Banash, David, ed. *Steve Tomasula: The Art and Science of New Media Fiction*

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The Art and Science of New Media Fiction (2015), edited by David Banash, constitutes a valuable contribution to the fields of new media and literature. Bringing digital media at the center of literary and humanistic studies, this edition is a thorough examination of Steve Tomasula’s fictional works. In his fiction, Tomasula integrates literary practice with the latest software technologies. This being the case, this collection of essays introduces alternate ways of reading and interpreting Tomasula’s texts. Tomasula is examined “as a novelist,” painter, typographer and designer (Banash and Spain 10), emphasizing the multiplication of novelistic practice as a result of the convergence of different media and genres, since “his novels are informed by hypertext, video games and other techniques of representation and interpretation these kind of technologies make possible” (14). Tomasula’s novels signal a major shift in the direction the form of the print-bound novel has taken since the advent of digital technologies which affected novelistic experimentation with regard to writing practices and presentation of literary texts.

The introduction of this collection of essays contextualizes Steve Tomasula’s fictional works, placing them within “the broadest contexts of science, art, the history of the novel, and new media” (Banash and Spain 15). The edition comprises four parts, each of which focuses on specific fictional texts by Tomasula and tackles different thematic concerns: representation, body, wonder.
The first part concentrates on Tomasula’s novels *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (2002) and *IN&OZ: A Novel* (2003). Anthony Enns focuses on the notion of the posthuman as this is portrayed in *VAS*. Françoise Sammarcelli juxtaposes the textual body (the novel itself) with the human body, which is highly contested, as it can be reshaped, and, hence, constantly transformed and technologically redesigned. The author explores the ways in which both types of body become hybrid constructs. R. M. Berry shores up his analysis of *VAS* by resorting to Freud’s theories as well as stressing the importance of the physical features of the novel, that is the appearance of words, in “experiencing [their] meaning (111).

Part Two focuses solely on *The Book of Portraiture: A Novel*. Both Flore Chevaillier and N. Katherine Hayles highlight the “ongoing impossible-to-represent history of representation” (Hayles 146). Chevaillier sheds light on different ways of self-portraiture and self-reflection, while Hayles takes the concept of the posthuman a step further by considering the narratives contained in the novel “posthuman,” in that they manage to “weave a web so complex, interconnected, and vast that no one can entirely control it” (146).

The essays included in Part Three of the edition attempt to pin down the ways in which Tomasula’s *TOC: A New Media Novel* (2009) subverts traditional reading habits and literary practices. Kathy Inman Berens offers a medium-specific approach to the novel, delineating the differences between reading *TOC* as an electronic text on desktop, on iPad, and in printed form. She successfully links the elements of touch, gesture and obsolescence of the novel itself with the themes of the novel. Anne Hurault-Paupe provides a semiological analysis of *TOC*, viewing it as a hybrid text that combines both old and new media features. Lance Olsen provides a juxtaposition between *VAS* and *TOC*. What is interesting in his analysis is the way he utilizes typography, which appears to mirror Tomasula’s way of writing in *VAS*. The author’s creative and artistic experiments with typography in the article seem to reflect Tomasula’s experimentations on the novel and its transformation due to the application of the practices of technology.

The final part of the edited collection provides perceptive links between Tomasula’s fiction and the contexts of science fiction, the fantastic, and the aesthetics of wonder. The value of Pawel Frelik’s contribution in the present edition lies in his considering Tomasula’s works as science fictional. While science fiction writers create estrangement through the themes they tackle, Tomasula also achieves this through the challenging form of his works. Although Frelik’s article relates to Tomasula’s fiction as a whole, the rest of the essays contained in this part concentrate mainly on Tomasula’s short story collection *Once Human: Stories* (2014). Anne Larue demonstrates the ways in which the postmodern figure of the cyborg can be used in order to discuss issues of race, gender, and disabilities in Tomasula’s short story “The Color of Flesh” included in *Once Human: Stories*. The author takes into account Donna Haraway’s cyborg theory as well as the illustrations depicted in the short story so as to complement her argument. Françoise Palleau-Papin argues that in *Once Human: Stories* Tomasula challenges the form of the short story through his enumerations included in his narrative, while Anne-Laure Tissut unveils different forms of wonder that lend a sense of optimism to his works. The volume concludes with an interview with Tomasula being asked to comment on issues, several of which are also addressed by the authors in this edition.

Engaging and thought-provoking, the edition serves as an essential and comprehensive guide to the fiction of Steve Tomasula. All contributors to this essay collection deftly
manage to portray the array of themes they discuss by thoroughly analyzing Tomasula’s novels. At the same time, the book can be regarded as an invaluable source for researchers and theorists of old and new media.

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