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What Forms Can Do: The Work of Form in 20th- and 21st-Century French Literature and Thought. Edited by PATRICK CROWLEY and SHIRLEY JORDAN. (Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures, 69.) Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020. viii + 329 pp., ill.

Based on a conference from 2016 marking Michael Sheringham's retirement, this volume of nineteen essays addresses the question of form through consistently productive acts of close reading and intellectual enquiry. The forms addressed in this volume are genres of writing, figures of language, and artistic media, while their function, as Patrick Crowley and Shirley Jordan establish in their invaluable Introduction, is to make sense of experience, to intensify the relation to the real, and to deliberate on the formation of significant moments in life-writing. Diana Knight and Edward J. Hughes respectively analyse Roland Barthes and Didier Eribon, who both try to overcome their different difficulties with choosing to be self-analysing writers having become public figures. Barthes does so by emulating an Ignatian exercitant to overcome doubts concerning the authenticity of the diary form, while Eribon uses digression and detour via other writers to tackle the double exclusion of the 'transfuge de classe' (p. 192). Ian Maclachlan offers a forensic reading of Louis-René des Forêts's *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* (1988), where he discusses form as 'a process of forming, deforming and reforming' (p. 166) and develops his commentary by tracking the gap between spontaneity and stylization in this introspective poetic sequence. Emily McLaughlin contrasts the poetics of Francis Ponge and Philippe Jaccottet with the attempt by Eugène Guillevic to cast poetry as an interrogative form of human expression that is attuned to the world's creative force but is not a privileged means of mediation. In an act of literary history, Ann Jefferson provides an account of how the 1940s novel differed from its less historically aware and less philosophical 1930s predecessor, acknowledging the contributions of Raymond Queneau, Jean Prévost, and others, to the propagation of a new form of novel. Micro-histories with abundant everyday details feature in several essays including Jordan's study of three

figures (Camille Laurens, Annie Ernaux, and Chantal Akerman) working between forms of repeated gestures and formless detritus or non-verbal human expression. Part of Charles Forsdick's wide-ranging contribution focuses on forms of attention to repetitive activity in Georges Perec's *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* (1975), demonstrating that lists are not "subsumptive" forms' (p. 142, citing Michael Cronin) and ending with Barbara Cassin's definition of translation as unending, in implicit reference to Michael Syrotinski's essay here on Cassin. The dialectic between form and formlessness is examined resourcefully by Eric Robertson, who combines Georges Bataille's definition of 'informe' ('un terme servant à déclasser', p. 272) with reversions to form's 'tenacious hold on our way of thinking' (p. 284) in work by various artists and writers including Tetsumi Kudo and Caroline Bergvall. Finally, Alison Finch links form and taste in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, plotting a campaign of tolerance regarding aesthetic and sexual tastes, as well as the endless fascination with structure as an underlying form of narrative, followed by a Bourdieu-directed exploration by Michael Lucey of social nuance and aesthetic judgement as they are reflected in the different reactions to Vinteuil's septet. Overall, this volume argues for a 're-apprenticeship' (p.192) to the omnipresent, diverse and sometimes neglected functions of form.

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