

on Rae Armantrout but does so in order to highlight the difference in their treatment of the familiar and the local, discussing Armantrout's revision of Williams's minimalism and the resulting special kind of figurativeness that Bartczak conceptualizes as "a reversed metaphor or the inductive field" of poems whose own metabolism and critical agency are offered to the readers instead of the safe harbor of pristine commonness in Williams and the objectivists (227, 247). The work of the poem is also the subject of the penultimate chapter, looking at the imitations of life and threshold singing in Peter Gizzi, who takes up and rewrites the lessons found in Stevens, Dickinson and Whitman, and their engagements with the natural world, oscillating between nothingness and excess in the space of the song that itself becomes a form of life. *Matter and Self-Creation* concludes with a chapter tracing the developments in Bartczak's theoretical inquiries into the status and role of the poetic text. Audaciously argued and supplemented with the author's own poetic work, it charts the journey from the concept of the *poem as a speaking organism* (proposed in "Wiersze, które się zachowują" [Poems that act], *Świat nie scalony*, 2009) through the *poem as an environment* ("One cannot simply say one reads them. These are texts one participates in, and it is a participation in a rich and heterogenous environment the access to which is found precisely in the space of the poem"; 280), leading to the idea of the contemporary poem as *formal field of plenitude*, an "empty formal body" and an engaged "transducer" of energy and matter in a disintegrating world.

It is a beautiful book, and an unobtrusively useful one. Read separately, each chapter will provide a nuanced, erudite discussion of some of the most intriguing American authors of the last century. As a whole, *Matter and Self-Creation* offers a way of reading that may also become a way of being in or with the world "fatally irradiated by the spectacle" (Andrzej Sosnowski qtd. in Bartczak 282), and its increasingly dark plenitudes.

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**Małgorzata Myk. *Upping the Ante of the Real: Speculative Poetics of Leslie Scalapino*. Peter Lang, 2019, 312 pages.**

Poetry can be a philosophical exercise in a time of crisis, as shown by Małgorzata Myk's monograph on the work of Leslie Scalapino (1944-2010). The author has undertaken an ambitious task of exploring the radically experimental and generically heterogenous oeuvre of the American avant-garde poet, playwright, essayist, prose writer and artist, often associated with West Coast Language poets, but never really fitting this or any other grouping or critical label. The value of Myk's richly theoretical study lies not only in the comprehensiveness of her inquiry—which embraces Scalapino's prolific literary output as well as her numerous visual art projects—but,

above all, in the original interdisciplinary model of *speculative poetics*, proposed by the Lodz scholar, which allows for a new mapping of the poet's singular work. The model, based on a dialogic fusion of non-standard philosophies, including Catherine Malabou's materialist ontology, the radical materialism of Quentin Meillassoux, and new realism as proposed by François Laruelle and Maurizio Ferraris, remains sensitive to the idiosyncratic character of the poet's dictions and forms, matching the complexity of Scalapino's radical experimentation. The study, confronting, as the author herself admits, Scalapino's "elusive, intransigent poetic protocols" (7), illumines diverse trajectories of her artistic development, uncovering the speculative nature of her practices. The monograph taps into the most recent trend of transdisciplinary studies at the intersection of philosophy and poetry, including Anna Kałuża's *Splątane obiekty* (2019), Joan Retallack's *Poethical Wager* (2003), Kacper Bartczak's *Materia i autokreacja* (2019), and Lynn Keller's *Thinking Poetry* (2010), which demonstrate contemporary poetry's investigative and exploratory thrust, aimed at questioning and expanding the inherited epistemological, aesthetic, social as well as cultural paradigms. Poetry emerges from those interrogations as an activity of reading, thinking and experiencing—"a constructive preoccupation with what are unpredictable forms of life"—to borrow from Joan Retallack (1).

Scalapino certainly belongs to those philosophically inclined poets who stretch narrow paradigms of thought to imagine and probe realities and forms both of and beyond the known experience. In *Public World*, the poet observes that "writing is... an experiment of reality" (Scalapino 8). Considering her substantial output, which entails poetry, critical essays, experimental theatre pieces, various forms of fiction (e.g. mock detective and science fiction novels), inter-art collaborations, experimental autobiography, her practice has remained a considerable challenge for her critics. This is mostly owing to the generic interdiscursivity and instability of her works, their elusive and protean theoretical alliances, and their aesthetic and multi-modal eclecticism. The difficulty, as observed by Myk, lies also in the extreme disjunctiveness of her syntax, its oscillation between abstraction and referentiality, often to the point of communicative opacity, "radical formal transmutability" (7), and a wide range of 'actors', contexts, materials, media and textures within her work. In the special feature of *How2* devoted to her work, Laura Hinton aptly notes that Scalapino should be read at once as "an heir to American versions of surrealism; to the anti-institutional poetics of the Beats; to mystic American poets influenced by Asian philosophy" and that it is hard, if not counterproductive, to "make [her] restless text rest" ("Zither"). Interpreted nevertheless through the multiple lens of phenomenology, Marxist, feminist, life writing and poststructuralist theories, Scalapino's relentless and explosive experimentalism has both fascinated and resisted even her most diligent academic readers. Among the readings that foreground the philosophical and avant-garde contexts underlying her work there is Lagapa's essay on Scalapino's use of Zen Buddhist egoless philosophy (2006); Elizabeth Frost's study of the poet's affinities with feminist avant-garde experimentation after Gertrude Stein (1996); and Laura Hinton's investigation of freedom in the poet's autobiographical works (2004). And yet, until now, there had been no in-depth, comprehensively theorized, synthetic study of her oeuvre. Her multi-modal projects resisted comparative methodologies of intermedial

studies, while her continuously transmuting poetics defied unequivocal artistic groupings and trending theoretical labels. The poet herself admitted in an interview that her distortions of conventional forms and “violations of genres” are meant “to go past the category of analysis” and “create a different plateau of reality in the reader, so that you’d have some way of approaching the phenomena of what’s going on out there that is different from what we’ve created before. Analysis isn’t enough” (Anne Brewster, Interview with Scalapino, n.p.). Given the above, Myk’s more sustained and theoretically innovative engagement is a pioneering, ambitious and significant contribution to the study of this avant-garde artist. The Polish scholar discusses Scalapino’s transgressive imagination against a backdrop of rich historical and literary contexts related to the practice of American avant-garde, especially Objectivist, Neo-Objectivist and Language poetry, contemporary philosophy, Buddhist spirituality and visual art, not only boldly challenging the critical status quo, but also seeking new and more capacious ways to interpret her hybrid forms.

In her engaging polemic with Scalapino’s critics, Myk convincingly contends that the inherited theoretical field and terminological apparatus of the poststructuralist generation, which have dominated research trends in experimental poetry studies, are insufficient to capture the non-figurative, speculative impulse in Scalapino’s writing, which, as the author argues, “is based on creative inadequacy, materiality, and conceptual as well as linguistic inexhaustibility” (Myk, “Horyzonty” 137). Thus, Myk’s attempt to update the critical topography as regards the poet’s practice by relating it to more recent paradigmatic transformations and materialist turns constitutes a great value in the monograph. Using both synthetic and analytic perspectives, the critic argues persuasively that new materialist and speculative optics resonate with Scalapino’s onto-epistemological conception of form. Myk contends that for the author of *way* poetry is “an experimental modality of realism” (Myk, *Upping* 7). The poet aims at a radical integration of thought and matter, and works to undo binary categorizations reinforced by poststructuralist discourses and their deconstructive ideologies, inviting a multi-layered new materialist reading of her projects. The notion of “speculative poetics” proposed by Myk sheds a new light on the poet’s strategies and complex reconfigurations of reality, subjectivity, identity and social relations, providing a functional conceptual paradigm for the study of Scalapino’s formal experiments. Myk’s meticulous study, also embracing unpublished archival materials, brings out intertwined—material, semiotic and performative—aspects of Scalapino’s multi-modal work, demonstrating that her poetics is not only a tool of experience, but also a mode of philosophical reflection and a form of experience itself.

The central question informing the study concerns Scalapino’s preoccupation with definitions and conceptions of reality, along with attendant notions of essence, matter, identity, subjectivity, objectivity and thought. As shown by Myk, Scalapino’s new materialist imagination works to transcend deconstructive aporias and negate sharp dualisms between the object and the subject, the individual and the world, word and image, rejecting also fragmentary, atomized visions of subjectivity, and shifting the focus from referentiality to the material dimension of being, language and thought.

To showcase the poet’s life-long commitment to the evolution of form, Myk’s monograph is divided into three thematic sections, each dealing with a



different experiment. The arrangement is chronological, following the development of Scalapino's artistic practices from the 1970s to her late works from the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The composition covers the diverse and multi-generic body of her work, foregrounding the interrogative nature of the artist's experiments and reflecting her notion of art as an incessant process of creation and breakdown of forms, always in search of better, more receptive methods of understanding the complex entanglements of the mind and matter. Respectful of the transgressive and ever-evolving character of Scalapino's projects, the critic provides interesting points of entry into their interrelational, open-ended, metamorphic, multifaceted, and transgeneric forms. The overarching concept of Myk's approach is that of plasticity, adapted from the post-deconstructive philosophy of Catherine Malabou. As shown in the analyses, Malabou's ideas are useful for confronting Scalapino's critical intelligence, as the French philosopher insists on the significance of form, along with its spatial, temporal, neuronal and figural aspects, and opposes its dematerializations in contemporary thought. Malabou treats plasticity as a highly operative concept which implies at once a receptive material form, a structure, and its transformative movement and potential dislocation. Plasticity ends the polarization between form and content and defines a form as always open to other forms, inherently capable of metamorphosis, self-annihilation and reorganization (Malabou *The Future of Hegel; What Should We Do*). Redefining essence as contingent, unstable, differentiating and transgressive, plasticity, Malabou contends, "has become the form of our world" (*What Should We Do* 9). The French philosopher differentiates further between "plasticity" and "flexibility," emphasizing the positive, actively transformative overtone of the former and the negative, mechanical adaptability, utility and passivity implied by the latter (see Malabou's *Plastic Materialities*, 2015). Defined in those terms, plasticity resonates strongly with Scalapino's concept of poetry as an event—a malleable, ontologically unstable potentiality, open to the contingency of the phenomena, relational and subject to constant transmutation, self-engenderment and self-regulation. The concept dissolves the boundaries between the external and the internal, paving the way for the dispersion of subjectivity and questioning the autonomy of the subject. Fittingly applied to illumine Scalapino's poetic strategies and development, the concept informs and integrates various threads of Myk's engaging argument.

Throughout, Myk remains sensitive to the sensual, ethical, sociopolitical as well as aesthetic aspects of Scalapino's work. For example, in the chapter titled "The Erotic as (Non)Ground," the critic convincingly argues that eroticism, marginalized in the discourses of language poetry with which Scalapino is often linked, is an integral part of the poet's project. A tool of (self)knowledge, as shown by the scholar, the erotic also becomes a radically emancipatory form of writing which aims at dismantling patriarchal structures and discourses of domination and power. In her analyses, Myk builds intriguing convergences between eroticism, politics, and the space of the text, arguing that Scalapino's experiments restore the erotic to the social space and rehabilitate eros as a space of action and social engagement. The critic also problematizes the abstract, anti-figurative impulse in Scalapino's work, situating her minimalist, anti-narrative forms among gestures of protest against the representational abuses of literary language in confrontation with victims of suffering and social exclusion. Referring to

the ethical considerations of François Laruelle and Richard Rorty, Myk examines the radicalization of the poet's language, which constantly destabilizes the comfortable positions of the observer, revealing the inherent relationality of the objective gaze.

Myk's interrogations of Scalapino's intermedial practices are particularly rich in fresh findings and impressive in their interdisciplinary scope. Using the medium of photography in her photo-texts and installations, here exemplified by *Crowd and not evening or light* and *The Tango*, Scalapino probed the nature of the word-image relationship, looking into the limits of the illustrative and representational function of images, and proposing a tighter alliance between the photo-image and thought. The conceptual framework for Myk's analysis of those forms is Laruelle's radical non-philosophy, in particular his essay "The Concept of Non-Photography," in which the French philosopher postulates moving away from transcendence and its representational impulses towards immanent realism. As argued by Myk, the concept of non-photography, which Laruelle derives from non-philosophy, enables a non-hierarchical and anti-dualistic thinking about the word-image relationship that reveals extra-linguistic dimensions of experience. Myk employs the notion of non-photographic optics to highlight and nuance the theme of trauma, which runs through Scalapino's works, showing that the traumatic content resurfaces both in the dialogue and in the radical ruptures between images and words. In her reading of Scalapino's intermedial trilogy, which includes three texts from the 1990s—*The Return of Painting*, *The Pearl*, and *Orion*—Myk explores the poetics and politics of negativity, addressing the speculative potential of the discontinuous and primarily spatial form of the comic book. What Myk problematizes here are the new forms of subjectivity that emerge in the negative spaces of Scalapino's forms. While the analyses are firmly grounded in the micro-reading of the poet's texts, they lack an in-depth reflection on the nature of the medium, in particular the temporal-spatial paradigm of the comic book, which is the starting point for Scalapino's intergeneric experiments.

In the final section, Myk focuses on Scalapino's late texts—*Floats Horse-Floats or Horse-Flows* (2010) and *The Dihedrons Gazelle-Dihedrals Zoom* (2010)—which are aleatoric experiments, derived from the poet's interest in surrealism and neurolinguistics. The poems in those volumes are particularly challenging, due to their improvisational nature and the aleatory combinations of words and images. Myk confronts their opacity and surrealist imagery with an interpretative model based on Quentin Meillassoux's study of the relationship between randomness and necessity, and his postulated genre of extro-science fiction. Scalapino's aleatoric language, as shown by the critic, is capable of self-regulation and autopoietic activity, which complexifies the sensory texture of her diction and leads to an alignment of affect and intellect. The poet's revisionist approach to image is discussed here in juxtaposition with the representations of space in Joan Fontcuberta's photographic series *Landscapes Without Memory* and the film *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol* by Lu Chuan, which served as intermedial counterpoints for the poet.

Christopher Nealon notes that much of the most recent poetry "seem[s] to be written out of some set of conditions we are still struggling to name, conditions not quite matching the major accounts of the postmodern" (583–84). The erudite and intellectually provocative philosophical underpinnings of Myk's inquiry certainly

enrich our understanding of those conditions, showing furthermore that epistemology and experience are one and the same thing in Scalapino's radical investigations of reality.

Myk's study is an encounter of two acute critical minds—the poet's and that of her attentive and passionate critic—both engaged in “writing as a form of exchange” (Scalapino, Interview, n.p.). The only issue I have with this erudite and well researched inquiry is Myk's minimalist use of source texts. The chapters would have benefited from more generous references to Scalapino's texts and a closer reading of individual pieces, as the argument strikes me at times as too general. Some chapters are rather sparsely illustrated by examples, failing to give full justice to the non-representational, abstract, and multi-sensorial aspects of Scalapino's singular diction. Myk's chief aim is to show the parallels and intersections between Scalapino's philosophical orientation and materialist ontologies, and this is done very convincingly throughout the monograph; however, the dense philosophical and theoretical contexts sometimes overburden the analyses, allowing the conceptual apparatus to dominate the textual hermeneutics.

Those isolated problems do not diminish the pioneering value of this insightful and thought-provoking monograph. Situating Scalapino's work at the center of contemporary philosophical debates concerning the subject, the nature of existence, and reality, Myk's interdisciplinary approach offers intellectually rich insights into the plasticity of Scalapino's forms. The first book on the poet, *Upping the Ante of the Real* paves the way for future studies of Scalapino and avant-garde poetics.

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**Łukasz Muniowski. *Three-Pointer! A 40-Year NBA History*. McFarland, 2020, 208 pages.**

In early 2021, an NBA fan, who not only watches the games but also follows the news and reports on the developments in the greatest basketball league in the world, could come across headlines such as: “Golden State Warriors: Kelly Oubre is the worst 3-point shooter in the NBA”<sup>1</sup> or “The Utah Jazz just had the best 3-point shooting month in NBA history.”<sup>2</sup> Basketball’s beat writers’ focus on this single aspect of players’ and teams’ basketball arsenal may seem obvious as the NBA is in the midst of the Golden Age of 3-point shooting. However, it has not always been so. It has taken the NBA decades to not only incorporate the 3-point shot but to actually utilize it in a manner the shot was meant to be—a *spectacular* and *tactically efficient* play. Muniowski’s *Three-Pointer! A 40-Year NBA History* is a fascinating story of the evolution of the 3-point shot and the league where the shot is best utilized. The book is also much more.

Muniowski’s book is a work of passion harnessed in intellectual approach and academic rigor which makes *Three-Pointer!* a not-for-everybody book, which is by no means criticism of the book. Muniowski’s historical novel with limited dialogues, while filled with interesting narratives which include players’s biographies and even anecdotes, may overwhelm some readers with abundance of statistical data and names of: players, coaches and executives; however, it is only a testament to author’s meticulousness and broad knowledge of the subject matter. In his book, Muniowski blends the technical with the poetic when providing statistics and analysis on the mechanics of the 3-pointer or explaining why shooting percentage is a factor; he also paints narratives of rich and eventful life stories of the book’s (numerous) protagonists, which provides the humanistic element to the analytical work.

Each of the chapters begins with a player (or a play) that contributed to the increase in importance of the 3-point shot and places the said player (or the play) in clearly outlined context, which results in each chapter having a distinct theme which reveals itself in the stories told by the author.

The Introduction, apart from the usual outline of the book, offers detailed explanation of what a 3-pointer is and how its introduction kick started the evolution of the game of basketball (mainly in the NBA, although other professional and semi-professional American basketball (mainly in the NBA, although other professional and semi-professional leagues, teams, and players are mentioned). Muniowski paints a

1 [https://hoopshabit.com/2021/01/27/golden-state-warriors-kelly-oubre-3-point/?utm\\_source=flipboard&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=flipboard](https://hoopshabit.com/2021/01/27/golden-state-warriors-kelly-oubre-3-point/?utm_source=flipboard&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=flipboard)

2 <https://www.deseret.com/sports/2021/2/1/22260626/the-utah-jazz-just-had-the-best-3-point-shooting-month-in-nba-history>