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Introduction (English)

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Introduction (English)

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This special issue, “Interpoetics in Renaissance Poetry,” offers a wide array of studies based on French and English poetry but also addresses a wider set of transnational and multilingual connections and comparisons.¹ The aim of the issue is in keeping with the current scholarship that considers multilingual, regional, and global elements of Renaissance literary texts, thereby contesting the constructed notions of monolingual and monocultural national literatures through which past literature is still often seen. The studies—for instance, the articles on Milton’s Shakespeare and on Veynert’s and Kharon’s creation of a fictional French poet—offer imaginative contributions to this scholarship, illustrating the issue’s central theme of betweenness, as manifested through comparative readings that show an awareness of intertextual resonances and offer a diverse and multifaceted view of Renaissance poetry. This Introduction elaborates on interpoetics, which might be said, succinctly, to be the points at which various traditions, forms, and genres intersect and interact. The notion of thinking about poetics outside of a national framework seems powerful and timely, and is often absent from contemporary literary criticism. As mentioned later in this Introduction, I will not venture here too much into a wider contextualization that includes the decline of comparative literature in North America and the widening gulf between the culture of higher education in the anglophone world and in Europe, as I have written about these matters before.² The liminal space, the betweenness, the intercultural and bilingual—multilingual, really—aspect of Canada is one reason this special issue came to be in this bilingual Canadian journal and provides one possible intervention in poetry and interpoetics. The question of how poetry represents the world or

1. Many thanks to the editor, William Bowen, and the associate editor, Megan Armstrong, of *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, and to the three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and advice for revisions to this issue. Their suggestions can be seen reflected throughout, including in this Introduction and in my article “Prefatory Poems and the Openings of Poetry.” Indeed, all the contributors to this special issue have carefully considered the recommendations of the reviewers.

2. See, for instance, Hart, “Traces, Resistances, and Contradictions”; “Rediscovering Alternative Critique”; “Futures of Comparative Literature”; “Recognitions”; “Comparative Literature”; *Literature, Theory, History; Reading the Renaissance; Imagining Culture*.

reality and how it travels and crosses borders, how it is of itself and is between, is central to this Introduction and to the issue as a whole.

This special issue on interpoetics concentrates on the between both geographically and culturally, between literature and book design, poetic traditions, literatures, languages through translation, genres, genders, religion and poetry, Europe and the Americas. The bilingual contributions refract light in a prismatic way, illuminating interpoetics, poetry, and poetics from different angles while concentrating on interpoetics in the Renaissance (mostly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) in terms of the following topics: visual arts, book culture, court life, translation, language and languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, English, Spanish, Russian), psalms, defences of poetry, memory, classical antecedents, female poets and characters (representation and self-representation), influence, intertextuality, empire, the Western Atlantic, and liberty and subjugation (as part of the afterlife of the Renaissance). By analyzing the space between, we learn more about a poet, a text, an image, an influence, a genre, and the like. We learn more about both sides.

The inter is a hyphen, a betweenness, something that represents either/or and both/and, the analogy or analysis between texts, between texts and images, a poetics, a visual poetics and a cultural poetics of betweenness. More specifically, this threshold or liminality involves a change or passage, a ritual of interpretation, but it does not efface the identity of either side of the threshold or betweenness, the comparison or analogy. The betweenness can be seen in the work of Arnold van Gennep, who used “liminality” to mark the time when people are on the threshold of beginning a new phase in life, having put the previous phase behind them. Van Gennep saw ceremonies as marking a transition that enables a person to experience this liminal phase, thus losing and then recreating identity. Interpoetics is part of this ceremony. In discovering texts and images, scholars remake or uncover a new identity for both themselves and the works they study without fully leaving behind the previous identity. The context of one article or of a special issue or collection creates new interpretative identities in what I call interpoetics.

In discussing cultural phenomena in search of *communitas*, and relating it to structure, Victor Turner picks up on van Gennep’s notion of liminality.³ Turner adapts van Gennep as I adapt them both. Turner is explicit in his debt:

3. Turner, *Dramas*, 231. See also Turner, *Ritual Process*; *Forest of Symbols*; van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*. For the English version of the last, see van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*.

“Liminality is a term borrowed from Arnold van Gennep’s formulation of *rites de passage*, ‘transition rites’—which accompany every change of state or social position, or certain points in age.”⁴ Moreover, Turner reminds us that *limen* is the Latin word for “threshold,” although, like van Gennep, Turner is interested in this term as a margin, something between separation and reaggregation, whereas I, although sharing their interest in culture, ritual, religion, and transition, am relating it to poetry and a kind of poetics of culture, to interpoetics.⁵ Liminality, or the state of a threshold, is a fulcrum that connects two sides and is something in and of itself and also relational. Turner is interested in the connection between the dialectical relation between structure and *communitas*, which is liminal but also structural, over time.⁶ He sees poetry in the context of ritual and iconography, and he views thinking of these three as reflecting or expressing the political or social structure as vain, arguing that symbols may reflect and create anti-structure and not structure. He favours the relational and interstices.⁷ In *Ritual Process*, Turner gives a general definition that is helpful in casting light on the liminality of interpoetics: “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.”⁸ This special issue is about Renaissance poetry in relation to itself and to other matter, different kinds of poetics, textual and contextual. The “inter” is the limen, the fulcrum, the between, a matter of poetics, which may be a realm of anthropology and sociology, as expressed by van Gennep and Turner, but, as can be seen in the contributions to this special issue, is focused on poetry and poetics, visual poetics and cultural poetics.

A few instances will show the contours of the liminal as a context and as it relates to this special issue. Liminality has been, as Jochen Achilles and Ina Bergmann point out, applied to many different fields and used in many different ways, but they see it as applying most adeptly to fiction in literary studies, which is not surprising given their own study is of short stories in Canada,

4. Turner, *Dramas*, 231.

5. Turner, *Dramas*, 232. See also Turner, *Forest of Symbols; From Ritual to Theatre; Ritual Process*.

6. Turner, *Dramas*, 235, 240.

7. Turner, *Dramas*, 232.

8. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 95.

the United States, and Britain.⁹ In a discussion of the prologues of the plays of Shakespeare and, to some extent, his contemporaries in England, Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann see the dramatic prologue as being more social than his lyric poetry, as it provided “a ritualized transition,” and they examine the cultural and ritual process, the prologue and the presentation of it being a “rite of passage.”¹⁰ Bruster and Weimann see the ideas of liminality and threshold as helping to make clear “various instances of connection, transition, and difference between the early modern dramatic text and the circumstantial world and embodied space of its public presentation. In such a space the imaginary world in the play tends to be introduced and addressed by (but also drawn into complicity with) the material occasion for playing, writing, and watching in the world of sixteenth-century London.”¹¹

The space of interpoetics has a liminal element, a threshold between two sides or aspects, visual poetics and cultural poetics, and crosses genres more than the dramatic prologues of Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights do. The contributors to this special issue examine lyric, drama, and epic in connection with books, typography, the court, and other contexts in England, Scotland, France, Spain, the Western Atlantic, and elsewhere, including a typology between Renaissance France and the Soviet Union. Difference, connection, and transition extend in a wider time and space than what Bruster and Weimann adeptly examine. There are wider spaces, times, words, and worlds, actual and possible (fictional and imaginary). The poets and audiences (readers) are on both sides and on the fulcrum of the between. Sometimes discussions of the relation of trauma and otherness to liminality are much more focused on the traumatic and the Other than on the theoretical or structural aspects of liminality and do not concentrate on the origins of the theory found in van

9. Achilles and Bergmann, “Betwixt and Between,” 4. On liminality in literary studies and related fields (the theory is employed across many disciplines), see, for instance, Achilles, Borgards, and Burrichter, *Liminale Anthropologien*; Aguirre, Quance, and Sutton, *Margins and Thresholds*; Andrews and Roberts, *Liminal Landscapes*; Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues*; Carpi and Gaakeer, *Liminal Discourses*; Clingman, *Grammar of Identity*; Duffy, *Thresholds of Meaning*; Greenblatt et al., *Cultural Mobility*; Kay et al., *Mapping Liminalities*; Schwenger, *Borders of Sleep*; Soto, *Place That Is Not*; Squier, *Liminal Lives*; Viljoen and van der Merwe, *Beyond the Threshold*.

10. Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues*, vii–x, esp. viii.

11. Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues*, viii.

Gennep and Turner.¹² In examining the liminal, Bjørn Thomassen does consider these two figures and beyond and, in that spirit, he views liminality as referring to moments or periods of transition during which the normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to novelty and imagination, construction and destruction; he thus sees the ideas of liminality as having “the potential to push social and political theory in new directions.”¹³ Thomassen wants to take liminality—that is, how humans experience and respond to change—from ethnographic studies of ritual to the heart of modern society at large.¹⁴ As Thomassen notes, Turner’s first book came out in 1957, the same year van Gennep died, but Turner only discovered van Gennep by reading *Rites of Passage*, which had a profound influence on him, in 1963. Turner wrote poetry and was interested in art and ritual, and Turner spoke of “social drama analysis,” something akin to van Gennep’s method.¹⁵

Liminality calls into question the distinction between centre and margin, something Marshall McLuhan does in his consideration of borderlines, more particularly the borderline case of Canada. This leads us back to where this Introduction began, with Canada as betwixt and between, and that being a positive place for crossing linguistic and cultural borders in considering Renaissance poetry. McLuhan considers the liminal and argues that “[Chester] Duncan found the key with ‘between-ness,’ the world of the interval, the borderline, the interface of worlds and situations.”¹⁶ That is what the contributors to this special issue on Renaissance interpoetics do. As guest editor, I assumed a decentralized view in which each contributor would address Renaissance poetry or poetics in his or her own way, exploring the analogous, comparative, and between. This Introduction gives a vantage, through the between, but the contributors and readers will supplement that view and enrich the individual essays and the issue as a whole. The drama of meaning occurs between writer and reader: that is, the theatrical semantics, the mutual rhetoric of writing and reading through poetry and poetics. In discussing style, Aristotle saw an overlap of poetics and rhetoric in examinations of poet, speaker, performance, audience,

12. For example, Ganteau and Onega, *Contemporary Trauma Narratives*. On the liminal and otherness, see Ganteau and Onega, “Introduction,” esp. 11.

13. Thomassen, *Liminality*, 1.

14. Thomassen, *Liminality*, 1.

15. Thomassen, *Liminality*, 6, 10, 24, 77–79.

16. McLuhan, “Canada,” 233.

metaphor, anagnorisis, and catharsis in his *Poetics* and in book 3 of his *Rhetoric*.¹⁷ Betweenness allows for exploration and a Renaissance poetry or interpoetics without a centre. Ambivalence, contradiction, and incommensurability unsettle analogies, comparisons, and the yoking of opposites—paradox.

The focus of this Introduction and of the special issue is on Renaissance poetry and poetics, text and context, and the matter at hand in each contribution. Although other collections on the Renaissance or the early modern period, and on world and comparative poetics, have made significant contributions, this issue is distinctive in that it concentrates on a period and a genre—poetry—while exploring text and context, in and of itself and something between.¹⁸ It seemed a better way forward than revisiting wider debates on the Renaissance/early modern period and comparative literature, which I arrive at here as I promised in the opening paragraph.¹⁹ In speaking about comparing literatures, David Damrosch says, “If the study of Renaissance poetry and bourgeois novels could once have seemed a kind of escapism or high-toned consumerism, today the careful reading of challenging literary works has something of the oppositional force of the slow food movement in a world dominated by artery-clogging fast food.”²⁰ This is one justification for an issue such as this one on Renaissance poetry. Thus, this issue contributes to comparative studies and Renaissance studies but is not a meditation on their general contours. To keep the focus of the special issue sharp, this Introduction does not get into the wider, vaster, and well-trodden debates on periods or fields or disciplines, but instead concentrates on the explorations of the articles in this issue.

The constituent articles contribute to interpoetics, to poetry between texts and contexts. The issue cannot address the vast scope of Renaissance poetry and is anchored in French and English literary traditions and their major canonical poets. This means that the topics that are examined here also exclude important subjects even in Western Europe itself let alone in the Western Atlantic and elsewhere. Thus, a multiplicity of voices is a strength of this special issue, but there are also other ways to approach Renaissance poetry. By exploring interpoetics, which includes liminality, this Introduction has tried to suggest

17. See Hart, *Aristotle*.

18. Hart and Xie, “World Poetics.” See also Hart, *Reading the Renaissance; Imagining Culture*.

19. See, for instance, Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*; Hart, “Futures of Comparative Literature”; Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*.

20. Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures*, 5.

one way that has not been explored widely in the study of Renaissance poetry, that is, a way that I suggest in reading the articles and the issue. No outsized claim for originality is being made, and the topic needs to be approached self-consciously and critically. There are different, multiple perspectives, including the multiplicity presented here and in this issue. In a different context, Carina L. Johnson and Ayesha Ramachandran discuss multiplicity, seeking to grapple “with the need to conceptualize and narrate the multiple dimensions of ‘global’ in the early modern period.”²¹ This issue on interpoetics presents its own multiplicity among multiplicities, that is, by bringing together the different perspectives of scholars from Canada, France, the United States, and also China, so that it is more of an open circulation of ideas across borders, those transitional and liminal states. In other words, liminality and interpoetics are built into the geography and spaces in which these scholars work individually and collectively in this issue. The editor and contributors quietly help to adjust ways of seeing and knowing, to build on the work of others or the earlier works of the contributors themselves.

The inter or between also involves mimesis, which Colin Burrow, echoing Ben Jonson on imitation and learning in *Discoveries*, tries to limit from prosecuting all that could be said of everything, as the work would be without end, by concentrating on the slightly less daunting and more circumscribed subject of the manners “in which authors imitate each other” rather than how authors have imitated or represented reality.²² Between poets using mimesis, there is an intertext or interpoetics that partly involves an imitation of each other, an intertextuality within the traditions of poetry and their relations to the other arts and ways and to the world. Thus, the relation among poets, alive and dead, would affect the Renaissance poets even as they represented reality. A carrying over or translation is part of interpoetics just as mimesis is. Like the work of Burrow on mimesis, of poets imitating poets, poetry begetting poetry, as Northrop Frye used to say, the work on Renaissance translation by A. E. B. Coldiron suggests many ways in which translation is a key to Renaissance culture and a literary habit.²³ In a wider sense, Renaissance interpoetics is a form of imitation and translation among other things.

21. Johnson and Ramachandran, “Introduction,” 2.

22. Burrow, *Imitating Authors*, 1.

23. Coldiron, *Printers without Borders*. See also Coldiron, “Response,” 99; “Translation and Transformation.” On the Latin *habitus* versus the Greek *hexis*, see Burrow, *Imitating Authors*, 5.

The crossing of borders or thresholds, a kind of liminal mobility, has different aspects, including languages. In the first article, “Du Bartas, l’Écosse et la mer: *La Seconde Semaine et l’Histoire de Jonas*,” Frank Lestringant considers Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas’s official voyage to England, and especially to Scotland, in 1587 at the invitation of James VI, who spoke French and wrote a poem in Latin on the Battle of Lepanto, which Du Bartas translated. Focusing on the figure of the prophet Jonas (Jonah), Lestringant notes that Du Bartas used Scots and English words in *Seconde Semaine* that later entered French, such as “plaid.” Here is an example of the circulation of texts in linguistic and cultural translation. These multilingual traces show an otherness from within, words crossing textual thresholds. Interpoetics involves a movement between and within texts.

Then we move to Joachim Du Bellay for another kind of betweenness or interpoetics in which the poet fills up the great empty space with a good name. Like Lestringant, Tom Conley in “Du Bellay and the Catchword: From *L’Olive* (1549) to *Les Regrets* (1558)” reads closely the texts of Du Bellay and his betweenness involving print and design, the verbal and the visual, letter and image. These pairs have individual relations but are also joined through a fulcrum, individual and relational, the transition of the limen or threshold. Conley argues that the structure of Du Bellay’s dialogue of 1549 and his sonnets of 1558 comes from the way *réclames* (or “catchwords”) appear in his *Recueil de poesie*, making the reader wonder whether the author worked with editors and typesetters and whether the layout is of poetic design, in which writing and set up suggest a spatial aspect of the poetry as books and art. There is a geography of the text, a crossing of the threshold between book and art. In other words, Conley concentrates on the relation of *réclames* in Du Bellay’s poems and contends that his late poetry builds on the art of formatting that was a signature of his earlier verse. There is also an interpoetics not just in space but in time between Du Bellay’s early and late poetry. Throughout, Conley’s analysis combines an examination of poetics, visual poetics and cultural poetics.

The transition or threshold can be a matter of translation as well as multilingual elements in poetry. In “Navigating Sacred Languages: Paraphrasing the Psalms in Renaissance Scotland,” D. A. Porter, like Lestringant, compares Latin and Scots and examines the role of translation in the between. Porter argues that the translation and paraphrasing of the Biblical psalms in Neo-Latin and the vernacular languages was a popular genre in early modern Europe. In

Scotland, the genre came under the influence of Calvinism after the Scottish Reformation Parliament approved a Protestant confession of faith in 1560. Porter examines some of the Latin psalm paraphrases of George Buchanan and two Scots-language psalm translations by Alexander Montgomerie to analyze the Renaissance interplay of translation, poetics, confession, and politics. Interpoetics involves the Latin and Scots traditions in religion and poetry. The poems are made and read in and of themselves, but also in relation to other poems, as well as in connection with the religious texts from which they are derived.

The special issue then shifts from France and Scotland to more emphasis on England and other kinds of interpoetics. In “The Art of Poetry and the Art of Memory: Philip Sidney’s Mnemonic Poetics,” Rebeca Helfer notes that in *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney argues for poetry as a place of memory. She contends that Sidney defines poetry through the art of memory and as the memory of art. Remembrance and art are a mutual mediation, a crossing of each other’s borders, a criss-crossing, a chiasmus. This takes Sidney’s work beyond its time and place, allowing for a comparison to works of earlier eras, and leads to Helfer’s sense of betweenness, which is within Sidney and England, but which connects to ancient Greece and Rome and to the early church. This interpoetics is temporal, linguistic, and cultural. Helfer explores how Sidney forges a memory theatre that embodies a poetics of memory through what the poet performs in regard to Ciceronian rhetoric, Platonic philosophy, and Augustinian theology in prose. Poetry lies between rhetoric, philosophy, and theology.

In “‘Yong, and the unworthiest of thousands’: Youth and Subjectivity in Shakespeare and Speght,” Rachel Prusko explores the between, interpoetics in genre, and the betweenness of age and subject. She examines relations between different kinds of poetic expression, which manifest in a discussion of “youthful subjectivity in both dramatic and non-dramatic poetry.” Prusko considers constructions of female youth in Shakespeare’s late romance *Pericles* and in the work of poet and polemicist Rachel Speght. Questions of gender and representation are key to what is between for Prusko. She reads Speght’s *A Dreame and Mortalities Memorandum* to analyze how Speght constructs a sense of herself in her verse and compares this construction to Shakespeare’s representation of the young female subject in *Pericles*. Prusko’s exploration is between Shakespeare and Speght, a productive relation that Prusko raises and puts in view not simply for her own examination but as a connection or threshold for others to take up.

In “Milton’s Shakespeare: Imitation and Originality,” Paul Stevens explores what is between Shakespeare and Milton. More specifically, Stevens examines the two works in which Milton considers Shakespeare most directly, his “Epitaph” on Shakespeare (1632) and his *Eikonoklastes* (1649), uniting these two parts through the theme of liberty. Stevens concentrates on what scholars recently identified as Milton’s copy of Shakespeare’s First Folio, on Milton’s careful annotations, and especially on Milton’s use of Shakespeare’s *Richard III* in *Eikonoklastes*. Stevens also sees Milton’s Shakespeare in terms of the *studia humanitatis* and *sola scriptura*, human freedom and divine freedom, and he maintains that the problem of agency is at the centre of Milton’s connection with Shakespeare, and that Milton works through this problem in distinct ways throughout his career. Agency becomes part of a poet, who is also adept in essays, responding to a monumental poet, an image Milton uses to describe Shakespeare.

The last two articles include connections or the crossing thresholds that reach out to poetry in other ways beyond France, Scotland, and England. In “Prefatory Poems and the Openings of Poetry: The Interpoetics of Epistemic Incorporation in the Atlantic World,” I focus on poetry as preface or front matter (paratext) in and of itself (including connections among the prefatory poems), and on prefatory poems in relation to the main text of a prose work. The border here is between the paratextual and the textual, between the poems as front matter and the text they introduce. This interpoetics is internal as well as external among English, French, and Spanish poems. Briefly, I frame French and Spanish prefatory poems and the beginnings of epic poems with other works, including *The Faerie Queene*, in which Spenser alludes to the New World—to Peru, the Amazon, and Virginia. This poem I relate to works by other poets representing the Western Atlantic, such as the French poets Jodelle, Ronsard, Poupo, and Du Bartas, and poets who voyaged to the New World like Parmentier and Lescarbot (who wrote about New France), and the Spanish poet Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà, whose *Historia de la Nueva México* (1610) tries to incorporate the “New World” into the epic tradition through translation—translation of study and translation of empire. I argue that these poets, from England, France, and New Spain, bend these genres to the unknown, to these new lands, just as they remake the ancients in Europe. This is an interpoetics of epistemic incorporation, trying to relate new lands to Europe, to make known the unknown and perhaps the unknowable.

The final article of the collection is “Guillaume du Vintrais, un poète huguenot au goulag stalinien” by Nadezda Vashkevich, who explores the connection, the temporal and spatial threshold, between a fictional poet and an actual one, “Guillaume du Vintrais, a fake Renaissance poet in GULAG, and Clément Marot, a Huguenot refugee in Italy and a true reformer of French verse.” Part of the interpoetics here is the mimetic boundary between poetry and reality. Vashkevich studies the love poem as a political genre and explores what is between a fake Renaissance poet, Guillaume du Vintrais, imagined into existence by two GULAG convicts, Yury Veynert and Yakov Kharon, and Clément Marot, a humanist and libertine French poet, imprisoned and persecuted as a supporter of the Protestant Reformation in France. According to Vashkevich, both Guillaume du Vintrais and Clément Marot chose the sonnet to convey the Renaissance ideal of freedom and human dignity with distinct voices in the face of a dominant dogmatism. This comparison brings us to one example of the afterlife of poetry, of the sonnet, from Renaissance France to Soviet Russia. This last article brings us into the recent past and brings interpoetics into the twentieth century, exploring how the early modern and the modern bring together life and art, fiction and the fiction of fiction, a travelling poetics in time and space, which interpoetics underscores.

To the articles we now turn, their different perspectives and the connections between text and context, exploring new borders to cross within the individual works and the configuration of those works in relation or between. It is important, as I said in quoting Damrosch earlier in this Introduction, to stress Renaissance poetry because “careful reading of challenging literary works” is oppositional.²⁴ The close attention to the poetry of the Renaissance that the contributors show figures this reading against the grain of our times, as Damrosch intimates, and the insights they provide are significant in and of themselves and in the configuration of this special issue. Poetics, visual poetics, and cultural poetics are all part of the interpoetics interpreted and embodied in the articles of this issue explicitly and implicitly.

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