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Review 1

“Parallèles entre les arts” [“Parallels between the arts”] edited by Olivier Bonfait and Annie Claustres (*Histoire de l’art*, no. 69, December 2011).

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Full text (PDF file)

Treatises on parallels between the arts, which flourished in the Renaissance and Classical periods, were dismissed by modernism: modernist criticism discarded comparisons in favor of the search for specificities and absolute limits between the arts. Now that, today, post-modernist and post-structuralist thought permeates the history of the arts, particularly through cultural studies and the attention paid to popular culture, the question of parallels may be raised again. Interest in traditional discussions of *paragoni* has resurfaced, but without the emphasis on classifications and hierarchies. This revival is a chance to re-examine certain periods: Rose-Marie Ferré shows, for instance, that a Medieval *mediality* existed, which questions the impact of iconography and requires a history of visual culture to be introduced into the history of the arts.

This renewed interest in comparisons between the arts informs a rereading of Classicism, in an attempt to situate the limits of *ut pictura poesis* (Jonathan Unglaub), and an analysis of the transition toward the 18th-century utopia of fusion between the arts, whether between the arts of music and painting (Marie-Pauline Martin) or through the invention of a genre like landscape, conceived as the perfect mediator between poetry and painting (Ilona Woronow).

Inter-arts relationships —between visual arts on the one hand, and theater, dance or music on the other— are also addressed: 19th-century painting developed an anti-theatrical esthetic (Pierre Sérié), Jerzy Grotowski’s “poor theater” influenced the critical thought of Germano Celant (Barbara Satre), Trisha Brown’s choreographies influenced Gordon Matta-Clark (Roula Matar-Perret), and rock was used as a counter-cultural motif by Andy Warhol (Marine Schütz). The artistic nature of what might not immediately be considered to be art is also re-evaluated (Élodie Voillot).

In the light of this reassessment of parallels between the arts, the history of the arts may also be brought into contact with other disciplines such as linguistics, in order to compare traditional Indian arts with Sanskrit literary devices (Vincent Lefèvre), or the medium of sound with the book (Constance Moréteau). But hybridizations between the arts can also, as in biology, create “ultimate degeneration” (Thierry Côme).

This issue shows that one can no longer talk of comparisons or parallels between the arts, but rather of interactions and passageways.