Daneben werden gerade in den Erlebnisberichten der kolonialistischen Akteure die stereotypen Merkmale des 'unedlen Wilden' auf die 'inhumane' Behandlung durch die kolonialistischen Konkurrenten zurückgeführt, um für Deutschland, im Gegensatz zu Großbritannien, die "Idee eines 'humanen' Kolonialismus" (187) zu reklamieren, oder, wie die Verfasserin in der Kennzeichnung der grundlegenden Tendenz der fast vierzig von ihr untersuchten Jahrgänge der Zeitschrift *Globus* zuspitzt: die "Lanzierung eines deutschen 'Kolonialismus mit menschlichem Antlitz'" (217). Diese Tendenz wird von der Verfasserin in der am Schluss stehenden Zusammenfassung deutlich stärker gewichtet als die sozialdarwinistische 'Umfunktionierung' des Kinder-Topos, der die kindliche Schwäche zum "Untergang [. . .] als [. . .] 'Naturnothwendigkeit' im 'Kampf ums Dasein'" (153) wird, weshalb sich in den Beschreibungen der 'Länder' eine (etwas zurückhaltend so genannte) "Objekttrennung" (343) von Natur und Bewohnern ergeben kann, wie 1883 im *Globus* über Neukaledonien: "auch hier [ist] eine allmählige Ausrottung und Vernichtung der ursprünglichen Bevölkerung zu erwarten" (227).

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Romantic Prose Fiction.
Edited by Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel, and Bernard Dieterle. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008. xxi + 733 pages. $297.00.

The thirty-six essays that make up the volume under review pursue their material through an inventive variety of different themes, though with a great deal of overlapping in the works chosen for discussion. Those themes carry the contributors through major and minor examples of Romantic fiction, often sweeping through such dizzying lists of works and across so many different language traditions that they have to go beyond specialized expressions of personal expertise. Despite the prodigious amount of effort that must have gone into the enterprise, it is very hard to believe that Gerald Gillespie, the principal editor, could be very happy with the outcome. His own contribution, an essay on the detective novel pursued from E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "Das Fräulein von Scuderi" through its development via Edgar Allan Poe to recent times, stands out so far above the others that it provides the only positive indication of what unachieved ideal lies buried beneath the laborious process out of which this book emerged. That ideal would certainly not have offered the final word on anything, but it would have been a splendid intellectual achievement and well worth the effort of any serious challenge it might have provoked.

Gillespie reads fiction with ingenuity. The relentless power of attention and imagination with which he follows ideas as they develop certainly matches the aim expressed in the concluding line of the book to explore Romanticism as "a shape-shifting heritage." Although some of the other essays do have interesting things to say and offer respectable accomplishments in their own right, a regrettable number are so badly thought out that their mass demolishes any coherent vision underlying the whole. They simply manifest no sense of shape at all. Many apply the term "Romanticism" with what borders on reckless abandon so that it patters down like hail on a tin roof under which any text can be housed. Lacking Gillespie's flair for relationships and correspondences, they offer the most extraneous criteria as the basis of resemblance

and argue for the most arbitrary of assemblages that reveal nothing about the work or the time in which it appears.

This oblivious inflation of terms naturally leads to contradictions. Thomas Klinkert and Weertje Willms list Jane Austen as a romantic novelist (229), whereas Manfred Engel remarks that she "cannot be called 'Romantic' even in the vaguest sense of the word" (278). Walter Scott figures prominently in many of the essays, but Markus Bernauer, in a very rigorously presented inquiry into the conception of narrative history during the early 19th century, notes that Scott "denounced" E.T.A Hoffmann's fantasies in favor of "a more reality-based narration" and "argues from the poetics of the bourgeois novel of the Enlightenment" (297). It does not matter that there should be disagreement about what constitutes "Romanticism" but it does matter that this question itself gets so little attention. Such attention would, however, require a certain measure of theoretical consideration—whether through Romantic theoretical writings, or through more recent ideas. The introduction deals with this rather explicitly when describing the program on which the volume was built. The editorial team was "pledged" not to write in "subservience" to Romantic theory, and, we read, no one among the contributors "volunteered" to introduce thinking from contemporary theory (xvii). Perhaps it was represented to them as a suicide mission.

On the contrary, everyone colludes to an oppressive degree in the assertion that the terms "the Romantics" and "Romanticism" identify a historical subject about which sweeping claims may be predicated. We do not need to define Romanticism; its clarity enables us to define other domains into which its time has flowed. Sven Halse describes "the fate of every Romantic" (397) as determined by the "fundamental worldview of Romanticism" (386). This foundation lies constituted in ideas that "dominated the Romantic cast of thought" (395). Joel Black finds a single line of development leading up to recent times in "the dialectic of the will already evident in Romanticism itself" (601). Of course, dialectic of the will might easily be constitutive of history itself, thus certainly present in Romanticism no matter how narrowly or broadly we explore it, as it would be in any other historical self.

Yet the history of those individuals in whom an identity as "Romantics" expresses its most vital scope would suggest that what we learn best when we learn most about Romanticism reveals that it contains no "cast of thought" or "fundamental worldview." It looks much more like a situation than a body of ideas. The phrase "typically Romantic" haunts this collection everywhere. Such a bald assertion about typology distracts from the evolution of the term "Romantic," and especially the polemic nature of its reformulation among the Germans over the period of their energetic collaboration in Jena and in the journal *Das Athenäum*. Probably the most useful common aspect of Romanticism's various endeavors lies in the way they situate themselves as projects, not in any defining convictions about ideology or style. Each of these projects, whether approached by single individuals or small groups of collaborators, undertook something of a struggle to redeem what they found to be an alarming decline in literary taste and an urgent requirement to restore literary language. That meant a programmatic awareness that they could properly address only a fraction of the reading population. Resistance from the rest would be integral to the situation.

William Wordsworth's preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* lays out his understanding of the "experiment" he and Coleridge undertook towards this end, but there he uses the word "romantic" in its then contemporary sense without any indication that it defined

or described the project. The essays in this collection all too often fail to recognize how the term Romantic, whether capitalized or in lower case, denotes only whatever it was that induced someone to adopt the name or to impose it on someone else. Criticism working from some general, simple meaning should long ago have fallen into disrepute. Ninety years ago, Walter Benjamin observed that the founding figures of German Romanticism, with their emphasis on reflection, aimed precisely at distance from anything "romantic" as it was understood then and still is today.

We know very well that not only do individual talents or specific collaborations in Romantic literary history show essential differences from others, but individual personalities change their ideas quite radically, yet by virtue of the situation, remain just as Romantic. The insistence on the coherence of the project of *Romantic Prose Fiction*, on the other hand, leads to a vanishing of distinctions and contradictions within the vast extent of the material covered. Virtually anything connected with Rousseau is Romantic, anything connected with the Middle Ages is Romantic, major works of the opponents of Romanticism may be Romantic. In Goethe's case, this inclusiveness does not restrict itself to youthful works like *Werther* but also extends to quite different texts, even *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (672). Something typically Romantic is supposed to resurge constantly through all this chaotic variety, permitting formulations about "archetypal Romantics" (241, 285). We read that Anne Radcliffe is "like many other Romantics" (185), though Wordsworth would have been horrified to find himself anything like a woman writing in a genre he called "frantic novels." We are told there is "a view of childhood [. . .] adopted by the Romantics" (185) as though this were something shared by Coleridge and Poe.

The position of Edgar Allan Poe amid all this confusion grows all the more revealing of the problem with the book in its entirety. It is true that Gillespie is particularly inclined to write about Poe as "typically Romantic," but he uses this provocative rhetorical twist as the means to bring out something of independent interest in the heritage of the detective story. Jean Smoot traces American Romanticism back to origins in Rousseau and Christian optimism, and on these grounds identifies Mark Twain with "this decidedly American [. . .] Romantic mindset" (580). Where does that leave Poe? Essay after essay drags him in as an American Romantic (along with J. Fenimore Cooper). The Transcendentalists (Emerson and Thoreau types) did embrace what they read of the European Romantics, but Poe was much more elusive in his relationship to such traditions—far more ironic than the most romantic of the Romantic ironists and, above all, a mighty foe of Nature, and thus wildly antagonistic to American Romanticism in that identity. All the serious commentary on him, going back to Baudelaire, notes the imperturbable control, the exacting scientific and engineering manipulation of his language and his themes, the technical intricacies that remove him so absolutely from the intoxication and rhapsodic illusions he takes as his subject matter, but in this book, over and over again that gets forgotten and the author is mistaken for his inventions and his constructions.

The editors specifically mention the important function of the index in such a book. Unfortunately one can quickly run into irritating deficiencies here too. All in all, it is hard to draw a direct correspondence between the value of this book and its price.

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