

Book Reviews

Sprache und Empathie. Beiträge zur Grundlegung eines linguistischen Forschungsprogramms.

Herausgegeben von Katharina Jacob, Klaus-Peter Konerding und Wolf-Andreas Liebert. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020. vii + 631 Seiten + 41 s/w und farbige Abbildungen. €119,95 / \$137,99 gebunden oder eBook.

Empathy—as a historical conceit, an educational desideratum, or as a literary effect—has been a recurring focus of interest in German Studies and one that has been rejuvenated in the last decade alongside a burgeoning body of work on affect, emotions, and cognition in the humanities and social sciences. The new volume *Sprache und Empathie. Beiträge zur Grundlegung eines linguistischen Forschungsprogramms*, edited by Katharina Jacob, Klaus-Peter Konerding, and Wolf-Andreas Liebert, attempts to represent the breadth of this field while also anchoring discussions of empathy closely to linguistic perspectives. This is at the same time a delimiting strategy and the basis of an argument that the authors collectively make across their contributions, namely, that while empathy has become a key term for cognitive, social, and cultural studies, these discussions have tended to be somewhat linguistically indifferent, and this in spite of the fact that “Sprache und sprachliche Interaktion im Bereich der menschlichen Kommunikation und Verständigung das grundlegende Mittel und Medium für Empathie sind” (1). The overarching case made by the volume is that linguistic inquiry is integral to empathy studies, and a secondary claim follows that empathy is likewise at the basis of successful communication, and thus an essential aspect of applied and socioculturally-oriented linguistic scholarship. The book is divided into three parts, designed to move from some of the core fundamental concepts and questions to situated examples of empathy in different social and research contexts.

The first section, entitled “Grundlegende Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang von Empathie, Kommunikation und Sprache,” sets the stage for the rest of the volume. The first three chapters are clearly positioned in disciplines outside of but adjacent to language studies—philosophy, ethnography, and psychotherapy—and the final two are from within linguistics itself. These all serve to establish the study of language and empathy as inherently and necessarily transdisciplinary, while introducing some

key questions for this field. The first chapter, by Thiemo Breyer, begins by giving a widely encompassing definition of empathy as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes a physical-embodied dimension, an affective-emotional dimension, and a cognitive dimension. Breyer also touches on questions of morality, ethics, and empathy that harken back to philosophers, including importantly Kant and Schopenhauer. The next chapter, from Frank-M. Staemmler, looks at the relationship between empathy and psychotherapeutic practice and research, and in particular the emphasis on the role of verbalization as it has developed since Freud. Staemmler also brings in two important considerations that resurface throughout the volume: the importance of transmodal perspectives that situate language amongst other semiotic systems through which empathy is mediated, and the notion of relationality (*Bezogenheit*), i.e., that empathy is more often than not reciprocally constituted. Relationality is central to Thomas Stodulka's chapter, which focuses on the methodological considerations it poses for ethnographic field research. Arguing that empathy is a requisite part of ethnographic field work, Stodulka summarizes a pilot study involving the use of emotion journals during fieldwork to show how empathy can be made visible as a site of reflective research practice through entextualization. The final two chapters by Klaus-Peter Konerding and Wolf-Andreas Liebert (both editors of the volume) are anchored in two different subfields of linguistics: pragmatics/social interaction and hermeneutics/interpretation. These two contributions each argue that attention to empathy can complement and enhance existing linguistic scholarship conceptually and methodologically.

The second section, "Empathie in intrakultureller, interkultureller, multimodaler und Interspezies-Kommunikation," includes five chapters, which consider empathy as it is situated in particular relationships and modalities. The first, by Maxi Kupetz, draws on conversation analysis to examine how empathy displays are mutually constructed in social interaction. In addition to providing concrete examples of research methods for the study of empathy in language, the chapter also initiates the topics covered in the next two contributions: interculturality and multimodality. Sabine Rettinger's chapter on "Empathie und Interkulturalität" adopts a hermeneutic approach to interculturality, that is, one based on the premise that our ability to empathize with others is intimately linked to our ability to imagine them as "fellow sufferers." Rather than contemporary research in intercultural studies, Rettinger leans heavily on Richard Rorty's rather contentious book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), but her focus on the potential of narrative for fostering empathetic dispositions is potentially of interest to many working in German Studies. Using the genre of "Polittalkshow" as his example, Andreas Rothenhöfer demonstrates how a multimodal analysis of empathy displays and their negative counterparts (e.g., blocks, distancing) can reveal contradictory and multifaceted aspects of empathy, especially in a context in which multiple levels of addressivity are at play. The final two chapters both consider empathy in interspecies relationships. The first, by Pamela Steen, compares how human empathy vis-à-vis animals in the wild manifests in two forms of video media: documentary accounts from hunters and live footage from a *Wildtier-Show*; based on this video evidence, Steen asks which variables are most relevant in the human construction of empathy in relation to non-human others. Heike Rettig's chapter focuses on two interrelated situations, the training of horses and riding lessons for those who ride them. At the outset this appears to be a rather instrumental context; however,

Rettig's interest is not primarily in the success of the instruction, but more in inter-species relationality, in this case the forms of embodied empathy that develop as two bodies synchronize with one another in action.

The third and final section, "Empathie und ihre Relevanz in exemplarischen gesellschaftlichen Kommunikationsbereichen," features case studies of communicative contexts in which empathy plays a key role: the justice system (Ekkehard Felder and coauthors), doctor-patient relationships (Pavla Schäfer), academic communication (Michael Bender and Nina Janich), the political arena (Josef Klein), public relations (Helmut Ebert and Edith Münch), education (Jörg Killian and Konstanze Marx), reading fictional texts (Berbeli Wanning and Anna Mattfeldt), lay linguistic discourses (Kristin Kuck and Kersten Sven Roth), and the professional art world (Paul Reszke). This wide array of studies also comes with a broad spectrum of understandings of language. The first contribution from Felder et al. is representative of this; this one chapter offers twelve different ways of thinking about language in juridical contexts, each authored by a different co-author.

Sprache und Empathie offers a fairly comprehensive overview of the range of issues and perspectives related to this field. Because of the breadth of the collection in terms of scope and disciplinary positioning and the lack of editorial commentary or guidance beyond the introduction, *Sprache und Empathie* has an encyclopedic structure. Many readers would likely be interested in select chapters, rather than the volume as a whole. At the same time, there are some focal areas that are absent or mentioned only in passing, which might be missed by scholars in German Studies. For example, with the exception of a few brief references, questions of race, gender, and sexuality are not taken into account, in spite of the recurring focus on selective empathy and the understanding that it is socially and culturally constituted. Overall, though, the volume is a useful resource for scholars working in or just starting to think about language and empathy.

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Naturerscheinungen. Die Sprachlandschaften des Nature Writing.

Von Jürgen Goldstein. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2019. 326 Seiten. €24,00 gebunden.

Until recently it has been held that there is no such thing as nature writing in Germany—that genre of literary nonfiction in which authentic, first-person encounters with nature and observation of plants, animals, and landscapes are combined with essayistic self-scrutiny and reflection on human interaction with the natural environment. Nature philosophy, popular science, political and sociological writing on nature, and nature poetry have, it has been suggested, occupied the position in German cultural tradition which nature writing possesses in America, where it has served as a medium for the formation of national identity, and to a lesser extent in Britain. While there is still no German word for nature writing (see the subtitle of Goldstein's book), the last decade has seen an explosion of interest in the genre. Inspired by American writing and the New Nature Writing which emerged in Britain in 2008 but driven primarily by a wave of popular and academic interest in Germany, the Berlin publishing house Matthes & Seitz launched the *Naturkunden* book series in 2013. Under the editorship of Judith Schalansky, this has made translations of the classics of