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4 This volume brings together a range of scholars in order to explore "literature's productive engagement with and involvement in visual culture" (11) from the early-seventeenth to the twenty-first century. The aim of the editors Ronja Bodola and Guido Isekenmeier to cover a wide scope of literary practices that are shaped by, and inform historical perceptions and representations of visuality, is reflected in the three-part structure of the volume that follows its title. *Literary Visualities: Visual Descriptions, Readerly Visualisations, Textual Visibilities* provides a comprehensive investigation of the intersections between literature and visuality as evidenced in different genres – playbooks, early modern drama, short stories, visual poetry, dictionary novels – while it offers a combination of familiar and less frequently discussed literary works as ground for interdisciplinary critical observations.

5 In "Playbooks as Imaginary Theatre: Visuality and Description in Early Modern English Drama," Nicola Glaubitz does not consider readerly visualization of playbooks as typically based on the print text, but rather approaches it "as the imagination of mediated, theatrical, and performative visibility" (21). Embarking on his exploration by wondering whether literary visuality is "applicable to early modern drama at all" (23), Glaubitz highlights the role of playbooks in "allow[ing] us to historicise the configuration of 'literature,' 'visuality' and 'readerly visualisation'" (24). Aware of

limitations such as "the multiple contingencies that flow into the process of playwriting from inception to manuscript" (32), Glaubitz probes into Thomas Middleton's *The Puritan Widow*, William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* and Thomas Middleton and Thomas Decker's *The Roaring Girl* in order to demonstrate how texts can be viewed as "points of intersection of material culture, discourses on words and visuality, scripts for practices, and institutional contexts" (73).

6 While Glaubitz's essay explores the contexts of early modern drama, Guido Isekenmeier's "Descriptive Visuality and Postmodernist Fiction" turns his attention to fiction in the literary landscape of the late twentieth century. Urging for a "visual cultural history of the descriptive" (119), Isekenmeier demonstrates the significance of the descriptive as concept and literary practice to the understanding of narrative, focalization, and processes of visualization. His observation that "postmodernist texts revert to the minimalist means of pre-nineteenth-century descriptivity" reveals a counterintuitive turn in the history of the descriptive. By juxtaposing the mass production of household products around 1800 with the post-World War II "expansion of commodity culture," Isekenmeier indicates the paradox of "a renewed reliance on a cultural store of images enabling readerly concretisations of the visuality of the fictional world" (99). Emphasizing the "descriptive economy of the postmodernist novel" (111), Isekenmeier focuses on Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Paul Auster's *Ghosts* (from *The New York Trilogy*) in order to highlight the metonymic nature of description in postmodernist fiction, "a descriptivity without description" (103).

7 In what constitutes one of the most insightful contributions to the volume, Silke Horstkotte argues that "ekphrasis is not simply an evocation of visuality, but a way of problematising culturally determined modes of visuality" (144). The sharp critical engagement with a web of theories of immersion (Ryan, *Narrative*), ekphrasis (Heffernan, "Ekphrasis"), visualization (Iser, *Act*; Mendelsund, *What*), phenomenology (Esrock, *Reader's*; Scarry, *Dreaming*), and focalization (Bal, *Narratology*; Jahn, "Windows"; Stockwell, *Texture*) lays the foundation for the investigation of three primary texts: "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats, "The Man in the Turban" by Pere Gimferrer, and *Vom Schnee* by Durs Grünbein. Horstkotte's "Ekphrasis as Genre, Ekphrasis as Metaphenomenology" demonstrates how "ekphrasis can contribute to an enriched understanding of literary visuality" (161), which is bound to textual representations of looking while remaining historically and culturally contingent.

8 In "The Iconic Power of Short Stories—A Cognitive Approach," Renate Brosch explores the cognitive and emotional challenges that intense visualisations offer to the reader of short stories. Highlighting the compressed nature of short stories, Brosch brings together developments in cognitive narratology and neuropsychology in order to show how "experiencing short stories unfolds in a tension between verbal economy and imaginative projection" (168). Using Graham Swift's "Seraglio" as a case study, Brosch shows how short stories employ binary structures only to undermine and question them through intensified visualisations, urging the reader "to visualize a set of opposed mental spaces and to resolve them by creating a blend" (188). Describing such intensified visualisations as "iconic moments" (184), Brosch underlines the significance of images for the short story genre and offers an interdisciplinary approach that reveals "the mental pathways underlying the process of constructing meaning" (167).

9 Visual poetry becomes the focus of Kai Merten's "Media History in Seventeenth-and Twentieth-Century Visual Poetry in English: Two Case Studies," adding to the diversity

of primary material that the volume explores. Drawing upon the media theorist Friedrich Kittler (*Gramophone* 1999; *Optical* 2010), Merten postulates that "the two histories, of media and of visual poetry, are closely intertwined" (205), which paves the way for his main argument that visual poetry "works *through* the visualities and discourses of visuality of its time in order to establish its own literary visuality both with and beyond these other (media) visualities" (219; emphasis in original). Suggesting that George Herbert's "The Altar" "dissolves the text into the realm of the image" (209), Merten also highlights the positioning of the poem in Herbert's poetry collection *Temple*, in order to suggest that the latter is "not only *about* an architectural structure; it also *is* in several ways a temple" (211). Locating "The Altar" within a historical framework shaped by creative literary practices and printing affordances, Merten argues that the poem "both rejects and embraces the 'letterpress monopoly' of the seventeenth century, while it looks ahead to, without yet fulfilling, the internalization of visuality into literature" (208). "Poem, Or Beauty Hurts Mr Vinal" by E.E. Cummings is also examined in the chapter as a thorough example of "modernist poetry's affiliation with the culture of (graphic) advertising" (215) against the context of audio-visual media, leading Merten to suggest that "modern visual poetry visualizes language both against and beyond the new (visual) media" (219).

10 Bernhard Metz turns his attention to a body of dictionary novels that employ the organizational principles and conventions of dictionaries, while they openly dismiss the reading practices associated with them. "Non-linear Readings: The Dictionary Novel as a Visual Genre" brings together significant conceptual literary works across national contexts that demonstrate how the particular genre "cries for digressions and cursory reading, radically challenging linear and unidirectional reading movements" (257). Metz discusses how "the dictionary decides to bring her words to life to tell her own story" (230) in British artist Sam Winston's *A Dictionary Story*, while emphasizing its loop structure that resists finiteness. Austrian writer Andreas Okopenko's *Dictionary Novel of a Sentimental Journey to the Exporters' Meeting at Druden* is presented as the oldest specimen of a dictionary novel, offering an array of reading paths and possibilities to the reader that are, according to Metz, "the real content of this dictionary novel" (236). While the reader is explicitly instructed "to develop the model and the genre" (241) by actively contributing to the narrative, the presence of arrows "as invitations for digression" (235) highlights the visual component of this work. [1]The Serbo-Croatian *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel in 100,000 Words* by Milorad Pavić invites the reader to uncover and construct the myth of the Khazars via a combination of Christian, Islamic, and Jewish perspectives, and Metz describes Pavić's work as "a balkanized blend of the Kabala and One Thousand and One Nights, Jorge Luis Borges and Umberto Eco," creating significant intertextual associations (245). The "allegedly poisoned pages" of *Dictionary of the Khazars* lead Metz to emphasize the profound difference between the reading experience offered by the (haptic engagement of the) print book and that of its e-book equivalent. In addition, Metz explores the fourth part of *See Under: Love* by Israeli author David Grossman, and *The Last Window-Giraffe: A Picture Dictionary for the Over Fives* by Hungarian writer Péter Zilahy. While "the reader has to move and walk between sections of the text, reading footnotes, skipping between columns, [and] going back and forth" in Zilahy's text, Metz notes that "navigating through this jungle of words . . . is the only thing the reader has to achieve" (251; ellipsis added).

11 In the final chapter of the volume titled "Do you See? Literature and Other Optical Media," Karin Krauthausen draws upon Kittler's notion of literature as an optical medium in order to examine its competitive engagements with photography and film. Krauthausen demonstrates how, following "the heyday of literature as an optical medium" during the eighteenth century, literature "does not relinquish its optical potential" (264). Gustave Flaubert's *La Tentation de saint Antoine* becomes the focal point of Krauthausen's investigation, which illustrates how the book "evokes the reality of mental images" (271). The French novelist "differentiates literature as a medium and art by making something visible that photography is not able to show in the same way" (268), while through "excess of descriptions in the stage directions, Flaubert shifts his play into the realm of prose" (270), Krauthausen argues. The examination of Marguerite Duras's film *Le Camion* is oriented towards the use of free indirect discourse, a means through which "literature trains the film recipients in a new optics" (279). Krauthausen suggests that Duras "addresses the viewer as a reader," thereby using literature as a vehicle "for this new optics" (273).

12 *Literary Visualities: Visual Descriptions, Readerly Visualisations, Textual Visibilities* adds to contemporary critical scholarship by demonstrating how literature's diachronic engagement with visuality has been varied, sustained, and creative. Published alongside a surge of multimodal literary works that feature a strong visual component, this volume allows us to recognize a significant historicity that leads into the present moment in literary production. Although a radical trimming of footnotes along with a reconsideration of the length of certain chapters could be suggested in a subsequent edition, Bodola and Isekenmeier's *Literary Visualities: Visual Descriptions, Readerly Visualisations, Textual Visibilities* offers a thorough critical investigation that challenges the dominance of the verbal text in literary practice and criticism, contributes to the shaping of a literary history of visual culture, and fuels interdisciplinary approaches to literature.

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NOTES

1. Many of the digressions result in empty or non-existent entries, echoing the playfulness encountered in the "DNE" entries that appear in the Index section of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*.