
Misreading Shelley, Misreading Theory: Deconstruction, Media, and Materiality

Christian Huck

published in: Theory Matters. The Place of Theory in Literary and Cultural Studies Today, ed. Martin Middeke, Christopher Reinfandt. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 49-63

Misreading Shelley, Misreading Theory: Deconstruction, Media, and Materiality

Christian Huck

THE TRIUMPH OF THEORY

In 1986, J. Hillis Miller was asked to give the Presidential Address at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association (MLA). Here, Miller first proclaimed the “Triumph of Theory” that has preoccupied English studies ever since—despite the fact that Stanley Fish, Walter Benn Michaels, and others had only recently declared theory to be dead on the pages of the *Critical Inquiry*.

What theory, or “Theory” or “high theory”, exactly is (or was), however, was never quite clear in these debates. Jonathan Culler’s famous ‘unsatisfactory definition’ is as good as anyone’s and should serve as a starting point:

[W]ritings from outside the field of literary studies have been taken up by people in literary studies because their analyses of language, or mind, or history, or culture, offer new and persuasive accounts of textual and cultural matters [...]. The genre of “theory” includes works of anthropology, art history, film studies, gender studies, linguistics, philosophy, political theory, psychoanalysis, science studies, social and intellectual history, and sociology. (Culler 3–4)

C. Huck (✉)
University of Kiel, Germany

Most importantly, Culler highlights the fact that theories become 'theory' only when they are taken out of their original context: 'The works in question are tied to arguments in these fields, but they become "theory" because their visions or arguments have been suggestive or productive for people who are not studying those disciplines.' (Culler 3-4)

A closer look at Miller's speech shows that the 'Triumph of Theory' is an ambivalent matter: 'The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading, and the Question of the Material Base', as the full title reads, mentions also the possible casualties of such a triumph (see Miller 1987, 81-91). The aim of this chapter is to see whether these casualties can still be recuperated to, on a more ambitious level, suggest ways of doing (English) Literary and Cultural Studies after Theory.

THE TRIUMPH OF LANGUAGE

If there is an official beginning to the "Triumph of Theory", it is most probably the publication of *Deconstruction and Criticism*, co-authored by Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller in 1979.¹ The back cover of a recent re-edition calls the book no less than 'a ground-breaking work that introduced Deconstruction to the Western world' (Bloom et al.). The five essays, as the original preface reveals, were originally intended to concentrate on English Romanticism and, especially, the poetry of Shelley. Although this plan was later abandoned, the presence of Shelley, and of one poem specifically, is still very much noticeable within the book. The three 'boa-deconstructionists' (Hartman ix), as the preface calls Derrida, de Man, and Miller, concentrate on Shelley's final, unfinished poem 'The Triumph of Life'. Bloom and Hartman, on the other hand, 'barely deconstructionists' (Hartman ix), as the preface declares, mention Shelley only once each, focusing instead on Keats and Wordsworth. Miller returned to Shelley's 'Triumph of Life' in his 1985 book *The Linguistic Moment*.² Reviewing this ongoing engagement of Miller with Shelley, and 'The Triumph of Life' especially, it seems not too far-fetched to suggest that Miller was thinking of the title of Shelley's poem when he declared the 'Triumph of Theory' in 1986—even though he does not even mention Shelley in his speech.

So what is it about "The Triumph of Life" that makes possible the "Triumph of Theory", and deconstruction, the mother of all "Theory", in particular? As Christoph Bode and others have shown, the affinity of deconstruction for Romanticism is no coincidence, their common denominator being the idea that language is the medium of thought (see Bode

131–59). While the early Romantics might still have hoped to use the productivity of language to go beyond language, at least since ‘the publication of *Deconstruction and Criticism*’, as Tillotama Rajan has remarked, ‘the [Triumph of Life] has become a synecdoche for the self-effacement of language’ (Rajan 351). Welcome to the prison-house of language where all that is solid melts into thin air.

According to the famous words in de Man’s essay ‘Shelley Disfigured’, we should ‘understand the shape [= the ‘master trope’ of the poem] to be the figure for the figurality of all signification’. Language, the poem apparently shows, is rhetorical or nothing: ‘It follows that the figure is not naturally given or produced but that it is posited by an arbitrary act of language.’ For de Man as much as for Miller, Shelley’s poem performs and presents the modus operandi of language as such: ‘The positing power of language is both entirely arbitrary, in having a strength that cannot be reduced to necessity, and entirely inexorable in that there is no alternative to it.’ (de Man 62–3) Language, de Man and Miller conclude, is both absolute and arbitrary: for them, there is, indeed, “nothing beyond the text”, as the infamous Derridean slogan goes, and the text cannot help but to reveal the ‘free play [of the signifier] in relation to its signifying function’ (de Man 60).

For Miller, Shelley appears as an arch-deconstructor, poetically revealing an insight that theorists were able to grasp only more than a century later: ‘[The] act of unveiling recurs as a basic trope throughout the poem. Perhaps it is the most fundamental trope or turning. The unveiling is also simultaneously a reveiling. One mask is dropped to reveal another mask behind it.’ (Miller 1985, 140) ‘Mask after mask fell from the countenance/ And form of all’, Shelley wrote (ll. 536–7).³ And Miller (1985, 141) concludes, somewhat apodictically: ‘To appear is to appear as language.’ The “Triumph of Theory”, here, becomes a triumph of language—over reality, or rather: as reality.

THE TRIUMPH OF READING

The ineluctable nature of language is central to Miller’s presidential address as well. Consequently, for him, ‘the future of literary studies depends on maintaining and developing that rhetorical reading which today is most commonly called “deconstruction”’ (Miller 1987, 289). Only if literary scholars follow the path of deconstruction, can they circumnavigate the pitfalls of idealism and materialism that apparently await those on both sides of the political landscape. ‘Both the right and the left are united,’ Miller claims, ‘in their instinctive or irrational opposition to an illocution-

ary or positional theory of language, the right from the vantage point of an aesthetic view of literature and in the name of humanistic values, the left from the vantage point of a commitment to history and the material base.' (Miller 1987, 284) While the right hopes to keep up ideal values, the left apparently sees such ideals as a necessary consequence of a material base, that is, as its determinate superstructure. While the right ignores the words on the page and looks straight for ideas, all the left apparently sees is society, history, materiality. Both ignore, Miller claims, that it is language which constitutes both ideas and history. "Rhetorical reading", Miller suggests, is the remedy against such ills.

To ignore the powers of language, Miller claims, undermines every liberating project:

If you oppose theory from the so-called left, I say you should make common cause with those who practice a rhetorical study of literature [...]. Your commitment to history, to society, to an exploration of the material base of literature, of its economic conditions, its institutions, the realities of class and gender distinctions that underlie literature—this commitment will inevitably fall into the hands of those with antithetical positions to yours as long as you hold to an unexamined ideology of the material base. (Miller 1987, 290–1)

Trying to look for a world beyond language, Miller suggests, is as naïve as it is futile. Instead, for Miller, reading for the rhetorical, topological, performative, and positional dimensions of language should be the central task of literary studies, even for a Marxist. Only by following the path of "Theory" can the liberators be liberated, Miller informs the "so-called left": "Deconstruction" is the current name for the multiple and heterogeneous strategies of overturning and displacement that will liberate your own enterprise from what disables... it.' (Miller 1987, 291)

The logic that de Man and Miller apparently deduce from reading Shelley's poem claims that language is everything, and everything language; even "ideas" and "materiality" are mere products of language. 'The Triumph of Life', de Man claims, represents 'the undoing of the representational and iconic function of figuration by the play of the signifier' (de Man 61). Only by deconstructing the constructions of language, only by revealing the world-making powers of language, Miller claims, can the world be unmade and made anew. And indeed, many a project in gender, postcolonial, and so on "literary" studies seems to have followed this hint:

the amount of theses and articles on "gender/race/class", or later: "age/ability/sexual orientation", in author x/y/z is legend.

"Reading" became the central method of all so-called critical studies, undoing the linguistic constructions of gender, race, class (and so on) their *raison d'être*. If the world is made by language, it is also where we have to change it. For English studies such an understanding of the linguistic turn must have been like winning the jackpot: now you could go on doing what literary studies is supposed to be doing, reading, that is, and at the same time you could engage with all these important emancipatory projects, liberating the unfree from the yoke of language. However, books about *Bodies that Matter*, about *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, about *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* and many other "things" came to shake the belief in pure signification, and with it the bounds of English Studies.

THEORETICAL DOUBTS

As we know today, a naïve understanding of deconstruction and cultural/social/linguistic constructivism has long been refuted. As Werner Hamacher has shown in the late 1980s, an insistence on the figurality of all language could do nothing else but undo itself:

If the pathos of defiguration were actually the determining trait in the structure of literary texts, then paradoxically, the reading that would correspond to its metonymic movement would be its metaphor. The text and its science would converge in a figure—the figure of defiguration—whose universality would delete its figurative character and, in pure mediation, sublimate both the text and its science. (Hamacher 182)

By the 1990s, defiguring figurations, deconstructing cultural constructions, became a somewhat hollow gesture, endlessly repeating its once liberating gesture.

At the same time, Derrida himself felt the need to speak out against those who followed him all too hastily in the name of deconstruction:

The phrase which for some has become a sort of slogan, in general so badly understood, of deconstruction ("there is nothing outside the text" [...]), means nothing else [but]: there is nothing outside context. [...] Once again (and this probably makes a thousand times I have had to repeat this, but when will it finally be heard, and why this resistance?) as I understand it [...], the text is not the book, it is not confined in a volume itself confined

to the library. It does not suspend reference—to history, to the world, to reality, to being, and especially not to the other, since to say of history, of the world, of reality, that they always appear in an experience, hence in a movement of interpretation which contextualizes them according to a network of differences and hence of referral to the other, is surely to recall that alterity [...] is irreducible. (Derrida 1988, 136-7)

When Derrida declares that there is nothing outside the text, he explicitly refuses to limit language to a free play of signification. Understanding is determined as much by the text proper as by its context, as Derrida has repeatedly emphasized, and this context is by no means restricted to other texts in the vicinity of the text at hand, as New Historicism and other limited understandings of discourse analysis have suggested. But why does nobody want to hear what Derrida has to say ('a thousand times')? Well, if English Studies took on board what Derrida suggests, reading would no longer suffice. When there is no limit to the text, there is no limit to understanding a text, and consequently no limit to the academic work on a book.

LITERARY DOUBTS

Before exploring whether there is a way to approach literature that sees 'the paper for the words', I want to suggest a re-reading of Shelley's poem that questions Miller's and de Man's interpretation. Miller seems to be vaguely aware of such differing reading: '[The] determination of thought, institutions and distribution of power is, as the rest of the poem makes clear, not made by the light itself but by fictional figures that light takes when it manifests itself on earth.' (Miller 1985, 124) Miller is right, of course, when he insists that absolute knowledge is unavailable to humans. (But who would doubt that doubt?) Nonetheless, some form of knowledge seems to be available, a knowledge that 'manifests itself' in 'fictional figures'. And it is these 'fictional figures' that in turn determine 'thought, institutions and distribution of power' in the world—it is the presence of these fictional, that is, made, figures that has real consequences in "life". However, for Miller such contingent knowledge is supplementary only: it is what 'the *rest* of the poem makes clear'—that very rest that Miller almost completely ignores in his analysis.

Another reading of Shelley's poem suggests that the constructions of language, which the apparent 'rest' of the poem deals with, are as important as the debunking of all apparently absolute truths. 'I desire to worship those who drew/New figures on its [= the world's] false & fragile glass//As the

old faded' (ll. 246–8), the speaker of the poem says. To which his guide 'Rousseau' answers: 'Figures ever new/Rise on the bubble, paint them how you may;/We have but thrown, as those before us threw, //Our shadows on it as it past away' (ll. 248–51). Here, indeed, we see the defiguration at work that de Man and Miller celebrated: every figure is undone before long. As a consequence, a frustrated 'Rousseau' judges all attempts to escape the prison-house of language to be futile. The speaker, however, praises those who draw new figures—despite their relative instability. The speaker, here, goes beyond both 'Rousseau's' disillusioned romanticism and de Man's ironic detachment.

'Rousseau' still seems to be attached to the paradigm of painting ('paint them as you may'), the paradigm of the synthetic image, of the symbol, and he seems discouraged when the promise of wholeness and authenticity is disappointed. De Man reveals the futility of 'Rousseau's' attempts. The speaker of the poem, however, does not speak of painting; he celebrates drawing, the production of sketches, of lines that produce new figures on top of old fading ones. The difference is crucial: whereas the image that 'Rousseau' refers to can always be revealed as a deficient re-presentation, the line that Shelley draws leaves a mark one cannot go back on; what follows cannot be completely arbitrary, but is influenced by the foregoing inscription. Shelley, more than his rhetorical-minded interpreters might have noticed, draws attention to the materiality of the medium upon which the figures are drawn. And it is this insistence on the materiality of the medium that distinguishes Shelley—and Derrida, for that matter—from de Man and Miller.

Shelley uses the image of sand to figure the contingency of signification:

And suddenly my brain became as sand

'Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador;
Whilst the fierce wolf from which they fled amazed

'Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore
Until the second bursts—so on my sight
Burst a new Vision never seen before. (ll. 406–11)

According to de Man, this 'scene dramatizes the failure to satisfy a desire for self-knowledge and can therefore indeed be considered as something of a key passage' (de Man 45). Recounting this key passage, de Man claims that 'the water [is] washing away the tracks' (de Man 53) and that the

transformation which 'Rousseau's' brain undergoes is 'said to be the erasure of an imprinted track' (de Man 45). This transformation, in de Man's interpretation, is 'a passive, mechanical operation that is no longer within the brain's own control: both the production and the erasure of the track are not an act performed by the brain, but the brain being acted upon by something else' (de Man 45-6). And this something else is, of course, language. 'Consciousness,' Miller assists, 'is phenomenality. But since, as Hegel saw, consciousness speaks, [...] consciousness is linguistic through and through—always, already, from the start.' (Miller 1987, 289) Every figure of signification is soon disfigured and replaced by a new one: 'The process' that acts upon the brain, de Man concludes, 'is a replacement, a substitution', following an 'erasure or effacement' (de Man 46). For de Man, the subjectivity of consciousness is undone by the work of signification: man does not simply use language, but is used by it.

And indeed, those waves that roll on 'Rousseau's' sandy brain do destroy the wholeness of the image. The old image, however, is not entirely gone when the new arrives, but is only 'more than half erased' (l. 406), as the poem says. While the readings by de Man and Miller dismiss the importance of this modification, I hold the difference between a substitution and something that is grafted upon remaining traces to be crucial. It is the poem's notion of the "track", similar to Derrida's insistence on the importance of traces, that complicates Miller's and de Man's endless circle of figuration and defiguration, their claim of a free play of signifiers.

Such a claim, as Hamacher has insisted, would be paradoxical to say the least: 'For although the referential content of an utterance is unreliable and cannot be assured by any dialectically impassioned device, the contention that the utterance was liberated from all referential possibilities, a free play of signifiers, would itself necessarily be referential.' Consequently: 'No text has the possibility to exclude the possibility that it says the truth, or at least something true; but no text can guarantee this truth because every attempt to establish its certainty must proliferate the indeterminacy of its meaning.' (Hamacher 182) What Hamacher criticizes here is de Man's and Miller's strict opposition between an interpretation of language as an arbitrary process and one that claims necessity. That language, that our interpretation of the world might be neither arbitrary nor necessary escapes such reasoning. To go beyond this binary opposition of necessity and arbitrariness, of conventions and their undoing, we need to go beyond signification and the paradigm of representation; in the words of

the poem, we have to move from the painting of an image to drawing a line.

Derrida, in his engagement with 'The Triumph of Life', shows a distinct sensitivity to the drawing of lines over lines. Derrida highlights 'the element of haunting that inundates, if you will, *The Triumph of Life*, its "ghosts," "phantoms," "ghostly shadows," and the like' (Derrida 1979, 106)—instead of the "forgetting" that de Man emphasizes (see de Man 50). What Derrida is interested in is the frightening fact that words might well mean something—we just never know when and what. The relation between signifier and signified, then, is neither arbitrary nor necessary, but *contingent*. Central to such understanding of language, as Derrida highlights in his interpretation of Shelley's poem, is what he calls 'writing, mark, traces and so on' (Derrida 1979, 103).

However, all I present here is still no more than mere reading: no more than just another, media theory inspired, reading. An analysis of the poem that would go beyond mere reading would have to start from the contingent meeting of reader and text, mediated by the materiality of the book. Such an analysis would have to take into account the affective response of a corporeal reader as much as the interpretative labour of a cultured mind, it would consider the practices a certain materiality affords as much as its effect on textual meaning-making, it would try to put signification in context, a context that goes beyond signification. Doing this, however, would spell the end of this theoretical essay, and the beginning of another, historical examination. What I can present in the remainder of this chapter is little more than a despairingly vague sketch of what could be done, or rather, how we could start to begin doing something else. Unfortunately, there is no theory for such a practice.

READERLY DOUBTS

'The triumph of theory,' Miller fears towards the end of his Presidential Address, 'is the resistance to reading in the sense that theory erases the particularity of the unique act of reading.' (Miller 1987, 289) A complete 'Triumph of Theory' would make impossible every thorough engagement with a text, if this triumph means that we know what a text can and cannot mean before we have even read the text and have related it to its specific context. Abstract theory can never capture the uniqueness of art, its historical and material specificity, Miller knows. Miller also knows that language, by using signs that can never be singular, can never capture the

specificities of history and materiality: he knows, too, that materiality is that which 'can never be approached, named, perceived, felt, thought, or in any way encountered as such' (Miller 1987, 289).

Nonetheless, despite all this, there is one event that brings the practitioner of English studies as close to history and materiality as he or she will ever be:

Perhaps the closest we teachers of language and literature can come in our everyday work to glimpsing what we have erased, forgotten, or even forgotten that we have forgotten is in that most ordinary of experiences for the literary scholar, the act of holding a book in one's hand and reading, that is, *confronting face to face the materiality of the inscription*. The trouble is that the inscription makes the matter invisible once more. We do not see the paper for the words. (Miller 1987, 289; my emphasis)

Here, the *medium* is the point where reader, meaning, and materiality come closest. Even if the weight of the signifier might habitually escape the reader, the presence of the material inscription in the practice of reading can be overlooked—but not denied. It appears as if Miller, somewhat unexpectedly, suddenly begins to doubt the absolute centrality of "rhetorical reading" to (English) Literary and Cultural Studies: if all exteriority is finally eradicated, the book itself might disappear. However, Miller seems to shun the consequence his sudden revelation entails. That anything else but reading might be at the centre of English Studies does not seem to appeal to him.

FUTURE ENGLISH STUDIES: CORPOREAL READING, MATERIAL MEDIA

What de Man and Miller, and those that followed them, seem to miss is an understanding of the *material* mediality of language. While they highlight the fact that thinking uses language as its medium, they seem to ignore that language cannot be without a medium itself, and is therefore as little—or as much, for that matter—in control of itself as the mind. Miller and de Man fall prey to the invisibility of every medium at use (cf. Krämer 2008, 68). They do, indeed, fail to 'see the paper for the words', as Miller himself had feared. Instead of analysing the sand and its capacity to make imprints possible, to use Shelley's trope, Miller and de Man have eyes only for the figures that are imprinted. It is, as Sybille Krämer's reinterpretation

of deconstruction has insisted upon, the aim of media studies to bring the paper to the fore and to analyse the sand that takes the imprint.

Media studies, at least in the "German" sense, moves beyond easily defigurable acts of signification:

With the media aspect of signifying processes in mind—and there is no sign without a medium—something comes to the fore that does not follow the formula of the conventional meaning of signs. The stamping potency of a medium—and that's the central thought here—unfolds itself in a dimension of meaning that goes beyond a semantics based on convention. It is the materiality of the medium that provides for this "excess", this "surplus" of meaning which is not following the intention of sign users and is indeed beyond their control. Due to their media materiality signs say more than their users mean (to). [...] It is this phenomenon of the trace as opposed to the sign that makes all the difference. (Krämer 1998, 78–9, my trans.)⁴

The 'tracks' in Shelley's poem are not merely 'posited by an arbitrary act of language', as de Man has it, but determined by the receiving sand also, and less easily to be undone. Krämer reverses the direction of power: whereas de Man was interested in the power—or rather: powerlessness—of the stamp to imprint (lasting) figures, media studies draws attention to the receiving material. Only when the form of the stamp and the formable material come together, do figures appear—and the place where form and formability meet is the *medium*. Media studies allows understanding materiality and meaning as forms—formed by and from something other than itself.

In Shelley's poem, figuration and defiguration do not proceed as smooth, steady, and repetitive as the waves on the beach might suggest. Instead, the medium changes through repeated inscriptions, and with it the possibilities to form figures. The medium—Shelley's sand—is not simply an unconnected repertoire of elements giving equal way to every figure imprinted by the almighty powers of language, but a relatively structured repertoire, contingently preferring certain combinations over others (see Werber 171–98). This relativity of the medium, this contingency of the medium, is determined both by the history of its usage and by the materiality of its make—not every sand is the same, and it never stays the same. While the medium might not be the message, it nonetheless limits the possibilities of figuration.

According to Lambert Wiesing, media are tools that allow distinguishing between *Genesis* and *Geltung* (validity):

The term *Genesis* is generally used for all physical, material processes. Every process of production or formation is identified—surely in a somewhat emphatic terminology—as “Genesis”. [...] Such processes occur in space and time; they are empirical facts and consequently can be analysed using the means of various empirical sciences. (Wiesing 241, my trans.)⁵

While there are, of course, many things in the world that can be analysed empirically, only media are able to use their materiality to create something non-material, something that is not bound to space and time: *meaning*—‘and precisely that is their *Geltung*: the existence of something that is the same for different people at different times’ (Wiesing 242, my trans.).⁶

Understanding media as meeting points of meaning and materiality might enable us to understand the form of the figure as an *event* (cf. Gumbrecht 578–92). In this sense, we can reapproach the primal scene of reading that Miller refers to: ‘that most ordinary of experiences for the literary scholar, the act of holding a book in one’s hand and reading, that is, confronting face to face the materiality of the inscription’ (Miller 1987, 289). The materiality that Miller refers to here is not one represented, but one manifested in the materiality of the medium itself, performed in the corporeal (!) act of reading. Before all representation, before all referring to some other materiality or idea, or rather: co-originary with it, comes the *aesthetic* presence of the medium. Materiality might never appear as such, only in the context of meaning, but equally, meaning only appears in the context of materiality: the world we encounter always already means something to us, and meaning is always already presented. Consequently, I suggest that our encounter with literature—or any other cultural product for that matter—should be understood as an act situated in time and space, as a performance that can be examined according to factors of perception, corporality, and staging (cf. Fischer-Lichte 7–26).

The task of a theoretically informed study of literature—that is, one that knows that its object escapes all positivistic encounters—is precisely not to forget its materiality and the specific particularity of this materiality. Once one accepts that a book is part of the world (as materiality) of which it might not be part (as meaning), new alleys of research open up that supplement rhetorical forms of reading: who reads, and where, and

how; how is the book produced, distributed, circulated, and aesthetically consumed; what is done with the book, and to it. It is not through representation that we can encounter literature's 'economic conditions, its institutions, the realities of class and gender distinctions', which Miller had questioned, but through the—however precarious—presence of the cultural product. Instead of analysing the apparent 'realities' of gender, race, class, age, nature (and so on), which literature apparently represents or misrepresents, a practice-oriented approach to literature could start with the realities of the encounter between reader, meaning, and materiality. Whatever the text means, and might be able to represent, is a consequence of this encounter: only because media have a reality of their own, are they able to produce realities (cf. Seel 356).

Literature can neither be understood through its meaning nor its materiality only, but only through the co-originary presence and withdrawal of meaning and materiality in the material-semiotic nodes we corporally encounter as media (cf. Haraway 201). Media open specific horizons of possible meanings, but they are themselves only specific realizations within a horizon of material and historical possibilities (cf. Engell 54). By combining actuality and potentiality, media enable humans to live beyond *that* place and *that* time the very act of perception ties them to. If anything, that's the Triumph of Life.

NOTES

1. A date that Miller also alludes to in his 'Presidential Address', although with reference to de Man's *The Resistance to Theory*. The beginning of the rise of theory can probably be dated to a 1966 colloquium on structuralism at the Johns Hopkins University, where Derrida, Barthes, and Lacan met with Paul de Man.
2. Although the respective chapter of the book is entitled 'Shelley', it concentrates almost entirely on the 'Triumph'.
3. The poem is quoted after Reiman.
4. '[M]it der medialen Dimension von Zeichenprozessen—und es gibt keine Zeichen ohne ein Medium—kommt etwas in den Blick, was [das] Schema vereinbarter Zeichenbedeutung nicht umstandslos erfüllt: Die Prägekraft eines Mediums—und das ist die Vermutung, auf die es hier ankommt—entfaltet sich in der Dimension einer Bedeutsamkeit jenseits der Strukturen einer konventionalisierten Semantik. Und es ist die Materialität des Mediums, welche die Grundlage abgibt für diesen "Überschuß" an Sinn, für diesen "Mehrwert" an Bedeutung, der von den Zeichenbenutzern

keineswegs intendiert und ihrer Kontrolle auch gar nicht unterworfen ist. Kraft ihrer medialen Materialität sagen die Zeichen mehr, als ihre Benutzer damit jeweils meinen. [...] Auf dieses Phänomen der Spur im Unterschied zum Zeichen kommt es hier an.'

5. 'Der Begriff der Genesis wird ganz allgemein für alle physikalischen Vorgänge verwendet. Jeder Herstellungs- oder Entstehungsprozess wird—in sicherlich etwas emphatischer Terminologie—als "Genesis" angesprochen. [...] Diese Vorgänge finden in Raum und Zeit statt; sie sind empirische Tatsachen und lassen sich dementsprechend mit den Mitteln unterschiedlicher empirischer Wissenschaften erforschen.'
6. 'und genau das ist die Geltung: das Vorhandensein von etwas, was für mehrere Personen zu verschiedenen Zeiten dasselbe ist'.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bloom, Harold, et al., eds. *Deconstruction and Criticism*. London: Continuum, 2004 (1979).
- Bode, Christoph. 'Romanticism and Deconstruction: Distant Relations and Elective Affinities'. *Romantic Continuities*. Ed. Günther Blaicher and Michael Gassenmeier. Essen: Blaue Eule, 1992. 131–59.
- Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- de Man, Paul. 'Shelley Disfigured'. *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Ed. Harold Bloom et al. London: Routledge, 1979. 39–73.
- Derrida, Jacques. 'Living On – Border Lines'. *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Ed. Harold Bloom et al. London: Routledge, 1979. 75–176.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988.
- Engell, Lorenz. 'Tasten, Wählen, Denken. Genese und Funktion einer philosophischen Apparatur'. *Medienphilosophie: Beiträge zur Klärung eines Begriffs*. Ed. Stefan Münker et al. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 2003. 53–77.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. 'Einleitung: Theatralität als kulturelles Modell'. *Theatralität als Modell in den Kulturwissenschaften*. Ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte et al. Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2004. 7–26.
- Gumbrecht, Hans-Ulrich. 'Form without Matter vs. Form as Event'. *MLN* 111.3 (1996): 578–92.
- Hamacher, Werner. 'Lectio: de Man's Imperative'. Trans. Susan Bernstein. *Reading de Man Reading*. Ed. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. 171–201.
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Simians, Cyborgs, and the Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books, 1991.
- Hartman, Geoffrey. Preface. *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Ed. Harold Bloom et al. London: Routledge, 1979. vii–ix.

- Krämer, Sybille. 'Das Medium als Spur und als Apparat'. *Medien – Computer – Realität: Wirklichkeitsvorstellungen und Neue Medien*. Ed. Sybille Krämer. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1998. 73–94.
- Krämer, Sybille. 'Medien, Boten, Spuren: Wenig mehr als ein Literaturbericht?'. *Was ist ein Medium?* Ed. Stefan Münker and Alexander Roesler. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2008. 65–90.
- Miller, J. Hillis. *The Linguistic Moment: From Wordsworth to Stevens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Miller, J. Hillis. 'Presidential Address 1986. The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading, and the Question of the Material Base'. *PMLA* 102.3 (1987): 281–91.
- Rajan, Tillotama. *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Reiman, Donald H. *Shelley's 'The Triumph of Life': A Critical Study*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965.
- Seel, Martin. 'Bestimmen und Bestimmenlassen. Anfänge einer medialen Erkenntnistheorie'. *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 46 (1998): 351–65.
- Werber, Niels. 'Luhmanns Medien. Zur philosophischen Rezeption einer anti-philosophischen Medientheorie'. *Philosophie in der Medientheorie: Von Adorno bis Žižek*. Ed. Alexander Rösler and Bernd Stiegler. München: Fink, 2008. 171–98.
- Wiesing, Lambert. 'Was sind Medien?' *Was ist ein Medium?* Ed. Stefan Münker and Alexander Roesler. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2008. 235–48.