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Porous Boundaries: Texts and Images in Twentieth-Century French Culture

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Jérôme Game, ed. *Porous Boundaries: Texts and Images in Twentieth-Century French Culture*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007. 164 pp.

In this collection, editor Jérôme Game (who is both a scholar and a poet) gathers an impressive array of thinkers aiming to reconsider “the text/images dialectic” (12) roughly in the postmodern period (“after Surrealism” 20), and within the specific purview of not privileging the linguistic pole as is too often the case. While this agenda is not new (as Game himself recalls, citing W. J. T. Mitchell and Marie-Claire Ropars, 10), the collection purports to develop specific “conceptual tools and methods” so as “to further the establishment of an interdisciplinary field of study” (20). The two approaches Game favors are “interpenetration (hybridization)” and “mutual destructuring (heterogenization).” Both are inspired by a proposed shift away from Barthesian textuality toward a Deleuzean matrix of virtuality and becoming in which writing is but one flux of intensity among others. Game’s introduction illustrates these notions by analyzing a single long take in a film by Jean Eustache in which language and image deterritorialize each other. The demonstration is perhaps less convincing here than that which Game provided in an excellent essay for a recent collection on Denis Roche, *L’Un écrit, l’autre photographie* (ENS, 2007).

The first part of *Porous Boundaries*, focusing on heterogeneity, contains contributions by Hervé Castanet on Klossowski’s *Le Bain de Diane*, by Jacques Rancière on Brodthaers’ visual reworking of Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de dés*, and by the late Marie-Claire Ropars on the mutual destructuring of writing and cinema, illustrated with the work of Duras. Although Rancière’s essay reprises the central thesis of *Le Partage du sensible* on modernism’s esthetic regime of the arts, it usefully complements his book on Mallarmé (*Politique de la sirène*), and can serve also as pendant to Rosalyn Krauss’ *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (1999) which takes Brodthaers’ work to be enacting the self-differentiation of mediums. Ropars’ essay segues with this problematic by limning out an alternative to the model of adaptation as “contamination and transfers” (63) among the arts. Invoking Adorno and Blanchot, she shows separate arts to be dialectically engaged with one another to the point of unraveling their presumed originary autonomy, particularly

in literature. Duras' *Aurélia Steiner* is Ropars' case study, as a work written in the “scarce reality of an imaginary vision” of a film (78), while a film Duras shot (*India Song*) appears to “unwrite” writing. Both works thus inhabit a heterogeneous in-between: writing haunted by film, film haunted by writing.

In the second part on hybridization, Raymond Bellour comments on Jean-Louis Boissier's DVD *Moments de Rousseau*, a compilation of instances of the word “moment” in Rousseau's oeuvre mixed with footage by Boissier. For Bellour, Boissier's DVD picks up on Rousseau's visual attention to staging representation, while constructing a hypertextual and interactive *promenade* that remontages his books into original film-like works that echo the history of cinema from Méliès to Bresson and Marker. Nathalie Wourm's illuminating essay addresses recent French poetry's turn to digital media, in particular Pierre Alferi's *Cinépoèmes & films parlants* (2003) that remix movie footage and create moving-word poems on screen, and Anne-James Chaton's more straightforward videos with superimposed words, *Autoprotraits* (2003). Wourm also examines several works from the website *Poézie 2000*. For Wourm, such works alter poetry's centeredness on linguistic operations (she indicates their overt anti-Jakobsonian poetics, 118) but also on the conceit of consubstantiality with a single person, since most of these works involve technical collaborators. Jean-Marie Gleize's essay (in the third part devoted to “Meta-Narratives of the Textimage,”) dovetails nicely with Wourm's contribution, since Gleize explicates some of the processes at play in his “post-poetry” (152). Post-poetry is the undoing of poetry's reliance on prosodic phenomena and on the poem as artifact, through serial prose pieces that recoup, complete and restage each other. Indeed this essay is for Gleize another piece in the complex *dispositif* that interconnects all his books via certain figures or schemas that substitute for any explicit narrative or subject-centered lyrical coherence. This third part also features essays by Jean-Michel Rey on recent changes in the spatial principles of organization of art exhibitions, and by Timothy Matthews on Deleuze's *Logique de la sensation* cross-read with works by Giacometti. Although excellent in and of themselves, these two essays seem less incisively devoted to the current theoretical rethinking of the text and image relationship.

This is a must-have collection for scholars seeking to keep abreast of the evolution of the “textimage” field. Yet the reader might wonder to what extent the theoretical underpinnings of the collection do articulate a new paradigm or not. After all, heterogeneity—a term that belongs to Bataille’s well-established philosophical lexicon—and hybridity—a term quasi-exhausted by 1990s race and postcolonial theory—have been around for a good while. On the other hand, heterogeneity is precisely the unraveling of paradigm, and Game puts hybridity in practice as it were by crossing Deleuze’s thought with these two terms certainly not central within it. The collection, however, is solidly held together by an explicit reflection of most contributors on the notion of the *dispositif*, a term which Christophe Hanna has brought to poetry studies from film and Foucauldian scholarship (see his *Poésie action directe*, 2003). Game (10, 29), Rancière (56, 60), Ropars (75, 76), Bellour (92, 95), Gleize (155), and tacitly Wourm, hover around this notion as the clear theoretical nexus of the textimage field today. This, in my eyes, aside from the high quality of each contribution, is what makes Game’s enterprise especially valuable and timely.

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Hafid Gafaïti, Patricia M. E. Lorcin, and David Troyansky, eds.
Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World.
 Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. xxiv + 427 pp.

Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World, the second volume of interdisciplinary articles originating in a comparative literature symposium held at Texas Tech University in 2002, brings historians and literary scholars together to explore the interrelated questions of migration, identity, and Francophonie.

The first section, entitled “Colonialism and Immigration,” situates concerns in contemporary France in relation to the twentieth-century colonial empire. Inquiry ranges from Philip Dine’s analysis of the ideological construction of French Algeria to Keith David Watengaugh’s reading of the political ambiguity of collaboration in mandate Syria between 1920 and 1946 to Elisa Camiscioli’s discussion of intersect-