

des so genannten „Urfaust“ – als Entdeckung in Goethes Nachlass ausgibt, was allerdings durch die Beibehaltung in Stettenheims Zeitschrift „Das humoristische Deutschland“ deutlich genug als Fiktion des Herausgebers kenntlich gemacht wird (vgl. 161–165).

Wie schon bei der frühen „Faust“-Kontrafaktur werden die beiden „Faust“-Parodien von 1862 und 1885 von Reck sorgfältig textanalytisch erschlossen – unter anderem durch einen Vergleich der Fassungen – und umsichtig in ihren zeitgeschichtlichen Kontext gestellt. Erneut ist auf die literarische Spiel- und Geselligkeitskultur in Alt-Württemberg zu verweisen, hinzukommt die Goethe-Rezeption im Allgemeinen und die – nach Vischers satirischer Typologie – zwischen Sinn- und Stoffhuberei schwankende „Faust“-Philologie im Besonderen. Den Parodie-Begriff verwendet Reck dem 19. Jahrhundert angemessen in einem weiteren Sinn; er weigert sich mit Recht, Gattungsdifferenzierungen der letzten Jahre auf sein historisches Objekt zurück zu übertragen. Trotzdem bleibt er mit seiner pragmatischen Lösung auf der Ebene einer gemäßigt modernen Beschreibungssprache, denn Vischer selbst, der sich in der Tradition eines Aristophanes und Fischart sah, hat den Parodie-Begriff für seine „Faust“-Texte nie verwendet, er sprach allenfalls von „Satire“ und „Posse“. Mit den zeitgenössischen Parodien etwa auf Schillers Balladen hat Vischer in der Tat nichts gemeinsam, neben den komischen Elementen bleibt bei ihm das kritisch-didaktische Korrektiv des engagierten Ästhetikers stets wirksam.

Als Ergänzung zu der gründlich gearbeiteten Studie, die im Editionsteil auch alle für die „Faust“-Projekte relevanten Briefe von und an Vischer bringt (vgl. 269–372), wünscht man sich neben einem Namenregister vor allem eine synoptische chronologische Übersicht über Vischers literarische und diskursive Auseinandersetzung mit Goethes „Faust“. Die gebotene Übersicht über Vischers „Faust“-Vorlesungen ist hier nur ein Anfang (vgl. 377–380), der entsprechende Teil in der Bibliographie ist kein Ersatz dafür (vgl. 177–181). Dort wird sinnvollerweise zwischen wissenschaftlichen und parodistischen Texten unterschieden, aber die Auflistung bleibt unübersichtlich, weil sie nicht chronologisch angeordnet ist, zwangsläufig Lücken aufweist (z. B. für die gerade edierte Handschrift von „Christians Schmerz und seine Heilung“) und in einem Fall auch eine falsche Zuweisung erfolgt.⁶

Reck arbeitet akribisch die Forschungsliteratur bis zur Drucklegung seines Buches auf. Zum Teil noch von ihm notierte Nachträge lohnen die Lektüre nicht. Um so relevanter dürfte Ajouris vorzügliche Dissertation zu Vischers und Kellers Romanen sein, die dazu anregen könnte, Vischers „Faust“-Kritik, in der er sich von dem ambivalenten Genietyp Faust ebenso fasziniert zeigt wie von den Widersprüchen und dem Fragmentcharakter des Textes, in Beziehung zu Vischers Roman „Auch einer“ (1878) zu setzen, der sich allen harmonisierenden Tendenzen des Realismus versagt.⁷

München

Volker Hoffmann

Patrick Greaney: Untimely Beggar. Poverty and Power from Baudelaire to Benjamin,
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London 2008.

It is impossible to conceive the reality of poverty without taking recourse to a metaphorical-representational construct. Especially in ideas like “the poor in spirit” or “impoverished language,” the metaphorical element is unmistakable. Such conceptions generate uncertainty

⁶ „Pro domo“ aus den „Kritischen Gängen“ (Anm. 5) gehört zu den wissenschaftlichen, nicht zu den parodistischen Texten (180).

⁷ Philip Ajouri: Erzählen nach Darwin. Die Krise der Teleologie im literarischen Realismus. Friedrich Theodor Vischer und Gottfried Keller, Berlin, New York 2007, S. 277.

as to what we actually mean by poverty, and this fundamental ambiguity tends – paradoxically or ironically or unwittingly – in the direction of richness and surplus. Poverty is a “rich” metaphor, but at the same time every metaphorical usage is uncomfortable insofar as it seems to come at the expense of “real” poverty. This tension, arguably, is what has made poverty so productive in literary, theological and political traditions. Patrick Greaney’s “Untimely Beggar” unfolds this tension within European modernist poetics, which for him represents a limit case for the more general problem of poverty and representation, which permits insights that have escaped other discourses.

As a topic or theme, poverty allows for a very contemporary approach to a wide range of inherited theoretical problems. The work of Giorgio Agamben appears in this regard as an unavoidable catalyst to Greaney’s investigation, particularly with respect to literary representations of poverty. Without directly addressing poverty as a theme or problem, Agamben’s work – thinking of figures such as the “Muselmann” in “Remnants of Auschwitz” or the patient artificially kept alive on life-support in “Homo Sacer” – systematically presents limit-figures of poverty. In the name of a theory of potentiality, Agamben focuses on representations of extreme privation, inaction, non-being, disempowerment, refusal and passivity. The somewhat troubling result of this undertaking is a series of representatives and protagonists, in effect metaphors, images deployed as illustrations of a theoretical *potentiality*, a quasi-transcendental “poverty.”

Patrick Greaney summarizes his own thesis as follows:

In the place of communicative speech that would relate the concerns of an already existing group of poor people, something else emerges that is powerful without conveying the voices of the poor or any other constituted group. [...] The thematic representation of the poor as an actual individual or group characterized by socioeconomic misery alternates with nonrepresentative moments in which literary language interrupts its presentation of what is and reduces itself to the potential for representation. (xv)

There is no way, as Greaney argues, to take poverty completely literally. Especially if the literalism of money (which, following Marx, is only a metaphor for labor) is discounted, and if the poor also include many who have no intention of selling their labor, then wealth and poverty can only be abstract and fundamentally figural concepts. Money, for all its appearance of empirical measure, is the essence of a representational-symbolic order, and poverty in this sense is a figure of the lack of representation, a representation of unrepresentability.

The case for poverty’s irreducibly metaphoric base is not difficult to make, and, as Greaney also emphasizes, the idea of poverty always transcends a purely socioeconomic conception. Whether one thinks of Walter Benjamin’s “Armut und Erfahrung”, Martin Heidegger’s claim that animals are “weltarm”, Heimito von Doderer’s suspicion that modernity is a “Zeitalter geminderter Wirklichkeit”, or Carl Schmitt’s concept of “Repräsentation” (kept alive and unsuccessfully negated by Habermas), it is clear that the idea of poverty is capable of accessing a deeper ontological condition than the mere lack of money. The underlying claim in all of these examples is that poverty does not designate a single, namable and demonstrably excluded group or class, but that it is something like a determining factor for a whole representational economy – a system of representation which, according to Schmitt, by definition cannot produce a poor representation of poverty. In his “Verfassungslehre” he writes: “etwas Totes, etwas Minderwertiges oder Wertloses, etwas Niedriges kann nicht repräsentiert werden. Ihm fehlt die gesteigerte Art Sein, die einer Heraushebung in das öffentliche Sein, einer Existenz fähig ist. Worte wie Größe, Hoheit, Majestät, Ruhm, Würde und

Ehre suchen diese Besonderheit repräsentationsfähigen Seins zu treffen.”¹ In “Römischer Katholizismus und Politische Form”, Schmitt further argues (and he is not alone, as Greaney’s chapter on Benjamin shows) that the modern conception of privacy and a private sphere also reflect a form of privation. If, as Greaney proposes, a poverty of representation (“impoverished language”) begins to displace the representation of poverty (precisely in the moment of the latter’s impossibility), then this shift is able to provide a definitive impetus to the project of literary modernity. The suspicion of a latent or dawning universal poverty, not limited to Schmitt, Benjamin or Doderer, becomes plausible in light of a history of representations, while poverty remains representable only in its opposite: “Repräsentation”.

The condensed argument of all of Greaney’s chapters – Marx and Foucault, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Nietzsche, Rilke’s “Buch der Armut und des Todes”, Rilke’s „Malte”, and Benjamin and Brecht – is the unrepresentability of poverty. Greaney does not make this general point (which I am perhaps overstating) in a totalizing or excessively systematic way that always produces the same results through the same assumptions. Instead he uncovers compatible results without forcing them all through a single paradigm. As the subtitle indicates, “Untimely Beggar” includes a historical arc, which focuses, as the title implies, on the anachronicity of the figure of the beggar as a representative of modern – industrial and post-industrial – poverty. The inadequacy of this representation reflects upon its unrepresentable base. Rilke, the only author who is the subject of two chapters, is arguably the pivot-point of this narrative, and for this reason it would be possible to read “Untimely Beggar” as a covert Rilke-monograph.

Given Greaney’s consistent claim that poverty is always relational and figural – even and especially when literature tries to engage the reality of poverty – his choice of texts and authors may still hold some surprises, particularly in the degree to which his approach to poverty focuses on problems of poetics. Greaney largely leaves readers to reach their own conclusions about how Büchner’s “Woyzeck”, Grillparzer’s “Der arme Spielmann”, Stifter’s “Kalkstein”, the novels of Dostoyevsky, Dickens, Hardy or Hamsun – to name only a few – might fit into this picture. Greaney’s decision pays off in the focus and continuity of a tradition that is rearticulated in terms of its ongoing political and historical relevance, its still contemporary untimeliness. The specifically *narrative* pathos of abjection is thereby mostly excluded: Several possible justifications, indirectly presented in “Untimely Beggar”, are conceivable here, but the conspicuous absence of the narrative tradition may also be read as a productive openness that is at least worth mentioning.

The construction of “Untimely Beggar” reflects the conflicting imperatives of literary scholarship, especially in the form of the book. The desire to reach multiple readerships and specialized sub-disciplines necessitates layering. A general theoretical problem, a theme or a thematic trace – such as poverty – dictates the larger architectonics, while the individual chapters provide contour and specific articulation. The challenge of this format is to keep the individual readings interesting while maintaining continuity and without becoming repetitive; each chapter is free-standing in its contribution to the pertinent secondary literatures. Ideally, this advances the specialized domains by expanding their perspectives and cross-pollinating them with other discourses. The more generally theoretical claims benefit, on the other hand, from localized treatments that may reveal unexpected continuities or contrasts. Stylistic and methodological heterogeneity inevitably persist, however, to the advantage and disadvantage of an interdisciplinary field: The residual virtuosity of interpretation pursues different ends than the virtuosity of argumentation; the aesthetic moment of

¹ Jürgen Habermas: Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, Darmstadt, Neuwied 1962, p. 20.

reading is never entirely comfortable with the more instrumental rationales of theoretical analysis. The individual readings have to serve the larger argument, but at the same time the argument has to serve the readings and, by extension, cause the primary texts to shine. Given this framework (more or less the norm of current literary scholarship), Greaney's emphasis falls – properly in my view – on the individual readings, even if, at the theoretical level, some repetitiveness is unavoidable.

In closing, therefore, I would propose a sharpening of „Untimely Beggar's“ argumentative point and possible *raison d'être*: Greaney rethinks a dominant conception of the value and function of representation. This conception still thinks that the problem of poverty – the lowest common denominator of all ills – can be solved if abjection is “given a face” and brought into the light of representation. This representational moment, the “aestheticization of poverty” of which Rilke is (in Greaney's view falsely) accused, can only represent poverty as potential glory. But the poverty we see is never its “truth,” and the poverty we undergo, even vicariously, may be more unnameable than that of any “poster child,” whose depiction, itself a transfiguration, also aims at translation and transformation through the saving power of money. If sheer potentiality divorced from realization (Agamben) devolves into a series of exemplary representatives to such a degree that one may suspect an excessively representational approach to the problem of unrepresentability, then Greaney strongly reasserts the unrepresentability that necessarily accompanies potentiality. Life sustained by intravenous and feeding tube gives a more contemporary appeal to the “untimely beggar,” but such new representatives of new poverty do not alter the underlying political-representational impasses. What Greaney proposes, by contrast, following Benjamin, is an *experience* of poverty and a poverty *of experience* that could be the starting point for new potentials that would not be recuperated or opened up to the false promise of redemption in closed emblematic forms.

New Haven

Kirk Wetters

Matthias Weichelt: *Gewaltsame Horizontbildungen: Max Kommerells lyriktheoretischer Ansatz und die Krisen der Moderne*, Winter 2006, Heidelberg.

Weichelt begins his study on Max Kommerell with an understandable gesture: with an appeal to authority. Ever since Giorgio Agamben called Kommerell ‘the greatest German critic after Benjamin’ and ‘perhaps the last great personality from between the two wars to be discovered’, it is hard to write an essay, much less a book-length study on Kommerell without alluding to or citing these words from 1991. Such a seal of approval seems necessary, because Kommerell does occupy a rather unique position in literary studies. Weichelt rightly calls him “den präsent gebliebenen Unbekannten” (9), the epitome of a critic who never really ‘makes it’, but also never fades away. For some, Kommerell is “zu konservativ”, for others “zu konventionell” or even “zu irritierend und eigenwillig” (11) – and yet a slow, steady reception continues to this day, often lead by some of the most prominent scholars in the field. Nevertheless, wide popularity on par with, say, Benjamin doesn't seem to be Kommerell's fate. This isn't to say that Kommerell hasn't received renewed interest from different corners of literary scholarship since Agamben's dictum and particularly through the attention he drew to Kommerell's notion of “Gebärde”, but it is probably a bit early or optimistic to claim that we are witnessing “den Beginn einer eigenen Kommerell-Forschung” (11). If this does occur, however, Weichelt's study will certainly aid its development and belong to its beginnings, since he addresses what has surprisingly received scant attention in Kommerell scholarship: the significance of lyric poetry and particularly the last