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Introduction

Guillaume Fourcade and Kerry-Jane Wallart

- 1 Each appearance of a new work of art corresponds to a re-calibrated “ambivalence between the living and the created” (Berger 189). Looking at the momentariness of textualities which have been construed as monumental and timeless by some critical traditions (see Folliot and Lopoukhine on Wordsworth) makes for a reconsideration of the crucial values, aesthetic, ethical and political, of impermanence. Literature and the visual arts are “in progress” in more ways than one, starting with their oblique but tangential relation to the sheer physicality of the world. The present issue of *Sillages Critiques* attends to the spatial and temporal dimensions of the age-old tussle between immanent practices and transcendent meaning, between the mundane and the ideal; we have collapsed the double axis of space and time into a phrase engaging with how forms tend to exceed their own perfected isolation in order to gesture towards dissemination and, therefore, change: “taking place.”
- 2 In its common usage “taking place” foregrounds an event caught in full flight. The expression describes the irruption of the real into the here and now, before it can be integrated within the symbolic order of language and representation. Focusing on this moment of transience and surprise provides a point of entry into critiquing any excessive attachment to the idea of acts of creation as excluding phenomenal, geographical, societal and historical contexts. Despite some recent and cogent reactivations of the type of formalism construed by the Prague Circle and continued with structuralism (see Gioia with “New Formalism,” Eyer with “speculative formalism”), it seems difficult entirely to do away with the distinct positionality of the artist and, even more so, with the material circumstances of creativity. Beyond issues of *mimesis* and *poiesis*, works of art necessarily reconfigure a material structure; they inhabit it even when the enterprise is one of radical subversion of that same structure. We felt the need for a re-evaluation of the modes on which the creative gesture is erupting through the surface of time at a given moment and place, tearing through the fabric of reality; of the ways in which it becomes what Louvel calls, in her discussion of the links between text and image, a “readerly event” (or “*événement de lecture*”, 261-267).

- 3 Exactly what is evinced by writerly, painterly, and readerly events is what we wish to circumscribe in the present issue of *Sillages Critiques*. The irruption of art in what is commonly called reality indexes a number of concepts: spatiality and temporality but also aesthetic surprise, readerly convention, authorial intention, social intervention, technological innovations, material culture. Analysing artistic experiences in terms of their taking/having taken place sheds light on the concrete conditions of existence of art as a concrete practice for the individual and the collective body.
- 4 The phrase “taking place” brings temporality to the fore while downplaying the spatiality heard in its second term. Yet, such an emphasis on action and time over topicality is at odds with what “taking place” expresses on the most literal level: what “takes place” gets hold of a location, even though this sometimes operates a destruction of the very integrity of places (see Guibert on Wall’s poetry). Whereas the French “avoir lieu” denotes a fair amount of stasis, the English version (“taking place”) emphasizes seizure. The appropriation of space implies a consideration of the alterations and substitutions that space undergoes under the influence of what takes it. What happens to the space in which a novel unfolds when events occur in it? To what extent is space modified by the actions occurring on stage? What transformation affects the space seized by a camera or the space which hosts a work of art (see the American “wilderness” in Rigaud’s analysis of site-specific sculpture)? Beyond the opposition between the real and the imaginary, whose dialectics traverses aesthetic practices of all kinds, the epistemology of settings and timelines in relation to events is a distinct one, relying upon a cluster of notions: processes, chronological boundaries and spatial coordinates (all of which are analysed by Kilroy through the notional shape of the parallax in a paper premised on Žižek’s theory).
- 5 “Taking place” translates into language a more or less violent process of appropriation of spaces, including meta-fictional ones (the page, the book, the canvas, the film, the stage). One might then wonder which place literature and the visual arts can (re)claim or (re)gain. The main tension which emerges from the phrase “taking place” pulls apart regionalist literature and cosmopolitan art, the local and the global, the most rooted as well as the most diasporic textualities. This tension plays itself out in all of the insightful contributions to this issue, as they trace the ways in which works generate their own exploratory hermeneutics.
- 6 The notion of taking place can be viewed as the simple parlance version of the concept of chronotope famously coined by Bakhtin to define the two intertwined parameters necessary to apprehend fictional events (Bakhtin 237). We wish, in the present issue of *Sillages Critiques*, to return to Bakhtin’s chronotope from the renewed perspective of 2019, that of a world gone global where migrations have become a certain norm, but also where regional fragmentations might have tended to hinder spatial connections. In the midst of such turmoil, the English language stands as both a stable and fluid, even endlessly distorted idiom.
- 7 Because of its dual embrace of space and time, any reflection about the “taking place” of aesthetic projects is also the occasion to reassess art as located at the intersection between immediacy and mediation, instantaneity and duration (including through repetitive patterns), between the seduction of elusive utterance and a wish to monumentality. This opposition has been partly mapped out by Attridge in *The Singularity of Literature*, a foray into the endless mutations performed by the same literary text but also into its appearance as an “act-event”:

This is what a literary work “is”: an act, an event of reading, never entirely separable from the act-event (or acts-events) of writing that brought it into being as a potentially readable text, never entirely insulated from the contingencies of the history into which it is projected and within which it is read. The statement that a work is not an object but an event may be a truism, but it is a truism whose implications have generally been resisted. (Attridge, 59)

These “implications” are unpacked in a wide range of manners by the articles which follow our introduction.

- 8 What “takes place” and gets hold of a place in literature and in the visual arts is necessarily underpinned by intentionality; as such, it is political by nature. It carries the potential subversion of a pre-existing order and opens up to the creation of a new one – this newness is what Attridge terms the “singularity” of art. Yet, the notion of “taking place” also paves the way for a reflection on limited or relegated agencies (see Lopoukhine and Folliot on Wordsworth and Woolf as insiders/outsideers). Remarkably, no living subject is ever associated with the verb “take place.” Whatever “takes place” appears to overshadow the forces that drive it; the sense of self becomes a sense of place, in full alignment with recent critiques of classical humanism and speciesism (see Haraway, Lowenhaupt Tsing, Pedersen, Wolfe); such a line of investigation is followed by Bouche, Morisson, and Saby in their respective contributions to the issue.
- 9 Impersonal and faceless, events take place, obfuscating any cause or even origin. In literature, choosing to represent an event or to comment on it in terms of “taking place” is a way of foregrounding action over subject and therefore of downplaying responsibilities for the action itself. Such a potential blurring of agency has understandably been taken up and re-cast by postcolonial practices, as is developed here by Jeanniard du Dot, Kowalczyk, and Omhové; taken together, their three papers carry out an analysis of the consequences of the land appropriation which opened Western modernity and which constitutes a catachresis of sorts of the phrase “taking place.” Their respective considerations of the migrant and/or diasporic body ring in tune with the decolonial delinking operated by Mignolo and located outside the Eurocentric matrix, in the “body-graphics” of silenced and invisibilized subjectivities (Mignolo 460-462).
- 10 Running alongside authorial turbulence – or possibly brushing against its grain –, the creative gesture is often playing with what does *not* take place, whether in the form of a never fulfilled expectation, or of non-events. A number of narratives, images, installations can be read as the impossible or lacking representations of an event, thereby raising questions about their ability, as forms or media, to seize their ever-evading object; this dialogue with spectral appearances that are and are not is placed at the core of Victor’s work on the photographic art of Nancy Rexroth. Some works of art do ask, in Mallarmé’s words, whether anything “will have taken place [...] but the place” (“*Rien [...] n’aura eu lieu [...] que le lieu*”; Mallarmé 474-475).
- 11 At a time when poetry tends to evolve towards the spoken word (see the poetry of Jacob Sam-LaRose, which we have been privileged to see and hear during the conference on “Taking Place”), when drama often rimes with ever more inventive and surprising performative forms (as is developed in their joint paper by Alliot and Schaaf, who grapple with the most recent transformations of dramatic practices), when narratives are including social media and sometimes even migrate towards them, it has become ever more imperative to think of aesthetic experiences in terms of irruption and disruption, of appearance and disappearance. In view of the acceleration of time, of

the celerity with which we revisit the past as well as enter the future, in view also of the ways in which the unexpected has turned into a routine category, we have devised the present issue as one which takes stock of an array of recent aesthetic and/or critical interventions.

- 12 We have wished to open the issue with the trace of a performance generously given by British-Guyanese poet Jacob Sam-LaRose in October 2018 at Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris (as part of a collaboration with Sorbonne Université). This performance was made possible thanks to Bastien Goursaud, who has also been kind enough to translate two poems by Sam-LaRose into French.
- 13 Juliana Lopoukhine and Laurent Folliot's essay brings together two authors who, in their respective centuries, both walked the streets of London: William Wordsworth and Virginia Woolf. This contribution examines how, for all that separates them in terms of gender, genre, but also historic contexts, and from the liminal positions they held, both peripatetic authors relentlessly attempted to take their place in London. The article explores the ways in which, in turn, the city took (its) place in their poetics. Benjamin Bouche combines an ecocritical and a cultural geographical approach to read the love affair in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Premised upon the necessity to integrate cultural constructions to (re)definitions of places, his article re-casts Sherwood not as a mere background but as a causal literary function. The connectedness Bouche traces between characters and various spaces is a fluid matrix which resists pre-established conceptualizations, including that of the "environment." Robert Kilroy's contribution is not centered on a contemporary text, but situates itself in a context of critical upheaval around the works of Samuel Beckett. While a recent trend has shed light on the intense influence exerted upon Beckett by the visual arts, Kilroy brings together the theory of the parallax developed by Slavoj Žižek and the most recent theorization concerning the text/image relation in order to re-think iconology. This, Kilroy contends, makes for an "infra-disciplinary short-circuit" whose model can be adapted to a number of aesthetic practices and receptions.
- 14 The loss of place is central to Pascal Guibert's discussion of Irish-born poet Eamonn Wall's poetry. An emblematic figure of the New Irish, who left Ireland for the United States, Wall has constantly travelled back and forth across the Atlantic. Pascale Guibert shows how his hyphenated identity has required creating a new, hybrid, poetical language that gradually does away with the sense of place and shatters its monumentality. Aurélien Saby's essay on *Sketches from the Tierra de Tejada* (2013) by British poet John Fuller tracks down the myriads of events that take place in a poem sequence which, at first sight, seems strikingly static. His close readings reveal the poems' attention to near-invisible, almost imperceptible goings-on, chiefly in the form of gradual transformations, and it highlights how Fuller's poetical language threads links between disparate components of the world, thereby keeping at bay the looming threat of dissolution. In a paper concerned with the ritualistically memorial poetry of Jordan Abel, Claire Omhové excavates a double removal, "both [of] the poem's subject matter and its law of composition" in a context of cultural and spatial reclaiming of forms for and by a new generation of Indigenous poets. The space of the page becomes a "place of scraps" where the dominant discourse of coloniality, expressed by Marius Barbeau's accounts, is de-ranged and re-arranged into visual forms that aim at the performative dimension of First Nations ritual-poles.

- 15 The difficulty of appropriating a place and of calling it one's own in times of deep political and existential turmoil is examined by Maëlle Jeanniard du Dot in her analysis of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *Exit West* (2017). How can one "take (a) place," or find one's place in the world, when one is a migrant and when one's identity is fluctuating? Maëlle Jeanniard du Dot's article investigates this question in the light of the Freudian notions of *Unheimlich* and *Doppelgänger*. Barbara Kowalczuk draws upon Edward Casey's theory of re-implacing in order to read Roy Scranton's *War Porn* (2016). The phenomenological analysis of remembering through re-enactment leads to ethical issues of grievability, in a reflection that takes its cue from Judith Butler's in *Frames of War* (2009).
- 16 In their article, Julien Alliot and Jeanne Schaaf foreground the profound mutations of British theatre which have occurred in the past few years. This diptych scrutinizes first the forms of migratory drama which have been promoted by the National Theatre of Scotland and, secondly, the various forms of immersive theatre which are appearing around such companies as Punch Drunk. This contribution underscores the extent to which the two novel dramatic experiments foster a reappraisal of previous conceptions of audiences, togetherness, and participation.
- 17 The space in and for which artworks are created and take place is the focus of two of the essays presented in this issue. Valérie Morisson discusses the creations, whether installations or performances, by contemporary Irish artist and performer Dorothy Cross to underline how they showcase the intrinsic continuity between man and matter, man and animal as well as culture and nature. By staging the irruption of undomesticated nature into exhibition and performance spaces, Morisson argues, the artist engages in a discussion that, informed by ecopolitics and ecofeminism, goes as far as to transform the appropriation of place into becoming place. Antonia Rigaud's comparative study of the installations by two seemingly very different contemporary American artists, Robert Smithson and Noah Purifoy, highlights their common attempts at having their creations get hold of a non-institutional yet highly symbolic place in the American psyche: the desert. Her scrutiny points out that the erosion that takes place in the desert is paramount to the two artists' experiments. Her essay underlines how, against the grain of traditional art historical perspectives, a fruitful insight into their works is gained by considering these artists jointly.
- 18 In his essay dedicated to the photographs collected in *Iowa* by American photographer Nancy Rexroth, Jean-Marc Victor puts to the test Roland Barthes' assumption that the photographic medium is always the visual trace of something that has occurred in a given time and place. Does it indeed capture what has taken place, Jean-Marc Victor asks, when the camera used repeatedly causes optical distortions and, above all, when it aims at reconstructing childhood events, in other words a time forever gone, in a place (mostly Ohio) which is not the place where those events occurred (Iowa)?
- 19 The collected articles make for a fruitful discussion about a number of recent "events" in poetry, the performative arts, fiction, and the visual arts. While a majority of the works considered here belong to the twenty-first century, the volume looks back to some less recent authors (William Wordsworth and Virginia Woolf; D.H. Lawrence; Samuel Beckett) from decidedly renewed critical perspectives. Such renewing is in keeping with what "taking place" suggests: a newness, be it a conflagration or a whimper, a revolution or a protracted aftermath, an ideological stance or a question mark left on the page. Central to Mallarmé's thrown dice of fate is its mysterious and

random cause(s). How does a piece, a text, a creative gesture “take place” rather than not “take place” – and within which frameworks is this taking place to be understood? The issue is as complex as it is compelling. We hope that the various articles constituting the present collection will become a site for a few explanations (or, in Attridge’s words, “implications”) to “take place.”

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