

REVIEWS

GAME, JÉRÔME. *Poetic Becomings*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011. ix + 253 pp. £35.00. ISBN 978-3-03911-401-6. This book offers a Deleuzian reading of four important contemporary French poets based on the problem of subjectivity, conceptualizing Being as pure expressive difference rather than fixed identity. The author's notion of a poetics of becoming emerges as a text's capacity to assert and maintain inconsistency, through language and style, always in the process of being reinvented. Following an overview of poetry's efforts over the last thirty years to negotiate a path between post-structuralist materialism and neo-lyricism, Game offers compelling and lucid case studies. Christian Prigent explores in the painful, violent *Écrit au couteau* the body, sex and the Mother; by dehumanizing the body, he produces a hysterical, paranoid anatomy where the subject is 'decomposed' in playful, laconic verse reminiscent of Laforgue. Dominique Fourcade's poetics of the rhizome produces a text constantly in flux – like Deleuze's disjunctive synthesis – a discontinuous text which, in Game's analysis, over-stretches its syntax like tangled wool. Olivier Cadot, in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, provides an intriguing variation on the Robinson Crusoe theme, playing with incoherent narration in a schizophrenic monologue which destructures temporality, de- and re-territorializing time and space with its chronic stutter. Hubert Lucot, in *Probablement*, creates a de-personalizing *linéaire non-linéaire*, presenting perception itself as sheer matter; Game calls this a 'heterobiographic' narrative which creates an epistemological tension and a 'Body-without-Organ' of language itself, 'not an individual essence but the becoming at work in any individuation' (p. 220). Sensitive readings of the multiple formal strategies at play here – acceleration, discontinuity, the line, the fold – are especially apposite. In conclusion, Game underlines the political dimension of this poetics of becoming, 'unravelling all things as processes rather than substances – nature, language, but also the self or History' (p. 233), and replacing the politics of the ideal subject with an emancipatory ontology of becomings. As such, this is an important study which offers both a sophisticated synthesis of major trends in contemporary French poetics and fruitful lines of future inquiry. [doi: 10.1093/fmls/cqu007]

Literary Studies and the Pursuits of Reading. Eds. Eric Downing, Jonathan M. Hess and Richard V. Benson. Rochester NY: Camden House (Studies in German Literature, Linguistics and Culture), 2012. 298 pp. £50.00. ISBN 9781571134318. This varied collection of essays explores the relationship between representations of reading and reading practice in literary texts on the one hand, and the significance of the reader for textual criticism on the other. The volume presents itself as an engagement with Clayton Koelb's developments of reader-response criticism, most recently *The Reviving Word* (2008), but including earlier theoretical explorations of reading and the implications of the reader's relationship to the text: *The Incredulous Reader* (1984), and *Inventions of Reading* (1988). Indeed, the final contribution is composed as a direct letter to Koelb. The chapters are grouped roughly chronologically, with studies of texts from the Middle Ages, the long nineteenth century and the twentieth century, while the introduction provides a theoretical overview of Koelb's work in the context of a rather one-sided assessment of New Criticism's contribution to reader-response criticism, before drawing correspondences between the essays presented and core areas of current research (embodied readers or affective reading; historically embedded reading; and 'media ecology' [p. 5]). This structure, as well as the extensive bibliography, make this collection of case studies an excellent research tool. The real value of the volume lies in the readings presented, which range from the impact of the codex on Christian conversion (Christopher Wild), to reading in Nuremberg carnival plays (Ann Marie Rasmussen), to Benjamin, reading and magic (Eric Downing). Highlights are Kathryn Starkey's fascinating analysis of evolutions in Thomasin's *Welcher Gast* manuscripts and two essays on nineteenth-century German-Jewish reading and identity (Jeffrey Sammons and Jonathan Hess). Certainly, the scholarship here inspires as much as it informs. [doi: 10.1093/fmls/cqu008]

LYONS, JOHN D. *The Phantom of Chance: From Fortune to Randomness in Seventeenth-Century French Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (Edinburgh Critical Studies in Renaissance Culture), 2012. 211 pp. £65.00. ISBN 978-0-7486-4515-2. This book explores the representation of chance in works by Corneille, Pascal, Lafayette, Bossuet, Racine and La Bruyère. In the introduction, Lyons distinguishes between fate and chance, arguing that chance is inextricably linked to