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Julie Beaulieu, *L'entrécriture de Marguerite Duras: Du texte au film en passant par la scène*. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2018. 283 pp. Notes and bibliography. \$34.95 CA. (cl). ISBN 978-2-7606-3913-3; \$24.99 CA. (pdf). ISBN 978-2-7606-3914-0; \$24.99 CA. (eb). ISBN 978-2-7606-3915-7.

Review by Sara Kippur, Trinity College.

In setting out to write a monograph on Marguerite Duras, one of France's most celebrated authors of the twentieth century, Julie Beaulieu rightly understands that she is embarking on well-trodden territory. The sheer number of books and articles on Duras's literary and cinematic corpus, to say nothing of the multiple biographies, risk a "danger de répétition" (p. 110), but a risk well worth taking, Beaulieu suggests, for the critic's intense satisfaction of diving deeply into the work of an endlessly fascinating, enigmatic, and subversive writer.

Beaulieu's monograph figures into a broader subset of Duras scholarship that centers on the intersections between textual and visual media. Duras was prolific across multiple genres—most notably, but not limited to, fiction, theater, and cinema—and critics have sought to identify the commonalities between her differing forms of production, the tensions at stake between generic categories, and the ways Duras actively unsettled such categories themselves. This question was at the heart of some of the earliest Duras criticism, such as Jean-Louis Libois's 1975 essay "Texte théâtre film." In recent years, scholars such as Jean Cléder, Sylvie Loignon, and Michelle Royer have been particularly instructive on this point.[1]

The primary intervention of Beaulieu's project, as the title suggests, is to introduce the figure of what she calls "entrécriture" to characterize Duras's corpus. For Beaulieu, "entrécriture" carries a host of different meanings and potential deployments, and her introduction defines it broadly: "Cet entrelacement composite et ouvert qu'est l'écriture, son oeuvre, je la nomme entrécriture" (p. 28). As a figure of betweenness, "entrécriture" refers to Duras's style of rewriting similar texts across literature, film, and theater. It refers as well to a critical scholarly approach that examines Duras's works comparatively in an effort to highlight productive exchanges across genres and media. Following Daniel Sibony's theorization of the "entre-deux," Beaulieu also uses the term "entrécriture" to describe Duras's thematization of betweenness in her work, such as in her tendency to evoke binaries (life/death, creation/destruction, etc.). The multivalent elasticity of "entrécriture" allows Beaulieu to weave it easily into her critical discussions of Duras's works. The term provides, in that sense, a broad overarching framework for Beaulieu's individual readings, but that could also feasibly be redeployed to encompass almost any comparative analysis of Duras.

The introduction not only establishes Beaulieu's usage of the term "entrécriture," but makes a case both for reading Duras's work philosophically—Deleuze will be a common anchor point throughout the book—and for treating Duras's cinematic, literary, and theatrical output as nonhierarchical and mutually imbricated. Beaulieu explains that her book cannot be exhaustive, given Duras's immense body of work, but that her selection of texts in this critical study allows us to see the way Duras refracts similar material across time and genres. The book is divided into three sections, each of which has three chapters. The first section, "Une écriture filmique à venir" examines some of Duras's earlier writings to show how they both anticipated her later turn to cinema and demonstrated her aptitude for rewriting across genres. The second section, "L'entre-deux-écritures," progresses to the next phase of Duras's works, highlighting some of her more experimental films and theatrical works of the 1970s to demonstrate their increasingly intermedial and innovative style. The final section, "La poétique d'une écriture avant-gardiste," characterizes Duras as a politically and aesthetically transgressive writer whose works should be read for their subversion of form, as well as of the sociopolitical order.

Beaulieu's first chapter argues for the poetic nature of all of Duras's work. This poetic style—Duras's careful attention to word choice, her minimalist prose, the melody of her phrases, her lack of punctuation—permeates her novels, plays, and films and in that sense constitutes the first of many of Duras's subversions of genre. Beaulieu uses the first chapter to advance several other concepts that will reemerge across the book as rough synonyms with "entrécriture": *intermediality*, as a form of "contamination" between Duras's filmic and literary texts (p. 53); *intratextuality* to refer to Duras's rewriting within and across texts (p. 52); and *hybridity* to signify Duras's engagement with "postmodern" tactics consonant with the *Nouveau roman* and the *Nouvelle vague* (p. 49).

Such terms anchor Beaulieu's other two chapters in the section, the first of which centers on Duras's novel *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, and the other on Duras's plays *L'Éden Cinéma* and *La Musica*. For Beaulieu, *Un barrage* narratively depicts the movie theater—the location where the mother character works, and where her children are transported by the images they see on screen—as a site for viewing pleasure. Duras's later works for cinema and the stage upended this early portrayal, challenging the representational limits of film and demanding of the viewer a more active and engaged participation. This idea, in chapter three, is where Beaulieu introduces what will be a common thread for the duration of the book: the focus on the reader or viewer's "imagination" as a critical method for understanding Duras. What characterizes Duras's work, for Beaulieu, is its appeal to "un lectorat créateur qui participe activement au texte à la mise en scène et au film" (p. 85), its demand for "un agent actif du film, donc un créateur d'images mentales" (p. 87).

The second section of the book takes a "rhizomatic" approach to Duras's works, examining how certain images, themes, voices, or even silences travel from one text to another. Chapter four draws on Sibony's "entre-deux" and Deleuze's "devenir," understood here as the change that occurs from the contact between forces, to contextualize a reading of Duras's experimental film *Le Camion*. As a film that is largely *read* aloud, "Le Camion" represents for Beaulieu the intersection between text, image, and voice and succeeds in challenging the primacy of the visual in cinema. This new viewing experience, especially in the ways that it refuses transparent representation, invites "la libération de l'imaginaire du public" as a critical component of creating the film's meaning (p. 127). Chapter five sensibly reads *L'Amant* and *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*

as examples of “la réécriture” not only between novels but also from literature to film. Beaulieu’s critique of the commercial nature of *L’Amant*, and her reading of *L’Amant de la Chine du Nord* as indebted to cinematic writing, are consistent with scholarly writings about and interviews with Duras.[2] In the closing chapter of the section, Beaulieu offers close readings of the film *India Song* and the play *Les Yeux bleus cheveux noirs*, both paradigmatic examples of “entrécriture” in their commitment to undermining conventional limits of genre.

The chapters in the book’s final section center on different primary texts—*Le Navire Night*, *Césarée*, *La Vie matérielle*, among others—to demonstrate Duras’s status as a transgressive, subversive writer. Chapter seven offers the most biographical reading of the book, looking at Duras’s descent into alcoholism and her compulsion to write as a mechanism for evading madness. Chapter eight offers an interesting parallel between Duras’s cinema and that of Maya Deren, both of whom, for Beaulieu, are inspired by surrealist and symbolist poetry and prioritize what Deren calls “verticality” (the depth of emotion and affect) over a horizontal, plot-driven narrative. The final chapter insists on Duras as a political writer, whose reflections on personal and collective history (such as in the Aurélia Steiner narratives about the Holocaust, or in *Hiroshima mon amour*) provide echoes between her formal and political projects, both of which, Beaulieu asserts, reveal Duras as a “subversive” writer committed to undercutting conventions.

Beaulieu’s brief conclusion gestures at the links between Duras and queer theory, a somewhat surprising ending, given the book’s limited focus on feminist and gender studies. Beaulieu invites scholars to pursue the “entrécriture” frame in future research as a mode of understanding “le caractère transgressif des écritures durassiennes” in their engagement with sexuality, desire, and gender identity (p. 267). This broad application of “entrécriture” begs the question of what exactly falls *outside* its boundaries. Could it refer to any moment where categories break down, or where there is an intersection between texts, themes, genres, or styles? One way to strengthen the theoretical weight of “entrécriture” would be for Beaulieu to have considered and acknowledged its own limits and borders.

The importance of rewriting, as Beaulieu aptly suggests, is critical to understanding Duras. To the extent that the book engages with Duras’s rewritings across time and texts, it seems unfortunate that Beaulieu did not also consider Duras’s archives, which are readily available at France’s IMEC. How might these manuscripts problematize the very *problématique* of rewriting, what Beaulieu calls Duras’s “technique d’écriture privilégiée”? Beaulieu quotes an IMEC archivist on this point (p. 206), but I suspect that a careful consultation of Duras’s drafts and unpublished manuscripts would have enabled a more rigorous theorization of Duras’s approach to the task of rewriting.

Beaulieu’s intense engagement with Duras’s works is manifest from the very first page—in the poetic dedication she wrote for Duras—to the very end, in which she acknowledges the personal stakes of being captivated by her subject matter, “l’idylle entre elle [Duras] et moi” (p. 263). One has the sense across the book that the reader/viewer, whose imagination, personal investment, and participation in the production of Duras’s work are constantly evoked, is not just a strong remnant of reader-response theory that permeates Beaulieu’s approach, but a reflection of the author’s personal investment in her project. At times, I would have hoped for a more critical engagement with who exactly this reader/viewer is: must they be deeply invested in Duras’s work to understand it? And why would they be charged with producing meaning—“comblent les trous” in narratives, as Beaulieu suggests (p. 133)—when Duras’s writing so privileged the blank

space, the absence, the void as themselves immanently meaningful? Beaulieu's project is motivated by an understanding that "remplir les interstices laissés par le texte demeure le rôle principal du lectorat durassien" (p. 209), and in that sense its critical approach models such a reader. Readers of *L'entrécriture de Marguerite Duras* will find a host of important issues and questions raised about a writer whose work remains vivid and relevant.

NOTES

[1] See Jean-Louis Libois, "Texte théâtre film," in *Marguerite Duras*, ed. François Barat and Joël Farges (Paris: Editions Albatros, 1975), 175-80. Among many other recent texts one could cite Jean Cléder, *Entre littérature et cinéma: Les affinités électives* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012); Michelle Royer, *The Cinema of Marguerite Duras: Multisensoriality and Female Subjectivity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2019); and the essays gathered in *Marguerite Duras 3: Paradoxes de l'image*, ed. Sylvie Loignon (Caen: Lettres modernes Minard, 2009).

[2] See most notably the interviews and essays collected in *Cinéma invisible: L'Amant de Marguerite Duras: Entretiens entre Marguerite Duras et Claude Berri, avec Jérôme Beaujour et Sophie Bogaert*, ed. Jean Cléder (Nantes: Éditions Nouvelles Cécile Defaut, 2014), a book absent from Beaulieu's bibliography.

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