

Summaries

Suzan van Dijk

Women authors before 1900: the international context

This article describes an on-line database which has been created to facilitate research into the (international) connections between female authors, particularly into the connections between these women, and between their works. Too often women authors are situated in the global context of the literary field. This tool is supposed to permit large-scale investigation of influences exerted by

women on their female readers, and of course on other female authors (without excluding comparisons to be made to the 'male' reception of the works). The possibilities are illustrated by examples, concerning the Dutch Meynarda Verboom (17th century), the French Jeanne Leprince de Beaumont (18th century) and the world-famous George Sand (19th century).

Elke D'hoker

'Those hopelessly physical beings'

Representations of women in the postmodern work of John Banville

This article investigates the representation of female figures in the works of the Irish author John Banville. A close reading of some exemplary novels shows how women in Banville's works tend to appear in complementary pairs, in which the stereotypical representation of woman as angel or femme fatale can easily be recognised. This oppositional representation is related to the splitting of the mother figure as described in psychoanalysis (cf. the work of Melanie Klein). In the thematic context of the novels, this splitting also ties in with the fear of Banville's protagonists for all forms of physicality and mortality, which, as Sarah Kofman

has shown, can be contained precisely by the idealisation of women as angels and the corresponding demonisation of the fallen women or whore. A final part tries to determine in how far the novels are self-reflexively aware of this stereotyping or try to undermine it through exaggeration or irony. Even though self-reflexive irony is a pervasive feature of the novels, the insistent and often uncritical reproduction of these female figures suggests that the splitting of female figures in angel and femme fatale is more deeply ingrained in Banville's oeuvre than its postmodern features would lead us to expect.

Anke Gilleir

'Mit frauenzimmerlich kunstloser Hand'

Authorship and masculinity in the historiography of nineteenth century German literature

According to the view which Thomas Carlyle forwarded in his 1840 lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, historical progress - notably in literary history - is only due to great individuals, both male and masculine. A similarly gendered view on the literary past was developed by the 'founding fathers' of the German literary historiography during the second half of the nineteenth century. Even before the study of German language and literature was established at university as part of the academic research, the exclusion of women was already obvious.

Women were not part of the initially informal inner circle of linguists and historians and neither were women writers included in the canon formation which the early literary historians Georg Gervinus and Wilhelm Scherer undertook in their eclectic historical works. Curiously enough, also the more democratic views on literary history, which were developed as a reaction against the former approach of history, did not transcend the traditional view that women writers could not meet the - heroic- standards of creativity and learning.

Elke Brems

Of minor importance?

Stephanie Vetter in Flemish literature

Stephanie Vetter is a forgotten novelist in Dutch literary history of the mid-twentieth century. In this article I set out to answer the following questions: why was Vetter not included in the canon; what was the conceptualisation of her authorship; and what were the gender norms and values operating in the contemporary literary field in Flanders. The quality of Vetter's work was variable, but certainly good enough not to be discarded immediately. A first problem, however, was that she was the wife of the Flemish novelist Ernest Claes, whose reputation strongly determined the reception of Vetter's work, however different. Consequently, she always played the second fiddle to her famous husband. Secondly, Vetter was received as a 'female author' and thus had

to cope with a double critical standard. Furthermore, Vetter's literary views and the female figures in her work suggest that she had largely internalised the reigning gender views. The label of 'female author' which Vetter both received from literary critics and applied to herself, entailed that her work did not adhere to the dominant literary norm determining canonisation. The author and her work were isolated and, hence, blocked from entering canonical literary history. Only a literary history which takes into account the rich variety of literary norms and practices co-existing at a given time, would be able to accommodate novelists like Vetter who were shy of public manifestation and whose work was little innovative.

Judith Franco

To be or to be had

Negotiating between male models and female subjectivity in Catherine Breillat's films Romance and A ma soeur!

Throughout her career, which spans twenty years, the controversial French writer and filmmaker Catherine Breillat has negotiated between male paradigms and the expression of female desire and subjectivity. By means of a close analysis of two case studies, *Romance* and *A ma soeur!*, an attempt is made to reveal the narrative and textual strategies at work in Breillat's sexually explicit and autobiographically inspired film texts. Catherine Breillat is firmly rooted in the French *auteur* tradition

that defines femininity in terms of a normative masochistic sexuality. Yet, these patriarchal representations are challenged by the author's feminist-inspired vision that manifests itself in the privileged, empowering status of transgressive heroines/alter egos. They overcome their (culturally imposed) masochistic destiny and, through the use of real time and the foregrounding of the female gaze and voice, explore the complexity of female desire and identity and critique machismo and misogyny.

Marieke Borren

Feminism, power and the neo-liberal system

Argument for a feminist criticism on the late-modern consumption society

In this article, feminist theory - especially Judith Butler's theory on power - is applied to one of the most pressing problems in our era of economic globalisation, i.e. consumerism, in order both to gain insights in its complex dynamics and to explore adequate and fruitful modes of resistance against the dominance of the neo-liberal paradigm. In particular, the so-called 'anti-globalisation movement', as the most recent and interesting activist movement against this dominance, could benefit from these insights. Threatening to reduce subjects to consumers, the problem of consumerism could be approached against the background of relationship of power between subject and system. In addressing this relationship, it is argued, conventional critical determinist and liberal positions fail both to grasp the complex

dynamics between subject and system and to offer fruitful possibilities of resistance against it. The one attaching the primacy of power to the system, the other to the subject, this antagonism inevitably leads up to a deadlock. By showing the subject's 'passionate attachment' to the system and conceptualising resistance as subversion through processes of repetition, implying shifting meanings, Butler allows ambiguities to enter the political stage. In this, the deadlock implied in the antagonism of liberal and determinist critiques of consumerism is deconstructed simultaneously. 'Culture jamming' offers an interesting example of this, by exploiting rather than striving to reduce ambiguities and as such, it is argued, could be a source of inspiration for the anti-globalisation movement at large.