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International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice by Hans Bertens; Douwe Fokkema  
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a poetic production whose transnationality reveals a dominant configuration: the use of language in a reduced form which . . . allows Concrete poetry to communicate with an objectivity similar to that of a scientific formula" (Reis). While most analyses here and elsewhere in the volume maintain a celebratory tone, they also suggest certain limitations of the genre: an "emotional numbness" resulting from the suppression of "linguistic magic for the benefit of a 'pseudo-science'" and technological innovations, "complicity with the objectification of the text," failure especially of early concrete "to engage the social base of language as an interactive heteroglossia," and so on.

The shorter section entitled "Memoirs of the Concrete" contains the personal accounts of Mary Ellen Solt and Elisabeth Walther-Bense, who, from their marginocentric locations at Indiana University and Stuttgart University, published and promoted the first international anthologies of the concrete movement. One misses from this anecdotal, personal history the perspective of the poets themselves; that perspective is partly recovered in an addendum entitled "Symposium on Contemporary Poetics and Concretism: a World View from the 1990s," which collates the responses to a questionnaire given by a dozen or so members of the international experimental scene. These responses call into question and refine some of the categories with which other essays have operated, offering new understandings/uses for the work of the poets: "Recent work has also insisted on the social materiality of the poem, a rethinking of what the materiality of language is that incorporates the social and historical registers of words and their combinations not as tools toward extralinguistic expressions or description but as artifacts that reflect, inflect, and inhabit the world" (Charles Bernstein).

Though inevitably underrepresented in this volume, the performative dimension of the Yale "symphosopia" is present in the interspersed poetic fragments and color plates from Eugen Gomringer, Haroldo de Campos, Augusto de Campos, Ana Hatherly, Anne Tardos, Severo Sarduy, Charles Bernstein, and Jackson Mac Low; or indirectly suggested in the descriptive analyses of Haroldo de Campos's multilingual/multimediac productions, Oliverio Girondo's neobaroque intertexts, Severo Sarduy's highly formalized pictorial poems, the hieroglyphic rebus of the French Lettrists, the synesthetic techniques of "Polipoesia" in Spain, the "non-intentional" intermediatic art of the Fluxus project, or the sensual concrete poetry of Sweden. The more interesting analyses are those that are performances themselves, upsetting the boundary between analytic and creative discourse, like E. M. de Melo e Castro's exercise in "infopoetry," or the demonstration/analysis of "holopoetry" offered by Eduardo Kac. After reading these texts, one only wishes that such examples of performative criticism were more numerous or that this collection included also some examples of "electro(poetics)" and hypertext "installations" that would have updated the discussion, taking it more boldly into the electronic age.

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*International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice.* Hans Bertens, Douwe Fokkema, eds. Amsterdam/Philadelphia. Benjamins. 1997. xvi + 581 pages + 16 plates. \$165. ISBN 1-55619-602-4.

Fifty-two essays, divided into four major sections, cover introductory postmodernist issues, postmodernism in the other arts, postmodernist writing, and the reception and nature of postmodernism in different parts of the world. All the essays except two are published for the first time in this volume, revealing the diversity of the reception of what has come to be known as postmodernism in its various forms and manifestations.

The editors insisted that authors consider postmodernity and postmodernism as strictly distinguished phenomena. General cultural conditions such as changing industrial production, new information technologies, and a global market economy of goods and ideas are indicators of postmodernity, whereas postmodernism is defined as expressing and reacting to these phenomena of the zeitgeist in literature and the arts. That literature and the arts may become under such an editorial perspective merely vehicles for a secondary reflection on and a reaction to primary events of a technological nature implies a lesser role for literature and the arts in the overall understanding of human culture.

However, the authors have to a large degree followed their own inclinations and understandings of postmodernism, so that the result remains as diffuse and multifaceted as literature and literary theory can only be on an international scale, where differences remain signs of cultural independence and vitality. The editors acknowledge such differences of reception and value the diversity, which naturally ranges between acceptance and resistance. For this reason, the title *International Postmodernism* does justice to the healthy diversity represented in this volume. In addition, the American postmodernist context and its interpretation is, therefore, not predominant.

The year 1980 is the assumed watershed between early postmodernist texts, which are still open to the "anything goes" attitude, and later postmodernist texts, which "distance themselves from that notion and are more open to political and ideological commitments." In the American context of postmodernist theory, John Barth and Ihab Hassan, accordingly, belong to the early postmodernist theorists, whereas Jameson, Huysen, and Hutcheon represent the later theorists. The politicization and ideologization of literary culture is obvious in the later postmodernism, with its threatening or militant process of transculturation and the grand confusion scheme of deconstruction adversely affecting those who need a solid cultural and historical foundation for their basic education before they can be ready for postmodernist ideology, which, as contributors point out, is grounded in philosophy and social theory.

*International Postmodernism* is another significant addition to the Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages series sponsored by the International Comparative Literature Association. The volume proves that so-called Eurocentrism is nothing but another misplaced ideological buzz word indicative of self-denial and cultural deterioration.

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