Supermodern spaces in mediatic literature

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Abstract: Within the framework of the anthropology of supermodernity, Marc Augé defines, for the first time, the non-place in opposition with the anthropological space. According to Augé, the non-place is defined as non-identitary, non-relational and non-historical. Voided of all identity elements, the anthropological place becomes a non-place. For anthropologist Marc Augé, non-places refer to spaces destined to circulation, to professional occupations and to leisure activities: highways, means of public transport, airports, malls, entertainment centers, discos and stadiums – transitory spaces which have no memory, but also to the means of transport which transit these spaces and to the media. With media writers like Frédéric Beigbeder, non-places are not only a recurrent theme, but they also become supermodern spaces invading the fictional texts and having an impact on both characters and auctorial instances. In this paper, we will focus on the issue of non-places as they emerge on a corpus of novels by Frédéric Beigbeder such as: Tales on ecstasy, Holiday in a coma, 14.99 euros, Windows on the World and establish the main elements characterizing the media electronic space in literature, as well as the main operational dichotomies and trichotomies within the non-place (place/non-place, silence/noise, invasion/hybridation/evasion).

1 Introduction

Globalization is specific of a contemporary society where there are no more reference points, where nothing is any more recognizable. This loss of references is reflected by the emergence of places without landmarks, of non-places that people transit and with which they come into contact every day. The proliferation of media non-places implies a loss of identity at individual level, as well as the disappearance of the notion of Romantic “self”.

Globalization thus has a certain consequence on the perception people have of themselves and of others, as well as on the perception they have of time and place. Novel matter is also subject to essential changes, under the influence of globalization and under the influence of these non-places.

The fictional universe of Frédéric Beigbeder evokes the changes that take place in supermodern society. Besides the innovation in terms of literary technique, of vocabulary, of language and besides the hybridation of literary and media techniques, there is a certain constant of the fictional space that is brought forth: the omnipresence of non-places within the framework of which there is circumscribed a new individuality. The proliferation and accumulation of media technology in the novels by Frédéric Beigbeder lead to the emergence of spaces called „non-places”. By opposition to the

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anthropological place, the non-place is defined as non-identitary, non-relational, non-historical. Non-places thus refer to spaces destined to circulation, to professional occupations and to leisure activities: highways, means of public transport, airports, malls, entertainment centers, discos and stadiums – transitory spaces which have no memory, but also to the means of transport which transit these spaces and to the media that occupy these places:

“Si un lieu peut se définir comme identitaire, relationnel et historique, un espace qui ne peut se définir ni comme identitaire, ni comme relationnel, ni comme historique définira un non-lieu. L’hypothèse ici défendue est que la surmodernité est productrice de non-lieux, c’est-à-dire d’espaces qui ne sont pas eux-mêmes des lieux anthropologiques et qui, contrairement à la modernité baudelairienne, n’intègrent pas les lieux anciens : ceux-ci, répertoriés, classés et promus « lieux de mémoire », y occupent une place circonscrite et spécifique. Un monde où l’on naît en clinique et où l’on meurt à l’hôpital, où se multiplient, en des modalités luxueuses ou inhumaines, les points de transit et les occupations provisoires (les chaînes d’hôtels et les squats, les clubs de vacances, les camps de réfugiés, les bidonvilles promis à la casse ou à la pérennité pourrissante), où se développe un réseau serré de moyens de transport qui sont aussi des espaces habités, où l’habitue des grandes surfaces, des distributeurs automatiques et des cartes de crédit renoue avec les gestes du commerce « à la muette », un monde ainsi promis à l’individualité solitaire, au passage, au provisoire et à l’éphémère, propose à l’anthropologue comme aux autres un objet nouveau dont il convient de mesurer les dimensions inédites avant de se demander de quel regard il est justiciable. Ajoutons qu’il en est évidemment du non-lieu comme du lieu : il n’existe jamais sous une forme pure; des lieux s’y recomposent ; des relations s’y reconstituent.” (Augé, 1992).

1.1. **Context of definition**

We would like to emphasize the fact that the issue of non-places with Frédéric Beigbeder must be understood in a wider context of definition of a literature marked by non-places, by mass media, a literature that we call „media/mediatic literature” and whose main traits we try to render.

1) Stylistics where mediatic literature is conceived as a way of writing.
A certain unusual way of using the language leads to a mediatic narrative specific of Frédéric Beigbeder. This definition remains rather vague as it could be applied as well to an advertising slogan as to Beigbeder’s novel.

2) A type of discourse specific to mediatic literature
Our issue focused on mediatic literature in the world, at the same level as electronic, media and information technologies, could not admit this type of reduction; if there is a specificity of this literature, it is feed upon and developed by all these communication practices.

3) Semiotics where the fictional account specific to mediatic literature is understood as text in itself.
This new literature expresses concepts indirectly. In brief, an excerpt taken from a mediatic fictional account asserts something, but it means something else. We propose to start from the premise that the difference between mediatic literature and non-mediatic literature can be thoroughly explained by the manner in which a text generates its meaning. It seems to us that if the literature influenced by the media reveals a particular work on the language, it apprehends it in an indirect, fluid, rapid, aggressive way- starting

from the linguistic matter that brings forth words that mean something else than what they say: the same as the language of advertising.

4) An approach in interaction with the world, with the media. This approach represents an attempt at locating the mediatic fictional account in its interaction with the world. This is with a view to demonstrate that it is a place of encounter with the world and with the media and that the language specific to mediatic authors is a means of placing themselves in the modern world as writers. This new writing technique has emerged in the ‘80s in order to describe a literary phenomenon that entails the comprehension or articulation of that which is specific of the new mediatic literature.

1.2. A movement from literature to the media

We try place our research on the side of the contemporary interrogation on the notion of popular media/mediatic culture, avoiding all attempts of hierarchy, with its effects of overvaluation or devaluation, and we notice a movement from literature to the media, from the literary to the mediatic, not only in the Anglo-American area, but also in the French and Francophone areas, with the novels by Thomas Gunzig, Frédéric Beigbeder, Marc Gendron, Michel Houellebecq, Jean-Philippe Toussaint. We will consider in the present study excerpts from the works by Frédéric Beigbeder, a representative of French mediatic literature, who does not claim himself anymore to be subject to the influence of the Anglo-American space (Bret Easton Ellis), but on the contrary, brings forth his own scriptural techniques.

We are not going to detail upon the typology of non-places inside Beigbeder’s fictional space - the media (television, advertising, radio, Internet, cybernetics), the spaces destined to circulation (the railway station, the airport), the means of transport (the car, the plane), and great surfaces (supermarkets, hypermarkets, entertainment centres). We will rather reveal the main operational dichotomies and trichotomies within the non-place (place/non-place, silence/ noise, hybridation/ invasion /evasion) and try to see to what extent the supermodern spaces invade the fictional text as the writing space gradually transforms itself into a non-place.

2. Dichotomies and trichotomies operating within the non-place

2.1 The dichotomy place/non-place

Defined as non-identitary, non-relational and non-historical, the non-place lacks identity, relationships and own history. There is though a certain paradox in the uses made of this idea of the non-place in French mediatic literature, especially in Frédéric Beigbeder’s novels.

If a non-place lacks identity, it is not because it is defunctionalised, but because it functions as a space of transit, starting from which are distributed other places. In this
sense, it offers the possibility of a peculiar experience of the plurality of place and non-places existent within the container-non-place, through the unusual experience of a sort of dislocation, experience lived by the inhabitants of non-places in the fictions by Frédéric Beigbeder.

We discover that the non-place also represents a place of solitude, although it could be a populated solitude, as with the discos in *Holiday in a coma/ Vacances dans le coma*. The French mediatic writer, like the anthropologist of supermodernity, wants to render a singular experience, specific of the “supermodern” condition of the contemporary individual and of the type of wandering that the non-place renders possible. The inhabitant of the non-place thus becomes a sort of spectator and the space of the passenger, of he who transits the non-place - an archetype of the supermodern non-place.

A discotheque like *Les Chiottes in Holiday in a coma* can be reduced to a series of advertisements or invitations to opening-nights, or to a world apart unfolding behind a window pane that separates or isolates the individual who spends a night of authentic experience, not manipulated by the masters of this non-place: the disc-jockeys. With Beigbeder, the non-place does not correspond to a utopia, since utopia in literature has its own space, distance, metrics, and spatiality.

In Frédéric Beigbeder’s works, the non-place is not an unreal space or the absence of space or of real referent. It rather reveals a category of supermodern spaces that dynamite other spaces within by creating other heterogeneous microcosms inside the container-non-place.

What seems to be particularly interesting in Beigbeder’s novels is the constant passage from place to non-place and from non-place to place. They substitute each other and sometimes they are invested with meaning or memory by their inhabitants; this is the case where non-places turn into places.

We are going to exemplify with a current non-place in the novel *Holiday in a coma*, the discotheque that can be considered at different instants, either as a non-place or as a place.

Under the spell of music in the disco *Les Chiottes*, the individuals become a human magma that reflects the decline of individualism. The factor which brings about the homogenisation of this new social organisation is represented by the musical technology of the discotheque.

The feeling of belonging to the peripheral clan of the non-place is reinforced by the technological and mediatic development inside the disco in Paris. This electronic mediatic galaxy is organized through a network that uniforms individuals and brings them together into an undifferentiated mass. The operator of this giant uniformization, the disc-jockey, becomes the master of the world:

> “Joss descend sur la piste un mur de moniteurs et de scanners. Donne-nous aujourd’hui notre dose quotidienne d’images fractales et de spirales soûles. Le disc-jockey ne mélange pas seulement les sons, il veut tout marier: la prière, les clips, les amis, les ennemis, les lumières et les endorphines. La Grande Ratatouille Nocturne. Marc a le vertige. Il comprend qu’il se trouve dans la nuit définitive. Que cette soirée pourrait bien être sa dernière : la Nuit de la Fête Ultime. C’est Paris dans la danse, un début d’apothéose. La multitude de corps en lévitation gracieuse. Ils ne font plus qu’un dans le tempo métronomique des boîtes à rythme. Les têtes ne portent qu’un seul corps, et cette pieuvre n’émet qu’un seul cri, monstrueux de pureté. Les dévots cyclothymiques s’aiment en cadence. La house acidulée soude les somnambules.”
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>(Beigbeder, 1994)
Nevertheless, the meaning of the space of the non-place can change, since the party spirit and the noise can also serve as possible refuge for the inhabitants of the non-place who can thus create a space of their own, allowing them to withdraw into themselves. The media technological environment that clutters the space of the disco destroys on the one hand, any form of possible socialisation, but, on the other hand, encourages a withdrawal into oneself, that is the possibility to recover oneself in a place of one’s own inside the space of the giant non-place. “Neutralising the world by the power of sound” (Lipovetsky, 1983) supposes to withdraw into oneself and feel one’s own body and the rhythm of one’s own thoughts alongside the rhythm of music amplifiers, forgetting the exteriority of the real non-place. This doesn’t mean a certain indifference to the world that populates the non-place, an indifference accompanied by self-contemplation, but rather a withdrawal into oneself that allows the spectator to avoid mass alienation by the conscientization of the elements of the immediate proximity of one’s own body. The non-place thus shelters a series of microcosms of places:

“« La fête gonfle ses poumons », mais Marc devient conscient qu’à l’intérieur de la discothèque « Chaque nouvel arrivant symbolise un univers, chacun est une munition pour plus tard, un ingrédient dans la recette diabolique de Joss».” (Beigbeder, 1994)

2.2. Invasion/hybridation/evasion - an operational trichotomy within the framework of the non-place

The imaginary of the media writer is invaded by elements of popular culture, of media culture. The invasion by media signs and slogans is highlighted in Frédéric Beigbeder’s novels by the ubiquity of advertising brands and textual references to audio-visual VIPs and to elements of televisual culture. The queer coexistence of the literary space and of elements of popular culture in the Frédéric Beigbeder’s works proves to be one of the essential features of the scriptural non-place. The space of non-place is entirely invaded in the excerpts from Frédéric Beigbeder’s novels by advertising signs and by references to elements of media culture and to personalities from the media. The space of non-place gradually transforms itself into something that resembles more to an advertising space. This new spatial entity functions both as a utopia and as a contrary of utopia –that is a society which exists as such, but does not shelter any organic community, since it is based on hyperreal images. With Beigbeder, hyperreality within the non-place can be thought of as ‘reality by proxy’, reality by the impression of proximity and is a means to characterise the way the consciousness of both occupiers of non-places and media consumers define what is actually “real” in a world where a multitude of media (television, advertising and so on) shape and filter the events and sensory experiences being depicted in novels such as Holiday in coma or 14.99 Euros.

The invasion of the fictional media narrative by media and signs is manifested through certain specific recurrent themes: for example, the advertising space and the use of a hybrid language.

Like real supermodern metropoles that house a series of microcosms of architectural non-places such as Paris and Tokyo (populated by characters in *Holiday in a coma*), the fictional texts taken from Beigbeder’s novels are invaded by advertising panels and commercial slogans from daily reality. The cityscape architecture of non-places overlaps the landscape engendered by the imaginary of Beigbeder’s media novels:

“L’ABUS D’ALCOOL EST DANGEREUX POUR LA SANTÉ A CONSOMMER AVEC MODÉRATION GILLETTE LA PERFECTION AU MASCULIN DU LEERDAMMER OU JE FAIS UN MALHEUR BELLE DE MINUIT DE NINA RICCI LA NUIT TOMBE LES GARÇONS AUSSI MICHELIN LES PLUS BELLES PERFORMANCES SONT CELLES QUI DURENT VISA PREMIER IL N’Y A PAS QUE L’ARGENT DANS LA VIE PENDANT QU’ON REGARDÉ CANAL + AU MOINS ON N’EST PAS DEVANT LA TÉLÉ ON DEVRAIT TOUJOURS COMPARER SA VOITURE À UNE 306 LE PARISIEN IL VAUT MIEUX L’AVOIR EN JOURNAL GALERIES LAFAYETTE LA PLANÈTE DÉSIR ENTRE DANS VOTRE VIE GAZ DE FRANCE ICI LA-CAROLL IL FAIT BEAU TOUS LES JOURS ENJOY COCA-COLA” (Beigbeder, 2000)

Sometimes, the invasion of the narrative is reflected by what there seem to be true advertising spots:

“Maigrelette 0 % aux fruits. Pour être en forme physique et mentale!”
“Mon secret c’est... Maigrelette.” (Beigbeder, 2000)

As with non-places, the organization of the narrative borrows a lot from the clipping technique. The same way an article or advertisement is clipped from a newspaper, the advertising references and the references to real brands are cut out and then pasted on a surface with other materials not normally associated with one another. This is done with the aim to interpellate the reader. The advertising non-places thus establish a transition, a “link between a fictive intrigue and a hyperreal reality” (Durand, 2004).

Alain-Philippe Durand argues that “the ubiquity of media culture perturbs the organisation of the fictional story and narrative” (Durand, 2004). We are faced to a true calling into question of language. Inside non-places, the writing and the traditional modes of expression disappear in favour of advertisement slogans and of a hybrid language which is incomprehensible and remains misunderstood by the occupiers of this new media community. We advance the idea that hybridation can be understood under two forms: hybridation of stylistic means and hybridation of genres.

The first aspect is represented by the hybridation of stylistic means.

The same way as his characters (for example, the DJ Joss Dumoulin who mixes all kinds of music with texts or sounds recorded in all languages) - the writer Frédéric Beigbeder continuously mixes stylistic means. He juggles with Frenglish, with slang, informal language, formal language and mixes bawdy language with poetic metaphors. As examples, we can refer to the epigraphs that we find at the beginning of every chapter in *Vacances dans le coma / Holiday in a coma*. We can distinguish the lyrics of a disco song by Donna Summer:

“Let’s dance
The last dance
Tonight
Yes it’s my last chance
For romance
Tonight.”
Donna Summer, Last Dance
Casablanca Records.
“Les deuxièmes romans s’écrivent dans un état
two.
Moi.” (Beigbeder, 1994).
or to a quote from Haiku by Jack Kerouac :
2 h 00
Entracte
“There I am
2 a.m.
What day is it ?”
Haiku de JACK KEROUC. (Beigbeder, 1994).
or to a retort of Samuel Beckett to André Bernold :
“Qu’auriez-vous fait si vous n’aviez pas été écrivain?
- J’aurais écouté de la musique”. (Beigbeder, 1994)
or to a sequence with dialogue from Holiday in a coma, where the characters Irène and
Fab use Frenglish, a mixture of French and English:
Mais pour qu’un théorème soit scientiquement démontré, il faut plusieurs vérifications. Marc se tourne
donc vers Irène de Kazatchok.
–Je bosse vachement, dit-elle.
–Pourquoi? lui demande Marc, tout sourires.
–Well, pour gagner de l’argent.
– Pourquoi?
– Get out of there ! Parce qu’il faut bien manger, that’s all !
–Pourquoi?
Give me a break ! Pour pas crever, my boy !” (Beigbeder, 1994)
“–Yo Chestnut-Tree*! Ça m’a l’air fresh ici! L’anglais est très hypno. *Marronnier en anglais. L’anglais est
très hypno. (Author’s note)” (Beigbeder, 1994)
The second aspect of hybridation is represented by the hybridation of genres.
As far as the strange cohabitation between the literary space and the popular culture is
regarded, we discover the stylistic innovation of Frédéric Beigbeder at the end of the
novel 99 francs when this opens out to a quick passage from the aphorism of the hyper-
consumption society to an extraordinary poem in prose. At the end of the novel 99 francs,
we find enumerations of strong poetic images, with sky, the ocean, and quotes from
Rimbaud which enable the reader to understand that we do not laugh and make fun of
things anymore, but we are on the contrary faced with an instant of emotion, of delirium
of the copywriter who turns out to be a poet. That is why we are witnesses to the final
scene of the hero’s death, a scene whose main elements are defined by violins, blur, and
superimposition:
“ […] sombrer ; traverser le miroir ; enfin se reposer ; faire partie des éléments ; des ocres propres aux
rayons pourpres […] ; boire des larmes de rosée ; le sel de tes yeux ; leur bleu rigoureux ; tomber ; faire
partie de la mer […] ; flotter comme un nénuphar à la surface ; surfer sur du creux ; rester immobile ; les
poumons gorgés d’eau ; âme aquatique ; partir pour de bon ; cinq milliards d’années avant : rien ; cinq
milliards d’années après : rien ; l’homme est un accident dans le vide interstellaire ; pour arrêter de mourir il
suffit d’arrêter de vivre ; perdre le contact ; devenir un sous-marin nucléaire caché au fond des océans ; ne
plus rien peser ; crawler entre les anges et les sirènes ; nager dans le ciel ; voler dans la mer ; tout est
By practicing this hybridization of stylistic means and of genres which is symbolic of irony and self-irony, the writer drives himself away from the text and breathes outside the space of non-place. Thus, he finds a way to protect himself against the dangers of a world made up of displacement places, by continuously negotiating and renegotiating their meaning and their impact on both characters that populate his novels and on auctorial instances (the author Frédéric Beigbeder and his alter ego, Marc Marronnier). He weaves his prose through a series of “collages” that come together as a work of art made from an assemblage of advertisement clippings and quotes from classic literature and poetry, thus creating a new whole from an intertextual network originated at the same time from the literary tradition and from media culture. Thus, he makes fun of the supermodern world, made of mockeries and of the strangest mixtures.

Finally, the evasion from the non-place which reflects the image specific of a supermodern society is translated by the desire of individuals and characters that inhabit Beigbeder’s media novels to escape by all means life spleen and nostalgia. How do they escape? By means of drugs in Tales on ecstasy or by the illusive evasion in the hyper(i)rreality of visual and electronic media in Holiday in a coma, by making us discover the world of displacement places, of supermodern non-places.

3. The writing space as non-place

3.1. Does the scriptural space become a non-place?

The notion of invasion reaches its highest impact when media technology, besides intruding on the fictive spaces present in Frédéric Beigbeder’s novels, occupies the fictional text itself.

The mediatic narrative of Beigbeder unveils several examples of this new writing style. The sight and the hearing of characters inhabiting the mediatic non-places are torn apart between the most contradictory broadcasts. These characters continue to zapp from one channel to another, to change the radio frequencies, and to mechanically move inside the non-place, passing from one screen to another, from one spot to another, guiding themselves according to the music they hear and on the continuum of images unfolding in front of their eyes:

“Le silence aussi était en voie de disparition. On ne pouvait pas fuir les radios, les télés allumées, les spots criards qui bientôt s’infiltreraient jusque dans vos conversations téléphoniques privées.” (Beigbeder, 2000)

The border between organic and artificial is difficult to distinguish in the fictional media narrative. Joss Dumoulin, the disc-jockey in Holiday in a coma lives only by the
intermediary of the songs he listens to the radio or to the songs he mixes in the disco that becomes a giant non-place where he makes others live through his music, a music that is impregnated in his body until it is confounded with the rhythm of his heart beats:

“Est-il vraiment nécessaire de rappeler comment les disc-jockeys ont pris le pouvoir? Dans une société hédoniste aussi superficielle que la nôtre, les citoyens du monde entier ne s’intéressent qu’à une chose : la fête. Or les disc-jockeys la contrôlent totalement. […] Les disc-jockeys remxient nos existences. Personne ne leur en fait grief : quitte à confier le pouvoir à quelqu’un, un disc-jockey est au moins aussi qualifié qu’un acteur de cinéma ou un ancien avocat. Après tout, pour gouverner, il suffit d’avoir une bonne oreille, un minimum de culture, et de savoir enchaîner.


Bref, le métier le plus important de notre temps est un métier qui rend fou.” (Beigbeder, 1994)

The invasion of the non-place overruns this limit because the inspiration of the columnist-writer Marc Marronnier in Holiday in a coma is constantly blurred, blocked by the progressive invasion of popular media culture, and especially by the information technologies and by the noises of soul blues listened to the radio and in the disco where Joss Dumoulin works. He accepts to let himself be distracted and to drive himself away from what surrounds and implies the writing act, beginning with the musical and informatique environment:

“De retour aux disques, Joss enchaîne les tubes de soul. On peut s’estimer content. Marc a envie de logorrhée sans ponctuation. À une heure pareille, vous voudriez qu’il ait les idées claires ? Il réfléchit comme quand on donne des coups de poing sur une machine à écrire. Cela donne à peu près ceci :

« uhr!B ‘!gjikotgbf!ngègpenkv( ntuj.kg ukngqrjigj(rjh k.v kvviOYEASVGN)c‘; à-; à-, v’»i,jugjg(ikkkk (gt jgkxe$’c4»” (Beigbeder, 1994)

That is why the writing act implies a whole technological script, as well as the mastery of the elements of the environment where the writer finds himself at a certain moment. The columnist-writer in Holiday in a coma manipulates his computer without any reason and he writes almost anything:

“uhr!B ‘!gjikotgbf!ngègpenkv( ntuj.kg ukngqrjigj(rjh k.v kvviOYEASVGN)c‘; à-; à-, v’»i,jugjg(ikkkk (gt jgkxe$’c4” (Beigbeder, 1994)

In the case of the journalist-columnist-writer, the attempt to write proves to end with a failure, since the narrator cannot finish what he begins to write. The inspiration of the columnist-writer Marc Marronner, the alter ego of the writer in Holiday in a coma is constantly interrupted by the progressive invasion of popular culture, by the proliferation of information technologies that invade his own system of perception and by the noise within the non-place. He gets away from everything that surrounds the writing act, starting with the deafening environment intruding on his working space.

Nevertheless, the major distraction that stops the narrator from focusing on writing is the invasion of his private space by a public space, that of the non-place, which is reflected by the dysphoric environment of the songs that distract and invade his thoughts:

“Ses pensées ressemblent bel et bien à une oeuvre de Pierre Guyotat. Il les note sur ses Post-it.” (Beigbeder, 1994)

If the narrator of Windows on the World is courageous enough to separate himself radically from the television in order to be able to work better, the media (TV) comes
back to haunt him, assault him, reinvesting his private space and stopping him from writing. Otherwise, the narrator of *Windows on the World* finds that the invasion of his private space by the televisual non-place blocks his reflection, and the free course of his thoughts. The high-tech cannot be mastered by the occupiers of the non-place. Subsequently, the narrator becomes conscious of the fact that the role of books is precisely that of “writing about all that we cannot watch on television”, given the fact that literature is more and more menaced by the media:

“Le rôle des livres est d’écrire tout ce qu’on ne peut pas voir à la télévision... La littérature est menacée, il faut se battre pour la défendre, c’est la guerre... Les gens qui aiment lire et écrire sont de plus en plus rares, c’est pourquoi ils doivent jouer sur tous les tableaux... Utiliser toutes les armes dont ils peuvent disposer pour défendre le livre... quand soudain quelqu’un de la maison d’édition est venu nous prévenir qu’un deuxième avion était entré dans l’autre tour du World Trade Center. Mes péroraisons littérao-martiales prenaient une tournure bien ridicule. Je me souviens m’être récité à haute voix une équation mathématique assez simple (bien que peu euclidienne) :

1 avion = 1 accident
2 avions = 0 accident.

Thomas et moi sommes tombés d’accord sur le fait que mon combat-en-prime-time-pour-la-sauvegarde-de-l’art-scriptural-contre-l’oppression-médiatique pouvait attendre.” (Beigbeder, 2003)

Besides proper non-places, we find that in the Frédéric Beigbeder’s novels the text itself is invaded by advertising slogans of radio and television broadcasts, by the informatics jargon, by radiophonic references or mixtures of music genres. This progressive invasion within the non-place eventually renders the texts incomprehensible. To a certain extent, the writing becomes itself a non-place:

“MOI ADECCO ÇA NE CHANGE PAS LE MONDE MAIS ÇA Y CONTRIBUE L’ORÉAL PARCE QUE JE LE VAUX BIEN AUTANT D’ATOUTS C’EST UNE DAEWOO CHARLES GERAIS IL EST ODIEUX MAIS C’EST DIVIN SELF TRADE ET SI LA BOURSE PROFITAIT A TOUS ON DEVRAIT TOUS S’OFFRIR UNE CLIOTHERAPIE MENNEN POUR NOUS LES HOMMES ERICSSON COMMUNIQUEZ L’EMOTION LA POSTE ON A TOUS A Y GAGNER MONOPRIX DANS VILLE IL Y A VIE TROIS SUISES C’EST UNE CHANCE D’ÊTRE UNE FEMME LE BÂTON DE BERGER Y A PAS D’HEURE POUR EN MANGER WILLIAMS QUAND ON TIENT A SA PEAU MOBALPA ON EST LA POUR ÇA NOUVELLE POLO VOUS AUREZ PEUT-ÊTRE DU MAL À LA RECONNAÎTRE SEGA C’EST PLUS FORT QUE TOI VOUS ENTREZ SUR LES TERRES DU CLAN CAMBELL […] MICHELIN LES PLUS BELLES PERFORMANCES SONT CELLES QUI DURENT […] ENJOY COCA-COLA FRAÎCHEUR DE VIVRE HOLLYWOOD CHEWING-GUM WORLD ON ONE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON BARILLA ON EST TOUS UN PEU ITALIEN QUELQUE PART RATP UN BOUT DE CHEMIN ENSEMBLE TÊTE 2 POURQUOI CONTINUER A TÉLÉPHONER TROP CHER OENOBIOL TOUT MON CORPS RÊVE D’UNE PEAU PLUS JEUNE IBM SOLUTIONS POUR UNE PETITE PLANÈTE CLUB MED ÊTRE-RE PEUGEOT 206 ON PEUT ENCORE ÊTRE ÉMU A NOTRE ÉPOQUE ADIDAS VOUS REND MEILLEUR TROPICANA EN VOUS LA VIE S’ÉVEILLE HERMÈS AN 2000 PREMIERS PAS DANS LE SIÈCLE YOPLAIT C’EST TELLEMENT MEILLEUR QUAND C’EST BON AIR FRANCE FAIRE DU CIEL LE PLUS BEL ENDROIT DE LA TERRE GIVENCHY UN PEU PLUS LOIN QUE L’INFINI RHÔNE POUENC BIENVENUE DANS UN MONDE MEILLEUR

**BIENVENUE DANS UN MONDE MEILLEUR**” (Beigbeder, 2000)
3.2. **Non-place and creative impersonalisation**

At the level of writing specific to Frédéric Beigbeder, the relationship to alterity could be envisaged from a double perspective: first, the writer becomes *other* because he uses certain elements (stylistic or thematic elements) that convene a strange text, a text *other*, of Rimbaud or Lautréamont; secondly, the writer, at the precise moment of writing, feels a certain change in his being, phenomenon that poieticians describe using the syntagm “creative impersonalisation”.

The study of the fabrication of the scriptural self inside the writing space that has become non-place with the French media writer cannot ignore or oversee the inherent relationship to the *other*.

Hybridization results from a change of language and style, of the construction of the work as mosaic of quotes and self-quotes, as well as from the practice of fragmentary writing and from the mixture of poetic language and advertising language:

“[...] crawler entre les anges et les sirènes ; nager dans le ciel ; voler dans la mer ; tout est consommé rosée; le sel de tes yeux; leur bleu rigoureux; tomber; faire partie de la mer; devenir l’éternité; une minute sans respirer, puis deux, puis trois; une heure sans respirer, puis deux, puis trois; dans cinq milliards d’années, c’est la mer allée avec le soleil ; une nuit sans respirer, puis deux, puis trois; rejoindre la paix; « tu es plus beau que la nuit, réponds-moi, océan, veux-tu être mon frère ? » (Lautréamont); [...] CARTE NOIRE UN CAFÉ NOMMÉ DÉSIR J’EN AI RÊVÉ L’A FAIT GAP TOUT LE MONDE EN CUIR SNCF LE PROGRÈS NE VAUT QUE S’IL EST PARTAGÉ PAR TOUS FRANCE TELECOM BIENVENUE DANS LA VIE.COM EDF NOUS VOUS DEVONS BIEN PLUS QUE LA LUMIÈRE RENAULT SCENIC À NE PAS CONFONDER AVEC UNE VOITURE ROCHE BOBOIS LA VRAIE VIE COMMENCE A L’INTÉRIEUR NISSAN MADE IN QUALITÉ SOCIÉTÉ GÉNÉRALE CONJUGUONS NOS TALENTS” (Beigbeder, 2000)

We notice the ambiguity of Beigbeder’s mediatic narrative that abounds in references to mechanisms from different domains: communicational, advertising or journalistic domain. The writer works with literary and mediatic materials and becomes other, frequents the space open to alterity, even if he asserts the viceversa of what he means:

“Décollement de la rétine et du papier peint plom ssaw plom plom sssaw. Je suis platine interactive table de mixage saturée fusible disjoncté fonfonfonffon. Hibernation je me cryogénise dès que je rentre à la maison je m’enferme dans le congélateur c’est décidé je serai le premier Findus humain. La source de tous mes ennuis : Je n’est pas un Autre. Je n’est pas un Autre. Je n’est pas un Autre. Je n’est pas un Autre. Dance Dance Dance or Die.” (Beigbeder, 1994)

The creative matter of becoming *other* (creative impersonalisation) results from the fact that the material used by the writer is combined with other materials from advertising, from other media, in new contexts. Hybridizing operates by cutting up the original text in different pieces that will make up another figure of the puzzle, once they are combined with other pieces deriving from other languages (advertising, cybernetic and so on):

“[...] transformer profondément le texte de l’autre en le déplaçant, en lui offrant un nouvel environnement, et inscrire en retour son propre texte en relation.” (Samoyault, 2001).

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The borrowings from the “others”, from other languages, from other techniques originating from the media, represent anchor points in the text of the world (popular culture, the literary, sociological, psychological text and media techniques) that allow to this new writing to find its generating element and to the writer to use the mask of another “actor” in order to play his own role: the impersonalisation, under the form of a game of identities within the non-place. The game of identities supposes a continuous oscillation between the writer Beigbeder and the mediatic Beigbeder, between the columnist Beigbeder and his alter egos, Octave Parango and Marc Maronnier, writers, copy writers, editors in chief, - inside the border space of the non-place that functions as a transit space, allowing the passage from one psychic state to another and from autobiography to fiction:

“Pas de TV donc. Le succès de vos livres paraît pourtant lié au personnage public que vous êtes : en lisant le Beigbeder écrivain, on pouvait difficilement ne pas voir le Beigbeder médiatique. Pensez-vous pouvoir séparer ces deux dimensions ?

Honnêtement, ça m’est un peu égal…

Pourtant, ce lien entre les deux personnages est évident dans vos livres puisque vous y mettez en scène, à travers Octave Parango, le Beigbeder chroniqueur, concepteur-rédacteur…

C’est très délicat, très difficile pour moi d’analyser qui je suis. Je ne sais pas si je suis devenu une image, une caricature, un histrion, un imposteur ou un auteur respectable et crédible… Je pense même que je suis la seule personne incapable de vous répondre à ce sujet. Mais ce que vous dites est sans doute vrai, dans la mesure où mes livres ne sont pas éloignés de ma façon de vivre, y compris Au secours pardon : je n’ai jamais été chasseur de mannequins à Moscou, certes, mais je suis souvent allé en Russie. Donc, oui, Octave est un personnage qui n’est pas complètement l’antithèse de ce que je peux symboliser. Il est hédoniste, agaçant, friqué… C’est dommage d’être limité par une image publique, mais en même temps je trouve intéressant de jouer avec. Au fond, est-il possible de faire autrement ? Les écrivains ont une image et, qu’ils le veuillent ou non, ils doivent jouer avec et être présent, d’une manière ou d’une autre, dans le récit.

Certains en font peut-être trop, d’autres, à l’inverse, essayent de fuir leur image ; moi, je considère un peu cela comme une tauromachie. Reste que dans Au secours pardon, beaucoup de choses ne me sont pas arrivées : je n’ai pas couché avec des filles de 14 ans, par exemple. Faut-il le déplorer ? (rires). En revanche, j’ai donné à Octave des caractéristiques qui ne sont pas forcément éloignées des miennes. Il s’agit donc d’un jeu avec mon identité, comme le pratiquent beaucoup de grands écrivains - ce qui ne veut pas dire que j’en suis un -, dont certains que j’admière. Pour augmenter le plaisir du lecteur, il faut donner un réalisme, une crédibilité au personnage afin que le lecteur puisse s’identifier et se demander si oui ou non le narrateur est l’auteur. C’est ça, le roman.” (De Graeve, 2008).

The work with the new text is achieved through a continuous oscillation between the text of the other (borrowed from the media) and the writer’s own text. The passage from a linguistic or stylistic register to another (the use of Frenglish, the passage from a poem in prose to the advertisement slogan) could be proof of the writer’s wish to constantly become other or proof of the writer’s impersonalisation.

The wish to become other could be translated by three tendencies that we want to emphasize: becoming other, identification to the other and finally, overcoming the other – other texts, other influences, in order to find a new writing technique which is specific of a certain author.

First of all, the identification to the other takes place at the level of acceptation of techniques and other languages borrowed from the media, in order to surprise, to interpellate the reader. A second level of identification to the other is represented by the comprehension of the mechanisms of the other. The mediatic material always haunts the writer’s soul and mind and calls forth a hybrid, fragmentary writing, a non-place.
Finally, overcoming the other at the level of writing implies a profound knowledge on the specific stylistic features of other writers (goal that he achieves in *Dernier inventaire avant liquidation/ Final inventory before clearance sale*) and the creation of certain structures appropriate to this new writing technique that bears the mediatic fingerprint with Frédéric Beigbeder.

The final aspect of these interrogations on the writer’s relationship to alterity and on the relationship between the non-place and creative impersonnalisation focuses on the result of the author’s all writing experiences. Once he has mastered the formulas of the others, the writer tries to overpass them, to divert and reroute them and to take risky initiatives. He asserts himself as writer and he aims to comment upon other writers (such as Houellebecq, his friend), and upon their choices in his essay of literary criticism *Dernier inventaire avant liquidation/ Final inventory before clearance sale*, proposing at the same time his own alternatives.

Frédéric Beigbeder seems to be engaged in a continuous documentation work in other domains (media and others), in a creative receptivity which reveals that his work is made up of contradictions, of mixtures and strange collages – literary and mediatic.

All this research work, this continuous oscillation between the text of the other (borrowed from the media) and his own text and words, between references he finds in his readings and the borrowings from media language testify in fact a powerful tendency to substitution and the overpassing of the other and oneself in order to be able to better express himself through his new writing technique.

The detour by the materials of others could at least give him the illusion of being able to transgress the limits of his scriptural possibilities, of his contradictions in order to have the chance to express himself through a writing of his own that would not be perceived as a job in itself, but as a chance:

“JMDF : Tu t’accommodes aisément de tes contradictions.
FB : Certainement. Je suis fait de contradictions. « I am large, I contain multitudes», dit Whitman.
Mais j’ai tenu à me fixer des principes parce qu’il est compliqué d’être critique et éditeur à la fois, parce que c’est une exception française et qu’il ne faut pas en abuser, enfin parce que la critique m’a appris bien des choses sur le jugement d’un texte. Je pense, par conséquent, que le critique est plutôt compétent, en tant que lecteur, pour juger d’un texte à éditer.
JMDF : Si tu devais faire un choix, que préférerais-tu être : écrivain, éditeur ou critique?
FB : De ces états ou professions, je souhaiterais sans hésitation devenir écrivain. Je me tiendrais informé de l’actualité littéraire, je côtoierais d’autres auteurs et surtout, je continuerais de lire le plus de livres possible. Mais ce n’est qu’une hypothèse puisque je reste boulimique.
Je dis un « état » parce qu’il m’est difficile de considérer l’écriture comme un métier. Pour moi, c’est une chance ! Écrire, être édité, rencontrer un public à travers ses propres ouvrages : c’est une chance. Être prêtre, est-ce un métier ?
JMDF : Non, une vocation. Comme s’exprimer à travers l’écriture peut être une vocation aussi.”

(Beigbeder, Di Falco, 2004).

**CONCLUSIONS**

Our paper tackled on the issue of literary cross-breeding and hybridization in supermodernity, starting from the analysis of corpus excerpts from works of the mediatic writer Frédéric Beigbeder. Even if the concepts of cross-breeding and literary
hybridization are already being applied to a variety of activities across traditions and languages, both formal and thematic, we focused on the exploration of a dichotomy operational within our corpus of study: the hybridizing of stylistic means that brings about a new language identity altered by the media and by the virtual interactive non-places and the cross-breeding of genres. This dichotomy is doubled by a trichotomy operating within the fictional space with Frédéric Beigbeder: invasion/hybridation/evasion. Invasion is revealed as far proliferation of media signs and slogans is translated into Frédéric Beigbeder’s novels by the omnipresence of brands and of audio-visual VIPs. The strange cohabitation between the literary space and popular culture in the Beigbeder’s works becomes one of the essential characteristics of the supermodern scriptural non-place.

Finally, we dwellt upon a possible answer to the question: “Does the scriptural space become a non-place?”

We concluded that, apart from general non-places that we encounter with Frédéric Beigbeder, the text itself is invaded by a series of radio and television advertising catch phrases, as well as by an informatics jargon. The progressive invasion of non-places ends by rendering the texts incomprehensible thus transforming the writing space into a non-place.

When discussing the progressive transformation of the scriptural space into a non-place, it is important to take into account the fact that the study of the fabrication of the scriptural self inside the writing space of the French writer cannot oversee the inherent relationship to the other, since hybridization results from a change of language and style, of the construction of the work as mosaic of quotes and self-quotes, as well as from the practice and the mixture of poetic language and advertising language. The work with a new text is achieved through a continuous oscillation between the text of the other (borrowed from the media) and his own text. Moreover, the creative matter of becoming other (creative impersonalisation) proved to result from the fact that the material used by the writer is combined with other materials from advertising, from other media, in new contexts. Once overcoming the other – of other texts, other influences is achieved, the author can find a writing technique of his own to differentiate him from the others and which is specific only of himself.

References


