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the contemporary work of philosophy and linguistics will deserve a wide readership for the intellectual efforts they clarify and demonstrate.

Timothy Bahti
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Romantic Irony. Ed. Frederick Garber. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988. Vol. VIII in *A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* (International Comparative Language Association).

The twenty essays in this collection consist of two on "Tradition and Background," five designated as "Syntheses," and the heavy, and to this critic's eye only intermittently comparative, filling in this sandwich, no less than thirteen "National Manifestations," some in the survey format, "Romantic Irony in Scandinavian Literature," most with some specification of period, "Romantic Irony in Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Literature," some with a narrower topic: "The Ironic Recit in Portuguese Romanticism." All are by distinguished scholars who provide much information of a literary historical nature as well as great insight into one of the oddest, yet most significant, of modern literary "modes": that very word begs the question of definition which is, inevitably, a major, indeed repetitive, preoccupation of this collection. Breaking novelistic or dramatic illusion, deploying Socratic irony, self-reflexiveness, the grotesque and arabesque, shifting levels of reality (or of artifice, depending on the perspective), abruptly mingling tones, and even genres, to the point of the auto-destruction of the text (Bourgeois: perhaps "deconstruction" would serve also), comprise a partial catalogue of the microcosmic strategies implicitly or explicitly attributed to the various works and authors discussed, culminating in romantic irony seen as a structural principle. The artist as the God of a collapsing universe (see G.R. Thompson on the romantic irony of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, with Melville's *The Confidence Man* as the apogee of romantic

irony in America) is evidently the same as that ironic principle (in Lilian Furst's argument) which "led not to transcendence and progression," as it had seemingly promised, "but to reduction and dishevelment," in the relativist, paradoxical, ambivalent *Weltanschauung* which is the hallmark of macrocosmic romantic irony. These are among the chief counters which these critics deploy with varying, though overlapping and repetitive, emphases and qualifications.

Virtually every paper (Bourgeois' on romantic irony in France is an exception) makes the point, for instance, that irony in the older, "rhetorical" sense is *not* to be considered as part of romantic irony, or again, bogging down in qualification, argues for (or, more commonly, against) the notion that romantic irony can exist in the absence of an explicit and conscious theoretical underpinning in the works of the Schlegels. But as Milan Dimić usefully reminds us, "[r]omantic irony indicates the fundamental structuring law of these texts and permits their understanding not only as bizarre outgrowths of past experiments, but also as *milestones in the development of the 'modernity' of modern literature*" (my italics). That Schlegel, in his theorizing of romantic irony, was anticipating a future literature rather than describing an early nineteenth-century one, is Struc's teasing hint (Ferraz and Coelho also ask this question and fail to follow it up), while Furst, applying to romantic irony Muecke's dictum that "the seeds of modernism" are to be found in romanticism, and finding it in long-established predecessors as well as descendants, is the fiercest opponent of the narrowly "historical" approach. It is a minority, however, who sees romantic irony in other than strictly historical, cause-and-effect terms, in which Friedrich Schlegel (along with other German Romantic theorists) is the "cause," and authors acknowledging, or clearly displaying, his influence are the "effect." The article most needed to complete this volume would thus be one on the mode of romantic irony fulfilling itself in twentieth-century literature, from the European Old World to the Europeanized portions of the New World, as the few critics willing to accept a non-historical definition of romantic irony imply, or, though this is nowhere adumbrated, to the post-colonial New World.

Frederick Garber's editorial preface is, however, a model of concise clarity: he stresses the "Germanic center" and the prime theoretical roles of Friedrich Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck; among forerunners, Cervantes, Diderot, and Sterne, among principles to look for, in the local constituencies of the various national literatures, "resistance" to romantic irony as

well as "acceptance" of it. He hopes for a centripetal return to the study of the Germans, balancing the centrifugal diffusion of romantic irony among the nations. And, pre-empting my reviewer's privilege of pointing out what he has omitted, Garber asks for work on Italy and Spain, on Nietzsche (though Behler, in a substantial piece on German theorists of romantic irony, goes some way towards placing him), and on such contemporaries as John Barth and Thomas Pynchon, to which much else, for instance virtually *all* of the contemporary "Black Humour" novelists recently discussed by Patrick O'Neill (in *The Comedy of Entropy*), could well be added.

In the opening section, called "Tradition and Background," Lowry Nelson contributes a neat and serious account of the ways in which *Don Quixote* served the romantic critics as the germ or kernel, the stimulus, to the development of their theory, and indeed their practice, of Romantic irony: a fruitfully "comparative" approach, which of course also serves to describe a key cross-section of the history of *Quixote* criticism, in which he "places" the Schlegels, Hegel, Coleridge, Carlyle, Ticknor, and several French and Spanish critics. In a parallel essay, "Sterne: Arabesques and Fictionality," Garber himself sees Rabelais and Cervantes as the ancestors of Jean Paul (Richter), with self-enclosed systems being one pole of the duality of which chaos is the other: as both are dangerous, an oscillation between them may be the best accommodation that can be hoped for. Sterne, though much admired by the romantic ironists, could never, Garber lucidly argues, attain for them the heights that Cervantes did; a claustrophobic restrictedness marks his arabesques.

Considering all the possibilities for comparative treatment offered by Romantic Irony in its long, complex, and thoroughly international history, is this first section perhaps a little undernourished, relative to the thirteen essays in the section labeled "National Manifestations," which are explicitly devoted to one-country, one-language topics?

Van den Berg and Kloek, in "Thorbecke and the Resistance to Irony in the Netherlands," postulate, in a somewhat unfashionable appeal to "national characteristics," that the Dutch kept post-Kantian romantic idealism at bay, without really understanding it, finding it inimical to their pragmatic, even "Biedermeier," common sense and national domesticity. This negative case, that the Dutch, for whatever reasons, *lacked* romantic irony in their literature, leads up, at length, to Thorbecke, the exception (which of course "proves the rule") to the negative Dutch

response to the philosophic temptations of romantic irony, and indeed to Romanticism as a whole. So another useful paper would be one developing—comparatively—Garber's hint that "resistance" is as interesting as "acceptance," in all those individual "segments," Holland, most of the Balkans, possibly both Russia (Struc) and France, and indeed parts of the world unspecified, partly because of the accidents of contributorship, also partly (e.g., Latin America) because of the strong chronological bias in favour of whatever portions of the nineteenth century (in most countries, the first half) could be designated as each nation's era of romanticism. All those national literatures which have in common a *lack* of romantic irony, among critics, authors, or both, could, by some polyglot person or team, be syncretised in a discussion of "resistance" to romantic irony, which might well show interesting affinities to critical "resistances" of a more contemporary sort.

Vera Calin, on the Romanian author Mihai Eminescu, closely connects the attitudes belonging to the *Weltanschauung* of romantic irony with its symptomatic stylistic features. Better than any other paper in this section, she succeeds in conveying the flavour and accomplishment of a distinctly unfamiliar corner of European literature, Romania's "segment" of the ironic pie (as well as clarifying some of the permutations of "Protean" romantic irony), by limiting herself to providing a close critical, analytic, and comparative reading of Eminescu's most relevant texts. Some comparisons with Russian literature seem to offer themselves (not unlike the ghosts of Pirandello and Flann O'Brien who hover in the wings of Raymond Immerwahr's excellent essay on major German Romantic literary texts), but of course it is no one's assignment, except perhaps the reader's, to make such connections explicit.

In the (genuinely comparative) section headed "Syntheses," Jean-Pierre Barricelli, with admirable candour, limits the field of the interdisciplinary comparison of literature and music, pushing aside numerous too "easy" equivalences. But his final haul is rather meager, if one excludes "literary" genres like opera and "program music" generally, and extrinsic matters, like biography (which Barricelli disapproves of as a criterion) and / or intentionality (which seems to sneak in). While he has adumbrated questions more theoretically and conceptually challenging than most in this book, he has very little to show in the way of answers, and those he has tend to be bent in the prism of music critics' notoriously metaphorical, inevitably subjective, verbal critiques of their non-verbal medium.

Gerald Gillespie's two articles should perhaps be considered together, as the first, "Romantic Irony and the Grotesque," is more about grotesque elements in the drama than it is about romantic irony, and could well be spliced into the following essay, "Romantic Irony and Modern Anti-Theater." They read like two chapters of a larger work with some crucial part of their context missing (as cross-references in each essay to the other "chapter" suggest). The first essay opens with a long wind-up, on Gothic and theatrical history, lapsing quickly back into the matter of the grotesque in German romanticism; all we get about romantic irony as such is a strained "analogy" of Coleridge's "greatest lyrics" with Romantic Irony in its highest reaches. Gillespie sees Valle-Inclán as the link between "Bonaventura" (on whom he writes, as always, admirably) and existentialism—a thought-provoking juxtaposition, which, at the same time, suggests the perhaps too-sweeping scope of this paper. The last page of the essay seems an after-thought, a tacked-on, clumsily framed, linking of the grotesque with irony: "Like the idea of 'irony', the idea of the 'grotesque' did not have a narrow fixed range for Romanticism" (341). Gillespie's second essay, which seems more on topic, is full of clearly arranged information of a literary historical sort, surveying (theatrical) criticism from Tieck to Pirandello in terms of romantic irony, with interesting detailed readings of some Tieck plays and an interlude on the theatrical metaphors in the romantic novel.

Balancing "international give and take" with "the literary specificities of every nation or cultural entity," including especially "the literatures of smaller diffusion" (I quote from the General Preface to the series, which reaches here its eighth volume), is, as the editors know, a counsel of perfection. It is equally so, in the *mise en abyme* which is all a review can offer of such a disparate work; if I seem random in my selection of essays to comment on and cannot do equal justice to all, it is a limitation that inevitably parallels that of the work itself.

Frederick Garber's editorial "Coda: Ironies, Domestic and Cosmopolitan," completes the frame opened in his introduction with a clear recapitulation and synthetic summary of the material in the book, often doing his authors' work for them, tactfully and without condescension, courteously touching as many bases as possible; he fills a large gap in his contributors' arguments, which had said much about irony, but little about Romanticism, by juxtaposing Romantic Irony against the organicist metaphors of mainstream Romanticism (Goethe's *Werther*, Hölderlin, Shelley). But it

is when he does his own thing, an account of “the curious relation between the fictive and the tentative” in Byron’s *Don Juan*, and, superbly, in the close reading (“practical criticism” at its best) of eighteen lines from Heine’s *Das Buch le Grand*, which are *also*, and at the same time, shown to be a textbook illustration of romantic irony in action, that we reach the very highest point of this whole critical enterprise. Not all of the book is as genuinely exciting as these four pages, along with the two in which he contextualizes Heine in the broader historical field of Romantic Irony. I am happy to be able to end on this high note of praise.

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Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing. By Nancy K. Miller. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988. xii + 285 pp.

Nancy K. Miller’s *Subject to Change* testifies to numerous visions and revisions of feminist thinking (her own and others) between 1977 and 1988. 1977 marked the appearance of Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of Their Own*: Miller’s aim is to establish a French tradition of women’s writing comparable to Showalter’s study of English women writers. At the same time, Miller tries to resist “the temptations of a feminist reuniversalization” of the sort for which *A Literature of Their Own* has been criticized. In contrast to Showalter’s project, Miller proposes a “poetics of location’ that would acknowledge both the geographics of the writing it reads and the limits of its own project. (In this sense, I’m working toward a more historicized poetics.)” (4). The book is divided into three sections: 1) “Reading Women’s Writing”; 2) “The Subjects of Feminist Criticism”; and 3) “Feminist Signatures: Coming to Writing in France, 1747–1910.” The last section is the best, for despite the difficulty of substantiating claims of a continuous French tradition of women’s writing, Miller’s argu-