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Physique de Colette (review)

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Sodome et Gomorrhe I onwards. Subsequent chapters address the literary interest of the 1986 typescript as an accessible source of authorial intentions that may contradict other *avant-textes* to reveal a succession of ‘repentirs’ and ‘bifurcations’ (p. 126). For instance, the version, dating from the war years, of the telegram announcing Albertine’s death reveals an identical structural and narrative pattern of expectation followed by reversal to that found in the 1986 typescript, but an opposing outcome in terms of establishing Albertine’s guilt or innocence. The co-existence of two mutually exclusive genetic stages destabilizes the text with which readers are most familiar today. The history of the posthumous volumes of Proust’s novel is marked by a tension between completion and incompleteness, stability and instability, unity and plurality. Mauriac Dyer’s study, which is complemented by valuable annexes detailing many of Proust’s revisions, persuasively calls for a validation of the latter in future editing and scholarship without proposing an effacement of the former.

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Physique de Colette. By JACQUES DUPONT. Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2003. 232 pp. Pb €24.00.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, criticism on Colette has taken a special interest in her representation of the body. Her feminized men and virile woman, and her abiding fascination with the figure of the androgyne, have provoked a significant reappraisal of her work, which is now recognized as subversive and complex in its gender politics. Dupont’s text takes this trend to the limit, focusing exclusively on what he calls the micro-events of the body, detailed lovingly and exhaustively by Colette and creating a rich, coherent theory of the interplay between subjectivity and its materiality. His approach is phenomenological with an element of psychoanalysis; hence the theorists to whom he appeals are Merleau-Ponty and Didier Anzieu, but this is by no means a text dominated by its theoretical framework. Dupont’s intention is not to draw overarching conclusions from Colette’s *œuvre*, nor to explore any particular critical concept in relation to the Colettian body. Instead we find an analysis that is dominated by Colette’s voice, by the myriad examples of blood circulating, muscles straining, complexions altering, appetites sharpening and pulses quickening. The Colettian body is porous and passive, responding to the slightest external stimuli. The barely audible but insidious messages of the body determine the subject’s sensual and sexual orientation in the spaces it occupies and become indistinguishable from the experience of happiness and suffering. Colette’s images of the body draw repeatedly on concepts of plenitude and lack, beauty and health associated with lascivious qualities of tautness or roundness, old age and illness tending towards the slack and the shrivelled. The question of appetite and consumption is explored in depth, with Dupont proposing its fundamental relationship to the erotic in Colette’s work. It is unfortunate that, as Dupont himself notes in his introduction, Kristeva’s analysis of Colette came too late for his own publication, as there are intriguing parallels to be explored in his exposition of the world and the sexual body as edible for Colette’s protagonists. The erotic is only ever a step away from the cannibalistic in her texts, as Dupont suggests that: ‘Consommer un homme [...] c’est s’appropriier sa substance, le vampiriser, le

vider' (p. 114); hence the phallic virility of Colette's women, represented repeatedly by a textual focus on laughing mouths full of strong, white teeth, and 'erectile substitutes' such as the clitoris and the nipple. Dupont makes a compelling case for the intimate, probing vision of Colette that obsessively documents and evaluates the body's tropistic responses. The deductions she bases upon this material evidence are partly Balzacian physiognomy, partly a quasi-medical response to bodily symptoms, partly the attribution of a phantastic understanding of the body that is unique to Colette. Although some might be disappointed that this critique does not take the extra step of analysing the phantastic body created in and through Colette's texts, there is an abundant wealth of textual detail to be enjoyed here that reminds us of Colette's extraordinary literary inventiveness, and her original representation of being-in-the-world.

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Savage Sight|Constructed Noise: Poetic Adaptations of Painterly Techniques in the French and American Avant-Gardes. By DAVID LEHARDY SWEET. (North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 276). Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2003. 318 pp., 24 b&w plates. Pb \$54.95.

David LeHardy Sweet selects Apollinaire, Reverdy, Breton, Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery for his discussion of Modernist poetry's assimilation and adaptation of the concepts and techniques of nonrepresentationalist painting, particularly Cubism. Acknowledging Marjorie Perloff's brilliant work on Franco-American synergies, Sweet opts for a technical and philosophical treatment of the transnational confluences and divergences between visual and verbal media. With a steady focus on writerly processes and strategies, Sweet discusses French poetry's mediation of collage technique, and the American poets' dispersed debt to their French Modernist forerunners. Sweet begins with an analysis of Apollinaire's art criticism, reading it as a site of the tensions played out in the poetry between abstractive drive and humanizing impetus. Reading 'Un fantôme de nuées' (pp. 50–51), he demonstrates the slippages between Symbolist and Modernist impulses, between music/memory and painting/immediacy. There follow persuasive readings of linguistic texturing and framing devices in 'Les Fenêtres', and of the 'cultural contingency' of 'Lundi Rue Christine', the latter viewed as a hybrid of chance and aesthetic necessity. Sweet's exploration of the ideological strains articulated in the *calligramme* 'Lettre-Océan' emphasizes tropes of technological, affective and political resistance, and celebration. Sweet's meticulous readings integrate the critical tradition in Apollinaire studies and take forward perspectives informed by Derrida and Compagnon. Reverdy as a major theoretician of the image receives his due place in Sweet's study, linked more to late Cubism than to Surrealism. For Sweet, Reverdy's definition of the image founded on 'deux réalités lointaines et justes' performs the balance of audacity and moderation that is key to Modernist image-theory. Keen insights into the hermeneutic potential of Reverdy's poetry are provided as Sweet examines typography, layout, syntax and signifiers, and concludes that the purity synonymous with Reverdian style