ON CREATURELY LIFE:
RILKE, BENJAMIN, SEBOLD

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Creatures come in many different shapes and sizes, especially in the horror genre. In the Cold War era of low-budget “creature features,” there appears a whole bestiary of liminal, monstrous beings—vampires, mummies, werewolves, witches, zombies, giant animals and just plain blobs. Such creatures pose threats to the myriad boundaries that demarcate human cultural, social and political activity (human-animal, natural-artificial, civilized-primitive, domestic-foreign and so on). In other words, such creatures are created, and their creation implies a (sovereign) creator. In some cases the creature is a by-product of “nature,” or rather, of the “revenge of nature.” In other cases the creature is a more explicit creation, through occult powers (the golem), science (Frankenstein’s monster) or psychiatry (mental aberration). Creatures—those beings that appear repulsively nonhuman and exist in close proximity to the animal or beast—are at the same time always created. Perhaps it is this strange “creativity” specific to creatures that both threatens the various cultural, social and political boundaries and, ultimately, contributes to their re-fortification by the end of such films.

The concept of the creature, however, and its relation to a whole set of terms—creation, creator, creativity—are not exclusive to horror films. The concept is, of course, a theological one, formulated at length in medieval Christian theology. In the theological context, creatures are not aberrations but are in the domain of all that is created and living. This is also, it should be noted, a political-theological issue as well, for the relation between the creator and the created is also a relation between a sovereign power and subjects. If all creatures are created by a sovereign creator-God, then what is the relation of the creatures to God? Answering this question meant asking whether or not creatures—and in particular human creatures—contained some aspect of the divine within themselves. Do creatures take part in the singular, divine essence, or is the divine essence in each creature in its entirety? When laterally transposed to the political realm, such questions have interesting ramifications: Is sovereignty held over citizens, divided in parts among all citizens, or is sovereignty within each citizen? While few medieval philosophers posed such questions this directly, the increasing formalization of the concept of the creature continued to be linked to ideas of political-theological sovereignty. By the time of Bonaventure and Aquinas, the derivation and dependence of creatures on a sovereign creator enabled a host of related concepts—the “Great Chain of Being,” as well as the introduction of quasi-medical terminology of the “corruption,” “pollution” and “pestilences” of the human creature.

Eric L. Santner’s On Creaturally Life deals with neither of these kinds of creatures. This omission, however, is itself noteworthy. The uniqueness of Santner’s book is to have articulated the contours of the space between the early modern, onto-theological creature and the contemporary, cultural representations of the monstrous. To say that Santner’s book identifies the status of the “creaturesly” in modernity only begins to get at the spaces opened up by On Creaturally Life.

In contrast to the medieval-Christian tradition, in which the creature is always derived from and striving toward the divine, Santner focuses on a modern, German-Jewish, literary-philosophical tradition (Kafka, Benjamin, Scholem, Rosenzweig, Celan), in which the creature is precisely the life that is exposed and rendered vulnerable.

For these writers . . . creaturesly life . . . the peculiar proximity of the human to the animal at the very point of their radical difference—is a product not simply of man’s thrownness into the (enigmatic) “openness of Being” but of his exposure to a traumatic dimension of political power and social bonds whose structures have undergone radical transformations in modernity.

In the opening sections of his book, Santner pays particular attention to the work of Rilke and Heidegger as they each engage the question of the creature. For Rilke, animals participate in what he famously calls “the open,” that mode of uninhibited existence in rela...
is this exposure to an opaque sovereign. If animals only exist in an environment, then human beings inhabit a world in which individuated beings come to presence in their Being. Thus animals are, in Heidegger’s inimitable formulation, “poor-in-world,” while humans are “world-building.” Animals are captivated by a generalized exteriority to which they have no access, an “exposure to alterity” that remains opaque.

For Santner, the importance of the German-Jewish tradition he discusses is that this being “poor-in-world,” this exposure to an opaque alterity, is rendered in an explicitly political light. Creaturely life is not simply animal life, and neither does it describe the dialectics of the human-animal boundary. Creaturely life is the (sovereign) creation of a poor-in-world within the domain of the human that remains human—and yet captivated in a way that characterizes animal life.

The creature is bare life exposed before the sovereign exception. The creature is created by a sovereign creator, and creaturely life is what is in fact produced in this state of exception. If, using Heidegger’s terms, human beings are “world-building,” then what is built is this exposure to an opaque sovereign power. “What I am calling creaturely life is the life that is, so to speak, called into being, ex-cited, by exposure to the peculiar ‘creativity’ associated with this threshold of law and nonlaw” (p. 15).

In a strange way, then, the “poor-in-world” state that characterizes animal life is produced—created—within the human, in relation to the sovereign exception that forever remains opaque.

This process takes many different forms, and much of Santner’s literary exegeses are directed at the elucidation of creaturely life. In Kafka, for instance, the creature is subjected neither to God nor to a secular sovereign power, but to the distributed anonymity of the law, a law that is everywhere and nowhere at once (what Santner calls “sovereign jouissance”). Similarly, the contemporary German author W.C. Sebald offers an understanding of creaturely life as it is lived through the “spectral materialism” of urban spaces, discarded commodities and media such as photography.

While Santner calls attention to the political dimensions of the ongoing creation of creaturely life, his project also aims at seeking out modes of intervening in that process—a kind of counter-creativity, “some way of uncoupling from the mode of subjectivity/subjectivization.” It is in this context that Benjamin’s notion of “natural history” is central for Santner. Natural history refers, that is, not to the fact that nature also has a history, but to the fact that the artifacts of human history tend to acquire an aspect of mute, natural being at the point where they begin to lose their place in a stable form of life (think of the process whereby architectural ruins are reclaimed by nature).

Through Santner’s literary constellations, creaturely life is seen also to harbor within itself a form of resistance (“melancholic immersion in creaturely life and ethicopolitical intervention into that very dimension”). However, it is ultimately tied up with the sovereign exception, and thus the entire pair is what must be questioned. The real dynamic in Santner’s proposition, therefore, is between memory and oblivion, and the real challenge is the dynamics of politics, a notion of change that is neither that of modernity (e.g. therapy, moving on, getting over, making progress) nor that of a critique of or dismissal of modernity (be it through nostalgia, immanent critique, or even nihilism).

On Creatively Life will likely be read by those who have read Agamben’s Homo Sacer and The State of Exception, or Michel Foucault’s recently published lectures at the Collège de France, or the recent translations of Carl Schmitt’s work. But I would argue, however, that Santner’s book invites a much wider readership. The concerns of the creature presented here open onto other areas of interest, including the extensive and diverse writings on “animality” and contemporary philosophy’s engagement with religion (Badiou, Taubes, Zizek), as well as the ways in which contemporary art engages the life sciences (including, but not limited to, “bio-art”). On Creatively Life does, it is true, participate in an ongoing dialogue concerning the state of exception, sovereign power, “bare life,” biopolitics and so on. However, by reframing this dialogue in terms of the creaturely, Santner asks us to think of the question of sovereignty as inseparable from the question of animality, and to seek ways of critically intervening in what Agamben calls “the anthropological machine.”

**AMONG THE JASMINE TREES: MUSIC AND MODERNITY IN CONTEMPORARY SYRIA**


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Among the Jasmine Trees is a hauntingly beautiful example of all that is best in contemporary anthropology and ethnomusicology and their mutual nexus with performance studies and ideas of embodied knowledge. It is also an important book for those interested in ethnographic studies of the contemporary Arab world and of how cultural heritage is being used to express alternative forms of modernity that draw on sentiment and emotion.

Chapter One introduces the reader to Aleppo, where the study was conducted. It relates why Aleppo is a critical site for studying tarab music: It has long been seen as the cradle of traditional Arab music, and tarab music itself is seen as a quintessentially Arabic tradition connecting contemporary Syrian music back to the golden age of Levantine culture. Chapter Two intro-
ducers a key concept that the author elaborates upon in each chapter: authenticity. Holt Shannon relates how while in the past, authenticity signified “genuineness,” “rootedness,” fixedness, permanence,” and lineage,” today its meaning has shifted such that modernity has become the essence of authenticity. The shock of modernity has led to a revival in which alternative modernities are emerging through the creative use of cultural heritage, which involves the construction, performance and contestation of musical authenticity.

Accordingly, Chapters Three, Five and Six focus on different aspects of authenticity in tarab music. While Chapter Three focuses on the role of history, cultural memory and the emotions in the construction of authenticity, Chapter Five focuses on what constitutes an authentic performance and how authenticity is performed. Chapter Six focuses on the relationship between sentiment and authenticity in tarab music. The intervening chapter, Chapter Four, examines the all-important dhikr ceremony, which is a ritual invocation and remembrance of God and is especially important for understanding the historical roots of “authentic” Arab music, as well as for engaging the notion of body memory, which is of central importance to this study and the music itself. All in all then, this is very much a study of authenticity and is, I believe, currently the most detailed case study of authenticity to be found in the ethnographic literature.

The study succeeds admirably in showing how musical authenticity is imagined, constructed, performed, embodied and contested. It closely examines the genealogy of the key terms authenticity, heritage and modernity in the Arab world and provides a nuanced study of the different uses of origins in constructing alternative narratives of authenticity. It also provides a convincing account of how Syrian musicians are engaged in a project of performing and imagining an alternative modernity that emphasizes emotion over rationality.

In all this, two ethnographic incidents are extremely compelling examples of the difficulties and pleasures involved in conducting anthropological fieldwork.

The first incident relates the author’s search for dhikr, his difficulties in getting invited to such a performance and the virtually mystical way in which he eventually experienced it. In this it is a classic example of the strength of humanistic anthropology to leave the reader with the experience of having been there and having come to understand something of the, dare I say, “authentic” Other. The second incident involves Holt Shannon’s personal experience of embodied knowledge, in which, through the inexplicable failure of his recording equipment, he came to have a deep emotional experience of just how important embodied knowledge is, of how it is “written on the back of the heart.” For all this, and more, this study certainly deserved the Kerr Award, but there is a major problem at hand as regards the anthropology of authenticity.

Holt Shannon reveals how contemporary Syrian artists consider authenticity as a negative aesthetic and how it is a fundamentally important determinant of their musical experience in which the authentic is always opposed to the inauthentic. In this, at the behest of his informant, Holt Shannon defiantly returns us to Adorno—but at a price, for the absence of engagement with the anthropological research on authenticity is stunning. It will be fascinating to see how anthropologists invested in authenticity in such different ways to Holt Shannon will respond to this work.

It is above all fascinating to see how Holt Shannon is so deeply committed to Sapi’s and Adorno’s ideas, which have been so thoroughly rejected in postmodernist anthropology and cultural studies. One possible reason for this is that the study ultimately relies on an essentialist conception of authenticity as a negative aesthetic. In this, Holt Shannon’s intellectual inheritance lies within the classical tradition of Adorno’s The Jargon of Authenticity (1973), Sapi’s Adorno-esque notion of the “genuine” versus the “spurious,” Lionel Trilling’s important work Sincerity and Authenticity (1972) and Suzanne Langer’s all-important study Feeling and Form (1953). Drawing on subsequent ethnomusicological studies that engage the topic of authenticity, the axioms on authenticity developed in anthropology are nevertheless all sensitively evoked. These include the constructivist and emergent nature of reality, the importance of discourse, the nature of culture as fractured and contested, the invention of tradition and the importance of ambiguity, contradiction and paradox in which all that was formerly considered solid has melted into air.

Despite this fundamental contradiction, this study perhaps deserves to become a classic of early 21st-century ethnography. In it, we see how intellectuals and musicians reflect upon and theorize the imagined tension between the present and the past and the ways in which different subject positions deploy and experience the notion of the authentic versus the inauthentic. Though it will be interesting to see how anthropologists working on authenticity react to it, having been so utterly left out of the equation, it will be more interesting still to see how Arab intellectuals respond to this work and how Muslim tarab audiences in Africa and Asia respond to it in terms of its silence on how Syrian women and the rest of the Islamic world experience tarab.

SURREALISM AND CINEMA


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Cinema became an art during the first decades of the previous century. Its inspirations are universal in scope, intimate in effect, with nearly mythic implications. That digital technologies are now transforming cinema by displacing access to films from the social space of a theater to the private space of the home has not, as yet, given us more than that.

What we have in film, however, and some of the best of what we have, still seems to surge from an encounter that surrealism has helped to define. Call it an encounter between dream and reality, desire and repression, individual freedom and collective identity, or something similar to this—it is there before us, implicating our struggles, our failures and our triumphs.

How, then, do surrealists interpret, and continued to interpret, the cinema, from Luis Buñuel to Jan Sánckmajer? What does Michael Richardson’s book add to this discussion?

At the very least, Richardson begins where most other commentators leave off. As an academic close to contemporary surrealism, he shares something of the sensibility within each director he examines via these three points: that...
surrealist cinema animates a subversion of prevailing modes, from the popular to the “avant-garde”; that anything is usable; and that a lucid clarity about relationships—between humans, humans and animals, and humans and things—prevails.

From Jacques Prevert to Jean Vigo, Nelley Kaplan, Walerian Borowczyk, Fernando Arrabal, Roland Topor and Wojciech Has, Richardson tracks their contributions. Not to foreclose on precursors and how surrealism has influenced directors who carry some of its charm in their works, Richardson also discusses Fuellade, von Sternberg, Herzog, Wenders, Ruiz and others. In his intriguing chapter on the documentary, he notes the influence of the movement in the striking Jean Painlevé, who made films on the natural world for scientists, with a career spanning 5 decades.

There is something in this monograph, however, that brings with it a sense of possibilities gained, lost and just partially refuged. That it is far from complete, with too many sketches of this or that filmmaker, including the Brothers Quay, whose hermetic worlds are more important than Richardson will admit, is perhaps a sign of the times. In our consent to find in the cinema a work played for the price of a ticket, we have come to a verge where screens too often elude us. As a momentary hiatus in our usual complacency, where images and stories circulate endlessly, film does not so much restore our reality to us as glance off it. However honest the film, clear to its intent and production values, I can think of few that provoke an experience we must endure, that evoces our beliefs, and that enlivens without qualification. Why is it that we refer to L’Age d’or so much as a turning point? Is our attraction to this film simply nostalgic? I do not think so. It is not that we yearn for a cry equal to that which we recognize here, but that our current films generally leave us wanting. They are beautiful, moving, demanding, horrifying, critical, funny and altogether civilized. They are films that have slipped into a century, much like the last, with conflagration knocking on the door.

What filmmaker will open that door, as much to the world as to how we know the world through film, and find there a vision of life, of living, masked, unmasked, it no longer matters, save that it reveals us uniquely?

That is the promise of surrealism and the cinema. It is also a promise of the kind of critique that Richardson casts over the filmmakers and films he discusses, within the context of their historical moments. Fortunately, it is a promise that neither cinema nor history, nor the history of cinema, exhausts.

**NEW MEDIA POETICS: CONTEXTS, TECHNOTEXTS, AND THEORIES**

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So fast come the changes in digital technology, and so rapid also are their impact on culture, that the theoretical knowledge of what we do and learn by simply putting things into practice stays inevitably far beyond the practical knowledge of it. The phenomenon of such a gap between the practical and the theoretical, or the instinctive and the categorical, is far from new, and it has been formulated with impressive acuteness by Gertrude Stein in a famous lecture delivered at Amherst College. Taking as its starting point Stein’s insights on the fact that “what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything,” this intelligent and useful volume, brilliantly introduced by Adelaide Morris and carefully edited by herself and Thomas Swiss, makes a more than welcome attempt to bridge the gap between the two forms of knowledge mentioned above.

Today’s practice is clearly on the side of Web 2.0, which we continue to call the “interactive” version of the Internet, yet this term is definitely inappropriate to catch what’s new in the shift toward newer uses of the Internet and other digital technologies and environments. The notion of interactivity has been put into question by several major theoreticians (the best-known of them being Espen Aarseth) of the “pre-” Web 2.0 applications, and various contributors to *New Media Poetics* attack it fiercely. However, this collection does not limit itself to denounce the rearview mirror (to follow the metaphor coined by Marshall McLuhan) that helps us to enter the future when we rely too much upon the conceptual tool of interactivity. It introduces also a whole series of alternative concepts that better fit our current practices of digital writing.

Among these concepts, the most salient are obviously those of “experience” and “temporality.” The first, experience, aims at broadening the already traditional idea of immersion that is often associated with digital culture. Yet contrary to the idea of immersion, which involves an idea of loss as well as completeness (one enters completely a fictional world, in which to behave as in real life), “experience” hints at a broader range of sensations and thoughts, in which self-reflexivity and the splitting of the self are also present. Also, contrary to the more aesthetic approach of the digital sign as “mobile” and “dynamic” (in comparison with the so-called fixity of signs in print culture), the notion of “temporality” transfers the temporal dynamics to all the features and aspects of digital communication (including the subject itself and his or her making sense of the active shaping of the signs during the digital experience).

*New Media Poetics* also takes sides in favor of a medium-specific approach to the field, which stands in sharp contrast to the stereotyped ecumenical vision of an overall “multimedia” approach to digital culture of the 1990s. By doing so, the book follows the tendency launched by Lev Manovich and Katherine Hayles, among others, to avoid fashionable discourses on post-medium hybridization and to foreground instead the multiple forces that reshape medium-specificity in the digital age. Hayles’s ideas on “technotextuality”...
(i.e. the basic stance that the text is a material object molded by the formal characteristics of its carrier and communicational context) are here rightly passed on to new media poetry.

New Media Poetics offers the best currently available overview of poetry in the new media age (it continues thus the groundbreaking work on poetry and media by Marjorie Perloff and Katherine Hayles, both present in this book). In addition, it also makes room for authors who are deeply committed to digital writing themselves (I am thinking here of authors such as Kenneth Goldsmith, Talan Memmott and John Cayley). Such a move is extremely valuable. First, it helps to correct the too-rapidly institutionalized canon of the first-generation digital works: thanks to books like this, with a focus on Memmott's Learn to Perplex or Cayley's RiverIsland, it should become possible to leave behind the unhappily so-called golden age of hyperfiction still deeply rooted in classic teleological narrative and print culture (see Michael Joyce’s Afternoon, now part of the Norton anthology). Second, it contributes also to the sobering observation that there is much more to find on the Internet than just the newest, the latest and the hottest. The archival function of the Internet is at least as important, not just for new media poetry, but for new poetry tout court. Thanks to the digital archive and its possibilities for open and free access (the web site that comes here to mind is, of course, UbuWeb) one can rediscover many aspects and examples of avant-garde writing, and one does it in a way that is much more complete than ever before, both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view: We point out, the book's original title was “Genes in Development”—reflecting Sarkar’s point and make us wake up! “None of the promises of Gilbert's radical genetic reductionism have been borne out. Proponents of the HGP promised enormous immediate medical benefits. There have been none” (p. 87).

Further on in Chapter 3, Sarkar argues that DNA (and hence the gene) can no longer be seen as the locus that is responsible for the structure, behavior and diversity of living entities. As I suggested earlier, this is a challenging book. It will be interesting to see if in the near future the arguments presented attract sound refutation from scientists and philosophers working specifically in this area.

The last two chapters of the book deal with some of the ethical and social concerns regarding the re-reading of molecular biology. I would have liked to have seen this section contain another two or three essays to thoroughly flesh out this aspect of the genetic “game.” I understand there is a limit to book size but this recommendation would not have made the book unmanageable.
in size and would have thoroughly rounded it out.

This minor criticism aside, *Genes in Development* will become a standard text in the field for both students and scientists at the highest level of research. I also believe it will be a gold mine for science writers and journalists who are the intermediaries between the scientists’ laboratories and our lounge rooms.

**BOURDIEU AND THE JOURNALISTIC FIELD**


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When it comes to Pierre Bourdieu and Marxism, two misunderstandings are common. The first takes as a premise that Bourdieu was a reductionist thinker who did not consider art and culture to have any autonomous value at all. Out of this premise, Bourdieus-style sociology is accused of trivializing culture and leveling the debate. The other misunderstanding is completely opposed to the first. Its premise is that Bourdieu, just like the Marxists of the Frankfurt school, adheres to an elitist interpretation of political economy.

It would be quite hard to hold on to such misunderstandings after reading *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. The book is the result of a project that started in 1999 with the aim of bringing together French and American scholars studying recent changes in the relations between news media and politics. The two editors, Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, begin by introducing some of Bourdieu’s key concepts—such as “field” and “habitus”—as well as describing the academic and historical conditions for the reception of his theories in the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-American world. In doing so, they also describe some of the competing alternatives, such as “differentiation theory.”

In his posthumous contribution, Bourdieu expresses his view on the degree of “autonomy” (or independence) and “heteronomy” (or dependence) of the journalistic field. He also puts forward the two general hypotheses that are discussed and tested throughout the book, namely (1) that the journalistic field is “immersed” in the political field, and (2) that the journalistic field is becoming increasingly heteronomous (that is, dependent on economic and political interests), at the same time as the autonomy of other fields (such as the social science field) is weakened by the heavy dominance and influence exerted by the journalistic field.

Of the other contributions, I would like to focus on Julian Duval’s report on a project in which the field of economic journalism in France was mapped in accordance with statistical methods. The report shows that in this field and in this national context, there is a clear divide between three main groups of mediums. The first belongs to the intellectual and specialized pole of the field; the second belongs to the commercial and specialized pole; and the third belongs to the commercial and popular pole.

Duval’s report also demonstrates, in detail and with utmost clarity, how an analysis of this kind is carefully built up from a number of empirical variables. Because of the solid empirical ground, Duval can safely conclude that the development of economic journalism in France confirms Bourdieu’s hypotheses—the economic sections of the dominant media adhere to the dominant political ideology (namely that of market liberalism), and taken as a whole the autonomy of economic journalism in relation to the financial world has weakened. The immersion of the journalistic field in the political field could not be shown more clearly.

The book ends with three “Critical Perspectives,” in which the previous topics and contributions are discussed. Erik Neveu describes and refutes some common misunderstandings regarding Bourdieu (for example the “Frankfurt” one). Michael Schudson represents a more skeptical orientation in his critique of the concept of “autonomy.” Referring to some striking American examples, he asks to what extent “autonomy” is just another word for not having to admit one’s own faults.

Daniel C. Hallin, finally, contrasts field theory with the “differentiation theory” of Jeffrey Alexander (see above). He concludes that the deterministic character of differentiation theory (media always moving towards greater differentiation) is one of its weakest points, and that it has to be contrasted or supplemented by field theory. On the other hand, he also concludes that while the analysis of power relations remains a great opportunity with field theory, the nature of journalists’ own power and the relations between the journalistic field and the political field still needs to be clarified.

This is a useful book that really shows how Bourdieu-style sociology can be put to work in the analysis of new fields (i.e. “new” in the context of field analysis). From the perspective of humanities and cultural studies, we should hope that an analysis similar to the one that Duval performs on economic journalism could be applied also to cultural journalism. There is also reason to hope for an intensified debate on the issue that remains the least explicit point in this book, namely to what extent sociology in the spirit of Bourdieu could and should be a weapon for political change.

**THE PROSTHETIC IMPULSE: FROM A POSTHUMAN PRESENT TO A BIOCULTURAL FUTURE**


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It is quite rare to have the privilege of reviewing a book the contents of which represent scholarship at the highest level and that is also written extremely well. This is one such book. Considering the complexity of the subject matter, both the contributors and the editors are to be congratulated in providing the reader with an interesting,
pleasurable and enlightening experience. This book is not concerned with current high technologies per se for extending ourselves into a posthuman-style technoculture. The book tends to play down the rather populist, ill-conceived notion of the majority of us being uploaded to super bionic bodies, riddled with nanobots and leaving our biological, evolutionary inheritance behind completely.

The Prosthetic Impulse, in part due to this non-hysterical approach, is like a breath of fresh air in the field of cyborg, posthuman, post-biological literature, much of which has become bogged down in uncritical rehashed tropes and over-enthusiastic hype for every new plastic-encased electronic prosthesis that is put in or added on to our bodies. This book discusses and investigates prosthesis in its broadest sense, especially from a contemporary cultural theoretical point of view, rather than from a medical or engineering perspective. Together with contributions from cultural and disability studies, the book considers “prosthesis as both a literal, material, and phenomenological concern and a metaphorical, theoretical, and philosophical one” (pp. 256–260).

The book contains 13 chapters divided into two sections. The first section, Carnality: Between Phenomenology and the Bicultural, covers an enticingly diverse range of topics, including Aimee Mullins’s erotic glass legs, the prosthetics of war, stumped genes and disappearing bugs (both literal and metaphorical). The second section, Assembling: Internalization, Externalization, discusses prosthesis more as a cultural phenomenon through the discourse of such disciplines as evolution, psychoanalysis and art. There are black-and-white illustrations relevant to each contributor’s essay, an introduction by the editors, Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra, and a list of contributors.

This book will become essential reading for all scholars and students involved across the broad range of disciplines that prosthetics covers. The main reason for this is the depth of critical analysis the book brings to the overall problem of prosthetics. Almost all essays are at pains to point out that “the prosthetic impulse” involves far more complex issues than simply, for example, constructing an aid to regain mobility. Humans have become, over hundreds of thousands of years, a technological species, and thus our tools (extensions of our bodies) can rightly be considered prostheses.

Quite a few of the essays in this volume ground their discussion in a broad approach to prosthetics throughout history. Simply stated, virtually everything we have created, through extending our very limited physical bodies, to growing large brains, to externalizing our internal dialogues and visions, comes under the rubric of prosthetics.

“The prosthetic is not a mere extension of the human body; it is the constitution of this body qua ‘human’” (p. 7).

As the editors point out, the essays take an eclectic approach, “drawing on historical and theoretical methodologies from gender studies and philosophy, literary criticisms and visual culture, psychoanalysis and deconstruction, critical race studies, cybertheory, and phenomenology” (p. 7).

The more sophisticated and smaller of computers become and the further we advance in high-body technologies (such as gene manipulation therapies), the more pressing and urgent will become the need for a broad multidisciplinary discussion and critical investigation into “the prosthetic impulse.” This book will surely become a respected reference work in this field.

**FOUNDATIONS OF COMPUTATIONAL VISUALISTICS**


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Some years ago, the department of computer science at the University of Magdeburg developed a completely new degree program called Computational Visualistics as an alternative to studies in digital media. Visualistics is a blend of visual and linguistic studies that includes how humans express what they perceive, feel, experience and create with their computational media. It has points of intersection also with a myriad of fields, such as computer vision, cognitive science, communication, mathematics, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, history of art, aesthetics and semiotics. This book is conceived as a map of questions, such as what images are for computer science and their uses. Other topics treated in the book include image processing, object models, interactivity, image databases, virtual architecture and mental images.

Inside one can find an introduction to the old concerns regarding the relationship between symbol and icon, word and image, chains of signs and the field of signs, time and space that have caused different degrees of unrest, and academic, cultural and religious quarrels throughout the years. Our symbols will continue to question our concepts of the universal and the particular, material and spiritual and our current scientific paradigms.

Schirra also explains how images have become a central part of our culture that not only transforms information but also connects and simultaneously separates people. There are discussions about various aspects of the image such as resemblance, mimicry, perception, reflection, and deception.

**Foundations of Computational Visualistics** has practical information for computational graphics and interactive installations. The main interest is not just data but the process of acquiring knowledge and its scientific application in a communicational context.

It is common to have discussions about whether text is more adequate to represent reality and acquire knowledge or if it has an unfair prevalence over the image both in text-based computer code and academic discourse. The text in the book uses word signs in order to understand picture signs. The book does not favor word over image or vice versa but deals with the formalization of what can be called an image data type that deals with pictures represented by algorithmic artifacts borrowing some linguistic terms, such as syntax, the order of words; semantics, the meaning of words; and pragmatics, the use of language for communication in a social context. Thus, the data type “image” is defined using picture syntax, which deals with image processing and the order of pixels; picture semantics, which deals with geometric models, visual gestalts and computer vision assimilated as “image understanding”; and finally picture pragmatics, which deals with authenticity (whether the apparent sender of a message is the real sender or not) and interactivity.

The general approach is hybrid, but it is more focused towards graphic engineers. It also concisely analyzes some interactive artworks in Chapter 4, entitled “The Generic Data Type ‘Image’: General Aspects,” under the
The book has a good deal of both new and specialized terminology and so is suitable for a class curriculum in the topic that can expand the ideas described with more examples. Although one can find algorithms for image processing and information visualization, it is not necessary to have a deep mathematical background to read it.

**KLIMT, SCHIELE, MOSER, KOKOSCHKA: VIENNA 1900**


Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens, Department of Art, University of Northern Iowa. E-mail: <ballast@netins.net>.

In Western art history, innovations called “Modernist” are almost exclusively credited to artists working in Paris at the beginning of the 20th century. Inspired by French Impressionism and the Post-Impressionist work of Cézanne, their efforts coalesced to form fauvism and cubism—whereupon everything spun off from there. At least that is the typical view, so much so that until a few years ago, according to this book, the work of such prominent Austrian artists as Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele, both world famous, had only once been shown in France. This rich, large format volume (with ample full-color plates throughout) and the exhibition it documents (held at the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais in Paris in the fall of 2005–2006) were attempts to question the usual view that Modernism emerged solely (or at least primarily) from Impressionism, but instead (according to Serge Lemoine) “to see how other trends—just as important and just as innovative—found outlets in France and other parts of Europe.”

Not surprisingly, the leading contender for this crown of historical leadership is turn-of-the-century Vienna, which is ably represented here by four extraordinary Modernists: Klimt, Schiele, Koloman Moser and Oskar Kokoschka. Schiele and Kokoschka were largely painters (with occasional excursions into poster design), while Klimt and, especially, Moser were not only painters but also spent considerable time designing utilitarian forms such as furniture, murals, jewelry and clothing (indeed, they were linked with a famous cooperative called the Wiener Werkstätte). In other words, they were designers (or, disparagingly, “commercial artists”), as distinct from supposedly uncompromising fine artists who made only self-expressive, non-functional art, among them those we worship now as the purveyors of Modernism. If Klimt, Schiele and their associates have been snubbed in art history (and that may very well be the case), it may not only be because they were not French, but also, as much or more so, because they dared to step outside the category of fine art. Art, as Gloria Steinem once said, is “what men created,” while design and crafts (traditionally known as the decorative arts) were objects “made by women and natives.”

One of the virtues of this book (which makes it unusual and worthy as well) is its deliberate emphasis on the embedded geometric plans that appear in the work of these Austrian artists. As is pointed out, for example, there is an uncanny resemblance between certain compositions by Klimt and James A.M. Whistler. Both these artists saw abstractly and, to some extent, they blazed the trail for non-pictorial “abstract art.” Yet, Whistler (world famous for his painting of his mother) is taken no more seriously than Klimt or Schiele, in part because he too is seen as having drifted away from “High Art” in order to dawdle in craft and design. Another way this book stands out is that it looks very carefully at the paintings of Koloman Moser. It discusses not his Wiener Werkstätte furniture, jewelry, posters and so on (he was remarkably versatile), but, instead, looks exclusively at his paintings and shows that his work was influenced by the Swiss-born painter Ferdinand Hodler (who is himself a fascinating subject). One last point: Whenever it features a full-page reproduction of a painting, this book includes, on the opposite page, a brief but highly informative text about its historical and biographical contexts, along with helpful notes about how we, the viewers, might look at it.

(Reprinted by permission from Ballast Quarterly Review from Vol. 21, No. 3 [Spring 2006].)

**THE NEW MEDIUM OF PRINT: MATERIAL COMMUNICATION IN THE INTERNET AGE**


Reviewed by Kathleen Quillian, U.S.A. E-mail: <kathleen@dprojx.org>.

After so much theorizing about the death of print in the age of digital media, it is clear that not only will print never die, but that it has also become an irreducible element in the pursuit of global communications. In the age of information, the savvy media producer knows that in order to build a successful communications campaign, he or she must harness the dynamics of a multi-channel communications structure if all intended and potential audiences are to be reached. The New Medium of Print, by Frank Cost, makes for a good handbook to embark on the vast and variable seas of contemporary information adventure.

The first half of the book examines the “old” medium of print—the various processes, techniques and histories of print communications—while the second half inspects the uses of print, including much speculation about its relevance in the age of the Internet. Much of the discussion in the book revolves around advertising, since, like it or not, this is the area where the print medium is most industriously and creatively used, thanks to the ingenuity of Benjamin Day, the creator of the “penny press.” This revolutionary 19th-century business model offset the cost of printing with revenue received from businesses to place advertisements in...
the publication. Thus began a lifelong symbiotic relationship between editorial content and advertising—one that continues to this day in ways more complicated than ever. The relationship between economics, consumer culture, editorial content and print media is given much attention in *The New Medium of Print*, in light of today’s global market. After all, in our age of capitalist overconsumption, it takes a lot of ingenuity to make people buy things they do not necessarily need or want. Print media is crucial in all stages of this effort, from advertisements and direct marketing right down to the label on the product. Cost examines not just the uses of print in every stage of the consumer’s journey, but the psychological repercussions of every step along the way—from the first temptations solicited through billboards and direct mail to the navigation of lascivious packaging so abundant in supermarket aisles. Cost also shows how the Internet, with its multi-channel communication platforms, has become an indispensable tool for the advertising industry and how it can be used successfully in tandem with print communications in the ultimate goal of attracting customers.

One would not necessarily think that a book about the medium of print would be so entertaining, but Cost, along with a cornucopia of knowledge and experience in print production, has a very astute sense of humor that he uses throughout the book to flavor his presentation. For instance, explaining the benefits of digital publishing technology, he introduces the topic by saying: “That book you have always wanted to publish of dinner recipes obtained during your recent abduction by aliens can now become a reality.” The humorous language opens up an otherwise dry topic to creative speculation. Another engaging aspect of the book is the use of self-reflection to illustrate the various aspects of print publishing. In a discussion about the various things one can do using digital page design programs, Cost includes a screen shot of the very pages he is creating, allowing the reader to spiral into an esoteric rumination on the practice of page design through desktop technology. By the end of the book Cost engages the reader in a discussion about print on demand (which is the method he used for this book) and theorizes about how best to use the new medium of the Internet to add value and dimension to the traditionally printed book. He invites readers to leave comments on his on-line message board with the promise that the most insightful ones will be included in future editions of the book—easy enough to create through the print-on-demand method because of the immediacy to the author.

It is hard to disagree with Cost’s argument that print media still reigns supreme by virtue of its quiet dignity in the face of fast and furious digital forms of publishing (spam, blogs, e-mail). But with the virtual collapse of space and time on the Internet, value is no longer judged simply by quality, attention to detail or scarcity. Rather, value is a construct, driven by an entire industry filled with advertisers, marketers and big business ideals. Digital technology has opened up new doors in the print industry unheard of even 20 years ago. Accessibility, distribution, cost, material, and production are all shaped by new technology, and Cost makes a focused consideration of all of these elements in the determination of the evolution of the print medium. For anyone interested in embarking on a project that involves printed media or even for those who are interested in simply thinking further about their place in consumer culture, this is a comprehensive and engaging book to consult.

**WIRELESS WRITING IN THE AGE OF MARCONI**


Reviewed by Jan Baetens, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Faculty of Arts, Blijde Inkomststraat 21, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. E-mail: jan.baetens@arts.kuleuven.be.

For several reasons, this is an important book in the field of literature and technology studies. First of all, it opens a completely new object of study, which had been confused until now with the much narrower field of “radio studies” or “radio theory.” Despite the rapidly increasing number of publications on the cultural analysis of technology, the interest in radio, nowadays an extremely fashionable object, has never led to the reappraisal of wireless technology. Yet, the specific features of wireless transmission and wireless culture in general, cannot be denied. In comparison with radio technology, the wireless prevents overemphasis on *aurality* on the one hand while stressing the role of inscription and storage devices on the other hand (it should therefore not come as a surprise that Timothy C. Campbell’s work relies strongly on a Derridean thread). Second, the book also takes a strong stance in the field of media theory in general. Rather than making the impossible choice between *medium specificity* (in the narrow, almost essentialist and dehistoricized sense of the word), and *media hybridization* (as postmodern or deconstructive buzzword), Campbell puts forward the necessary entanglement and cooperation between various specific media (here the main reference is not Derrida but Kittler, although not the Kitter of the great triadic periodizations but the Kittler of the mutual reshaping of technology-driven media).

Besides giving an excellent survey of our actual knowledge on the history of the telegraph, in which it foregrounds the cultural background and the surrounding stories, Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi contains in the very first place a series of well-conceived and very illuminating close readings of some major figures and events of the Marconi age, starting from the experiments of the years 1895–1905 and finishing with Ezra Pound’s Radio Roma broadcasts made from January 1941 to July 1943. In chronological order, the following landmarks and principles are dealt with: the invention of radiotelegraphy by Marconi, the use of wirelessly transmitted speeches by D’Annunzio during the post–World War I occupation of Fiume, the notion of “wireless imagination” in the Futurist writings of Marinetti and the longtime companionship between Pound and the wireless that started at the period of the early *Cantos*.

In each chapter, Campbell is not just interested in the historical and cultural context of the authors and the works he is studying (but even at this level, the material that he has gathered in his book is fascinating and constantly surprising). What he wants to do is tackle a number of theoretical questions, both in the field of media theory and in that of literary studies. Campbell demonstrates very convincingly the intermediary character of all media, be it the “immaterial” wireless transmission technology or the very “old-fashioned”
forms of literary writing. The combination of the words “wireless” and “writing” in the title is not just an easy combination of keywords, but the very essence of how Campbell sees technology as well as literature. Wireless transmission is not materialized communication, but a new way of knitting new and old technologies together in environments that multiply their interactions, and literature is no exception to this rule. The most speaking (sic) example of this view is of course Campbell’s global reinterpretation of Pound’s Cantos, which he reads in the light of what was really new in the wireless: the necessity for the transmitter to create meaning by manipulating the frequencies of the otherwise meaningless and conflicting sound waves that came through the air. Digging up many unknown or completely forgotten documents, Campbell’s readings offer many new insights into the authors he is studying, and his work encourages the reader to go back to the texts themselves in order to read them afresh, which is always the best compliment one can make to literary or cultural criticism.

At a more historical level, Campbell confronts also the complex question of the relationships between technology and fascism. This question is not new, yet the author manages to define quite a new approach to it, by relying exactly on what is the major point of his work, namely the mutual implication of writing and technology (of technology as writing and writing as technology). Rereading Derrida’s texts on the “apocalyptic tone” (and on apocalypse in general) as well as Rudolf Arnheim’s paintings of the 19th century because

The Fourth Dimension in Relativity, Cubism, and Modern Thought


Reviewed by Amy Ione, The Diatope Institute. E-mail: <ione@diatope.com>.

Shadows of Reality is a book that not only makes a good first impression but also follows through as one becomes better acquainted with it. Written by Tony Robbin, whose innovative art and computer visualizations of hyperspace have contributed to efforts to conceptualize other dimensions, the text provides a revisionist math history as well as a revisionist art history. This work, the latest in a series of works by Robbin probing the fourth dimension, builds on his earlier studies. In it, Robbin investigates with more specificity how dimensional research contributes to our comprehension of different models of the fourth dimension and examines their applications to art and physics. A foundational component of this cross-disciplinary revision is the author’s introduction of the distinction between what he terms the slicing, or Flatland, model compared to the projection, or shadow, model. On the one hand, the strength of the slicing model is its grounding in calculus, which makes it mathematically self-consistent. Thus, the slicing model is often taken to be an accurate, complete and exclusive representation of fourth-dimensional reality. On the other hand, the projection (or shadow) model is also self-consistent and mathematically true. Yet, it nonetheless offers a parallel approach. What is key here is that this second view enriches geometry by offering a system that makes infinity a part of space. This not only changes the geometry but, more significantly in Robbin’s view, allows for a presentation more like the way space is.

Mathematicians and philosophers first explored and comprehended the two competing models during the 19th century. Today, the slicing or Flatland model is best seen as a God’s-eye view, popularly presented by E.A. Abbott in his classic 1884 book, Flatland. Abbott described the experience of seeing a higher dimension as a direct experience, the kind in which the insight is only conceptualized through inference.

Essentially, this translates into the idea that a 4D world is to our space as a 3D world is to a Flatlander. While an effective analogy, it largely ignores the use of projective techniques to study 4D figures and spaces. Robbin clarifies that the projective alternative provides a more mathematical orientation, or a shadow model. The value he places on this latter approach comes through in his decision to title this book Shadows of Reality.

In Shadows of Reality, historical sections, analysis of the tensions between the two models, and the examination of the uses and misuses of the two models in popular discussions are presented insightfully. The comprehensive approach to fourth-dimensional thinking is impressive, as is the overview explaining why the powerful role of projective geometry in the development of current mathematical ideas was long overlooked. Particularly thought-provoking is Robbin’s review of how projective ideas are the source of some of today’s most exciting developments in art, math, physics and computer visualization. Perhaps what is most needed in our general popular discussions are the sections in which Robbin proposes that our attachment to the slicing model is essentially a conceptual block that hinders progress in understanding contemporary models of space-time. Also of note is Robbin’s attention to detail, as evident in the many sidebars and well-chosen visuals. These effectively supplement the text and add to the well-developed arguments, which at times become quite difficult.

Robbin begins with an outline of historical theories of 4D geometry, including the work and pioneering drawings of Washington Irving Stringham, Pieter Henderick Schoute and Esprit Jouffret. Integrating a number of case studies, Part One examines past uses of the projective model. Here Robbin walks us through early 20th-century ideas, examples of painting and various constructions of the fourth dimension, drawing upon his own research and relevant studies by art historians (e.g. Linda Henderson, Pierre Daix and Josep Palau I Fabre) and historians of science (e.g. Arthur I. Miller). I particularly liked how this author makes the case that Picasso’s Les Demoiselles d’Avignon (1907), frequently described as the first important painting of the 20th century, should perhaps be characterized as the last important painting of the 19th century because
the themes that it attempts to fuse are of the 19th century. Placing it next to Picasso’s Portrait d’Ambroise Vollard (1910), we see the latter contains an exaggeration of color and line that breaks from the more generic formalism evident in Les Demoiselles d’Avignon. Evaluating the visual evidence from his perspective as a painter, Robbin concludes that Picasso adopted the methods of the mathematician E. Jouffret in 1910 and essentially used the projection model to invent cubism. Also noteworthy is how well this author fleshes out Minkowskii’s work. Briefly, Robbin claims that Minkowski had 4D projective geometry in mind when he structured special relativity.

A short course in projective geometry, the Entr’acte, separates the historical studies from the presentation of contemporary uses of the projective model (Part Two). Turning to the projection model, the latter part of the book examines creative ideas about space in contemporary mathematics such as twisters, quasicrystals and quantum topology. Given the complexity of this material, however, I am not prepared to evaluate his research in detail. Suffice it to say that the concepts would have certainly translated better to a mathematician. As a layperson, I found the scope and intelligence within this part (and the book as a whole) breathtaking as well as challenging. This author goes far beyond confronting how a 2D model can be an accurate representation of 4D reality (if there is one). He offers examples that point to ways of viewing dimensions and grapples with how our models might co-exist and intersect. He reminds the reader that a key to the projection model is building an understanding of how the tesseract is a 3D perspective projection of a 4D hypercube and reaches beyond this as well. After an initial review of the ideas, I am not certain I integrally grasped the possibilities in their entirety.

The translation problem I encountered was not only within the specialized sections and the density of the material. In some cases I found myself continually re-thinking my conclusions as to how the author was defining the fourth dimension. It was clear that some things that happen in space could not be reduced to the slicing model. I also had no problem with his proposal that the projective model is not merely an alternative but often a requirement in representing the fourth dimension.

Less clear are his definitions of large concepts such as time and space-time, which seemed to be viewed through several lenses. The difficulty in comprehending the technical meaning(s) he wished to present led me to ask why we lack firm definitions and how this ambivalence has muddled our thought. These are not questions I feel qualified to answer. I do, however, feel comfortable stating that the definitional anomalies that result from the current state of science seem to put some arguments at cross-purposes in the ongoing discussions of other dimensions. In terms of Shadows of Reality, the terminological challenge was coupled with the thought that more and more multidimensional reality theories keep cropping up these days and are now being debated (e.g., string theory). With this in mind, I wish there had been additional material on the range of competing multidimensional proposals. This is not to negate the study’s contributions. Rather, with a range of dimensional variations now emerging to address the unknowns and theoretical challenges, I think we are remiss if we do not also ask ourselves if (whether) we are making real progress. That said, the book offers much to ponder and is definitely a contribution to the “dimensional” dialogue.

From another perspective, as a visual artist, I found the strength of the book to be within its visual component. Since the author’s effort to clarify many complicated concepts is not always as accessible, I appreciated the numerous drawings and diagrams that simplify concepts. These are stimulating and immensely pleasing to the eye. In a publication that hovers between the easily grasped and the dense, harder to decipher, the illustrations aid the reader immensely. They also seemed to acknowledge that Robbin’s eclectic audience includes many disparate communities: artists, scientists, mathematicians, art historians, etc. That said, one could argue that Robbin’s addressed the range of these groups skillfully, giving all readers something to work with in ferreting out his views. In my case, when I found myself thinking I was not following the mathematical point, the drawings drew me in and offered another perspective through which I could grapple with the concepts. Given the importance of the visual element, I applaud Yale University Press for a fine design.

In summary, Shadows of Reality is a book that takes the reader in and makes her welcome. It compares the slicing, or Flatland model, the God’s-Eye-View, with the projective spatial models that are only faulty approximations of physical events. It offers entry to the projective modality on its own terms as well. Groundbreaking and thought provoking, Robbin’s insights have an appeal that is well matched by their visual examples. Although the projects presented and the book’s many exciting ideas will require some time to sift through, they linger in my mind as I write. For this reason, I am sure I will return to Shadows of Reality on many occasions. I recommend it highly and think it would be a great addition to the libraries of all in our society seeking new understandings in art, science, mathematics and visualization.

Camouflage


Reviewed by Wilfred Niels Arnold,
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A few years ago I reviewed False Colors: Art, Design, and Modern Camouflage, an entertaining and informative study by my friend and colleague Roy Behrens [1]. In another context, the late Bill Ober told me that “the plural of anecdote is data,” and along the same lines I anticipated that by reviewing a second book with camouflage in the title I might be promoted to expert! But the present volume by Neil Leach lacks a subtitle and landed on my desk as
a surprise: His is indeed an idiosyncratic approach.

Leach proposes that we are much influenced by architecture and creative design, and that we all seek to adapt to our surroundings. He goes on to develop a working hypothesis that “fitting in,” “feeling at home” and “finding our place” promote a widespread desire for “camouflage.” I wonder how broadly the arguments and opinions expressed in his book will be embraced by the Leonardo readership. Leach’s premise certainly could not be further from the view expressed by Julian Levy that the artist alone among all the world has the duty to pursue a special point of view to the farthest reach, to exaggerate and embellish just the things which others prudently modify, diminish, or retract toward the common, less lonely, comprehensible, and useful center [2].

Parenthetically, such a creative artist puts him- or herself more at odds with society than does the creative scientist.

Perhaps a few quotes from his introduction will suffice to indicate the flavor of Leach’s work:

We human beings are largely conformist creatures driven by a chameleon like urge to adapt to the behavior of those around us. . . . Beneath the urge to assimilate at a physical level there also lies a desire to assimilate at a mental level. We have to think ourselves into the environment. . . . We human beings then, seem to have the capacity gradually to “grow into” our habitat, to familiarize ourselves with it, and eventually to find ourselves “at home” there.

Also, under the sub-heading Consequences for Architecture, Leach asserts:

So deeply has technology embedded itself within our modern psyche that it has become part of our definition of ourselves. . . . [T]his process of assimilation suggests that architecture, and indeed the whole realm of aesthetics, can play a significant role in aiding these processes of identification.

As an original paperback the book employs appropriate quality paper, and the overall production is handsome. The text has three parts, without clear explanation of how the divisions were chosen. On pp. 10–14 the author previews the contents of his chapters, which range from “sympathetic magic” through “narcissism” to “melancholia.” The text concludes with a theory of camouflage in which the author remarks: “Let us start by clarifying that the term is being used here not within the narrow, conventional sense of military camouflage, but within the broader sense of representation and self-representation” (pp. 238–247). As mentioned before, the book is sorely in need of a subtitle. Thirty-seven pages of notes and references are assembled in the penultimate section. An adequate name index is provided, but there is no index of subjects.

Eighteen illustrations based on black-and-white photographs by Francesca Woodman have been nicely placed, each one preceding a new section. They are variously ephemeral, enigmatic or energetic, and constitute an attractive visual feature, but on first riffle they do not seem much related to camouflage (either the traditional or the present author’s definition). Leach claims that the photographs “capture very precisely the main theme of the book—the desire in human beings to identify with and become part of their surroundings.”

Neil Leach is the author, editor or translator of more than a dozen books and has taught at a number of institutions. According to MIT Press, his research “focuses on the interface between architectural theory and contemporary debates within continental philosophy and cultural theory.”

References


CYBERSOUNDS: ESSAYS ON VIRTUAL MUSIC CULTURE


Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen, Hogeschool Gent, Belgium. E-mail: <stefaan.vanryssen@hogent.be>.

Twelve essays on music and the Internet. One can imagine that copyright issues (Napster and KaZaa et al.), fandom and on-line collaboration will be treated in depth, and so they are, but there is a lot more in this collection.

What keeps the whole bunch together is an ethnographical and anthropological viewpoint and a high quality of scholarship, so editor Michael Ayers, professor of sociology and music critic, has kept up his end of the bargain. What makes this an interesting book is the inclusion of a few essays that break new ground, which is a rare quality in view of the high number of recent publications on the sociology of music in the digital age and on the influence of technological advances in the production and consumption of music.

Markus Giesler contributes “Cyber-netic Gift Giving and Social Drama: A Netography of the Napster File-Sharing Community.” Borrowing from anthropological theories of gift giving, he stages the story of Napster and its descendents as a social drama (“drama” in the sense of anthropologist Victor Turner: a social process with relatively high visibility and very clearly recognizable protagonists, developing around an issue that takes on high symbolic significance for both actors and viewers). In a questionable but interesting argument, Giesler concludes that file sharing is practically the only example of gift giving without a trace of egoistic interest. This leads to specific moral consequences and a high potential for social change or at least some social upheaval, which genuinely deserves the epithet of “drama.” (By the way, he pulls Moses Maimonides, Marcel Mauss, Marshall Sahlins, Derrida and Caillé into the mêlée, so these are finger-licking pages for any social anthropologist.) Giesler’s penchant for coining new words and drawing in just a few too many epistemologically diverse theoretical frameworks cast a shadow over the essay, but it offers undoubtedly a big step forward in understanding the cultural dynamics of file sharing.

Andrew Whelan’s “Do U Produce?: Subcultural Capital and Amateur Musicianship in Peer-to-Peer Networks,” presents a Bourdieusian analysis of virtual communities of “amateur” musicians and thus establishes a solid basis for a discussion about the very nature of music. The fact that he distinguishes between amateur and professional is echoed, if inversely, by the concluding essay of the book: Jonathan Sterne’s “On the Future of Music.” Sterne quite rightly points out that the analysis of the effects of the Internet on the production and consumption of music has been too narrowly focused on the professional, or rather the industrial, field of production and on records and mass media as distribution channels. Amateur and local production with its much tighter feedback loops tends to be left out of the picture while it is exactly that part—a part where a lot of pure fun competes with high levels of uncensored creativity—that gets a boost from the Net.
The feedback loop in industrial music production is unquestionably mainly impersonal and purely functional: Sales figures, airplay and (nowadays) numbers of illegal downloads tell the managers, professional producers and marketers something about the audience’s appreciation of an album or recording. Again, the Internet is changing the situation, as Daragh O’Reilly and Kathy Doherty illustrate in “Music B(+)ands Online and Constructing Community: The Case of New Model Army.” How the NMA band branding leads to a feeling among fans of belonging to a virtual family and how that family feeling again helps the band is much more interesting than what we usually read about Deadheads and their relationship with their grateful favorites. (I must add that this has absolutely nothing to do with my personal taste—I dislike both the GD and the NMA, but the composers I prefer would not have fanclubs, would they?)

There are six more essays in the collection, but one needs to be mentioned separately. Trace Reddell’s “The Social Pulse of Telharmonics: Functions of Networked Sound and Interactive Webcasting” is the odd one out because it mainly describes the work of the author and a number of music projects that specifically exploit the technical potential of the web. I heartily welcome his categorization of networked music projects and interactive webcasting, but wrapping it in rather pompous rhetoric was not necessary. Actually, referring to Debord, Bakhtin and their like does not make the whole thing more intelligible. Enia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem, sayeth Occam.

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- King of Infinite Space: Donald Coxeter, the Man Who Saved Geometry, by Siobhan Roberts. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.
- Playing the News, directed by Jeff Plunkett and Jigar Mehta. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

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- Drawing Distinctions: The Varieties of Graphic Expression, by Patrick Maynard. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

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