

photograph or sculpture in stone has self-interests or value beyond what people assign it, but living art has its own interests, and, if it is sentient, its own desires quite independent of human beings. Control over living creatures means something quite different from control over inert matter. What do genetics and biotechnology imply about our relationships with other forms of life? What does it mean to bring consciousness to evolution? What roles do plants and animals play in human psychogenesis? Living art is ideally suited to engage such questions.

However, the only artist working with living things who gets anything like informed discussion is Marc Quinn, who uses living genetic art to update portraiture. Quinn is a powerful and accomplished artist, but by focusing on people, he avoids most of the questions that living art raises. In *The Molecular Gaze*, artists who do engage these questions are either not mentioned or else treated summarily. So human-centered is *The Molecular Gaze* that it could have been titled "The Anthropocentric Gaze."

Eduardo Kac is treated with a mixture of fascination and hostility. He has created several major live transgenic works, but the authors mention only *GFP Bunny*, the famous fluorescing rabbit named Alba. She is described as "allegedly luminous." Anker and Nelkin (or perhaps only Anker, since Dorothy Nelkin died before *The Molecular Gaze* was completed) repeat speculation that Alba's green color in photographs is a result of digital manipulation, and write that Alba died under "vague circumstances." The author(s) suggest that Kac may be engaged in "commercial spectacle," and allow readers to conclude that either Alba never existed or else she did not fluoresce sufficiently to photograph.

How fair is this? Throughout *The Molecular Gaze* the authors show no awareness that unverifiable claims are not unique to *GFP Bunny*, but characterize many works of art that involve DNA. No gallery-goer can see the bacteria in a David Kremers painting, or determine that they are alive, much less genetically engineered. Can we be sure that Laura Cinti's cactus has a human gene for keratin? Are the cells in Gary Schneider's photographs his, and not someone else's, or a starfish's, for that matter? Anker's own work invites such questions. Are the chromosomes depicted in *Zoosemiotics: Primates, Frog, Gazelle, Fish*, which appears on the

book jacket, really the chromosomes of those creatures? Viewers are free to dismiss any work that requires too much knowledge or faith, but we have more to gain by engaging such work on its own terms—unless, of course, there is good reason not to. A crucial test with art that involves genetics or DNA is whether an unverifiable claim is within the realm of possibility. Alba easily passes this test because, as almost everyone knows, several different kinds of animals have been genetically engineered to fluoresce. It is a minor mystery why *GFP Bunny* inspires the author(s) to indulge in attempted character assassination.

There are additional problems, but little would be gained by dwelling on them. This book would have been better if it had been either more ambitious, and covered more territory, or else more modest, and stuck to what the authors know best: the new grotesque, birth, and the metaphors by which we understand molecular biology. By trying to be comprehensive without doing the necessary work, *The Molecular Gaze* ends up being at times both untrustworthy and out of touch.

The Molecular Gaze includes sufficient information to be useful as a reference, but only for those who already know the subject extremely well. For those who do not, the pictures are valuable, but even here one must proceed with some caution. The photograph of mice with fluorescing ears and tails that is juxtaposed with Alba represents only one kind of GFP mice. There are others with much more uniform fluorescence.

CLOSE READING NEW MEDIA: ANALYZING ELECTRONIC MEDIA

by Jan Van Looy and Jan Baetens.
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It is no little irony that hypertext literature, which places so much responsibility on the reader to plot each unique reading path and participate in a work's unfolding, requires careful attention to a work of literature at a time when information overload demands an increase in the speed at which we take in that information and when literary scholars have rejected epistemologies

built upon the close study of texts. Anyone who has ever tried to breeze through Talan Memmott's *Lexia to Perplexia* or Stephanie Strickland's *Ballad of Sand and Harry Soot*, therefore, should get the gist of Jan Van Looy and Jan Baetens's argument for a close reading of new media in their collection, *Close Reading New Media: Analyzing Electronic Literature*.

This kind of approach to "texts," however, runs counter to postmodern approaches where theorizing about literature takes precedent over the works themselves and debates over meaning and truth have rendered any meaning and any truth nonexistent. But Van Looy and Baetens' view of close reading holds that it "does not aim to produce *the* meaning of *the* text, but rather to unearth all possible types of ambiguities and irony" (p. 8, authors' emphasis). In this approach they share much in common with literary translators and textual studies scholars who have long argued that the process of careful reading is necessary for the production of a translation or a concordance, for example. But it is, instead, to the semiotics of Jacques Fontanille and the media philosophy of Stanley Cavell, as well as theories suggested by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Marie-Laure Ryan and Lev Manovich, that the authors turn to for support, rather than to New Critics who also argue for close readings of texts. And as such, Van Looy and Baetens place electronic literature squarely into new media rather than literature—a view of electronic literature, of course, suggested in the book's title.

The book is actually a collection of nine essays divided into three sections—Hypertext, Internet Text and Cyber-text—with each section containing three essays. And so, in the first section, one finds analyses of Strickland's *True North*, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* and M.D. Coverley's *Califia*. Section Two offers essays on Geoff Ryman's *253* and Rick Pryll's *Lies*, Raymond Federman and Anne Burdick's *Eating Books*, and another on Ryman's *253*. The final section focuses on Darren Aronofsky's web site for his film *Requiem for a Dream*; the interface for *ebr* (*electronic book review*); and the theoretical views underlying *Grammatron*, by its author Mark Amerika.

It is not clear why Van Looy and Baetens have organized the book in this way. Certainly this reviewer cannot see a discernible rationale for breaking up the essays in sections one and two, since

they both address hypertext works of fiction and poetry thematically, structurally and the like; the reasoning for the third section makes sense since the first two essays look at hypertextual works that are not themselves literary but function as electronic environments in support of new media, and the third offers what could be described as a print-based hypertext. As such, they do follow Espen Aarseth's notion of cyber-text and ergodic reading (pp. 19–21).

So few books have emerged specifically about electronic literature that Van Looy and Baetens' book is a most welcome addition to scholarship in this area. Notable among the essays for clarity and quality of writing are Elisabeth Joyce's essay on *Patchwork Girl*, Raine Koskimaa's on *Califia*, Baetens's essay on *Eating Books* and Van Looy's on 253. The hypertext essay by Amerika, who remains one of the most interesting thinkers in electronic literature, stands out for its ideas and approach.

It would be remiss not to mention that the authors collapse hypertext with electronic literature and both of these with new media, for neither the introduction to the book nor their individual essays make it clear that (1) hypertext is but one type of electronic literature among many, (2) much electronic literature unites new media technologies with old media genres like fiction, poetry, drama and the essay and so remains kin to print-based literature, and (3) hypertext can occur in print media as well as new media. Additionally, the book does little to clear up the confusion surrounding the difference between net art and electronic literature. A case in point: Mark Amerika's *Grammatron*, evoked in the final essay of the book, was recently classified as net art at Ciberart 2004 but also appears as an example of electronic literature in the Electronic Literature Organization Directory.

Despite these issues, those looking for a text to use in the teaching of electronic literature at the graduate level will want to include Van Looy and Baetens's book on the list of required reading. Its message makes for a provocative discussion about approaches to analyzing new media texts.

NEUROLOGY OF THE ARTS: PAINTING, MUSIC, LITERATURE

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From the end of the 20th century a great deal of attention has focused on the brain. Many, as a result, have thought about whether neurology now might provide additional insight into the workings of the artistic mind. Specific cases accentuate this possibility. In the 1970s, for example, Oliver Sacks worked with an artist, Jonathan I., who became colorblind after his car was hit by a truck. Prior to the accident Mr. I. painted abstract, color-rich images and experienced colors when presented with musical tones. After the accident he lost his ability to see color and even lost the experience of color in response to sounds. Despite this, he continued to paint—in black-and-white, refusing to put aside the driving force of his life. More recently, while conducting a class critique in May 1997, the Berkeley artist and professor Katherine Sherwood was struck suddenly with a searing headache. Thirty seconds later, the right half of her body was paralyzed. A thin-walled collection of arteries in the left side of her brain had collapsed, and she suffered a massive stroke. Only 44 years old at the time, Sherwood was determined to return to painting and has done so. One of the most noteworthy aspects of Sherwood's story is the degree to which she, like Mr. I., was resolute in her determination to continue her artistic activities. In her case she did so despite finding that her painting hand was paralyzed; eventually she returned to teaching as well. Sherwood now claims that although her stroke erased some skills, it also led her to learn new ones, such as a new objectivity about her work.

These contemporary cases are recent additions to the literature connecting neurology and art. *Neurology and the Arts*, edited by F. Clifford Rose, brings many topics within this literature to light, combining them in a source book compiled from papers delivered at the 2001 Mansell Bequest Symposium of the Medical Society of London. These essays, I believe, offer great insight into case studies that have not received enough attention to date. Indeed, it is not easy to choose specific highlights from such a high-quality collection that reaches from anatomy to the neurological circumstances of historical artists such as da Vinci, Goya and van Gogh.

George K. York, a neurologist, sets the tone in the opening essay, where he notes that

thinking neurologically is a creative act in the same way that thinking artistically, musically or scientifically is creative. Neurologists may not be able to say where the artistic process is located in the brain, but they can at least have the pleasure of knowing what it is to be creative (p. 9).

These words not only encourage readers to think about creativity per se but also aid in taking the idea of creativity to another level when they come upon later essays that examine the art of well-known neurological figures. For example, Christopher Gardner-Thorpe's essay "The Art of Sir Charles Bell" points out that although best known as an anatomist, physiologist and neurologist, Bell's skills as an artist had a major impact on medicine and anatomical training in art. Indeed, his success in illustrating the body and offering medical descriptions communicated information that otherwise would have been hard to capture when he lived, before the advent of photography. In addition, Gardner-Thorpe's discussion of Bell's watercolor work offered more insight into his feeling for art, although I wish the reproductions had been in color.

Similarly intriguing are the range of ideas that point to neurological references and misconceptions often found within the literature. For example, it is often claimed that the disease depicted in Masaccio's *St. Peter Healing the Sick with His Shadow* (1426–1427) is polio. Yet this is one of several instances where the polio label is probably unlikely, since the first known epidemic of this disease dates to the 18th century. Similarly, there are so many stories surrounding van Gogh that separating the reality from the mythology is an art in itself. F. Clifford Rose's careful analysis of 10 possible diagnoses of van Gogh's aberrant behavior (e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, epilepsy, substance abuse, etc.) was quite illuminating. After reading through these summaries I felt better prepared to evaluate the various conclusions in relation to the artist's long list of maladies.

Perhaps the most noteworthy quality of the book is its style. Laypeople will find the articles accessible, while doctors and neurologists are likely to find the content fascinating. *Leonardo* readers will be particularly delighted with the balanced treatment the authors