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Effie Rentzou and André Benhaïm, eds., *1913: The Year of French Modernism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. 352 pp. \$120.00 U.S., £80.00. (hb). ISBN 9-78-1526145024; \$120.00 U.S., £80.00. (eb). ISBN 9-78-1526145048.

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This beautifully produced volume is a welcome and enriching addition to scholarship in French studies and the wider field of modernist studies. Given its subject matter, it is wholly fitting that it should be such a pleasing object, from the bold, unmistakable cover reproduction of Sonia Delauney's Eiffel tower, taken from the *Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France*, to the handsome mise-en-page and the high-quality reproductions of photographs, paintings and artworks. Effie Rentzou and André Benhaïm have brought together a collective endeavour that not only explores the extraordinary cultural riches of this exceptional year but also reflects them in its production values.

The book's title is a provocation. Though recent years have seen a marked shift towards global, transnational and post- or de-colonial approaches to modernist studies, the field remains nevertheless largely preoccupied by the cultural production of the Anglophone world. *Modernisme* has little currency in French, and French modernism, as Rentzou puts it archly in her introduction, "does not exist" (p. 2). The book, then, seeks to question the assumptions and preconceptions of a broad and long-established field of scholarship and, at the same time, make the case for a new area of enquiry. A significant asset of the book is its critical apparatus, consisting of a lengthy, informative and critically astute introduction by Rentzou to the volume as a whole, shorter unattributed introductions to each of its three constituent parts, and an illuminating coda made up of short reflections by two leading scholars in the wider field of modernist studies, Jean-Michel Rabaté and Susan Stanford Friedman.[1] The four successive sections of introductory material provide a valuable critical and cultural-historical framework for the fourteen main chapters. Rabaté's and Friedman's contributions add variety of tone and approach: Rabaté reflects on dimensions of cultural production and circulation that he omitted from his groundbreaking study of 2007, while Friedman offers a fascinating response to the fourteen chapters that make up the body of the book, to which I will return below.

Rentzou's introduction reminds us of the "storm of activity" that was witnessed in the field of French literature and the arts in 1913 (p. 2), in the shape of new works by Marcel Proust, Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay, Marcel Duchamp, Igor Stravinsky, Alain-Fournier...and the list goes on. It was also the year of the preparation of the first book publication of Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, Eugène Atget's album

Les Zoniers, and the landmark Armory Show in New York that brought so many French artists to the attention of a North American audience. The ambition of the present volume, as Rentzou puts it, is “[to capture] this moment of vibrant creativity in France, which also proved to be a crucial moment for modernism gaining traction throughout the world, and collectively [to produce] a narrative of French modernism” (p. 2). In doing this, Rentzou goes on, questions need to be raised about the various possible understandings of that noun and its modifier. French culture—with Paris as its epicentre—has long been considered as a fundamental part of the history of modernism, yet without, as noted above, having been explored and fully accounted for. Rentzou dramatically stages the challenge before her contributors in the following terms: “French modernism stands symbolically in the heart of the galaxy of global modernism: everyone acknowledges its gravitational pull, everyone knows it is there, but no-one seems able to see it, much less describe it” (p. 3). In order to begin the work of describing it, the volume takes the pivotal year 1913 as the point around which it is organized, taken not as a point of origin or birth but rather a key moment of coalescence or evolution of what would later be called modernism. In addition to this chronological delimitation (cleaved to closely by some contributors and only very loosely by others), the main criteria for inclusion are, predictably perhaps, writing in the French language and/or working in France (usually in Paris). The book’s chapters are arranged into three main parts: “1913, French modernism and historical time,” “1913, ‘French’ and ‘modernism’ in question,” and “1913, French modernism and intermediality,” with the two brief reflective pieces alluded to above making up the coda, “On modernism, beyond France and 1913”.

The year 1913 is used in the book in a range of ways, as indicated in these headings. Each of the chapters is coherent and compelling in its own ways, though readers will inevitably find their own quibbles about how far x or y is relevant or appropriate to the delimitations of what could be called a yearbook. In her introduction, Rentzou ties herself somewhat in knots, writing that “centring our view around 1913 dramatically reduces the scope of the volume, not allowing us, for instance, to venture back into the nineteenth century and discuss formative moments of modernism,” then three sentences later explaining that Christophe Wall-Romana’s chapter “outlines the history of ‘the cinematic’ in the nineteenth century” (p. 16). Suffice it to say that chapters attend to the cultural production of 1913 in more and less sustained or intensive ways—the chapter list below gives a sense of the approaches taken.

In part one, concerned nominally with historical time, André Benhaïm reads Proust in parallel with early twentieth-century excavations and discoveries in pre-history. Jonathan Eburne gives a rich account of the popular *Fantômas* film serial directed by Louis Feuillade that started appearing in April 1913, exploring the formulaic adventures based on Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre’s books in relation to evolving attitudes to historical truth. Guillaume Le Gall assesses Eugène Atget’s handling of space and emptiness in communicating the evolution of Paris and its hinterlands through time. Finally, Rentzou’s own chapter is an ambitious attempt to examine poetic and theoretical accounts of Paris as a centre of modernist activity in order to “reflect on the concept and usefulness of a ‘centre’ in considerations of modernism in its global existence” (p. 89). Here we see glimpses of the real merits of asking what a French modernism might be: Rentzou moves admirably between painting, poetry and thought, whilst sketching in the complex political backdrop and navigating sources in multiple languages. The plurality and messiness of modernism are deftly evoked, but they do not overwhelm the writing of the chapter. As Rentzou puts it (admittedly with perhaps overemphasis through repetition), “Paris as crossroads of avant-gardes and anxieties amplifies the main anxiety of the European avant-garde at this moment: an anxiety over being timely, over being modern” (p. 102). William Marx’s chapter ends part one

with a welcome consideration of the challenges of broaching the intensely heterogeneous nature of artistic (and especially literary) production in 1913, with a specific focus on *arrière-gardes*.

The chapters that make up part two seek to interrogate both terms in the unfamiliar syntagma of French modernism as well as the tensions between them. Christopher Bush explores Victor Segalen's *Stèles*, which combines Chinese and French and first appeared privately in Beijing (then Peking) in 1912 and was then published in expanded form in 1914. This so-called untimely work leads Bush persuasively to show how "worries about doing violence either to a French corpus or to the integrity of an Anglophone critical concept become less serious if we consider modernism a more widespread phenomenon" (p. 137). There follow two more chapters on individual works not typically considered modernist, that explore alternative frameworks for understanding them: David Ellison considers Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* in relation to romanticism and notions of beauty and Gerald Prince discusses André Gide's *Les Caves du Vatican* as a real (and modern) novel, as opposed to a *récit* (his chosen term for works such as *L'Immoraliste* (1902) and *La Porte étroite* (1909) that appeared before the publication of *Les Caves du Vatican* in 1914. Annette Becker's chapter takes Marc Chagall's painting *Homage to Apollinaire* as a prompt to survey the different geopolitical pressures at work on European avant-gardes around 1913. In such a visually rich work (five of the chapters are generously supplemented with colour and black and white illustrations), it is a surprise not to have the painting reproduced. Nevertheless, readers without French here have access, in Jay Winter's translation, to a rich and rewarding piece by a major French-language authority on Apollinaire and his period.

Part three broaches intermediality, though this is, to an extent, a thread throughout the whole work. Christophe Wall-Romana's piece on the "Cinematization of French thought and aesthetics (1867-1913)" spends thirteen densely argued pages on what he sums up as the "percolation of (pre-)cinema in philosophy" (p. 208), before attending only briefly and tangentially to work from 1913. Marjorie Perloff's chapter challenges the conventional categorization of the *Prose du Transsibérien* as a simultaneous artwork, critically illuminating the tensions between image and text. Virginie A. Duzer offers a fascinating survey of Mallarmé's afterlife around 1913 (connecting, though no explicit mention is made, with Prince's earlier discussion of the *Nouvelle revue française*). This leads neatly to Mary Shaw's excellent account of "analogies between Mallarmé's poetics" (p. 252) and the practices of Vaslav Nijinsky, Sonia Delaunay, and Marcel Duchamp. The final chapter is a sparkling contribution by Lisa Florman that offers an historical contextualization of the incorporation of pins into Picasso's *papiers collés* and *papiers épingleés* around 1913.

In the book's coda, Rabaté primarily foregrounds the significance of James Gibbons Huneker (1857-1921) in the evolution of his understanding of modernism and 1913 as a landmark year within this landscape since the publication of *1913: The Cradle of Modernism* in 2007. Friedman's pages revisit the paradoxes and challenges that are first set out in Rentzou's introduction and explored throughout the volume's chapters. She raises the question of the relative paucity of female figures across the book's pages as well as questions of origins and ethnicity: "At the very least, [Gertrude] Stein and Josephine Baker, as expatriates living and working in Paris, could be included, introducing the complexity of what constitutes 'French' in French modernism: language? citizenship? birth? residence (intermittent or permanent)? cultural sensibility?" (p. 316). She encourages a transnational approach to thinking French modernism and a theoretical bent that looks beyond limiting discourses of centre and periphery to more expansive, archipelagic models of relationality, building on the widely celebrated work of Édouard

Glissant.[2] There is nothing to disagree with here. Indeed, the inclusion of Friedman's critical appraisal is an admirable acknowledgement by the volume's editors, that a large-scale endeavour such as the present volume, especially when focused on subject matter as rich and complex as the artistic production of 1913, could always have a different shape, different points of focus. This reviewer might have preferred stricter chronological delimitation to the chapters and more explicit editorial intervention to flag up interconnections between them. More space might have been given to new work, as the chapters by Benhaïm, Ellison, Perloff and Shaw have all appeared in alternate versions elsewhere. Notwithstanding these what ifs and what abouts, the volume, as we have it, is a success: a substantive contribution to thinking about literary modernism, modern art, culture, and history through the lens of an extraordinary, and endlessly fascinating, temporal moment.

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Jean-Michel Rabaté, "1913, the future in the past"

Susan Stanford Friedman, "The paradox and promise of the 'new' French Modernist Studies"

NOTES

[1] Jean-Michel Rabaté is author of the excellent *1913: The Cradle of Modernism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), a crucial forerunner to the present volume, yet one cited in only two of its chapters. A more recent invitation to rethink the conventional boundaries and occlusions of modernist scholarship is Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations of Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[2] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

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