
Abstracts

Beth Newman, "The Situation of the Looker-On": Gender, Narration, and Gaze in *Wuthering Heights* 1029

In its frequent attention to visual acts, *Wuthering Heights* explores the sexual politics of the gaze. Not only does Brontë's novel make the gaze important thematically (as both a psychosexual phenomenon and a means of surveillance), it also suggests that narration itself is dependent on and produced by a gaze. But through its treatment of its two narrators and of Hareton and the second Catherine as gazing subjects, the novel suggests that there are limits to the power of the gaze to objectify, appropriate, and control. Thus *Wuthering Heights* anticipates questions that feminist theory has been asking about a possible "female gaze" and provides a feminist context for thinking about the visual metaphors pervading post-Jamesian theories of the novel. (BN)

Andrew Miller, *Vanity Fair* through Plate Glass 1042

Material goods in William Thackeray's work constantly circulate and incessantly dispirit, eliciting and frustrating the desires of characters. While these commodities present themselves as metonyms of enduring fulfillment and utopian pleasure, the images of contentment they provide are repeatedly undermined. This pattern, derived from Thackeray's own economic experience of loss, represents not a private obsession but the effects of the Victorian economy working through Thackeray's biography and his literary products. *Vanity Fair*, which represents this pattern most fully, derives its narrative energy from its characters' desires, and it suffers, as a result, an analogous disenchantment: the narrative itself, this essay argues, takes the form of the commodities Thackeray describes, and writer and reader experience the text in the way that the characters experience commodities. (AM)

U. C. Knoepfelmacher, Hardy Ruins: Female Spaces and Male Designs 1055

Whereas Hardy's novels follow the conventions by which male mansions become domesticated by female occupants, his poetry depicts the far more precarious fate of female enclosures. Like Wordsworth, Hardy associates a female place of origin with death. His youthful poem "Domicilium," in which a mediator helps her grandson retreat into a lost natural habitat, is soon subverted by "Heiress and Architect," which gives an ironic twist to the yoking of houses, femininity, and death found in nineteenth-century poetry. Desire becomes paramount again in *Satires of Circumstance* and *Moments of Vision*, where Hardy recalls his wife in various abodes to fill his home with remembered sound and movement. Built on a Bachelardian "dream-memory" of his earliest home and hence associated with a mother's body, Hardy's poetry dramatizes his sense of eviction from a primal refuge even when re-creating odd structures like the mother hull of the sunken *Titanic*. (UCK)

Bruce Thomas Boehrer, Renaissance Overeating: The Sad Case of Ben Jonson 1071

Jonson's relations to the supper table mirror his relations to royal authority. Thus, while his work promotes gastronomic moderation, stoic restraint, temperance, and the plain style, he repeatedly seeks to assimilate those virtues to the social context of the Stuart court, where conspicuous consumption and intemperate behavior reign supreme. In this untenable situation, forced to reconcile contradictory values that typify discrete social circumstances, Jonson generally proceeds by renaming conspicuous consumption temperance and vice versa. This stratagem re-creates him in the image of a court whose abuses he theoretically rejects, and in poems like "Inviting a Friend to Supper" and "To Penshurst," he emerges as an absolutist figure who sacrifices his

stoicism for courtly success. Jonson becomes the embodiment of literary moderation, yet he weighs 280 pounds. (BTB)

Raymond F. Hilliard, *Clarissa* and Ritual Cannibalism 1083

Lurid eighteenth-century accounts of sacrificial cannibalism in West Africa and other parts of the globe color Richardson's language and imagery in his delineation of *Clarissa's* highly ritualized persecution and death. Explaining cannibalism as a rudimentary cultural institution that symbolically expresses a collective psychic economy dominated by the preoedipal mother imago, modern anthropological theory shows that Richardson's novel represents this practice as the nexus between the personal (or intrapsychic) and the social (or cultural), between the text's twin obsessions with the preoedipal mother and orality and with social aggression directed mainly, but not exclusively, against women. As in actual cannibal cultures, where a preoccupation with nursing and weaning results in a pervasive oral metaphorization of thought and action, in *Clarissa* the ritual killing and eating of victims is the paradigmatic gesture underlying all major forms of social action, including the protracted "tearing in pieces" of the scapegoat heroine by relentless "blame." (RFH)

Clayton Koelb, Incorporating the Text: Kleist's "Michael Kohlhaas" 1098

Kleist's "Kohlhaas," though much admired, is also much criticized for the "subplot" concerning the gypsy woman and her prophecy. Many readers believe that Kleist spoiled his story by introducing material that is not germane to the plot's central concern. Such criticism is based on the assumption that the novella initially revolves around Kohlhaas's horses but then swerves to focus on the slip of paper containing the gypsy's prophecy. But the assumption is incorrect. The same issue is central at the beginning and at the end: the possession and interpretation of powerful documents. Even the horses themselves turn out, when examined carefully, to be stand-ins for missing papers. The prophecy material is no swerve, for it provides Kohlhaas with a document he can use to counter the power of another document (the *Paßschein*) that has been withheld from him. When Kohlhaas swallows the gypsy's paper, he incorporates the mysterious power that it represents. Kohlhaas thus redeems himself by means of a piece of writing just as Kleist hoped to redeem himself in the eyes of his Prussian family by producing texts like "Michael Kohlhaas." (CK)

Debra A. Castillo, Coetzee's *Dusklands*: The Mythic *Punctum* 1108

The novels of the South African writer J. M. Coetzee are frequently criticized for their lack of specific application to the social and political concerns of his country. In *Dusklands*, the first and least studied of these texts, the author makes an implicit response to the controversial and weakly defined question of the political value of literary works in postcolonialist discourse. For Coetzee, the inherently masculinist, aggressively terrorist underpinnings of the very concept of value urgently require demystifying; for the purposes of this paper, Roland Barthes's distinction between *studium* and *punctum* provides the analytic key. (DAC)
