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Julie S. Kleiva, *Intertextualité surréaliste dans la poésie de René Char: apparitions et réapparitions de l'image d'Artine*. Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2018. 159 pp. Illustrations and index. €88.00 and \$106.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-90-04-36877-4; (eb). 978-90-04-36878-1.

Review by Emma Wagstaff, University of Birmingham, UK.

René Char (1907-1988) is an unclassifiable poet who belonged to the Surrealist movement in the early 1930s and was honoured for his work in the Resistance. He continued publishing until near his death, but his best-known volumes are *Le Marteau sans maître* of 1934 and the 1948 collection *Fureur et Mystère*. As Julie S. Kleiva explains in the introduction to her persuasive book, criticism of Char's writing tended to view his departure from the Surrealist group in 1935 as accompanied by a shift in his poetry away from Surrealist concerns (p. 6). She considers that the major study by Jean-Claude Mathieu marked the beginning of a greater interest in the importance of Surrealism to Char throughout his writing life.[1]

The purpose of Kleiva's own book is to demonstrate the ongoing significance of Artine, the female figure who gives her name to a poem of 1929 that was first published with illustrations by Salvador Dalí, and reached wider circulation as one of the works included in *Le Marteau sans maître*. In doing so she identifies numerous intertextual references in *Artine*, and her nuanced tracing of the influence of Char's readings form the real originality of her book. Kleiva notes carefully when other critics have discussed echoes of Char's literary hinterland or contemporary connections, but her book is the first to bring these together through the lens of Artine, who emerges as "la figure exemplaire de la traversée du surréalisme dans l'œuvre de René Char" (p. 10). A key muse with which to compare her is Breton's Nadja: eroticism, meetings, and transparency are Surrealist themes common to both texts, and Kleiva notes the "sexisme fondamental" in Char's poetry (p. 148). Unlike Breton's use of "tu" in *Nadja*, however, Char's poem has no addressee. In her discussion of *Artine's* intertexts, Kleiva's meticulous scholarship offers insights into those other texts as well as Char's own œuvre.

Personal connections were important to Char, including those with artists who illustrated his work, and from his involvement with the Surrealist group also came a friendship with Paul Éluard. *Artine* began with an announcement in the Parisian newspaper *L'Intransigeant* to the effect that "Poète cherche modèle pour poèmes. Séances de pose, exclusiv. pendant sommeil récip. René Char, 8 ter, Rue des Saules, Paris (Inut. ven. avant. nuit compl. La lumière m'est fatale)" (p. 29). Kleiva notes that two women answered the advertisement, but that it is not known what happened subsequently. Char disappeared for some time, and Breton and Éluard published a humorous "prière d'insérer" along with *Artine* asking if anyone had seen their

friend, René Char (p. 30). Kleiva suggests that *Artine* in some ways therefore bears the hallmarks of a joint project.

Artine is only a few hundred words long, and displays many of the features associated with Surrealism: ambiguous, sometimes dreamlike images, evocation of chance and the marvellous, the figure of a female muse, and intimations of violence. It ends with the line “[1]e poète a tué son modèle” [2], which suggests a destructive relationship between the narrator figure and his muse, and also between the poet and the readings that have shaped his own creation.

Nineteenth-century writers are key influences on Char, and Kleiva focuses in particular on Rimbaud and Nerval, although Lamartine is present in Char’s choice of name for Artine. In Rimbaud’s writing she identifies dream, desire, and sin, and argues that for both Rimbaud and Char the meeting with the desired woman constitutes a shift from one state to another—not necessarily a psychological alteration, but a “métamorphose de l’esprit, c’est-à-dire une métamorphose poétique” (p. 51). Nerval was thought by Breton to demonstrate the Surrealist frame of mind, and Kleiva identifies a connection between enchantment in the work of Nerval, including, for instance, the enchanted wood in *Sylvie*, and the magical “contrées des sommeils” she cites from *Artine* (p. 96). [3] A mysterious, nervalian alter ego for Artine, called Lola Abat or Abba, first appears in a poem of 1930 and is one of the ways in which Artine is transformed over the course of Char’s writing. Kleiva makes a striking link between madness for Nerval, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s claim that the passage of time can cause a person to doubt what he or she previously thought (pp. 99-100). She thereby views *Artine* through a philosophical lens as well as a literary one. Sade is an important reference; his was among the *œuvres* that Char and fellow Surrealists sought to disseminate more widely. Sade represents for Char both a philosopher and an ideal of revolt, and Kleiva shows how several of the objects introduced at the start of *Artine*, including lead piping, two fingers of a glove, and a nail imply violence and have a Sadean origin.

Kleiva proposes that the poem also be seen as a response to Aragon’s *Le Paysan de Paris*, in which Aragon attempted to define a modern mythology based on what is marvellous in the everyday (p. 67). Myth recurs as a source for *Artine*, including the figure of the phoenix: Kleiva notes that the similarity between the words “amour” and “mort” is echoed by the anagram “naître” / “Artine” (pp. 69-70). Her book is organised not according to the intertexts for *Artine*, though many of those are discussed in discrete sections, but by the headings “rêve et surréalité,” “occultisme et alchimie,” “images mentales,” and “léthargie et vitesse.” There are overlaps between these categories, but they allow her to treat the surrealist impetus of Char’s work beyond the period 1929-35 and to show how the same authors influenced his poetry in different ways. In the final section she introduces an unexpected interlocutor—Filippo Marinetti—and demonstrates the liberating effect of speed and movement. Kleiva suggests that Char might have taken the image of a “voiture à chevaux, lavée et remise à neuf” [4] from Jean Metzinger’s Cubist painting *La Femme au cheval* (1912) (p. 127). In addition, Kleiva notes a Charian aesthetic extending into artworks such as Maria Elena Vieira da Silva’s *La Chambre à carreaux* of 1935 (p. 119).

Kleiva concludes that *Artine* evolves from a Surrealist trope towards the “incarnation d’une voix intérieure à la fois personnelle et poétique” (p. 149). “Artine est un intercesseur transcendant, dont le message vaut pour le poète comme pour le lecteur : rester réceptif, accueillant, aux dons de la poésie” (p. 148, emphasis original). Her book mines the short text of *Artine* to demonstrate

its rich, interlocking, and suggestive heritage. What it also achieves, but does not fully acknowledge, is to suggest that Surrealist writing is much more embedded in the reading that formed its creators than they might have wished to admit, with their insistence on the internal resources of the unconscious mind. That insight will be of interest to readers of Surrealist writing beyond the work of René Char.

NOTES

[1] Jean-Claude Mathieu, *La poésie de René Char, ou, Le sel de la splendeur* (Paris: José Corti, 1984). Among Anglophone criticism on Char, Kleiva cites in particular Mary Ann Caws's monograph *The Presence of René Char* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

[2] René Char, *Œuvres complètes*, revised edition (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1995), p. 19.

[3] Char, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 18.

[4] Char, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 18.

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