

Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel, & Bernard Dieterle (eds). *Romantic Prose Fiction*, vol. XXIII of *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 2008, 733 pp.

Elinor Shaffer & Edoardo Zuccato (eds). *The Reception of S. T. Coleridge in Europe*. Continuum, London, 2007, 403 pp.

In the history of European literature, Romanticism marks an extraordinary new departure, an outburst of unprecedented creativity, the range and significance of which we are still struggling to comprehend. *Romantic Prose Fiction* – the final volume in a subseries of five on Romanticism – offers a multifaceted approach to the phenomenon of Romanticism and to Romantic prose narratives in particular. A total of thirty-eight specialists have contributed to this volume. Rather than presenting a radically new view, each of these specialists charts ‘the state of the art’ in his or her field of study, thus providing an overview highly useful to students as well as to fellow Romanticists. What makes *Romantic Prose Fiction* stand out, however, is the comparative approach to which this volume, and the series as a whole, is committed. Though centring on the ‘golden triangle’ of German, English and French Romanticism, *Romantic Prose Fiction* explores the impact of Romanticism in Spain and Italy, in Eastern Europe and in Russia, as well as in Scandinavia (although, from the point of view of a Dane, Danish Romanticism does not quite get the attention it deserves).

*Romantic Prose Fiction* is divided into three parts. The first of these deals with

characteristic themes and topics. The second devotes itself to genres, forms and modes of discourse in Romantic narrative fiction. Finally, the third part discusses the legacy of Romantic fictional prose writings and their impact on writers and thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Part I opens with Gerhart Hoffmeister’s examination of the representation of the French Revolution in German, English and French prose fiction, followed by Bernard Dieterle’s discussion of the impact of Goethe’s *Werther* on the Romantics and of Wertherism as a literary historical phenomenon of the Romantic era. Having thus established the foundation of Romanticism in the French Revolution and, from a literary point of view, in the *Sturm und Drang* movement of the late eighteenth century, part I proceeds to explore the theme of art and the artist in Romantic literature. Gregory Maertz shows how the Romantics, building on the *Sturm und Drang* cult of the genius, cast the poet and artist as hero, sage, priest, visionary and privileged decipherer of nature’s meaning. Mihály Szedegey-Maszák discusses literary representations of non-literary art: music, painting, architecture. And finally Claudia Albert deals with musical motifs in Romantic prose literature, including fictional characters who are musicians and the attempt on the part of Romantic narration to achieve the reproduction of genuinely musical formal principles.

Nature is of course central to the Romantic enterprise. Wilhelm Graeber distinguishes three phases of development in Romantic representations of nature and landscape: first, the predilection for exotic landscapes and virgin wildernesses; second, the semiotics of nature in early German

Romanticism where natural objects, in accordance with the Romantic idea of 'Nature's secret ciphers', are represented as allegorical signs; and, finally, a third phase of realistically depicted landscapes associated with the construction of national cultural identities. Paola Giacomoni explores the aesthetics of the sublime in Romantic narration, with special reference to the new sensitivity that ascribes aesthetic value to mountain landscapes. André Lorant discusses the theme of wandering and the 'Wanderer' in Romantic prose fiction, encompassing literal wanderings as well as journeys into the self or towards the ideal realm of poetry. Including also Romantic versions of the theme of the Wandering Jew, Lorant looks forward to two chapters on Romantic explorations of the night-sides of existence. Ernst Grabovszki discusses the motif of the *Doppelgänger* as a means of raising the issue of identity. And Monika Schmitz-Emans examines versions of the madman in Romantic fiction, claiming that Romantic literature profits from psychological, medical, physical and philosophical discourses about insanity, and vice versa: that literature offers itself as a great laboratory for the exploration of madness, deviations and dreams.

Early Romanticism saw the rise of an image of childhood contrary to the ideas of the Enlightenment: childhood was no longer regarded as a preparation for adulthood, but emerged as an autonomous phase of intrinsic value. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer discusses versions of the Romantic image of the child and the continuous influence of the Romantic conception of childhood on children's (and adult) literature. The final two chapters of part I deal with the issue of woman. Michael Andermatt explores the motif of 'Artificial life and Romantic brides', with a special emphasis on Romantic versions of the Pygmalion myth where the body to be animated is no longer a marble statue, but a mechanical doll or an automaton, while Thomas Klinkert and

Weertje Willms discuss flesh-and-blood female characters in their chapter on gender and sexuality in Romantic prose fiction.

Part II is divided into two sections, the first of which deals with generic types and includes chapters on (sub)genres that came into being with the era of Romanticism as well as chapters on Romantic developments of existent generic types. To the former belong Markus Bernauer's presentation of the rise of the historical novel; Jörn Steigerwald's discussion of the fantastic tale which, according to Steigerwald, established itself as a new literary genre as the Romantics transgressed the limitations of the fairy tale in order to achieve the 'hesitation', characteristic of the fantastic, between two possible explanations; and Gerald Gillespie's chapter on the invention in high and late Romanticism of the detective story, a new genre that came into being with the rise of the modern city. Into the latter category fall Hendrik van Gorp's survey of the gothic novel; Santiago Rodriguez Guerrero-Strachan's discussion of the formation of modern short fiction; Sven Halse's study of the literary idyll in Germany, England and Scandinavia; and finally Manfred Engel's lucid examination of Romantic developments of the *Bildungsroman*. Engel here suggests a new term for the high Romantic version of this genre: the 'transcendental novel', of which Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is the prime example.

The second section of part II addresses the issues of modes of discourse and narrative structures. Fredrick Garber writes on boundaries and boundary crossing in Romantic narration and Monica Spiridon on Romantic fiction between homophony and polyphony. Remo Ceserani and Paolo Zanotti discuss the Romantic fragment as a means of conveying at the same time the impression of fragmentation and infinity. Sabine Roszbach explores narrative techniques typical of Romantic fiction such as mirroring, *mise en abyme* and involution

(but strangely enough leaves out the arabesque), while Dorothy Figueira investigates myth as a structuring force. Also included in this section are chapters on the Romantic novel and the verse *roman* (John Claiborne Isbell) and on the dialectic between historiography and historical fiction in the early nineteenth century (Virgil Nemoianu). Finally, Annette Paatz provides an overview of Romantic prose fiction in Spanish America.

The organization of part III is somewhat looser. Two chapters in this final (and shortest) part are devoted to the impact of Romanticism in Spain and Latin America (Jüri Talvet and José Richardo Chaves). Takayuki Yokota-Murakami writes on Romanticism in Japanese fiction, and Steven Sondrup on the Swedish Romantic C. J. L. Almquist and his collective novel *Tornrösens bok*. Jeanne J. Smoot discusses reactions to Romanticism in European and North American Realism and Naturalism; Joel Black explores two modernist offshoots of Romanticism – Symbolism and Surrealism – as well as the rebirth of Romantic irony in Post-modernism; and A. Owen Aldridge coins the term ‘ludic prose’ to delineate a tradition passing through Sterne, to Romanticism, and then to Modernism. Finally, Elaine Martin provides an overview of screen adaptations of Romantic works, from Méliès’s adaptation of Hoffmann (1900) to the present day.

The variety of issues and themes covered by *Romantic Prose Fiction* is quite impressive. My main objection to this volume, and in fact to the subseries as a whole, is editorial. *Romantic Prose Fiction* is preceded by *Romantic Irony*, *Romantic Drama*, *Romantic Poetry* and *Nonfictional Romantic Prose*. Given the Romantic endeavour to dissolve the boundaries among genres, to make prose poetic and to reconcile theory with literature, one may indeed query the decision to organize a series on Romanticism along generic lines. In the introduction the editors of the present volume address

this objection, only to dismiss it: generic crossovers do not abolish genre distinction as readers recognize them. This may well be true. But the fact is that the themes, modes and techniques presented in this volume do not respect generic distinctions, but cut across the boundaries between drama, poetry and prose, nonfictional as well as fictional. Several of the contributions to this volume would have benefited greatly from being able to include poetic, dramatic or nonfictional works. This applies to the chapters in part I in particular. It is a major restriction to write on mountain landscape and not be able to include Shelley’s ‘Mont Blanc’; on the image of the child without including Wordsworth’s *Prelude* or his Lucy poems; on dreams and dreaming and to have to leave out of account Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’; on the myth of Prometheus and not include Shelley’s verse drama *Prometheus Unbound*; and so on. As suggested by this list, the generic principle does in fact work counter to the comparatist intention, giving preference to German Romanticism over English Romanticism. A quick glance at the comprehensive (and very useful) index shows that E. T. A. Hoffmann is by far the author most frequently discussed in this volume.

Whereas anyone concerned with Romanticism will find something of interest in *Romantic Prose Fiction*, *The Reception of S. T. Coleridge in Europe* targets an audience of specialists. The book covers translations of Coleridge’s poetical, critical and philosophical writings into European languages (Europe in this context is largely synonymous with the Continent); assessments of his work in terms of reviews as well as critical and biographical studies; the influence of Coleridge on poets and thinkers; and finally special editions that have furthered the dissemination of his work – such as the 1876 edition of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* featuring Gustave Doré’s celebrated illustrations. Seamus Perry outlines Coleridge’s English afterlife up to the

1930s. Michael John Kooy deals with the early reception in France, showing that Coleridge's poetry from the 1820s and onwards was a widely acknowledged presence in French culture and a major influence on Baudelaire and the French Symbolists. Also pertaining to the reception of Coleridge in France, Gilles Soubigou discusses Doré's illustrations. Given the fact that Coleridge as a critic and a philosopher borrowed extensively from German sources, his reception in Germany merits special attention. Frederick Burwick studies the reception to the Second World War (touching in passing on Brandes's *Hovedstromninger*), while Hans Werner Breunig charts the predominantly academic interest in Coleridge in German-speaking countries after 1945 – an interest that not surprisingly centres on Coleridge's reception of German thinkers. Jorge Bastos da Silva considers the very late reception of Coleridge in Portugal (where a full translation of a piece by Coleridge was not published until 1998), and M. Eugenia Perojo Arronte discusses in

two separate chapters the reception in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spain. Likewise two chapters are devoted to the Italian reception: Edoardo Zuccato deals with translations into Italian of Coleridge's poetry and its influence on Italian poets and authors such as Primo Levi, while Franco Nasi considers translations of his prose works and the surprisingly large body of academic studies by Italian scholars. The final three chapters are devoted to Coleridge's reception in Czech culture (Martin Procházka), in Poland (Monika Coghen), and in Russia (Elena Volkova). A comprehensive timeline, compiled by Paul Barnaby, and an equally comprehensive bibliography contribute to making this volume a tool of great value to the Coleridge scholar or the comparatist. One might have wished for an up-to-date survey of the English-language reception, but given the amount of work on Coleridge this would no doubt have exceeded the limits laid down for the present project.

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