

HYPERCULTURE: CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION. By Byung-Chul Han. Translated by Daniel Steuer. Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2022. 98 pp.

Byung-Chul Han (born 1959) is one of the most prominent South Korean-born philosophers and cultural theorists. In his works, Han explores the late capitalist culture in its various facets, including concepts such as freedom, the internet, love, mental health (in particular, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, burnout, and depression), multitasking, popular culture, power, religion, sexuality, social media, subjectivity, technology, tiredness, transparency, and violence. In his analysis of contemporary culture and society, Han has mainly drawn on thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud, Félix Guattari, Martin Heidegger, and Carl Schmitt.

In his most recent books, Han identifies a “society of tiredness” (*Müdigkeitsgesellschaft*) and a “society of transparency” (*Transparenzgesellschaft*). He describes “transparency” as a cultural norm derived from neoliberal market forces. According to Han, the mechanisms underlying transparency generate a totalitarian system of openness in which social values such as shame, secrecy, and trust are neglected. Han also characterises contemporary society as increasingly regulated by narcissism and self-reference. Since people tend to be focused exclusively on themselves, they are unable to build durable relationships. Even love and sexuality have undergone a dramatic change: sex, pornography, and voyeurism have replaced love and eroticism.

*Hyperculture: Culture and Globalisation* is the 2022 translation of the original German book titled *Hyperkulturalität: Kultur und Globalisierung*, published in 2005 by Merve Verlag. Han’s text is structured into 20 short chapters. He opens the book with a long quotation from Carl Schmitt’s *Land and Sea* (1954). In this passage, Schmitt identifies a typical trait in the transition between two epochs; that is, there is a tendency to perceive chaos instead of recognising the emergence of a new order. In quoting this passage, Han implicitly refers to the contemporary shift between postmodernity (approximately the period between the 1960s and early 1990s) and hypermodernity (which, according to Han, has characterised our era since the early 1990s). This shift constitutes the main subject of the book, together with the concept of globalisation and the different interpretations and judgements that other philosophers have contributed to the subject. According to Han, the present era is one of transition: certain perceptions, habits, and values have been challenged to make room for new ones, which are not necessarily worse. Indeed, Han offers an optimistic view of this time of crisis, challenging pessimistic views about both the present epoch and the future.

The first chapter, “Tourist in a Hawaiian Shirt”, contains a reference to the British anthropologist Nigel Barley, who in 2000 expressed the concern that culture (as home) could one day be replaced by tourism (i.e. a boundless and siteless culture). The fact that Barley defines “tourism” as the ease with which it is currently possible to move from one cultural context to another indicates his negative conception of this new condition. Han asks, “[a]fter the end of culture, should the new human being simply be called ‘tourist’? Or are we at long last living in a culture that affords us the freedom to spread into the wide open world? If we are, how might we describe this new culture?” (p. 1). These questions guide Han’s book, which presents a positive view of the opportunities emerging from globalisation, the void it brings, and the present-day concept of a boundless and siteless culture. Consequently, Han implicitly casts Barley as one of the many individuals who only perceive absurd chaos when a new culture seeks to establish its order.

In the second chapter, “Culture as Home”, Han considers the works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Johann Gottfried Herder. Here, Han addresses the concept of cultural heterogeneity, that is, the coexistence of natives with foreigners. According to Han, the emergence of a boundless and siteless culture (the opposite of the idea of culture as home), opens many (potentially infinite) possi-

bilities for the betterment of society. Han employs these concepts when referring to hyperculture as the new contemporary culture that has resulted from the merging of different cultures. Central to this idea of hyperculture (the culture of the “side by side”, of simultaneity, and of the “as well as”) is the transformation of the “topology of happiness”. The transition Han refers to represents a shift from national happiness to hypercultural happiness. As Han states, hypercultural happiness “emerges from an abolition of facticity, a removal of the attachment to the ‘here’, the site” (p. 5). It is the nature of hypercultural happiness to appropriate the new. Seen in this light, Barley’s “tourist”, instead of serving as a negative figure, presents “the embodiment of the future happiness of *homo liber*” (p. 6). Therefore, in Han’s view, the abandonment of the culture as homeland gives rise to an “increased freedom” that shapes a new type of happiness: hypercultural happiness.

In the third chapter, “Hypertext and Hyperculture”, Han analyses Ted Nelson’s notion of hypertext, the idea that everything in the universe is intertwined, like a network without a centre. According to Han, “intertwinedness” characterises today’s culture. In today’s globalised world, there is neither theology nor teleology structuring a meaningful and homogeneous unity. Consequently, “cultural authenticity or genuineness” is dissolving (p. 9). Globalisation de-distances cultural spaces. As Han states, “[t]he resulting closeness creates a richness, a corpus of cultural lifeworld practices and forms of expression” (p. 9). This is why, according to Han, it is more appropriate to adopt the prefix “hyper-” – instead of “trans-”, “inter-”, or “multi-” – to describe contemporary culture. In this sense, hyperculture means more culture – not less culture, as Barley’s metaphor of the “tourist” implies. In response to this new idea of life and the world, Han warns against various attempts at re-theologisation, re-mythologisation, and re-nationalisation, which “are common reactions to the hyperculturalization of the world” (p. 10). Therefore, “hypercultural de-siting will have to confront a fundamentalism of sites” (p. 10). Han’s prediction already seems to be manifesting, as new waves of nationalism are currently underway in some parts of the world (the most striking example is Brexit).

In the fourth chapter, “The Eros of Interconnectedness”, Han reflects on Vilém Flusser’s concept of time. Flusser distinguished three forms of time: the time of the image (or plane-like time), the time of the book (or linear time), and the time of the bit (or point-like time). Whereas plane-like time belongs to mythical time and linear time characterises historical time, today’s time “possesses neither a mythical nor a historical horizon” (p. 11). As Han states, hypercultural time is de-theologised and de-teleologised “into an ‘atom-like’ ‘universe of bits’, a ‘mosaic universe’” (p. 12). In other words, it escapes a horizon of meaning. This is due to the increasing interconnectedness of the world, which favours a multitude of relations and possibilities. The space where these relations are established constitutes a hyperspace, which exceeds the “facticity”. In this respect, referring to Martin Heidegger’s notion of *Dasein*, Han states that “[t]he excess of possibilities enables a projection of *Dasein* beyond the horizon of ‘inheritance’ and ‘tradition’” (p. 13). In this interpretation, the hypercultural tourist is not necessarily on the move in a physical sense. For the hypercultural tourist, there is no division between “a place to be at home” and “a place to be somewhere else”. Instead, the two things coincide: “It is not that we leave our houses as tourists in order to return later as natives. The hypercultural tourist is *already* a tourist when *at home*. Still here, he is already there. He never *arrives* at a final destination” (p. 13). In sum, Han presents a positive view of the hypercultural concept of space and time because it presents more freedom of choice than do concepts belonging to myth and history.

In the fifth chapter, “Fusion Food”, Han argues that globalisation does not engender homologation but rather variety. He says, “[h]yperculture is not an oversized monoculture” because hyperculture is characterised by global interconnectedness, which generates “a pool of different forms and practices of life that keeps changing, expanding and renewing itself” (pp. 15–16). A provocative example is that of McDonald’s. As Han states,

In Asia, McDonald’s is no more than an occasional alternative to the native cuisine. And even McDonald’s has to vary its menu in line with the eating habits of local cultures. The US is the source not just of McDonald’s but also of “fusion food”, or “fusion cuisine”, an eclectic culinary approach that makes free

use of all that the hypercultural pool of spices, ingredients and ways of preparing food has to offer. This hypercuisine does not level the diversity of eating cultures. (p. 16)

Han provides further examples to demonstrate that globalisation is not synonymous with homologation:

At least as far as food is concerned, there will be no cultural homogenization. The creation of difference is part of how the sense of taste, and even enjoyment, works. The emergence of a bland cultural homogeneity would put an end to enjoyment. The levelling of differences would also not make sense in terms of the economy of consumption. The hypermarket of taste lives off difference and diversity. (p. 17)

Though Han's analysis is partly accurate (the purity of local food culture cannot offer the same variety as hypercuisine), it is clear that food chains such as McDonald's offer low-quality food, which may cause serious health problems. However, on one point, Han is correct: "Globalization and diversity are not mutually exclusive" (p. 16). Inevitably, in this situation of lively cultural exchange, certain forms of life disappear, while others flourish. From Han's perspective, an important point emerges; that is, hyperculture's space and time are inclusive, and, for this reason, they herald the end of history.

In the sixth chapter, "Hybrid Culture", Han undermines Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity. According to Han, far from being a feature of a specific culture, hybridity constitutes the very essence of culture. Herder had already demonstrated this concept when he explained that European culture is the result of the fusion of Roman, Greek, and Arabic cultures. In the same sense, Han affirms that "[h]ybridity marks the 'interstitial passage' that creates identity" (p. 20). Thus, identity originates from a dynamic variety of differences. On the basis of these premises, Han attacks Bhabha's view on contemporary culture: "Bhabha is still in thrall to the agonal-dialectical tension between colonizer and colonized, between ruler and ruled, between master and slave" (p. 23). Therefore, according to Han, it is misleading to speak of the verticality of power in the hypermodern era, as everything is placed "side by side". Han also describes the concept of creolisation, which refers to the process of cultural blending. Ulf Hannerz, in *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, claims that creolisation allows the culture of periphery to exert the same power of influence as the culture of centre. For example, both use the same technology, which allows them the same power of expression and diffusion. In this sense, megalopolises like New York, London, and Paris are partly extensions of peripheral societies. For this reason, they are not only creators of ideas and tendencies – they also play a key role as cultural switchboards between peripheries and semi-peripheries. It follows that philosophers can adopt the concept of creolisation to explain the cultural logic of hypermodernity.

With the concept of hypermodernity now established, Han uses the seventh chapter, "The Hyphenization of Culture", to contrast Bhabha's concept of hybridity with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's model of the rhizome. Han explains that Bhabha's concept of hybridity, although it undermines the essentialist concept of culture, "is still too rigid, too dialectical, for a description of contemporary cultural, even hypercultural, processes" (p. 26). Although Han and Bhabha agree that cultural identity is not a passive representation of certain cultural traits, they disagree on how this cultural identity is constructed. In fact, Han's concept of hyperculture is more open-ended than Bhabha's (dialectical) concept of hybrid culture. Therefore, the former better describes today's culture than the latter. Deleuze and Guattari's model of the rhizome is similar to Han's concept of hyperculture. In Han's words, "a rhizome is an open structure whose heterogeneous elements constantly play into each other, shift across each other and are in a process of permanent 'becoming'. The rhizomatic space is a space not of 'negotiation' but of transformation and blending" (p. 27). Therefore, as a de-internalised, de-rooted, and de-sited culture, hyperculture functions in a rhizomatic way. As Han states, "[t]here are rhizomatic transitions between sub-cultural and cultural structures, between the peripheries and centres, between temporary concentrations and renewed dispersals" (p. 28). Another feature that rhizomatic culture shares with hyperculture is the fact that both lack memory, as they are not cultures of inwardness or remembrance.

In the eighth chapter, “The Age of Comparison”, Han explains how the de-siting of culture leads to the age of comparison. As Friedrich Nietzsche understood, the death of God also implied the end of the *site*. As a consequence, Han describes a “side by side” culture, implying that different forms of knowledge, thinking, living, and believing coexist alongside one another.

In the ninth chapter, “The De-Auratization of Culture”, Han discusses Walter Benjamin’s concept of aura in relation to globalisation and hypermodernity. Han observes that three key companies – Microsoft, Linux, and Disney – have three similar slogans, which convey different nuances on the verb “to go”. For example, Microsoft’s slogan is about going today (“Where do you want to go today?”), Linux’s slogan is about going tomorrow (“Where do you want to go tomorrow?”), and Disney’s advertising slogan is about going now (“Are you ready to go?”). According to Han, in the three slogans, “Go” points to “the end of a specific *Here*” (p. 34). In other words, by emphasising the verb “to go”, *Being* loses its auratic depth because the *Here* is denied. Benjamin previously observed this issue in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*. He defined the aura of both natural and crafted objects as their uniqueness in a given place. Thus, the aura is the retention of a specific “here and now” that cannot be replicated *There*. As Han states, “[c]ontemporary globalization effects a change in the site as such. It de-internalizes it, takes away the ‘tip’ which gives the site its soul” (p. 35). However, contrary to Benjamin’s view, Han’s judgement regarding the de-auratisation of the site is positive, as it gives rise to the de-distancing of things, the nearness of what is different and distant. Moreover, Han suggests that the disappearance of the aura should not be regarded as a loss of depth, origin, essence, and authenticity. Conversely, hypercultural sitelessness, instead of resulting in a loss of *Being*, and all that goes with it, constitutes another shape of *Being*. In other words, “globalization de-auratizes culture and turns it into hyperculture” (p. 36). According to Han, the aura-free here and now heralds the existence of a *homo liber*. Put another way, in return for the decay of the aura, humans increase their freedom.

The tenth chapter, “Pilgrims and Tourists”, discusses whether modern humans are pilgrims, as Zygmunt Bauman believed. According to Han, Bauman’s view that modern humans are pilgrims is inaccurate because modernity overcomes the “asymmetry between *Here* and *There*, and it thereby overcomes the form of existence of the pilgrim” (p. 39). As Han states, “[t]he pilgrimage is a *pre-modern trope*” that does not belong to hypermodernity because “[i]nstead of being on its way towards a *There*, modernity progresses towards a better *Here*” (p. 39). It follows that hypercultural tourists are not directed to a *There* precisely because they are *fully Here*. In the hypercultural space, the here-there dichotomy does not exist; *There* is just another *Here*. For this reason, the hypercultural human being does not (and cannot) move toward a definitive arrival. Therefore, by de-distancing and de-siting the *There*, globalisation gives rise to a global *Here*.

In the eleventh chapter, “Windows and Monads”, Han compares and contrasts Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s concept of the monad with the cultural logic of hypermodernity. According to Han, Leibniz’s monadic universe contrasts with the hypertextual universe. Whereas the inhabitants of the former, the monads, have no windows, the inhabitants of the latter are window creatures; that is, it is through the windows that they receive the world. Monads tend inward, whereas hypercultural humans tend outward. Therefore, Leibniz’s universe is not a net universe. Windows prevent the house from its monadic inwardness, and in doing so, they de-internalise its inhabitants, who thus become hypercultural tourists.

In the twelfth chapter, “Odradek”, Han analyses Franz Kafka’s short story *The Cares of a Family Man* (written between 1914 and 1917), which tells the story of a creature called Odradek. As Han states, Odradek “embodies a hybrid identity” (p. 46). The concepts of hybridity and hyperculture provide Han with the lens through which to offer a fresh perspective on Kafka’s work. According to Han, “Odradek’s identity is not controlled by any teleology”, and “he is not part of any purposive horizon” (p. 48). However, Han states, Odradek has his own identity: “His identity is characterized by a being-together of what is as such unconnected” (p. 48). Despite this, Han remarks, Odradek

does not possess the features of a hypercultural tourist because he always returns to his house. Therefore, Kafka's works do not contemplate the trope of *windowing* as theorised by Han in chapter eleven. Kafka remained attached to the modernist ideas of the "house" and the "father", which have been abandoned in the hypercultural era.

At the core of the thirteenth chapter, "Hypercultural Identity", are the main features of hypercultural identity. One important premise is that hypermodernity is characterised by the collapse of horizons. Milieus that embed meaning and identity are disappearing, resulting in the fragmentation and pluralisation of society. To what appears to be a negative outcome of the present era (and in some ways, it is), Han responds with a positive view: "The decay of horizons is felt as a painful void, as a narrative crisis. But it also makes possible a new practice of freedom" (p. 51). In other words, what individuals lose in meaning and identity, they gain in freedom. In a world that consists of countless windows, one can form his or her personal narrative and identity. However, Han rightly warns that if the decay of the horizon produces a hypercultural plurality of forms, in the case of religion, this may lead to *annihilation*. A similar danger is observable in hypercultural art, which "no longer pursues the *truth* in the strong sense; it has nothing to *reveal*" (p. 51). In another passage, Han states: "Hyperculture does not produce a homogeneous, monochrome, uniform culture. Rather, it triggers increasing individualization. Individuals follow their own inclinations, cobbling together their identities from what they find in the hypercultural pool of practices and forms of life" (p. 52). However, Han neglects to say that individualisation may also produce negative outcomes, such as aggressive competition (instead of cooperation), unfulfilling career aspirations, alienating loneliness, the end of the community, and the disorientation of the world.

In the fourteenth chapter, "Interculturality, Multiculturality and Transculturality", Han compares and contrasts the concepts of interculturality, multiculturalism, and transculturality with the idea of hyperculturality. As Han states, interculturality and multiculturalism are associated with nationalism and colonialism. Within these phenomena, cultural differences are addressed through "integration" or "tolerance", which, instead of constituting positive behaviours, prevent mutual understanding and reflection. Moreover, interculturality accentuates the dialogical, whereas transculturality pertains to the "crossing of borders". Han affirms that while interculturality, multiculturalism, and transculturality can be found in every age and culture, "the culture of *today*, by contrast, is characterized by hyperculturality" (p. 57). At this point, it is worth reflecting on the meaning of the prefix "hyper", which points to the ideas of accumulation, networking, and compression. Therefore, the term hyperculture refers to an accumulation, a networking of different cultural forms that stand side by side in a hypercultural simultaneity. Consequently, in the hypercultural space, there is no need to cross borders (as in transculturality). In fact, there are no borders at all, just a singular *Here*. Consequently, hyperculture is not dialogical (like interculturality) but rather *dispersed*. Therefore, contemporary culture is characterised by the "hyper-", not by the "trans-", the "multi-", or the "inter-".

It is worth noting that Han's theory of hyperculture is informed by Asian culture, which has a distinct view of the human being, the world, and globalisation. For example, as Han observes, cultures of East Asia do not regard the human being as an individual totality with defined contours who is endowed with a soul. Instead, the human being is a relation. This is why Asians tend to view the world as a network rather than as a "Being". Accordingly, Western categories such as intersubjectivity and interpersonality are extraneous to Eastern thinking. Furthermore, whereas European culture is characterised by inwardness, Far East culture is open and porous. Consequently, Asian culture exhibits a strong propensity for adopting new ideas, change, and the new. Moreover, it is not a culture of memory. It has its own vision of globalisation, which does not derive from colonialism and immigration. This is why multiculturalism is largely absent there. As a result, as Han admits, there are many more similarities between hyperculture and Far East culture than between hyperculture and Western culture.

In the fifteenth chapter, "Appropriation", Han discusses the hypercultural notion of appropriation. Han states: "In recent times, the paradigm of the 'Other' or the 'radically Other' has been



introduced into many humanities disciplines, and since then appropriation has come to be seen as something rather sinful. The claim is that appropriation reduces the Other to the Same” (p. 58). However, in Han’s work, appropriation lacks that negative connotation. Instead, he distinguishes between exploitation and appropriation. Whereas the former, associated with colonialism, “destroys the Other in favour of itself and of the Same”, the latter is “an essential part of education and identity” (p. 58). In this respect, Han states: “What is one’s own is not something that is simply given as a datum. Rather, it is the result of successful appropriation. Without appropriation, there also is no renewal. Hyperculture desires such appropriation; it enjoys the novel. It is a culture of intense appropriation” (p. 59). Therefore, there is a dialectic in the process of appropriation; it transforms the appropriating subject as well as the appropriated Other. In this dialectic, the Other is not regarded as exotic or alien, and consequently, the “radically Other” (which results in timidity or terror) is not present in hypermodernity. As Han posits, another important distinction is between hyperculture, which contains curiosity, and folklore, which protects itself from the Other and seeks to exclude itself from any possible process of exchange.

In the sixteenth chapter, “On Lasting Peace”, Han argues that the blending of different cultures, which is proper to hyperculturalism, might lead to lasting peace in the world. According to Han, “[e]ven if it were based exclusively on the ‘spirit of commerce’, then, globalization would be able to bring about a ‘lasting’ peace” (p. 63). He continues: “There is, then, not such a big difference between ‘lasting’ and ‘perpetual’ peace” (p. 63). Therefore, in Han’s view, another positive effect of hyperculturalism and globalisation is the achievement, or a substantial contribution to the achievement, of peace among peoples. Even if such a situation is still far from happening, cultural amalgamation, if it succeeds in defeating all nationalisms (a decidedly optimistic scenario), could contribute to such peace in the world. Han adds two further points related to this view. On the one hand, the side-by-side nature of different perspectives discourages scepticism. On the other hand, without borders, hyperculture “is also a culture beyond ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’” (p. 65). However, Han fails to explain how hyperculture extends beyond the beautiful-ugly dichotomy.

In the seventeenth chapter, “Culture of Friendliness”, Han discusses a series of concepts – such as irony, negativity, politeness, and toleration – and explains why they do not characterise a hypercultural community as friendliness does. According to Han, hypermodernity is rooted in friendliness, leaving aside behaviours such as irony, negativity, politeness, and toleration. For example, irony and negativity do not function in a hypercultural society because they create a distance that contradicts hypermodernity’s idea of closeness. Politeness is another behaviour that is alien to hyperculture because it does not allow much openness. Moreover, “politeness is bound up with a cultural code. Where differently coded cultures meet, it loses its efficacy” (p. 68). Finally, toleration is extraneous to hyperculture because it is “something practised by the majority, which represents normality” (p. 69). Consequently, “toleration perpetuates the distinction between one’s own and the other” and such a distinction is extraneous to hyperculture, which is based on appropriation (p. 69). Therefore, irony, negativity, politeness, and toleration are not friendly. They are conservative concepts that belong to modernity and postmodernity, but not to hypermodernity. On the contrary, friendliness involves an openness that confers freedom and allows connections, concepts that are at the core of hyperculture.

The main argument of chapter eighteenth, “Hyperlogue”, is that “the World Wide Web has transformed the world into a seascape” (p. 71). In fact, we all navigate in an infinite sea of information. As Han states, this new situation establishes “a different form of being-in-the-world” (p. 72). In the new seascape, “[l]ogos gives way to hyperlogue” (p. 73). Therefore, according to Han, the hyperlogue is the order that rules hyperculture.

In the nineteenth chapter, “The Wanderer”, Han examines Nietzsche’s figure of the wanderer, a new type of human who, in many respects, resembles the figure of the hypercultural tourist. For example, both the wanderer and the tourist live in a de-teleologised, de-theologised, and de-sited world. Furthermore, they are not directed to a final destination and lose sight of a single horizon.

This liberates their vision, which becomes a *hypervision*. Fascinated by change and the new, both do not stay long in one place, and they are wary of the myth of “depth” and “origin”. However, Han specifies that the attitude of Nietzsche’s wanderer is not identical to that of the hypercultural tourist. The former lacks the leisureliness that characterises the latter. Therefore, according to Han, Nietzsche’s vision of the world remains that of a pilgrim.

In the last chapter, “Threshold”, Han concludes that “[t]he human of the future will be a tourist, smiling serenely”, not someone afflicted with pain (p. 83). Therefore, according to Han, there are two possible paths: (i) to become a *homo liber* or (ii), following Heidegger and Peter Handke, to remain a *homo dolores*.

Overall, Han proves to be a keen and thought-provoking observer of the present age. Furthermore, he presents novel and provocative readings of the works of authors from the past and present. In his book, Han challenges the widespread assumption that globalisation is a negative phenomenon, depicting the opportunities it offers instead. His most original contribution is the description of the hypercultural structure of the contemporary world. Another strength of the book lies in Han’s effort to compare and contrast Western culture with that of East Asia. This comparison allows him to establish a comparative philosophy in the Nietzschean sense. Han offers compelling answers to the most pressing questions that the philosophy of culture poses today, including the task of developing and defining a model that is capable of describing present-day cultural dynamics. While many scholars perceive an era characterised by decay and bewilderment, Han recognises the transition to a better world. Certainly, this is one of those books capable of changing one’s view of the world and promoting reflection on the most crucial and timely issues facing contemporary (globalised) culture.

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LITERATURE AND ITS LANGUAGE: PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS. By Garry L. Hagberg. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. 342 pp.

One specter continuing to loom over American literary studies since the so-called “Yale School” of the 1980s is the temptation to read a text through the lens of a major philosophical figure, cast one as the yardstick of the other, and ultimately contribute distorted interpretations of both. For an oeuvre that has only in recent years become a more frequently tapped resource of literary criticism, one might expect its nascent stages to follow a similar pattern. While recourse to a figure like Ludwig Wittgenstein would, moreover, seemingly lead to a dilemma straddling the positions taken in his earlier and later texts, the merits of Garry L. Hagberg’s recent volume *Literature and its Language: Philosophical Aspects* lies in treating Wittgenstein as an interlocutor rather than a programmatic tool.

The idea of the volume is gestured at in its Introduction: firstly, to make good on the postponed “promise [of]...the convergence of” literature and the philosophy of language and and, secondly, to “incorporate literature as a source of insight” into perennial questions of semantics taken up by the latter (xiii). Unsurprisingly, the volume puts forth the most developed instantiation of Hagberg’s aim in his own essay, “A State of Mind as the Meaning of a Word: J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*.” Much like the interlocutor of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein provides a series of invocations that prompt Hagberg’s discussion of *Disgrace*. To put it another way, the latter takes from the former an approach to the tone of his discussion more so than a measuring stick against which to assess the dimensions of the world developed in Coetzee’s fiction. One way to understand this approach is by considering how the excerpts lifted from the philosophical texts (whether those of Wittgenstein or