

**Suman Gupta. *Philology and Global English Studies. Retracings*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 253. ISBN 978-1-137-53782-9.**

Offering a panoramic look at the critical landscape of the frustratingly elusive and, at the same time, apparently tangible disciplinary notion of philology and its troublesome retraction to the discipline of English Studies is Suman Gupta's indisputable contribution to contemporary critical attempts to "fix" a floating subject. Paradoxically, "fixing" is what his investigation wisely resists as it successfully negotiates between a more general, descriptive and historical perspective on philology, revealing some structural vertebrae (nodes) that hold it together, and a more particular, case-sensitive manner of locating its subject within and beyond national borders. Once assembled, the variable lens of this critical position operates smoothly, retracing a number of founding theoretical models to relocate them within and against growing concerns about the discipline's progress. Along the way, it becomes evident that philology which operates as a "retrospective intellectual horizon" (3) is necessary in this endeavour to help determine the proximity of English Studies to or its distance from the goals of philological scholarship and, at the same time, to examine the "relationship and disjuncture between linguistics and literary study" (3) that constitute the "pillars" of the discipline.

The book consists of three parts, each enclosing a group of chapters on a particular aspect of philology. Part 1, titled "Philology", asks the seminal but troubling question of "What is philology?" (9) only to demonstrate the limits it poses to any attempt at an unequivocal definition. Philology is "understood as always being more" (10) and this aspect of excess is what challenges the urge for a viable definition (11). Gupta argues against fixing it to a specific formulation, suggesting, instead, a comprehensive effort that "hunts" for "certain coherent features of the broad scholarly formation" (12) which he calls "nodes of convergences" (12) and employs them to retrace a history of philology among various other historiographies. The first chapter dwells on four such nodes: fixing the text, origins and genesis, aspiration to unity, and institutional grounding. They provide the axis of the intellectual "horizon," the "measurement" that Gupta employs to navigate his own exploration of the departures and returns of English Studies from/to its philological origins. At the end of the chapter, he registers two such opposite directions of movement, or, "drifts" – through convergence on the four nodes, that is, the discipline's willingness to embrace traditional philological patterns; and through contestation of the latter which, however, may involve methods inherited from the contested field. Chapter two considers the departure from philology in greater detail tracing its historical whereabouts and following its mutations as an entity that both underpins the discipline of English Studies and renders it inadequate to meet the current demands of a pluralistic and global academic turn.

Part 2, titled "Institutional Histories," considers the dissemination of institutionalized forms of the discipline across various cultural and historical contexts on a map that highlights four major geopolitical localities: the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Continental Europe and India. The selection aims to outline "the contours of the increasingly diverse and global scope of English Studies" (70) disturbing the initial impression that this endeavour might take the form of a schematized critical perspective by discussing numerous "pluralities and overlapping influences within and across these [sites] to convey some sense of that global spread" (70). Besides, Gupta's sophisticated approach further dismantles the dichotomy that haunts a lot of scholarly attempts as they ascribe cultural hierarchy to the supposed "heartlands" (the UK and the US) and "hinterlands" (Continental Europe and India) of cultural interaction. Instead, he refers to the *former* status of these designations. The overall effect of this insightful gesture is a direction that helps produce the historical and geographical "bodies" of the discipline of English Studies as branching structures with travelling roots embracing both national particularities and cross-border interactions. Starting with the discipline's "rootedness" in its "former heartlands" (70), the critical perspective registers the persistence of the "horizon of philology" (71) taking new forms and dimensions in the course of its historical evolution. Tracing the ensuing itineraries, the research conducts a fruitful conversation between past and more recent perspectives, which enables the expanding focus of its lens. Chapter one of this part is concerned with the growing conviction that for much of the discussed period "[a] history of English Studies (with literature and language in view) appears as a departure from philology" (82) in both the broader and the narrower understanding of the philological horizon in the UK. The drift away from the goals and practices of philology is even more categorical in the case of the US where "philology was done away with by a process of channeling the academic discipline of English into professional

independence and pedagogic amenability. The process ... grew impatient with reductive philological practices and therefore turned away from philology itself" (92). The "hinterlands" in this comparative discussion appear to display a less certain willingness to revise and depart from the philological horizon. The dilemma of how "English" and "Englishness" are to be approached in Europe (where the concept of Europe itself is superseded by the more embracing concept of "New Europe") hinges upon the idealistic idea of European plurality as a unity of differences where the different underpins the viability of national self-confidence. Thus, unlike the case with the former "heartlands," the institutionalization of English Studies in Europe demonstrates a certain penchant for "bridging" the nationally distinctive patterns of its development in a philologically-minded expectation that "something unitary and exemplary is to be found in Englishness, which should be regarded as central to 'English Studies', which *thereafter* leads into diversity and difference" (106). This quest for unity in diversity is likewise practically consistent with the establishment of transnational associations for the study of English such as ESSE (The European Society for the Study of English) in 1990, preceded by EAAS (The European Association for American Studies) in 1954. As regards the discipline's location in India, it has long been the fulcrum of a political and cultural crisis demarcating the diverging strands of a quest for authenticity. Placed within colonial and postcolonial discourses, the academic focus of English Studies was not an end in itself, rather, adopted as a "more or less stable formation" (109), the discipline has frequently been employed for the purposes of ideological advocacy in a non-academic context. Only recently, Gupta claims, the philological tenets of the discipline's historical evaluation have come into prominence.

Part 3, titled "Linguistics and Literary Studies" turns to the internal fracturing of English Studies and the uneven but parallel development of its constituent branches – linguistics and literary studies. The first three chapters of this part retrace the fluctuating theoretical pathways of their institutionalization, marked by a pursuit of emancipation, constantly interrogated by the mutual dependence of their intellectual concerns and methodology. Again, the critical endeavour follows the evolution of past literary and linguistic theories into recent and contemporary patterns of renegotiated positions, all along moving away from the generalized and schematic understanding of the disciplines as normative and centralized. Throughout this effort, the philological horizon is never lost sight of, being more tangible or more distanced at the different stages of the consistent historical dissection. The final chapter endorses the centrifugal turn in the discipline's reformulations and argues that in its most recent theoretical permutations English Studies is re-conceptualized through tropes of transition, rather than plurality, where the idea of "World Englishes," premised on notions of static, individuated plurality, gives way to the more dynamic model of "Global Englishes," based on transition and interflow both within and beyond academic borderlines.

In sum, Suman Gupta's book is a must-read. Drawing from a deep theoretical reservoir and propelled by an inquisitive, analytical, comparative and consistent reading of the discipline's development it helps locate the contemporary cross-border position of English Studies more precisely and adequately.

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