

class-inflected. They symbolically evoke lower-class violence (Moll contemplating killing a child for a golden necklace) and, in the case of Roxana, an illegitimate and disruptive aristocratic violence that threatens to subvert bourgeois claims to power (266). Because of such class-inflections, however, both women participate in the process of an othering through which the bourgeois (male) 'self' can, once more, assert itself.

Christian Krug (Erlangen)

*Christian Huck. Fashioning Society, or, The Mode of Modernity: Observing Fashion in Eighteenth-Century Britain.* Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010. Pp. 357pp. € 39.80. ISBN 978-3-8260-4458-8.

If modernity is best characterised as the form of society constituted by the observation of observations, as Niklas Luhmann suggests, then, on the evidence of what can be reconstructed of the fashion system from various cultural artefacts (prints, journals, novels), eighteenth-century London was modern (302). Modernity is highly contingent, according to Luhmann, as the only grounds for established norms are what people observe of one another. In this impressively fine-grained and richly interdisciplinary study, Huck attempts to show, in a particular historical period, how contingencies of observation harden into perceived necessities, by means of the careful study of the meaning of particular objects in their full social operation. Huck studies the individual observational and interpretive work undertaken by people in the eighteenth century in an attempt to describe the operation of the fashion system, and place it in relation to other social systems and historical semantics – such as economy and gender (16). In an argumentative move that is cute and convincing in equal measure, Huck suggests that observers of observations in eighteenth-century Britain (although Huck focuses almost exclusively on London) are working in cultural studies. He also makes some important qualifications to intellectual models that have structured knowledge about the eighteenth century for many years, re-describing, for instance, the public sphere as the sphere of the circulation not of rational-critical views, but of the observation of observations, by means of which people anticipate how they will be seen by others (115). He closes the study with some parallels between eighteenth- and twenty-first century observers of observations, suggesting that contemporary observers are operating at a point in the decline of various conditions (urbanisation, industrialisation, expanding print media) that were at a comparable point in their rise in the eighteenth century (303).

Huck identifies various features of eighteenth-century life that make fashion possible, indeed necessary: the possibility of determining one's own social position by personal exertion, rather than being born to a station; urbanisation, which increases the possibility of meeting people one does not already know; widely circulated images and printed documents that allow the codification of dress and its association with certain behaviours and practices. In relation to the formal construction of visual and verbal artefacts, Huck distinguishes between those that adopt linear perspectivism as their mode of observation (a mode that isolates the observer from what is observed by viewpoint, or by the detached narration of events) and those that integrate the observer to a greater degree. Defoe's *Tour* and, in a rather different manner, Hogarth's narrative series, are placed in the first category, Ned Ward's *London Spy*, and Tom Brown's *Amusements Serious and Comical*, in the second. There may be an unresolved tension at

this level of Huck's work. The detached observer can at times appear to be the epitome of a fashioned world, one who observes, and, by means of observing observations, is able to achieve neutrality, dressing neither at the van nor the rear of the mode. Huck associates this position, that of being a 'man without qualities,' with the role of the tradesman, he who facilitates fashion also being one of its emblems. And yet at other times, the participating observer seems to be the epitome of integration into a system of reciprocal observation, in which dress has implications for behaviour that can only be known through social interaction (with sharpers, prostitutes, gulls and so on). It is not precisely clear if the modern fashionable observer is in or out of the world observed.

The detached position of Addison's Mr Spectator is regarded as at least potentially coercive: not subjecting himself to the observation to which he exposes others, and demonstrating the dangers of parting from the norms imposed by observation of observation, his position is part of the imposition of a regime of dress (109-8). Huck argues that in this form of coercion, the particular is reconciled with the universal, thereby making the existence of individuals in relation to a social whole possible (97). Whilst Huck's description of characters in novels as individuals needing to test out various possible (contingent) futures, largely by means of dress (221), is brilliantly substantiated, and his examples of those characters making observations of observations (as when Pamela places Colbrand's appearance) well selected (199), it seems a strain to suggest that without modern fashion, the representation of individuals is impossible (85). If merchants in sixteenth-century Northern European portraiture, for example, are placed in a definite (i.e. not contingent) social category by their dress, and even if their facial expressions might be related to highly structured physiognomical codes, surely the interaction of the minor variations in those codes produces something as individual as, say, the tradespeople or criminals one finds in Defoe? Thus the ways in which dress comes to indicate a person of a certain type in the new, as opposed to the old, sartorial regime, is sometimes a little obscure (as at 68-9), even if the case for thinking of new media (particularly mass-circulation journals) as enabling the preparedness and habitual knowledge required to be able to recognise the never-before encountered individual as, probably, an individual of a certain type (262), is very well made.

This study is enormously ambitious and highly successful. In refusing to focus on literary or visual documents, and in granting equal attention to the various modes of print publication, Huck provides a richer view of the topic than anyone working within a single discipline has yet achieved. Huck's readings are detailed and yet still brisk enough to retain the reader's attention, as in his lively treatment of Haywood's *Fantomina*. The book engages at a very high level with systems-theoretical work, and with cognitivist theories of narrative and fictional worlds. This sociological and literary-theoretical ambition is kept in close contact with the primary material of the study, as when Luhmann's work on roles is brought to a consideration of the role of the eighteenth-century tradesman. Engaging, argumentative and highly persuasive, this book has something to offer for all students of eighteenth-century culture, and all who take an interest in the study of cultural systems in general.

Tom Jones (St. Andrews)