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Inhalt

Editorial	1
Fünfundzwanzig Jahre ZAA	2

Artikel

JERZY WELNA

A Change Reversed > Reversed: The Restoration of the Nonprevocalic Sequence [er] in English	5
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

JOST HALFMANN

Zentrum und Peripherie: Zur Soziologie des nordamerikanischen "Exzeptionalismus"	17
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

ULF SCHULENBERG

Narrating the Disappearance of Reality: From Textualized Spatiality to Glamorous Panfictionality in Postmodern American Fiction	32
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

ANNEGRET MAACK

"Tragedy, Comedy, History"? Romanversionen des Hamlet-Stoffes bei John Updike und Damien Broderick	54
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

FRANK SCHULZE-ENGLER

Transnationale Kultur als Herausforderung für die Literaturwissenschaft	65
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Buchbesprechungen

Konrad Ehlich, Jakob Ossner und Harro Stammerjohann, eds. <i>Hochsprachen in Europa: Entstehung, Geltung, Zukunft.</i> (Volker Gast)	80
Hildegard L. C. Tristram, ed. <i>The Celtic Englishes II.</i> (Edgar W. Schneider)	82
Katja Lenz. <i>Die schottische Sprache im modernen Drama.</i> (Clausdirk Pollner)	83
M. H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, eds. <i>The Norton Anthology of English Literature.</i> (Klaus Peter Müller)	85

gradual difference between heaven and earth, though Kuester's argument does not make it entirely clear how this would have prevented the fall. Rather than a symptom of the fallen state of human nature, ambiguous and thus already fallen language precedes the fall itself (203), in fact, becomes the immediate cause of the fall (167). In the end, "to repair the ruins of our first parents" becomes possible not through a reform of language, but as an act of faith which reunites word and thing in the son of god, the word become flesh. This reunification of signifier and signified as "words with power" (20, 94, 203, derived from N. Frye) is explored in *Paradise Regained*.

Kuester presents a multitude of carefully documented secondary sources to support his argument. Indeed, much of the study reads like a compendium of quotations on Milton's use of language from secondary literature and Kuester's independent argument gets at times rather short shrift. By far the most readable and interesting is the section on the godgame, for which little secondary material is quoted. One regrets that not more is made of this section. Regrettably also, very few primary sources appear to have been consulted. The seventeenth-century 'sematology' (6, 46) discussion is presented in an extremely brief survey. The language theories of John Webb, Nicolaus Cusanus, Johannes Reuchlin, Jacob Böhme, Johannes Comenius, Peter Ramus, Robert Boyle and a rather general entity called 'biblical commentators' (16) are represented almost exclusively through pronouncements of modern critics about them. John Wilkins, whose language theory is repeatedly referred to in Kuester's analysis of Milton's semiotics, is reported on merely in passing (41-43).

It is perhaps this second-hand acquaintance with contemporary views that leads to somewhat startling pronouncements: It is hardly unique to *Milton's* version of the story that the fall is 'also an important stage in the history of mankind' ("in der Milton-schen Version [...] auch eine wichtige Station in der Geschichte der Menschheit," 5). While it may be Milton's reputed misogyny

that leads him to present Eve rather than the serpent as the immediate cause of Adam's fall (178), it would seem more likely that Milton simply adhered to his source (*Gen.* 3:6). It is of course possible that Michael compares the hill in Eden with the site of the second Adam's temptation in *Paradise Regained* ("den er typologisch mit dem Berg in *Paradise Regained* vergleicht," 183), though the more obvious source of comparison would seem to be the site of Christ's temptation as described in *Matthews* (4:8). Far from being 'mysterious' ("rätselhaft," 180), the enmity between the serpent and the woman announced in *PL* X.179-81 quotes *Genesis* 3:15 and is as a figure of speech commonly used at least until the nineteenth century; Mr Pott uses it, for example, in *The Pickwick Papers* (chapter 13).

More damaging to the argument are frequent misreadings of the text and the overly generous use of one term to include very different phenomena. The most blatant example is the application of the label 'ambiguity' ("Ambiguität," e.g. 62) to such different phenomena as irony, metaphor and the lie, even the facile equation of 'linguistic ambiguity' and 'lie' ("linguistische Zweideutigkeit, kurz Lüge," 196). While it obviously suited the purposes of contemporary polemics against ornate language to equate these phenomena (discussed 37-41), it would have been desirable to differentiate more carefully. Irony for instance is described as a deviation from univocal language and thus ambiguous because the one-to-one relation between sign and referent is broken, one thing is said but another is meant (e.g. 123). But in a lie what is said is what is meant, only what is meant is an untruth. A lie is thus not in the same sense ambiguous.

The central problem of the argument is that it largely ignores the implications of the very theory of accommodation which Raphael employs and thus, so Kuester, unwittingly causes the fall. According to the theory of accommodation, it would be a sheer impossibility for Milton as a postlapsarian man to use anything other than accommodated, i.e. postlapsarian, language.

To show then, as Kuester tries to do, that the language employed by a postlapsarian writer to express prelapsarian language and divine utterances is in effect postlapsarian, is simply to prove the obvious. Though Kuester mentions the issue in passing (119-120, 138) and appears to suggest that Milton was not an adherent of the accommodation theory, his treatment of the issue is not adequate.

Stefanie Lethbridge (Tübingen)

Alison A. Case. **Plotting Women: Gender and Narration in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Novel.** Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999. x, 223pp. Hb. £ 31.95. ISBN 0-8139-1895-2.

Alison Case explores the connections between gender and narrative over a period of two hundred years, from Richardson to Stoker. Her approach is informed by recent trends in feminist narratology, which focus on narrative voice and gendering on the level of *discourse* rather than *story* – on the "gender dynamics of narration, in texts by either men or women" (12). Case foregrounds the convention of "feminine narration" which is "characterized by the restriction of the female narrator to the role of narrative *witness*; that is, by her exclusion from the active shaping of narrative form and meaning [...] or from what I shall term *plotting and preaching*" (4). This convention may apply to male narrators, but it represents the usual, 'unmarked' case for female narrators and serves for example to convey a sense of immediacy and authenticity otherwise difficult to achieve in a more controlled narrative. Conversely, females exercising narrative control are shadowed by the negative image of the female plotter, and feminine virtue is equated both with the inability to plot and to tell a meaningful story. This *Pamela/Shamela* pattern functions as the narrative equivalent of the

angel/whore dichotomy. With regard to female authors, Case argues further, the sense of immediacy created by feminine narration is particularly apt to invite the biographical fallacy. Autodiegetic narrators are central to this study, since they prominently appear both as created and creators within the fictional world. In spite of the long period she covers, Case refuses to offer a 'master-narrative' of the development of feminine narration and its wider significance for cultural history. Instead, she offers close readings of crucial texts in chronological order, like stepping stones in the murky waters of lived experience and its literary representation.

If Richardson's epistolary novels, *Clarissa* more so than *Pamela*, negotiate the heroines' (narrative) agency, divorcing feminine virtue and credibility from material plotting, Brontë's *Jane Eyre* may be seen as a rewriting of *Pamela* which redeems the plotting woman, shadowed, to be sure, by the evil plotter Bertha Mason. Working both "within and against the conventions of feminine narration" (106), *Jane Eyre* revolutionizes the form. This new emancipatory potential is registered in Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. Here, the autobiographical 'broken tale' which emerges from the clash of the conventions of *Künstlerroman* and romance recounts the struggles of a female artist. Conversely, discussing the interaction between feminine and omniscient narration, Case shows that in *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit* as well as in *Armadale*, both Dickens and Collins offer conservative corrections of *Jane Eyre*, embedded in the larger context of the Victorian debate about autonomy and determinism. The documentary novels of Collins and Stoker also work along these lines. Both *The Woman in White* and *Dracula* "stage a gendered struggle for narrative mastery" (147), acknowledging modern complexities but ultimately encouraging readers to read against the female voice.

The earliest pieces in this book were already published ten years ago, and this patchwork character occasionally shows. Accordingly, the bibliography is more dated

than necessary, even given the usual delays of the publishing process, and the individual chapters do not always reach the sophistication of the introduction. This is not as bad as it might be, however, since the interpretations of individual works clearly form part of a coherent project. Case presents an important argument and combines analytical rigour with interpretive intuition. The book is well written and, rather than burying the primary texts in critical discourse, encourages readers to take a fresh look at them in the light of Case's ideas.

Ina Habermann (Erlangen)

Timothy Morton. The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, 42. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xiii, 282pp., 17 Fig. Hb. £ 37.50, US \$ 59.95. ISBN 0-521-77146-3.

West of Lisbon in Belém, where the estuary of the River Tejo opens into the Atlantic, the monastery St Jerome was built, in the sixteenth century, in memory of Vasco da Gama's discovery of a sea route to India. Appropriately, the great explorer himself lies buried there. Opposite his sarcophagus is a monument for Luís de Camões, the writer, who was born the year after Vasco died and who later immortalized his fame in the great epic of the *Lusíadas*. The parallel placing of their tombs suggests an equally contiguous relation of their legacies in national memory and myth: the maritime discoverer side by side with the epic poet, the seafarer and the singer as complementary contributors to a common project – political and literary empire building. As a matter of fact, the building of the monastery was financed through a special tax known as "pepper money" levied on all income from the Portuguese spice trade celebrated in Camões' epic. This is just one example of the many ways in which European cultural monu-

ments, in architecture no less than in literature, are often materially based on profits of imperial trade connections in the wake of maritime adventures.

However, such profits also involve crucial dangers. What Marlowe's merchant of Malta proudly presents as the basis of his wealth ("Mine argosy from Alexandria, / Loaden with spice and silks, now under sail," l.i.44-45) can quickly turn to ruin and defeat, as Shakespeare's merchant of Venice comes to learn when he must fear his "gentle vessel's side / Would scatter all her spices on the stream" (l.i.32-33). For all their promise of economic power, imperial sea routes have also been regarded as potential perils, because the constant cultural exposure and encounters they effect might inadvertently infuse the heart of Europe with uncanny otherness. Spice seems to offer the perfect figure of this ambiguity. No other commodity can so strikingly represent both the attraction of exotic luxuries and colonial riches as well as, on the other hand, the threat of foreign contamination, potential degeneration and, literally, unpalatable hotness. Because spices have no nutritional substance, their use is entirely aesthetic, a matter of refined taste and wealthy ostentation. Objects of desire, they have always been the target of suspicion and reformist zeal. *The Poetics of Spice* by Timothy Morton now sets out to investigate this double legacy.

In a series of five chapters, freely ranging across historical and material contexts, the author undertakes what he announces as "an experiment in the literary and cultural history of the commodity" (3). After some preliminary theoretical considerations, Chapter 2 begins this project by examining poetic discourses on trade and commercial enterprise (drawing, roughly in this order, on works by Joyce, Keats, Milton, Philips, Camões, Coleridge, Dryden, Dyer, Blackmore, Thompson, Darwin, Shelley, Saddam Hussein). Chapter 3 focuses on conspicuous consumption and the use of luxuries as negotiated in ekphrastic and related texts (drawing, among others, on Keats, Shelley, Mandeville, Apicius, Mil-

ton, Williams, Shakespeare, Moore, De Quincey, Eliot, Warton, King, TV advertisements). Chapter 4 explores the rhetoric of slavery and abolitionism in textual negotiations of sweetness and sugar (cf. More, Cowper, Stedman, Coleridge, Moseley, Beckford, Grainger, Southey, Shelley, etc.). Chapter 5, finally, reads the poetics of spice as an emblem for poetry (cf. all of the above, and many more).

The field is vast and the topic fascinating. But the 'experimental' treatment they receive here is, at best, provocative through flashy formulations, mostly generalized through cursory discussion or erratic reference, and often downright irritating. The author is an established scholar of Shelley and romanticism and seems to be most at home when his reflections centre on this period. At other points he manages, in the space of a single paragraph, to move his discussion from Milton, via Eden, the Song of Songs, Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose* and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" to the *Ordinaciones* of Peter III the Great of Aragon and twentieth-century breath mints. Dazzled readers trying to follow such bold moves are frequently offered explanations like the following: "The signs *spice*, *spicy* and so forth spice a line of verse without being marked or particularised, say as 'cinnamon' or 'pepper.' The role of *spice* as a re-mark, a mark that marks other marks as such, is ekphrastic in the precise sense that it appears to be at once a textual and an extratextual effect. *Spice* in its ekphrastic mode appears to free the reader from the text only by subduing her or him even more strongly to the grasping of the text as a text, especially insofar as its vagueness and generality has the magical blend of specificity and ineffable sensuousness" (130).

This gives a fairly precise taste of Morton's recipe, freely mixing spurious puns with half digested deconstruction and highly verbalized claims of literary learning, all served in the hope of subduing the reader through vagueness and generality. I, for one, find this academic diet neither magical and sensuous nor this argument persuasive and productive. Taken apart, the

sentences cited offer little substance. Like most of the fragmentary readings presented here, they simply lack specificity.

Morton's central idea and oft-repeated insight is that *spice*, in European cultural discourse from the early modern to the romantic period, functions as a self-reflexive figure of figurative language. This is interesting and challenging and, indeed, might stimulate a series of relevant readings – if only it were tested, in each case, against the rhetoric and ideology at work in a particular text. Morton's method, though, is not concerned with providing evidence for a foregone conclusion. To cite just one example, his reading of James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764) fails to recognize the poem's unease with neo-classical decorum. As a pro-slavery tract for the sugar trade, Grainger's text just serves him to exemplify conventional rhetoric. Morton thus makes the premise of his argument the result of his analysis. In this way, unlike its central object and concern, *The Poetics of Spice* mainly shows the dangers of cultural traffic in exotic goods. If there were a tomb for promising but disappointing academic studies, this book should be shelved there.

Tobias Döring (Berlin)

Annette R. Federico. Idol of Suburbia: Marie Corelli and Late-Victorian Literary Culture. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000. 197pp. 13 Fig. Hb. £ 25.20. ISBN 0-8139-1915-0.

In her immensely popular novel *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), Marie Corelli depicts Mavis Clare, an angelic, sweetly feminine writer of immensely popular novels who is beloved by the public and reviled by reviewers. Mavis Clare, deeply committed to her art, considers the defamations of the press beneath her contempt; she serenely feeds her bad reviews to a flock of tame pigeons whom she has named after the most important literary magazines. This portrait