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not only the technological critique of the dominant medium of these days, namely television, but also the ideological critique of the dominant cultural messages spread by television and related popular media (such as of course film and comics). Television was considered by avant-garde artists and critical theorists as a medium that had betrayed the possibilities of social interaction, dialogue and critique enabled by the very technology: Broadcasting is indeed not the only way of using television technology, and artists as well as social activists were looking for ways to “talk back” to the medium (David Joselit’s *Feedback* is a key publication in this regard). And the messages it carried to the public were characterized by a strong ideological subtext that was, among many other things, very woman-unfriendly.

On the other hand, there was an attempt to remediate these flaws, both by exploring video’s medium-specificity and by resisting the ideological meanings of the dominant media. Video was not (only) used as a carrier for other meanings, it was an opportunity to explore, that is, to invent a new visual language, which was used in its turn as a way of criticizing the belief that images, most importantly television images, were transparent windows on the world. Moreover, the new video art also investigated the (in this case sexist) ideology of the messages spread by popular and media culture, which were attacked and deconstructed through the classic avant-garde mechanisms of sampling and collage.

T.J. Demos describes with great clarity the historical context of Birnbaum’s video, stressing very rightly the relationships between the beginnings of video art and the postmodern aesthetics of appropriation art as exemplified by Craig Owens’s work around the landmark Pictures exhibition. He also underlines the strong input of *screen-based* critical and feminist film theory, as illustrated by theoretically schooled filmmakers such as Mulvey and Wollen.

Yet contrary to other works of the same artistic and ideological movement, Birnbaum’s reworking of the Wonder Woman mythology and television series has never had the same homogeneous and politically streamlined reception as that of most other works by her colleagues and competitors (one of the critical voices in this regard was that of Benjamin Buchloh). From the very beginning, there were doubts on the political “correctness” of this video, and

today it is even seen by many spectators, including women, as defending a positive image of a strong, postfeminist woman.

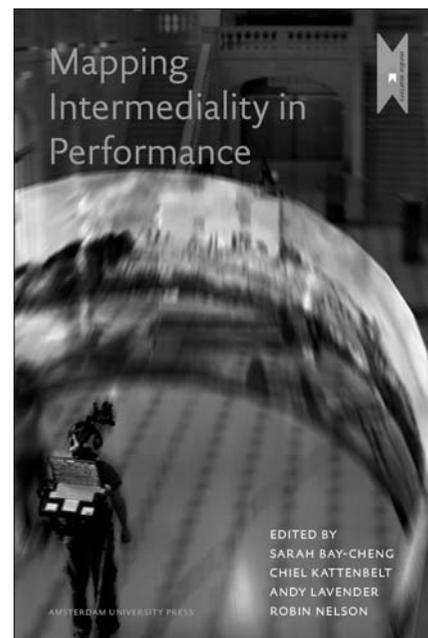
For T.J. Demos, this persistent ambivalence is not a flaw of Birnbaum’s work but one of its major strengths, and the fact that after three decades the *Wonder Woman* video is still producing such divergent interpretations should be the core question of any analysis of the work. Demos rejects, and I think he is right in doing so, the easy hypothesis of the multiple audiences: If Birnbaum’s work engenders various readings, it is not only because the public is different, both synchronically and diachronically, but also and foremost, and this is a much more courageous hypothesis, because *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* takes very seriously the strength of popular culture and dominant media and does not discard automatically the positive aspects of our fascination with this kind of culture. Birnbaum’s work is a highbrow critique of lowbrow culture, but one that does not take as its starting point the unbridgeable gap between both. How this complex relationship between distance and fascination works is discussed in the final sections of Demos’s analysis in reference to notions such as experience, interaction and affect (and, not unsurprisingly, the names of Bourriaud and Massumi are mentioned more than once). The aim of the One World series, which focuses on specific works, is of course not to give definitive answers to very general questions, but T.J. Demos’s discussion of *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* is a valuable contribution to a better, that is, a less *a priori* negative understanding of our long-standing oscillation between involvement and critical distance in contemporary mass culture.

MAPPING INTERMEDIALITY IN PERFORMANCE

by Sarah Bay-Cheng, Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender and Robin Nelson. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 2010. 304 pp. ISBN: 978-90-8964-255-4.

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When I defended my dissertation in LinguaMOO in 1995, I was very aware that there was significant space between



the room where I was physically inputting my responses to questions posed to me by my committee, who were physically present, and the virtual auditorium where I watched my thoughts become instantiated as posts (that each began with “Dene says”) for the 50-plus members of the on-line audience. I was, likewise, acutely aware that the performance required for each room was different—different in a way that had nothing to do with the research findings I typed for my responses but, rather, how I put forward those findings in each. Somewhere in that space between here and there I had to make a significant shift in my personae in order to reach the audience in both rooms effectively. Yes, William Gibson had, close to 10 years before, provided the metaphorical notion of “jacking in” and described the experience of moving from the real-world “Sprawl” to the on-line “Matrix,” and Sherry Turkle had already described the experience of *The Second Self* and had just told us what happens when we live *Life on the Screen*, but the theoretical language for making sense of the space and the performances that it mediates had not fully been realized in 1995.

Some years and a Second Life later, a cogent theory of what I had wondered about emerged: Intermediality. While Bay-Cheng et al.’s *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* is certainly not the first book to discuss intermediality directly—that honor may go to *Intermediality: The Teachers’ Handbook of Critical Media Literacy*, published in 1999—it is

perhaps the best one for making sense of it theoretically, from a performance focus.

Mapping Intermediality is a collection of essays written by 30 international artists and scholars working in the areas of art history, theater, film studies, media art, music, literature and performance studies and so provides a broad yet detailed perspective on intermediality and performance, specifically in digital culture. Organized into five portals, or “gateways into the network which afford a range of situated perspectives,” four nodes composing a “cluster of terms” and instances that offer “dialogic engagement” and a general fleshing out of ideas, the book itself reflects the act of mapping out space. Throughout the book the reader will find arrows pointing to “links” in the book’s “system” (p. 9), a strategy of remediating hypertextuality in print form that makes good sense for a book about intermediality in digital culture.

Intermediality, the book suggests, is concerned with “co-relations . . . that result in a redefinition of the media that are influencing each other, which in turn leads to a fresh perception.” It is, as Robin Nelson writes in the opening essay, “a bridge between mediums” (p. 14) and, so, constitutes a “both-and approach” to understanding information rather than an either-or perspective (p. 17). Citing the *International Encyclopedia of Communication*, Nelson points out three basic perspectives accepted for understanding intermediality:

First . . . [it] is the combination and adaptation of separate material vehicles of representation and reproduction, sometimes called multimedia. . . . Second, the term denotes communication through several sensory modalities at once. . . . Third, [it] concerns the interrelations between media as institutions in society, as addressed in technological and economic terms such as convergence and conglomeration [1].

Out of this broad understanding of object and experience emerge basic qualities associated with intermediality, such as interconnectedness, syncretism, interactivity and playfulness, and dislocation, to name a few that figure largely (pp. 19–21). One of the pervasive characteristics of digital culture is the way in which media work together in a system to accomplish “communicative strategies” (p. 15). In fact, the term intermediality suggests “the *interconnectedness* of modern media of communication [my emphasis]” [1]. Video games

that incorporate sound and image are but one example of the way in which elements of media objects connect with one another in order to present a unified vision—in this case for creating gaming experiences. But this relationship extends beyond the connection among elements to that between user and object.

The essays that follow build on these concepts from the perspectives of “performativity and corporeal literacy,” “time and space,” “digital culture and posthumanism,” “networking,” and “pedagogic praxis.” In sum, the book covers intermediality from practice to theory to teaching. While rhetorical, communications and linguistic theories offer insights into the relationship between viewers and information, they do not address the complexities that arise when linking analog objects, such as those represented by the physical body of viewers, visual art and the like, to digital media such as sound, images, video, and words found on the web. Moreover, intermediality stands in stark contrast to the separation of human and objects so prevalent in Western epistemologies. Thus, Andy Lavender’s essay on “Digital Culture,” which he says has been “shaped” by intermediality (p. 125), and Ralf Remshaft’s essay on “posthumanism,” which he tells us is a “matrix” and not a “condition” (p. 135), provide good foundations for understanding this change in perspective. Additionally, Remshaft’s take on the audience “becoming cyborg” also explains the way immersive technologies are “shap[ing] a new communal posthuman sense of performance experience” (p. 138).

The final section traces intermediality in “earlier encounters” (p. 248), beginning with, as Klemens Gruber points out in his essay “Early Intermediality: Archaeological Glimpses,” the use of the term for “spiritist séances” (p. 247), through the “crisis in art” brought about by the “verisimilitude” of photography (p. 247) to the “radical experimentation of film” (p. 253). Thus, intermediality is not new, but we are made more readily aware of it through the “convergence of digital technologies.” Certainly, “the process of encoding in 0:1s” all things “visual, verbal, sonic, and gestural” (p. 16)—as I learned by watching my on-line self interacting with the virtual slides in LinguaMOO’s auditorium during my defense—drives a need to reenvision intermediality, as the authors so aptly do in this book. For the fundamen-

tal shift in the relationship between humans and the digital technologies they engage with lays bare our potential to connect and become part of a feedback loop, influencing and being influenced by information—in fact, becoming expressed as information ourselves as another media in the *multi-media*. And while it is understood that “all discourse [is] ‘mediated’” (p. 15), it is, I have come to see, equally realized when connecting via and to digital media that the membranes that seemingly contain the elements as unique, discrete units are actually exceptionally thinned and extraordinarily permeable in this flux of information exchange.

Needless to say, *Mapping Intermediality* is well worth the read and will be useful in undergraduate and graduate-level courses in digital media where performance is a topic under study.

Reference

1. *International Encyclopedia of Communication Online*, <www.communicationencyclopedia.com/public/tocnode?query=intermediality&widen=1&result_number=1&from=search&id=g9781405131995_yr2010_chunk_g978140513199514_ss60-1&type=std&fuzzy=0&slop=1> (accessed 14 October 2010).

DESIGNING THINGS: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE CULTURE OF OBJECTS

by Prasad Boradkar. Berg Publishers, Oxford, U.K., 2010. 336 pp., illus. ISBN: 978-1-84520-427-3.

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“With some exceptions, design has traditionally under-theorized the cultural meanings of objects” (p. 12). Designers have, traditionally, been rather uncritical of the objects they create and the wider networks within which their activities are embedded. In *Designing Things*, Prasad Boradkar attempts to encourage designers to be more critical of the diverse networks that their creations are, and become, embedded within. What Boradkar wishes to highlight is not only the agency of designers of things but also how these things themselves then design those who use and ongoingly interact with them in the objects lifetime. This is embedded in the title of the book, which in one sense “refers to the primary activity of making, i.e. the process of the design of products, buildings, graphics, interiors,