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**Anne-Julia Zwierlein (ed.).** *Gender and Creation: Surveying Gendered Myths of Creativity, Authority, and Authorship.* Regensburger Beiträge zur Gender-Forschung 4. Heidelberg: Winter, 2010, 247 pp., € 35.00.

The volume *Gender and Creation* edited by Anne-Julia Zwierlein is a welcome addition to our understanding of the ways in which we have to conceive of creativity, authority, and authorship as deeply gendered concepts. Taken as a whole, the collection of essays, which includes thirteen contributions originally delivered as papers in a lecture series at the University of Regensburg, invites its readers to revisit gender studies and cultural studies as interdisciplinary approaches ideally suited to an exploration of how men and women thought, wrote, conceived of themselves and others in the past and the present, and how normative notions of femininity and masculinity enabled, marginalized or silenced forms of expression, in particular literary production. The volume covers much historical ground. In a successful attempt to draw our attention to the continuities and discontinuities that have shaped understandings of creation, creativity, and authorship, it presents a diachronic survey of their construction that begins with the writings of Christine de Pizan in the late Middle Ages (Annette Kern-Stähler) and concludes with a reflection on immigrant women's lit-

erary production in contemporary Great Britain and Canada (Brigitte Glaser). Its bookends indicate that although the volume focuses on British literatures and cultures it also includes “glimpses at German and French texts and works of art” (11).

Organized in chronological order, the contributions vary in focus. An effort to combine both theoretical reflections on gender, creativity, and authorship with an analysis of particular works by one or more writers ties them together and lends cohesiveness to the volume. However, a few contributors prioritize theorizing (to an extent that is somewhat redundant further into the volume); others deliver close readings of texts that could have explored in more meaningful ways how these readings relate to the concepts the volume seeks to (de-)construct. Rather than explore a set of questions, the contributors end up analyzing different pairings of gender, creation, creativity, and authorships, exploring what Zwierlein in her introduction outlines as intertwined centers of interest: “Creation and Creativity”, “Authority and Authorship”, “Female Authorship and Creativity”, “The Genderization of Narrative”, and “Gendered Myths of Creation and Creativity”. It is somewhat unfortunate that the volume’s structure does not reflect these centers of interest which would have helped readers to situate each contribution’s place in the volume even more precisely.

What emerges, nonetheless, are fascinating glimpses into explorations of creative freedoms, modes of creativity, creative identities of men and women, conflicted and conflicting notions of authorship, interpretations of creation (both spiritual and biological), and issues of authority and legitimacy. Following Annette Kern-Stähler’s investigation of medieval concepts of authorship and female creative empowerment that looks at the writings of Christine de Pizan and Chaucer, Danielle Clark analyzes rewritings of the Ovidian myth of Philomena during the Renaissance to point to the emergence of a possible “poetic potential” or “rhetorical power of the feminine” that had previously been denied by gendered ideologies that “restricted rhetorical practice to educated males” (61). Christoph Heyl concerns himself with the ways in which early modern cabinets of curiosities reflected normative understandings of creation, creativity, and gender. Looking at early modern fiction and poetry, Anna-Julia Zwierlein reflects on the significance of lovesickness and the accompanying mental fixations as gendered notions of creativity. She argues that writers such as Anne Bradstreet and Margaret Cavendish adapted or re-appropriated “traditional gendered constructions of lovesickness and melancholic creativity, which were grounded originally on the exclusion of the female” (86). Rainer Emig’s discussion of the spleen as an expression of enlightened notions of gender and creation is followed by two contributions that investigate the spatial dimension of creativity. Katharina Rennhak’s readings of Alexander Pope, Mary Chudleigh, and Sarah Fyge Egerton show how early 18<sup>th</sup>-century female writers “inhibited

by the ideology of the separate spheres” struggled to gain access to the creative realm. She interprets their writings as an attempt to make room for themselves (both literally and figuratively) in a male world and to wrest the power to see and to describe away from the male in an effort to reformulate – or as she puts it – “gender, degender, and regender” (129) tales of Creation. Helga Schwalm, in contrast, deals with a more tangible space. She explores the significance of the Lake District for authors such as William Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth and their construction of romantic subjectivities. Moving the volume into the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ralf Junkerjürgen concerns himself with images of creativity in Guy de Maupassant. In what seems like a wonderful dialogue between two essays, Ingo Berensmeyer and Virginia Richter explore the ambiguities and anxieties of gendered authorship in Herman Melville, Henry James, and Vernon Lee. Achim Geisenhanslüke opens new perspectives on gender, authorship, and creativity by looking at modern literature’s engagement with these concepts. Focusing on the writings of Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Franz Kafka, he not only expands the volume’s scope to include a German language angle. Looking at the myth of Medusa, he also draws our attention to language as a “liminal realm” where gender can be deconstructed and “in which writing undermines the distinction between nature and culture, science and art, myth and enlightened reasoning” (192). Francesca Nadja Palitzsch’s and Brigitte Glaser’s essays conclude the volume. Palitzsch focuses on gender confusion and gendered creativity in the novels of Jeannette Winterson. Glaser’s piece is a reflection on British and Canadian immigrant women’s writing. She explores how these writers deal with the phenomenon of ‘double colonization’ – their marginalization by (post)colonial and patriarchal conditions. Glaser shows that the women’s assessment of their cultural backgrounds not only produces literary creativity but also leads to their proud self-fashioning as authors and authorities in their communities and beyond.

*Gender and Creation* presents a tour-de-force through six centuries of literary production investigating concepts of gender, creation, creativity, and authorship. It does so mostly successfully. Although the quality of the contributions is uneven and the essays do not speak to one another as much as they could have, a number of stand-out essays in particular make this volume worthwhile reading. And while the volume’s cultural inclusiveness can be considered both a strength and a weakness, its strong encouragement to pursue gendered lines of inquiry should inspire the volume’s readers to continue where its contributors have left off.

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