BOOK MATERIAL TEXT

Essays on the Materiality, Mediality and Textuality of the (e-)Book

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BOOKS, MATERIALS, TEXTS: A THREEFOLD FOREWORD

Christian A. Bachmann and Stephanie Heimgartner

ABSTRACT *This foreword introduces to the focus of this volume, i. e. the intricate interconnectedness of the book as a material medium, its specific materiality, and the texts it is said to 'contain'. Drawing from philosophers and literary scholars such as Michel Foucault, Sybille Krämer, Marshall McLuhan, Jerome McGann and others, it sketches the horizon whithin which the contributions of this volume are situated, arguing that it is essential for literary scholars to consider the material embodiment of texts.*

KEYWORDS *Book, Book Design, Materiality, Textuality, E-Book, Performance.*

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I. BOOKS

For approximately 1600 years the book has been the most important medium for collecting information coded in written language in Europe. Although it underwent a number of modernizations throughout its history, the codex's shape and form have never been drastically altered. In fact, the codex proves to be a sound medium for word and picture until this day and may very well be of importance for centuries to come. The noun 'book' refers to more than just the codex-form. Leaving aside more metaphorical uses, Merriam-Webster's online dictionary lists seven meanings for this particular word: (1) "a set of written sheets of skin or paper or tablets of wood or ivory," (2) "a set of written, printed, or blank sheets bound together into a volume", (3) "a long written or printed literary compo-

sition," (4) "a major division of a treatise or literary work," (5) "a record of a business's financial transactions or financial condition—often used in plural," (6) "magazine," (7) "e-book." It becomes clear that the decision about what a book *is* largely depends on the perspective taken. Literary and cultural studies, it seems, mainly focus on the third definition, but lately the first and second definitions have become more relevant as the e-book, present in the seventh definition, becomes increasingly more important for professional and non-professional readers and writers alike. One has to wonder in what relationship "sheets bound together into a volume" stand with a "literary composition", and how, if at all, one affects the other?[1] And what, if any, is the impact of the rise of the e-book on this relationship and its individual parts?[2]

While it is unlikely that the e-book will supersede the codex, chances are that the codex will at some point in the not so distant future become a marginalized medium. Much like the scroll that it had mostly replaced by the 4th century, the codex may then be limited to a few specific roles within an entire cast of media. As more and more readers start using digital devices, texts no longer depend on being "in print". As more and more writers switch to tablet PCs for note-taking, blank books lose in importance. This prospect—often lamented as the "Death of the Book"—has been discussed widely. It can be conjectured that, once the codex has assumed its new position, the laments will quickly dissipate—considering how few people bewail the lack of the scroll in every-day communication today. The codex's new status may well be one of more regard than it is today. With the e-book becoming more popular and widely adopted, the need for cheap paperbacks with their often coarse paper and lacklustre typography will surely subside. On the contrary, the hardbound book, delicately made and exquisitely designed, will likely have a longer life and be cherished as an object of artistic merits, much like it is now or, in fact, even more so. Besides, billions of printed books remain in public libraries and private collections all over the world, and, in spite of points made by Nicholson Baker (2001), it seems highly unlikely that they will be completely destroyed any time soon, even if they are only preserved for practical or economic reasons (digitizing books is an expensive endeavour). However, the rise of the e-book and the improvements in digitization technology and scanning equipment will undoubtedly bring changes that might, in the long run, threaten two-penny paperback productions with extinction. Small public libraries that see their role mainly in making popular texts accessible will likely reduce their number of printed books in favour of digital copies, much like they dispose of books that are outdated or have fallen out of favour with readers and librarians. Digitization might then even enlarge the number of texts that are publicly available. In

1 See Monika Schmitz-Emans' contribution in this volume, pp. 11–27.

2 See Christoph Bläsi's contribution in this volume, pp. 65–75.

any case, libraries that function as archives such as national libraries seem much less prone to such measures.

Apart from the (nowadays uncertain) fate of the codex as a medium that we have become used to in the course of history, from early modernity on there has been a second approach to the materiality of books, one that connects the medium and its content more "intimately". Ever since Laurence Sterne's ground-breaking novel *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, a book that came out between 1759 and 1767, have authors of literary texts openly reflected upon the intricate relationship between the literary text and the printed book that 'contains' it. Around 1800, Jean Paul (*Das Leben des vergnügten Schulmeisterlein Maria Wutz im Auenthal*; *Leben Fibels*) and E.T.A. Hoffmann (*Lebens-Ansichten des Katers Murr*) made the book a central theme of their writing. Later in the 19th century, Stéphane Mallarmé would modernize our idea of the poem by consciously relating the printed verses to the blank of the page around them. Early in the 20th century, Italian Futurists like Filippo Tommaso Marinetti experimented with new ways of bookmaking and new forms of typography, producing, among others, The Tin Book (*Parole in Libertá Futuriste Olfattive Tattili Termiche*). Members of later avant-garde art movements like Kurt Schwitters, El Lissitzky, and Johannes Baader followed suit. In the wake of these developments, Paul Valéry (1960: 1246–1250) noted that the page of a book could be read as well as looked at as a picture. After 1945, these ideas led to further advancements in book arts and finally the rise of the artist(s)'s book in the 1960s spurred by protagonists such as Ed Ruscha, Christian Boltanski, and Marcel Broodthaers, to name but a few. Drawing additional inspiration from concretist poetry, literary works like Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1971) were published in this period. More recently, writers such as Mark Z. Danielewski or Jonathan Safran Foer have authored works in which the book features prominently as a material means of storytelling. So, quite contrary to common perception, as a means of artistic expression the codex form is perhaps more relevant than ever.

II. MATERIALS (AND PERFORMANCES)

This process in the world of art becomes a trend at approximately the same time that material culture (Bräunlein 2012: 14–28) has become a scholarly concern—in the second half of the 20th century. Starting out with archaeology and ethnology, in the 1980s the humanities have picked up on the notion that culturally relevant information is not solely coded in language, but in material objects as well. Can what we consider a text exist immaterially at all, as a sort of structure of fabula and stylistic devices? Does it have material quality, even cohesion, outside the author's or the recipient's consciousness? Does said text exist as pure material? And if so, what type of material are we speaking of here: only ink on paper? Are the signs that the ink forms material or immaterial objects, and in what way does

the one relate to the other? Maybe what Anselm Haverkamp calls "Latenz / latency" is the better applicable term, the inherent presence of hidden structures in the literary text that are only readable through a method of archaeological precision? These structures constantly transverse and deconstruct whatever the text obviously says and the reader tries to draw from it. Or is "latency" only the somewhat tropological counterfigure to literal speech?

In the early 1990s, sociologist Roger Chartier argued that we "are never confronted with abstract or ideal texts detached from all materiality; they manipulate or perceive objects and forms whose structure and modalities govern their reading" (Chartier 1994: 3). Literary texts used to be published in books or magazines, both of which have aesthetic and pragmatic traditions of their own, they command specific types of information that they can carry as well as individual forms of reception, including spaces, gestures, and so on. With the rise of the e-book and the shift of literature from the "real" to the "virtual", the question concerning the materiality becomes more pressing. Or does the digitalization pose entirely new questions? The connection between thought and body is immediate, and so is the relation between the material and the virtual side of texts. It lies in our performance. This connection is originally drawn by early drama theory. Aristotle (in his *Poetica*) argues that, in drama, we watch people—not actors—PERFORM. A chain of performance forms a myth, the "fabula". What we would call a performance, the re-enactment on the stage, is a repetition, a re-actualization of the fabula. Performing a text—whether reading it silently, a technique unknown in European antiquity (Augustinus: *Confessiones* VI, 3), reciting it, narrating it, or performing it on a stage—connects the dubious and polysemantical signs on the page to our body, and in this way makes them "come alive". But is this re-enactment of signs on a page really what one may call performative? And are literary texts purely virtual when they are not read or performed?

For Michel Foucault, statements ("énoncés")—the elementary units of discourse—are neither "completely linguistic" nor "exclusively material" (Aristoteles: *Poetica* 1449b).[3] They are necessarily connected to material and medial environments and cannot be cut out of them without risking a loss of functionality. Even though Foucault does not talk about literary texts here: they, too, can be taken as statements insofar as they participate in historical and material settings and play their role in forming social discourse. Their fictional or virtual worlds can, therefore, not be strictly separated from "reality" (Foucault 1969: 131–138).

Language philosopher Sybille Krämer has criticized what she calls the "Two Worlds Model"—the common idea that the sign as "something accessible to our senses is interpreted as instantiation of something that is not immediately present, but precedes the singular phenomenon logically and genealogically" (Krämer

3 "[…] ni tout a fait linguistique, ni exclusivement matériel […]" (Foucault 1969: 107).

2002: 324, transl. S. H.). In her theory of performativity,[4] following Foucault, she argues that there is no language apart from language in use, and use is always situated in identifiable space and time—and therefore will automatically and indiscriminately carry traces of its mediality (Krämer 2002: 331–332). "In this way, 'embodied language' becomes a search term for the material, pre-predicative shaping of our linguistic being" (ibid.: 332). Our body is, apart from all the other media involved, the foremost medium through which literature and other arts work. Performativity, as Krämer understands it, tries to formulate its theoretical framework along the lines of event and repetition, embodiment and realisation, out of which is generated a surplus effect for the reader, listener or audience (ibid.: 345).[5]

As Elisabeth Strowick (2005: 78) has pointed out, when the material aspects of literature are discussed, literary scholars usually focus on the written or printed word and the mechanisms employed in reading. Other concerns, e.g. the quality of paper or binding, are treated less favourably and are often left for book studies to explore and make sense of. And scholars in the field of book studies, such as Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles, have made very clear what they think about the materiality of literature:

> "Clearly, when we read books, we really read *books*—that is, we read the physicality or materiality of the book as well as and in relation to the text itself. Literacy, then, may be said to include not only textual competence but material competence, an ability to read the semiotics of the concrete forms that embody, shape, and condition the meanings of texts. Bindings, illustrations, paper, typeface, layout, advertisements, scholarly introductions, promotional blurbs—all function as parts of a semiotic system, parts of the total meaning of a text." (Moylan/Stiles 1996: 2)

III. TEXTS

In *Understanding Media* Marshall McLuhan assumed that the "printed book had encouraged artists to reduce all forms of expression as much as possible to the single descriptive and narrative plane of the printed word" (McLuhan 2001: 59). While McLuhan's assertion is true for the most part, the examples given above serve to illustrate that some writers venture well beyond the printed word. Com-

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4 Krämer (2002: 325, 332) demonstrates how in classical speech act theory not the actualized (oral) speech act serves as a model, but rather the written text.

5 Cf. Krämer 2002: 345. Even older reception theories describe the interaction between text and reader as resulting in a surplus of meaning—not yet taking into account the medial/physiological effects: The work formulates only incomplete speech acts, which the reader has to replenish to form worlds. It can furthermore be used as a critical method for establishing formerly marginalized issues in the center of discourse (see Iser 1984: 284).

monly, works of these artists are called novels, poems, or, more generally, 'books', just like the works of their peers that show no particular interest in the material conditions of their publications. Literary scholars traditionally—and indiscriminately—address the works of either groups as 'texts', that is to say: as meshworks of words, stripped of their 'outward' surroundings. Thereby, the supposed immaterial character of the text is underlined. On the one hand, oftentimes the material aspects of literary texts are indeed of minor concern, and rightfully so, for the rhyme scheme of a given poem, to take a simple example, is hardly affected by the paper the poem was printed on. When, on the other hand, a poet chooses to have a cycle of poems about the four seasons printed on paper in four different colours, one for each season, like Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli's *Livre des quatre couleurs* (1757), the line between the 'text', understood as a sequence of words, and the book, understood as the material medium of the printed word, is blurred. Similarly, with books that have not been written or printed but that the letters were cut out of, the paper becomes part of the text (e.g. Diego de Barreda's *Preces Latinae*, 1600[6]).

Around the time McLuhan published *Understanding Media*, Michel Butor stipulated that "tout écrivain honnête se trouve aujourd'hui devant la question du livre" (Butor 1964: 104). He anticipated that "[l]e journal, la radio, la télévision, le cinéma vont obliger le livre à devenir de plus en plus 'beau', de plus en plus dense" (ibid.: 109). In Butor's view, conceiving of a book, then, entails more than merely typing out a number of words, namely taking into account the exact placement of text on the page. Arguably, this shift has already taken place, or is at least on the verge of taking place. In turn, it can be argued that the notion of 'text' has to adapt to these 'denser' literary works, examples of which have been given above and will be discussed in more detail in the papers presented in this volume.

Already in 1991, Jerome J. McGann concluded that we "must turn our attention to much more than the formal and linguistic features of poems or other imaginative fictions. We must attend to textual materials which are not regularly studied by those interested in 'poetry': to typefaces, bindings, book prices, page format, and all those paratextual phenomena usually regarded as (at best) peripheral to 'poetry' or 'the text as such'" (McGann 1991: 13). This 'volume' ventures to do just that.

The papers collected here form the proceedings of a congress session titled *Book—Material—Text* that was part of the XXth congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, which took place at Sorbonne, Paris, in 2013. This section aimed at exploring the literary text as a material as well as a 'virtual' object. It referred to the first question raised by the congress organisers: "Is Comparative Literature just another Comparative Science among others?",

6 http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/Library_Bulletin/Nov1995/LB-N95-Cronenwett.html [30 Nov. 2016].

focusing on a concept of literature as can be defined in the discussion between scholars of Comparative Literature and researchers in the fields of book science, neuropsychology (enquiring the reading process), media science and history of art. Questions that were dealt with include: How does the medial change affect the process of reading? How does it affect the production and the commercialisation of texts? Does it enhance or question the fictionality of the literary text? Will the book from the primary source of well-grounded information turn more and more into an art object worth collecting? Not all of these questions can be answered in the present proceedings, but some light can be shed on them.

The editors wish to thank the organisers of the congress and the participants of the workshop for their contributions (and their patience).

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BOOKS AS MATERIAL, VIRTUAL, AND METAPHORICAL ENTITIES

Monika Schmitz-Emans

ABSTRACT *To talk about books can be a metaphoric operation. Because books have always been conceptualized as metaphors for the texts they carry, it is easy to see them as both 'real' and 'symbolic' objects of a complex semiotic nature. This article shows several ways in which the book is exposed as a material object used for the production of manifold semantic layers. Apart from metaphors, the codex itself can be worked on like in Queneau's* Cent mille milliards de poèmes *or altered like in Tom Phillips'* A Humument. *The effects of alteration and destruction on books can be shown on the book's body or in artwork or comment surrounding the (invisible) book as in Gérard Wajcman's* L'interdit *or Keri Smith's* This is not a Book.

KEYWORDS *Book, Bookness, Codex, Metaphor, Material, Matter, Raymond Queneau, Marc Saporta, Bryan Stanley Johnson, Tom Phillips, Konrad Balder Schäuffelen, Jonathan Safran Foer, Marcel Broodthaers, Stéphane Mallarmé, Keri Smith.*

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> "Cercavo un libro […].—Non è per leggere. È per fare. Faccio delle cose coi libri. Degli oggetti. Sí, delle opere: statue, quadri, come li vuoi chiamare. Ho fatto anche un'esposizione. Fisso i libri con delle resine, e restanto lí. Chiusi, o aperti, oppure anche gli do delle forme, li scolpisco, gli apro dentro dei buchi. È una bella materia il libro, per lavorarci, ci si può fare tante cose." (Calvino 1979: 149)

BOOKS AS MATERIAL AND SYMBOLIC OBJECTS

As Michel Butor (1964: 104–123) explained in his treatise on "The book as object" ("Le livre comme objet"), books are both material and symbolic objects. With regard to these different dimensions, one might even say that the word "book" refers to different significates both of which, again, are signifiers for other complex significates. But as the physical and the symbolic book are often confounded, their respective meanings also interfere: The word "book" firstly of course refers to a concrete material object, usually a stapled collection of paper sheets bound together at one side of the staple. The same word, then, is used as a metonymy for texts and even for the messages or contents themselves that are mediated by the text. Thus, "working on a book" does usually not mean to create a stack of paper sheets and bind them together, but to write down arguments and ideas, to explain matters, to narrate stories etc. "To read a book" correspondingly means: to read texts, to decode meanings, to interpret. It is, however, also connected with a physical act of handling a paper object. (Books in this sense of material objects can, strictly spoken, not be read, but they invite us to do many other things. We can take them into our hands, we can turn the pages, we can tear the pages out, fold and damage them, cover them with stains, we can throw the book at somebody, use it as a container of letters etc.—and, of course we can sell or destroy it.) Material books (or 'books as matter') are never just neutral containers of texts and other contents. They are signs or, rather, complexes of significant matter; as material objects they have got a semantic dimension.

One reason for what we might call the semanticity of the material book is evident at first sight: As concrete objects, material books can be designed in different ways, and probably no one who publishes a book is completely indifferent about how it looks. Books can be made of different kinds of paper, they can have different sizes, shapes, and colours; covers, typography and other parts of the para-textual arrangement depend on multiple and most different decisions. The simple fact that there are alternatives makes each decision for a special book design significant, as already the choice between two options creates meaning.[1] If the book appears in a publication series whose covers are always yellow, the book

1 If you have, for instance, the choice between a white and a black book cover, it is significant to choose the white one.—Cf. for instance "The Optimist's Handbook / The Pessimist's Handbook" (Edworthy, Cramsie 2010).

designers do not have a choice, and the yellow cover does not have a meaning. If you publish, however, a book that is not included in this series but adapts the series' design, this 'outfit' becomes a significant message itself. Several recent examples of appropriation art are characterized by their adaptations of book series' designs.[2]

There is, however, another important relation between the book in the first and in the second sense, between the book as physical object and as a medium of immaterial messages: They are strongly linked together by metaphorical bonds. Especially one metaphor is of crucial importance for the history of the book as piece of matter and a 'spiritual' object: The material book has always been regarded as a simile to the body of a living being. Metaphorical interpretations of books as the bodies of thoughts, ideas, concepts as their 'souls' interfere with an idea about the book whose origins can be traced back at least to ancient Roman culture: The book is regarded as another 'second' body in which the author's soul is incarnated—and when books become multiples, the author may be concerned about the fate of his doubles.

In modification of this metaphorical concept of the book as a spirit's 'body', books have also been regarded as graves. But the basic dichotomy of body and spirit as such is—according to ethnographers and philosophers—always connected to the idea of an after-life of the spirit, for instance of transmogrification. Burning books as an act of censorship is meant as an execution comparable to the execution of a living person, whose body is killed in order to tacit his spirit. Eating books is a magical act of assimilating another spirit's power. Books that are designed in a way that recalls the burning or eating of books evidently point the observer not only at concrete practices of treating books but also at the metaphysical concepts behind these practices—as for instance the idea of a book as an incarnation of spiritual forces, including the possibility of metempsychosis or resurrection. Books as material entities—as 'book bodies'—can especially be considered as metaphorical objects, whenever they are designed in an unconventional way (and regardless of what concrete metaphorical meaning may be attributed to them). Their respective design can support the readability of the texts (of the book as spiritual entity), but they may also constrict or even prevent it; both kinds of book design have their metaphoric qualities. In other words: As a consequence of the fact that books have always been metaphorically modelled, described and interpreted, every material book, every 'book body' can also be regarded as a metaphorical book, a materialised metaphor.

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2 Cf. Michalis Pichler's "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum" (2009). Regarding the level of content, this book is based on an appropriation of Max Stirner's "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum" (1845 [1844]). The cover design is borrowed from the publishing house Reclam.

The visible book bodies can be regarded as signs or representations referring to invisible books. The expression "invisible book", however, has several meanings: it may point to destroyed books as books that belong to the past; it may refer to possible books that—as something which must still be created—belong to the future; at any rate it refers to virtual books—even to such kinds of books that are hardly imaginable. Maybe there are examples of unconventionally shaped books that are not in first respect meant to be read in a conventional sense but rather to be experienced as a piece of material and visual art. Some books perhaps demonstrate the qualities and advantages of conventional books by the way of negation. Just like the bodies of living beings, 'book bodies' sometimes refuse to serve, to support the spirit incorporated in them. In all these cases there are metaphorical concepts grounding the design experiments—even and with a special emphasis in cases when there is nothing left to be read because the book consequently denies this function. And in specific cases we might speak of a "virtual text" not simply hidden behind but in a way even opposed to the material text.

STRATEGIES OF EXPOSING THE BOOK AS A MATERIAL OBJECT

Generally spoken, the art of book making illustrates exemplary that there is a tension but no contradiction between regarding an object as a piece of matter and as a symbolic entity (respectively: a signifier). As soon as pieces of matter are exposed in a way that stimulates the observer to perceive these objects' materiality with a more intense regard than usual and to reflect upon it, this reflection process will also recall the matters' symbolic dimension to mind: the multiple meanings of materials such as sand, stone and earth, of marble, diamonds, gold and silver, of iron and steel, glass and plastics, of hair, skin and flesh, of bread, water and wine. In plain words: We never perceive simply matter; we always perceive physical objects within a complex semantic horizon, objects of significant matters.[3] (And especially the attempt to perceive 'just matter'—an enterprise doomed to fail—is heavily loaded with symbolic meaning.)

Among the various materials that appear as significant in their quality as materials, books as pieces of matter must be regarded as a specific case. Often books are not just metaphors but also metonyms for broad spheres of cultural practice, practices of establishing codes and values, of structuring the symbolic universe and the social world. Just because books in everyday practice and ritual contexts are usually not explicitly regarded as pieces of matter, their materiality can quite easily and efficiently be stressed by treating them as plain matter—or rather: by

3 Many expressions of everyday language as well as literary texts (poems, novels etc.) point to these significations attributed to physical matters, and there are multiple forms of cultural (for instance ritual) practice and institutions based on specific matters' symbolic dimension.

pretending to do so. Actually, arrangements created from 'book matter' implicitly always both refer to the symbolic dimension of matter, the multiple meanings of specific kinds of matter—and complementarily also to the immaterial dimension of books. In artificial arrangements dedicated to 'book matter' (or to the 'book as matter'), the different material aspects of books are reflected in order to point to their potentials of signification—as for instance the paper, the binding, the pages' layout, typography, the codex structure—and the fact that books are spatial objects as well as spaces that may store all kinds of contents. As in many other arts, in the art of book-making alienation effects can be regarded as the most efficient means of sensitizing for both the aesthetic and the significative dimension of artifacts and artificial arrangements—of stimulating reflections about them. There is a great diversity of strategies of submitting books to estrangement effects. As one side of the broad spectrum, one may regard the different practices of creating beautiful and valuable books, books for bibliophile readers and collectors. At the other side of the spectrum, there are multiple strategies of altering and destroying conventional books.

There are multiple forms of 'making books' in order to point to the book as a material object and as a signifier by exposing its materiality. With regard to these forms one might roughly distinguish between some more general strategies:

(1) strategies and practices of staging book metaphors (including both the uses of 'book metaphors' in order to characterize other concepts—as for instance by the expressions such as 'book of nature', 'book of life', 'book of memory' etc.—and the use of metaphors to describe books—as for instance in the concept of 'living books', 'books communicating with their readers', 'books voices', 'books as food', 'books as houses' etc.),

(2) strategies of modifying books' architecture by developing alternative forms (modifying, more concretely spoken, the codex structure as the most common form of the book),

(3) strategies of altering books that already exist.

(4) Sometimes the visible book refers to an invisible book or to several such books. In these cases a specific metaphorical sense is connected with this relation toward something beyond visibility.

EXAMPLES

(1) Book metaphors

In order to illustrate the significance of metaphoric concepts and structures one might refer to many book objects as well as to artist's books and to unconventionally structured books presenting literary texts. The artist Martin Schwarz, pro-

ducer of numerous book objects, often stages book metaphors by taking them literally—as, for instance, the metaphor of books as living creatures, as thresholds between imaginary worlds and the real world, as 'spaces of nature' etc. (Schwarz 2008)—The novelist Mark Z. Danielewski conceived his famous novel "House of Leaves" (2000) structuring the book as a labyrinth, correspondingly to the different narrative levels' contents. He both refers to the metaphorical concept of books as labyrinthic spaces and books as houses.

(2) Modifications of the codex architecture

Modifying the architecture of the codex always means to question conventional uses of the book. Such modifications evidently occur in more and less irritating forms. They can be restricted to unconventional kinds of preparing the pages in a book that still has a binding; they can, however, also concern the binding and produce books without binding, collections of loose chapters, single pages or even smaller unities. Both literary writers and book artists have created multiple forms of modified book formats—often co-operating, often in the double role as writer and book designer. —The way we describe unconventional books often already indicates to the metaphors involved here—as, for instance, in discourses about mobile books. Here, the concept of mobility often implicitly refers to concepts and discourses concerning creativity, dynamics and vitality. Mobile novels presented as collections of single pages in a box respectively of books without binding can be regarded as an extraordinary and challenging genre of fictional literature. Similar to them, literary texts that suggest non-linear readings resist conventional reception and request specific strategies of approach, physically as well as with regard to interpretation.[4] Quite obviously, such phenomena expose their materiality and provoke questions concerning 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate', if not even 'possible' or 'impossible' reading processes. (Among the wide range of phenomena that could be subsumed under the term of 'movable books' there might even be examples that are not at all meant to be read in a conventional sense.) Mobile novels or poem books that are presented as collections of single pages in a box—respectively of books without binding—can be regarded as an extraordinary and challenging genre of fictional literature.

(a) Raymond Queneau's famous sonnet machine "Cent mille milliards de poèmes" from 1961 is already accompanied by an ambiguous paratext. In principle, the reader can compose billions of different sonnets by exploring all possible combinations of the respective 14 lines of ten sonnets, because the lines are printed on strips that are inserted into the book as gills. But, of course, he can do so only 'in principle'. As the paratext explains with seeming objectivity, it would take

4 Structurally both kinds of texts correspond with that kind of (mainly) musical artworks that Umberto Eco labelled as "opera aperta" (1962).

an enormous time to explore all options of combination, even if somebody read the potential sonnets speedily. And so the sonnet machine—in contrast with its ludistic character, its attitude to invite the reader to be a poet—reminds its user of the restrictedness of his or her life time, the boundaries of his or her reading and writing options and the narrow boundaries that constrict individual life. So, on the one hand, the sonnet machine can be described as a metaphor of what the reader can do—of seemingly 'infinite' reading possibilities—, but on the other hand, very clearly, as a metaphor for the impossible, or, more concretely spoken: for the impossibility of actualizing all those virtual books due to the finitude of our lives as readers. No matter how many texts are transferred into visibility and made readable—the major part of the virtual poems remains invisible and illegible.

(b) Marc Saporta's "Composition No 1" (1962) consist of a box with single sheets; one might describe the object as a book that is not (or not yet?) bound.[5] Saporta himself has written the text in order to present it in particles. The box which is designed like a book contains 150 cards like paper sheets plus an instruction for use; the latter instructs the reader to order the paper sheets sequentially, not according to a given rule but by chance. The single text elements or 'building blocks' can be combined in all possible ways, as the playing instruction says. "Composition No 1" on the one hand extends (or contradicts to) our concepts and ideas regarding the novel as an artwork, but it does so in accordance with aesthetic concepts and theories about literature and reading that even seem to be affirmed and illustrated by this literary work. It is especially the concept of the open artwork ("opera aperta") and, moreover, the discourse of reception aesthetics which finds its concretization in Saporta's novel. The more the reader is responsible for the artwork he or she experiences, the more virtual pieces of art may be detected within or behind a concrete physical arrangement. And when those (infinite) possibilities are not only restricted to the level of interpreting and attributing meanings to a perceived artificial object, but also to the act of composing the material elements of this artwork itself, the openness of the reception process becomes even more evident. The making up of Saporta's box book stresses the playful aspect of the reception process. It reminds of a game that is played with cards, and, thus, it encourages the reader to ludistic activities.

> "Le lecteur est prié de battre ces pages comme un jeu de cartes. De couper, s'il le désire, de la main gauche, comme chez une cartomancienne. L'ordre dans lequel les feuillets sortiront du jeu orientera le destin de X […] De l'enchaînement des circonstances dé-

5 "Not only the function of the book but also its form can be turned into a subject of art. In 1962 Marc Saporta wrote a novel called *Composition No. 1*, whose pages were neither numbered nor bound, so that they could be read in any sequence. There was no longer a predetermined content. The reader who had been free to disregard the author's intentions was now forced to make up his new book." (Dittmar [1978]: 128)

> pend que l'histoire finisse bien ou mal. Un vie se compose d'éléments multiples. Mais le nombre des compositions possibles est infini." (Saporta 1962: n. pag.)[6]

Although on the one hand, the reader is authorised to feel as the text's master, he or she is submitted to chance on the other hand. Thus, the recipient's freedom turns out to be ambiguous. Furthermore, Saporta's book work also appears as an ironical reflection about the ambiguities of reception theory as it strongly dominated the theoretical field in the 1960s. While on the one hand the immense number of possible compositions offers an immense space of aesthetic experience to the reader, on the other hand the innumerable options can never be experienced by one single person—and this reminds him or her of his or her own restrictedness; regarded from this point of view the book that appears as infinite calls our attention to our own finitude. The metaphorical dimension constituted by a book which is at the same time a set of playing cards, is not restricted to the interpretation of the reading process as a process of playing a game, although this idea certainly plays a crucial role. As the single cards carry texts with short prose texts pointing to fictitious characters' lives, life itself is metaphorically mirrored as a game in which elements of experience can be combined in alternative ways.

(c) There have been several other compositions in which the book format has been altered in a similar way as in Saporta's "Composition". Robert Filliou's "Je disais à Marianne" (1965) again consists of a box and playing cards—96 pieces, which now actually have the size of conventional playing cards.[7] Both sides of the cards carry print: one side of each is showing a picture, the reverse side a sentence, always written in English, French, and German. According to Filliou, the images and sentences refer to the lives of several families. The images of the cards can be used in order to connect story elements with them; and the meanings the reader or narrator can attribute to them are not restricted. This art object—especially in its quality as an 'altered' type of book—metaphorically refers to a certain idea about life and art. Belonging to the Fluxus movement, Filliou interprets both life and art as one coherent and permanent stream—and as a kind of game that follows continuously changing rules.

(d) Looking back to the 1960s again, another example should be presented briefly in order to illustrate that unconventional books are sometimes conceived

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6 "Der Leser wird gebeten, diese Seiten wie ein Kartenspiel zu mischen. Abheben darf er, falls er es wünscht, mit der linken Hand, wie bei einer Kartenschlägerin. Die Reihenfolge, in der die Blätter liegen, entscheidet über das Los des Mannes X. […] Von der Verkettung der Umstände hängt es ab, ob das Geschehen gut oder schlecht endet. Ein Leben setzt sich aus vielerlei Teilen zusammen. Aber die Zahl der möglichen Zusammensetzungen—compositions—ist unendlich." (Grimm transl. Saporta, quoted in Idensen 1996: 176)

7 Filliou's book is entitled French as well as English and German ("Je disais à Marianne", "I was Telling Marianne", "Ich sagte zu Marianne") (Moeglin-Delcroix 1997: 108). There is a correspondence linking this piece of book art with Italo Calvino's narrative cycle "Il castello dei destini incrociati" (1973).

as materialized metaphors. In 1969, Bryan Stanley Johnson created a box book that, in a way, refers to the idea of human life itself as a 'black box', as something intransparent and enigmatic. His novel "The Unfortunates" is printed in single chapters which are not bound together but stacked in a box and, thus, can be read in arbitrary order.[8] The English original edition presents the novel in a blue box; the German translation provides for a black box, which—with regard to the novel's content—is an even more suggestive object than the blue one: The novel tells about the narrator's friend who died of cancer as a young man; it represents a process of memorizing caused by a sojourn in the narrator's home town. The structure of the novel is not only meant to be regarded as a model of life as a chaotic and arbitrary stream in which myriads of files are cut off, and disorder rules—but also as a simile to the structure and growth of tumours. Thus, the arbitrariness, the determining influence of chance which is represented by the book's extraordinary form, does not refer to deliberate choice and freedom, but to the lack of sense and reason, to something 'disordered' that cannot be brought under rational control. Correspondingly, the 'box' design is not just a metaphor of mystery and surprise, but has to be regarded as the simile of a coffin.

(d) The Georgian writer Aka Morchiladze has recently created a novel that resists linear reading: It is composed of a collection of single chapters, each of them forming a small booklet, which are collected in a little bag—a kind of miniaturized traveller's bag ("Santa Esperanza", 2004).[9] The booklets form groups of different colours: yellow, blue, green and orange, and within their respective group they are numbered. There are nine booklets of each colour, which makes 36 chapters altogether. Their cover designs resemble playing cards, actually referring to a card game that is repeatedly mentioned in the novel as a popular game in the country depicted in the narrated stories. A map is added to the booklets in the bag. According to the paratextual instruction, the booklets can be read in different orders: either starting with one colour pack according to the order of booklet numbers, then proceeding to the next colour and so on. Or starting first with the 'one' numbers, then proceeding to the booklets with a 'two' and so on—these two reading strategies will provide for a set of four novels composed of nine chapters—or for a set of large stories composed of four parts each. However, we can also read the chapters in whichever order we like.—The novel's different stories are dedicated to the people of the country Santa Esperanza, which consists of different islands in the Black Sea and is populated—correspondingly to the four colours of the novel—by different groups: Georgians, Genoese (the descendants

8 Among the 28 parts of the novel there is one chapter marked as the first one, and another which is the final one. As Johnson says, the other chapters should be read in the sequence in which they are presented—as a staple in a box —, but alternative modes of reading are also legitimate.

9 Thanks to Natascha Gondecki for notifying me about this exceptional piece of novel and book art.

of former settlers from Italy), Turks and British colonists. There are several main characters in the novel, and there are larger units of stories, although as a whole the narrative is as complex as the history and the cultural realities of the fictitious country depicted here.

Francis Nenik's recent novel (or story collection) "XO" (2012) continues the series that was decades earlier represented by Saporta, Filliou and others: "XO" is a box that contains sheets of paper which can be read in any order, so that the result appears as arbitrary. Nenik's paratextual arrangement is evidently part of the game; the cover of his book-box carries a text that adapts the attitude of an explication and using instruction, but actually is of no practical use in neither function.

> "So geht das: Eine Mischung aus Briefroman, Comic und durcheinanderzentriertem (sic!) Gefabel. Ohne Beispiel, ohne Bindung. Eine Heimatloseblattsammlung? Wer weiß … Auf jeden Fall: das Vergehen einer Epoche als irdische Komödie. Und das Werden einer anderen als Groteske. Zudem: ineinandersickernde Welten, eigenhändig vom Autor gefälschte Dokumente, nicht eine einzige bedeutende historische Persönlichkeit, keine Mauer, keine DDR, keine Pioniere. Stattdessen: 'Die Geschichte des Baus vorgefertigter Häuser. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung mobiler Wellblechgebäude.' Druckreif, wie sich's gehört." (Nenik 2012, book cover)

Maybe it can be regarded as an indicator of post modernity that the paratextual rule of the reading game, now in its function as the experiment's foundation, is deconstructed.

(3) Altered books

(a) Tom Phillips's artist's book entitled "A Humument" (1970–2012) has been created in a process of multiple interventions.[10] In 1966, Philipps was inspired by William Burroughs's cut-up technique to create something analogous on the level of book design. In a book-store he eventually detected the Victorian novel "A Human Document" by William H. Mallock (published in 1892), and he submitted the book's 'body' to extensive alterations. At first he only scored out single words, but then he developed a more refined plan—designing the book's pages in a way that was supposed to remind of medieval book design.

> "I merely scored out unwanted words with pen and ink. It was not long after though before the possibility became apparent of making a better unity of word and image, intertwined as in mediaeval miniature." (Phillips 1980 quoted in Drucker 2004: 109)

10 For the different editions of his book, Phillips altered the respective former versions and, thus, actually created an entire series of books entitled "A Humument".

By painting the pages of Mallock's novel in a way that only parts of the original text remained readable—there are, more precisely spoken, different grades of readability, because the paint added to the pages is sometimes transparent—Phillips created a new text: the story of a protagonist called 'Toge'; his name is derived from the word 'together' and 'altogether' in Mallock's novel, just as the book's title "A Humument" is derived from "A Human Document". Phillips, as it should be stressed, created a new text by his interventions, although his text is evidently determined by the text in "A Human Document". In a way, Phillips takes the term "palimpsest" literally, as it was used metaphorically by Gérard Genette and many followers in order to model inter-textual relations. Thus, "A Humument" may be regarded as a kind of material metaphor of intertextuality: the dependence of one text on another is visualized in a way that appears as programmatical as a schoolbook example. With regard to the relationship between the visible and the invisible, the relation between Mallock's text and Phillips's text is somehow ambiguous: On the one hand, the hypertext (in the sense Genette attributed to this term) is created by a process of invisibilisation of the hypotext, on the other hand, relics of the hypotext are obviously highlighted by the creation of the hypertext—and, thus, are more clearly visible than ever before. (And who, by the way, would read Mallock's novel today, if Phillips had not submitted it to an estrangement process?) Regarded as a metaphor for palimpsest-like intertextuality, "A Humument" points to the two complementary aspects of hypertextual relations: It is the absence of the former text that gives way to the newer one, but in a process of memorizing, the old text may resurrect. In a way, the older text is never really 'absent', it is just 'covered'—as Philipps's "Humument" shows quite concretely. The book is a metaphor mirroring reading processes (but maybe other metaphorical significations might be revealed as well). To 'read' a book means, to experience both something visible and something invisible, something comprehensible and something hidden, and, moreover, the meaning of what we see and 'understand' is always determined by what is beyond our sight, physically as well as intellectually.

(b) Konrad Balder Schäuffelen's book art-piece "Haus der Bienenkönigin" (1973) consists of a fragmented text which is not presented on flat paper sheets but in the form of paper rolls that were inserted into a box and can be taken out by using a forceps: The text used for this piece of art was Jean-Paul Sartre's autobiographical narrative "Les mots"; the quotations, cut out of their original context, appear as aphoristic and have, thus, changed their quality as texts (Adler, Ernst 1988: 304–305). In other similar art objects, as for instance "Deus ex skatola", Schäuffelen also used literary texts in order to 'materialize' them. There are different aspects from which these objects can be interpreted metaphorically. "Deus ex skatola" echoes the concept of a "deus ex machina" by altering it: it is the box ("skatola") from which surprises emerge—selected by chance. "Haus der Bienenkönigin" (The queen bee's house) refers to the art of collecting and transforming the collected matter into another substance. While Saporta and Filliou

used quite neutral titles that refer to the structure of their artworks, respectively to the use one can make of them, Schäuffelen gives his object an ironical note by using a modified quotation as paratext. This example therefore sensitizes for the different functions paratexts can have when they accompany unconventionally structured books. Paratexts at any rate are important guidelines for interpretation; they propose reception modes, open perspectives, channel attention. Prologues and epilogues, instructions and guidelines for the book's use, but also titles play a major role for the reception process. And they are of crucial influence on the metaphorical potentials of the books' bodies.[11]

(c) Jonathan Safran Foer's "Tree of Codes" (2010)[12] is another quite unconventional book. The pages of the material book, the 'book body', have been cut, and there are many rectangular holes within the pages. The perforated pages overlap, so that below the single paper sheet the reader does not only see the following page but sometimes quite a number of pages. There are always several holes in the paper sheets, opening up several 'windows' to the following parts of the book, and when these windows are closed behind the reader, new windows open up. It is not easy to handle the book, as the pages resist to being turned easily. And of course, it is even more difficult to 'read' the book. The text extended in front of the reader's eyes always consists of heterogeneous particles: of the fragmented text on the side at the surface of the book, and of fragmented text elements from the pages under this surface page. Often these elements consist of single words or sentence fragments, which now interfere with the fragmented texts of other pages. Like Tom Philipps, Foer has used a former book containing a printed text as the basis of his artwork which here consisted in a process of sculpturing instead of painting. And like Philipps, he has created a new text that can be read as an autonomous text, at least in principle. The working technique as such already has a metaphorical dimension: whereas Phillips covered large parts of the former text by layers of colour, thus detracting them from sight but not literally extinguishing them, Foer's book is a materialized metaphor of at least partial extinction: the pieces of paper cut off are definitively lost for the reader—at least for the reader of this one book, as we should add—because Foer's construction at least offers the possibility of reading the original book that was submitted to excision. The metaphorical dimension of "Tree of Codes" is substantially based on the specific book that was used. This book's title—"Street of Crocodiles"—is related to Foer's book title in the same way as "A Humument" to "A human document"; it is again a proper subset: "sTREEt OF CrocODilES". "Street of Crocodiles" is the title of a collection of short stories by the Galician Jewish author Bruno Schulz who died

11 Sometimes, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, in the era of reception-theory and reader-emancipation, paratexts of unconventional books affirmed central theoretical concepts in a way that was not suspicious of irony. Schäuffelen's example illustrates the potential of paratexts to create another dimension of ambiguity by polyvalent paratexts.

12 See also T. G. Rapatzikou's contribution to this volume.

in the Holocaust; Schulz's texts are originally written in Polish and were translated into an English version used by Foer. These short stories collected in the book that was submitted to metamorphosis by excision, depict the lost Jewish culture of Eastern Europe, the world of the old Stetl and its inhabitants. In his epilogue, Foer explains that by his cutting-out-technique he intended to visualize extinction processes in another sense. However, there is a metaphorical relation between the fragmented book that resists simple reading and, nevertheless, can be read as a collection of fragments—and the Galician Jewish culture which is the subject of Schulz's narratives. Galician Jewish culture as a whole is lost, just like the original book is destroyed. But the holes in the book speak their own language—the language of the absent. Foer's afterword stresses the metaphoric dimension of his 'bookwork' and leads the reader in a certain direction.[13] Ólafur Elíasson who has contributed to the paratext of "Tree of Codes" (he is quoted on the book's back cover) suggests other, although not rivalling, metaphorical readings. He associates the reader's way through the book with a walk through a city—and he speaks about the book's body.[14]

(4) 'Destroyed' and 'invisible books'. Erased texts, radically altered and silent books

(a) Marcel Broodthaers has created another version of Mallarmé's poem "Un coup de dés" by covering the words on Mallarmé's poem with black bars. The structure of the composition was preserved, the text itself, however, was rendered illegible. Evidently, Broodthaers's piece of art refers to an invisible text. (The Broodthaers project exists, by the way, in different variations.) Jacques Rancière has comment-

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13 "For years I had wanted to create a die-cut book by erasure, a book whose meaning was exhumed from another book. I had thought of trying the technique with the dictionary, the encyclopdia, the phone-book, various works of fiction and non-fiction, and with my own novels. But any of those options would have merely spoken to the process. The book would have been an exercise. I was in search of a text whose erasure would somehow be a continuation of its creation. *The Street of Crocodiles* is often my answer to the impossible-to-answer question: What is your favourite book? And yet, it took me a year to recognize it as the text I'd been looking for. […]." (Foer 2010: 138)

14 "You can fly over a city or walk through it: your movement influences what you see and how. Your body cannot help but chart the shape of a building, the time it will take to reach the other side of the intersection, spaces and gaps. It generates a personal narrative, entangled in the endless stories of the city. This also happens in books, although we rarely think about it. If the reader's movement is made explicit from one word to the next, from page to page, from a while ago to two minutes from now, time assumes a key role in our reading experience. The gaps in-between words and pages—all of the book that isn't black ink—resonate. This is precisely what happens in *Tree of Codes*, an extraordinary journey that activates the layers of time and space involved in the handling of a book and its heap of words. Jonathan Safran Foer deftly deploys sculptural means to craft a truly compelling story. In our world of screens, he welds narrative, materiality, and our reading experience into a book that remembers it actually has a body." (Elíasson quoted in Foer 2010: back cover)

ed on this work in a way that stresses its metaphorical status: he regards it as a metaphor for the distance between word and image—and as a negation of the leading ideas of Mallarmé who had intended to synthesise words, images and ideas.

> "The heterogeneity of signs and forms must be reintroduced to the surface. […] Mallarmé's 'modern' project must in some sense be approached from the other side. […] The plastification of Mallarmé's *Coup de dés* is presented by Broodthaers as an 'image' of the poem. We must understand this word in its full meaning. Broodthaers returns Mallarmé to the reign of the image. In a reversal of Mallarmé's logic, he makes the image an instrument of reflection, fit for rethinking the encounter between signs, forms, objects and acts […]. The operation which rendered the 'spatial' Mallarmean poem illegible is indeed in accordance with a practice of word and image which emphasises the distance between them. There is no more an alphabet of the stars […]." (Rancière 2008: 208)

According to Rancière's reading, Mallarmé's book represented the concept of a congruency between the verbal and the non-verbal, which, in last consequence, made the world itself readable. Broodthaers's elimination of Mallarmé's readable text, however, states that the opposite is the case: The book has become a metonymy of an unreadable world.

(b) Gérard Wajcman's book "L'interdit" (1986), subtitled as 'a novel' ("roman") is a conventional book compared to those books which consist of loose chapters or single pages in boxes. However, most of its pages are designed in an extraordinary way: they contain only footnotes, while the main text is absent. Everything except for the footnotes has, as it seems, been consequently erased on these pages. Those parts which can be read—the footnotes—in their quality as footnotes implicitly refer to an invisible text. It is, however, difficult to judge whether this text was written. The pages' layout as such, however, at least suggest that the lacking text has 'existed' as something that might have been placed on these pages—as the framework is present, only its content is absent. Again, the erasure of parts of a text (in this case: an imaginary text) is meant to represent metaphorically another extinction process: Wajcman's book refers to the Shoah. The white pages are conceived as indications to the impossibility to 'tell' about the Shoah, to 'represent it by positive signs'. What cannot be said should be made sensible by the book's appearance. Only the last pages contain a text which can be read as the written voice of an autofictional narrator. At the end of the narrator's discourse, the keyword 'silence' dominates his reflections:

> "S'il arrive que je me taise définitivement, cela ne signifiera pas que je me suis éloigné; seulement que je n'ai plus de place. Je pourrais aussi penser qu'ainsi je rejoindrai un autre lieu, que j'accéderai à une autre existence. Dans le passé. Je retrouverai une autre

> langue […]. Le silence prononce mon absence, il me donne une place, dans le temps. Je n'y ferai plus obstacle." (Wajcman 1986: 266–267)

(c) One might regard the series of books published by Keri Smith as the playful counterpart of ›serious‹ projects like Wajcman's and Johnson's. All of them follow a common (and obviously popular) basic concept: Reading the instructions given by the respective book itself, the reader is supposed to treat it as a material object and submit it to different, sometimes radical alterations—even to destructive practices. There are, however, also instructions advising us to use the book as a notebook, as a medium of communication, as a stimulus to write personal texts or to draw. The books' readers, thus, are invited to regard the books as pieces of matter, to read and even write into them at the same time. Sometimes the point of this double program seems to lie in the difficulties arising from the combination of both strategies of regarding a book. There is a paradoxical trait in Keri Smith's book projects, as the books themselves invite the reader to destroy parts of them and to make their messages illegible. One of them refers already by its title—"This is not a book" (2009)—to this inclination toward paradoxy. The back cover informs the user of this book about its central idea:

> "This object does not exist without you. You will determine the content and the final product. All will be shaped by your imagination. You must go out into the world in order to bring it to life and complete the assignments.
> If it is not a book, then what exactly is it? The answer is up to you." (Smith 2009: Back Cover)[15]

Keri Smith has designed several other books that invite their readers to treat and alter them physically, as for instance "Finish This Book" (2011).[16] Again, these experiments make clear that practices of treating books as matter (up to partial destruction) are connected with symbolic meanings. And again there is a wide range of possible meanings, starting with practices of 'renaturalizing' the book as an artifice and ending with acts of brutal violence. Just a few examples for Keri Smith's instructions, quoted from "This is not a Book":

> "This is an inconvenience. Take <u>This is not a book</u> everywhere you go for one week. You must place it in full view at all times." (2009: 1)

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15 At the end of the book itself, there is a list of suggestions referring to the question what kind of thing this book could be: "A puppet, a protest, a revolution, a form of technology, an answer to a question, a debate, a microcosm, a quiz, a science experiment, a command, a diversion, a red herring, an artifice, a shift in perception […]." Again, the author adds an invitation addressed to the reader: "Come up with your own versions of what they [the things 'This is not a book' could be] might look like". (Smith 2009: 220)

16 In this book, Smith also uses a quotation from Italo Calvino's novel "Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore".

> "This is a recording device. Record the events of your day in point form here:" / "Make a mark for every time you enter a room." (2009: 2–3)

> "This is a Secret Agent.* Instructions: Give This is not a book some kind of disguise to hide its identity. / *Dispose of this note after reading." (2009: 5)

> "This is a transformation. Come up with a way to permanently alter this page. And change it into something completely different." (2009: 21)

> "This is a disappearance. / 1. Draw or write something here. / 2. erase it somehow (e.g., pencil & eraser, water-soluble ink, sandpaper)." (2009: 23)

> "This is a material. Conduct some experiments to uncover the properties of this page (paper). Make a list and test all of the things you can do to it. What happens when you add things (substances) to it?" (2009: 128)

A few summarizing remarks: At first sight, one might be inclined to say that the material book—the book's 'body'—in many cases does not support readability, as soon as it is altered, submitted to estrangement effects, cut into slices, painted, stained, torn apart from its binding, etc. However, at a closer look one realizes that distinctions have to be made here. Often it is the book's altered body that provides for a special kind of readability referring to a dimension of metaphors, metonymic relations and significations connected with the book's materials and structure. In these cases, the invisible texts in which those metaphors have been coined are implicitly 'surrounding' the book object. Whether they are readable in a conventional sense or not, unconventionally designed books expose their own materiality—their corporeality, their 'bookness' as 'bodiness'. And some of these unconventional books emphatically stress the difference between visibility and legibility—by implicitly referring to invisible books: as, for instance to lost or destroyed books, but also to possible future books, to alternative books, both on the level of structure and of content. In many cases the paratexts are of constitutive significance for the meaning and the metaphorical status of books' bodies—starting with their titles. So, for instance, paratexts underline, or even create, the tension between legible and illegible text, and, moreover, between the visible and the 'invisible' parts of the book.

Generally, the production as well as the reception of books whose bodies are shaped in an unconventional way is strongly influenced by metaphors. They often can be regarded as metaphorical objects themselves. Some books cannot be read in a conventional sense. However—and especially in such cases—, there is a meaning connected to the book's material appearance, for instance the idea of illegibility, of mute bodies, of silence.

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IMMATERIALITY OF THE WORK *VS.* MATERIALITY OF THE BODY?

DIGITAL LITERATURE

Isabelle Krzywkowski

ABSTRACT *This article shows how digital literature thinks about and works with the body of the reader in a time when the dominating role of the immaterial is more and more questioned. Digital texts play with their immateriality and their seemingly purely intellectual perception by making it their subject and pointing to their material environment, including the reader's body. Works by Serge Bouchardon, Shelley Jackson, Annie Abrahams and others show that it has become impossible to separate between the 'traditional' and the 'technological' reading experience insofar as through them, we experience not only the machine and/or our body, but both—while they are inseparably joined in a network or device out of which new possibilities of use and experience arise.*

KEYWORDS *Materiality, Immateriality, Digital Literature, Textuality, Materialisation, Body, Gesture, Serge Bouchardon, Shelley Jackson, Annie Abrahams.*

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The *Les Immatériaux*[1] exhibition in 1985 is still a landmark event, both for the contemporary research around new media art that it highlighted and for the conceptual significance that it had. This 'immaterial' approach to the digital arts may seem obvious: digital literature is *immaterial* since the way in which it is produced relies essentially on coding. However, there is little doubt that this *dematerialisation* of data[2] plays a less important role in the user's consciousness than their perception of the transience of the medium—which soon becomes useless (*i. e.* damaged or outmoded) or is entirely virtual (the *cloud*)—and the fragility of the data stored on it. This ephemeral nature, albeit it is being increasingly mastered, is a central element of the digital imaginary. It is also undoubtedly the most harrowing element for modern societies, who have constructed their histories upon the traces that have been left behind. It is a fact that there is no guarantee digital technology will leave any trace. This is particularly true for books and literature: not only is there the risk that a work may disappear through a technological fault, but there may also very often be no record of its genesis. This phenomenon—combatted in part by software with reviewing functionalities or simply by our habit of saving successive versions—is not always seen as a negative and often induces new writing habits. For John Cage, for example, using a computer to write

> does completely change your mind. When you write a text as I used to write with all the crossings out and everything, you have a picture of the past along with the present and you develop a maze. With the word processor you have only the present so that you're really in a new mental land[3].

The loss of the manuscript is nevertheless often likened to a form of dematerialisation. With its loss, not only does the record of an evolving thought disappear (rough drafts, crossings out), but so also does the rhythm of a gesture, of the writing body. We are talking about the disappearance of writing [*inscription*], that is to say, of the materiality and action on the material: 'digital literature implies the disappearance of any trace left behind' [*la littérature numérique signifie la disparition de la trace*] (Malbreil 2006: 169).

This awareness of dematerialisation also stems from the virtual experience. It is, of course, all about the ability to create other worlds: games and digital fiction simulate an environment, whether real or imaginary, in interaction with human

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1 The *Les Immatériaux* exhibition ran from 28 March to 15 July 1985 at the Pompidou Centre in Paris under the direction of Thierry Chaput and Jean-François Lyotard.

2 It should be noted that the human and social sciences are starting to take an interest in the ecological cost of digital technology, highlighting the material pollution of a technology that is ostensibly immaterial. See, for example, the French publication *Les Impacts écologiques des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication* (2012).

3 John Cage (1985) in an interview with Deborah Campana, cited by Kostelanetz (2003). Xavier Malbreil also notes, in "Écrire sur un clavier est une contrainte" (2006), how these practices put the text 'at a distance', creating an effect of strangeness.

beings, interweaving the virtual with reality. However, the virtual nature of the work, which only materialises when actualised by the machine, also has to be taken into account. Some artists highlight this process, most notably by displaying the metamorphic and 'potential'[4] nature of the work through an exploration of permutations, variations or automatic random generation methods, which regenerate every time the programme or machine is started up.

Nevertheless, the central role of 'the immaterial' is now increasingly being called into question, both by theorists (who most notably draw on Espen Aarseth's ergodic theory [1997], which emphasises the materiality of cybertext) and by artists. The issues focused on in the *BOOK—MATERIAL—TEXT* workshop provide an opportunity to show, alongside the question of the dematerialisation of the book and text, that calling this analysis into question results, in particular, in a 'return' of the material or, in this case, the body. Whether it is threatened with a 'loss of material' or, on the contrary, summoned to offset 'the immateriality' of the digital work, this 'return of the body' prompts the hypothesis that, in the words of Jean-Pierre Bobillot, 'the more we are surrounded by the virtual, the greater our need for real presence becomes' [*plus il y a du virtuel, plus il faut de la présence réelle*] (Bobillot 2008).

NEW MODES OF MATERIALISATION

It should be noted from the outset that this 'immaterial' approach to the digital work has to be qualified. First of all, it is relative to what is felt in the experience. The reader has, for example, a strong awareness of the materiality of the machine. Independently even of the new writing or reading constraints, the computer is not perceived as being less material than the book, particularly since the reader rarely seems to be aware of the programme that supports the 'material' text they are reading. The screen can therefore be considered the new materiality of the digital work, where each production is a materialisation. Likewise, the reader is aware of belonging to a 'network', which, in order to be immaterial, is never experienced as virtual.

Moreover, as Alexandra Saemmer highlighted, the digital work is represented by a 'textual material' [*matière textuelle*] (Saemmer 2007). It is worth mentioning the close link that exists between visual poetry, particularly concrete poetry, and animated poetry. While the written work is dematerialised, the writing is able to choose the 'matteric' way—plays on letters, words, typography, spatialisation—as introduced by the historical avant-garde. In the digital work, however, the 'material' is also expressed through the possibility, both for the writer and sometimes

4 This term is used most notably by a group called Oulipo (*Ouvroir de littérature potentielle* – Potential Literature Workshop) and is defined by Raymond Queneau in "Littérature potentielle" [1964].

also for the reader, of intervening in the text. Serge Bouchardon, who also takes an opposing view to the approaches that prevailed in the second half of the 20th Century, even suggests talking about 'the aesthetics of materiality' (Bouchardon 2008b). He differentiates between the materiality of the text (which responds to the reader's actions), the materiality of the interface (what he calls 'material figures', for example, the 'windows') and the materiality of the medium (some authors play with this, for example Annie Abrahams, when she asks readers to turn their computer screens off and then on again so that they see their own reflections in the screen) (Bouchardon 2009: 224 sq.).

Other characteristics reinforce this 'textual material' approach to digital literature. The process of updating, for example, also reiterates the question of materiality. Ambroise Barras showed that the principle of 'quantity', used by Walter Benjamin to criticise 'technical reproducibility' ('quantity has been transmuted into quality' [Benjamin 1935/1936, XV]), has been incorporated by digital artists (Barras 1997). It could also be said that the new place of temporality in a work turns it into a *phenomenon* (this is conveyed in the name of the group *Transitoire observable*[5]). The digital text is subject to motion and transformation. It is to be seen and 'observed' as much as (and sometimes more than) it is to be read. The materiality of the digital text stems from its dynamic character, and this is the notion that is at the heart of Saemmer's and Bouchardon's studies.

The immateriality of the digital work seems therefore to speak more to the imagination than to pertain to a digital literature experience. This hypothesis will be addressed by examining the relationship between this immateriality, real or constructed, and the body. To what extent does the body respond to immateriality? To what extent does immateriality affect the body?

THE BODY AS A THEME

The first thing to note is that many works take the body as a subject. A number of titles testify to this, including *Future Body* by Tina LaPorta in 1999, *Possible Bodies: ce que peut un corps* by Grégory Chatonsky in 2002 and *My Google Body* by Gérard Dalmon in 2003. They conjure up a body *to be*, a changing one, which is transformed by its relationship to its technological environment. For many artists, this confrontation with technology effects a disincarnation in the sense that thought and action become separated from the body. Naturally, this is an impression that becomes stronger as awareness of virtuality and distance increases. It is possible, for example, to experience a far-off space without ever leaving our armchairs (using *Google Maps* images to journey, for instance) or a three-dimensional

5 *Transitoire observable* [Observable Transient] is the name of a group of French digital artists, founded in 2003 by Philippe Bootz, Alexandre Gherban and Tibor Papp: http://transitoireobs.free.fr/to/.

space that does not even exist. We have the ability to perceive without engaging our bodies. Virtual worlds may, according to Friedrich W. Block, produce 'a wholly spiritualised recipient' [*der völlig vergeistigte Rezipient*] (Block 1998, 2000: 84) – a participant confined to their intellect. It should be noted, however, that this breakdown between perception and sensation is not just a characteristic of digital technology, but of distance communication technologies more generally. Photography, cinema and particularly voice technologies were the initiators of this experience, which Kafka said, in a letter to Milena in March 1922, resulted in the disappearance of the 'ghostliness' between human beings. Tina LaPorta explains, for example, that *Future Body* was

> a web specific work which explores the disembodied and dislocated nature of on-line subjectivity […] the separation of the corporeal world implied by the use of telecommunications technology (LaPorta 1999: 224)

The idea that technology constitutes a threat to the integrity of the living is not a new one. The figure of the automaton in fiction introduced us to the harrowing separation of the soul and the body. However, the loss of unity now affects the body itself. Manipulated and broken up, it is like Frankenstein's creature, which continues to haunt many contemporary works (*Patchwork Girl* by Shelley Jackson[6] or *F. aime F.* by Gilles Dumoulin). Sometimes, it runs counter to this figure, since the body is now disjointed and composed of interchangeable parts. In Gérard Dalmon's *My Google Body* (2003), where a generator is constantly replacing some body part or other with images (including metaphors) extracted in real time from *Google*, we notice the transition from a patchwork or puzzle, which ends up forming a whole, to the *disjecta membra* of a figure that is perpetually evolving, (de)formed by the flow of images that continuously pass over it. The body, seized by immateriality, simultaneously loses its substance and power.[7]

Conversely, the return of the body can be organised around a sensuous (and sometimes sensual) paradoxical experience, which the following titles also clearly show: *Touch me / Don't touch me* by Annie Abrahams (2003), *Touch/Toucher* (2009) or *Loss of Grasp / Déprise* (2010) by Serge Bouchardon, *The Worldgenerator/The Engine of Desire* by Bill Seaman and Gideon May (1996–) and *The Thoughtbody Environment* by Bill Seaman (2005). Various issues are concealed behind these titles. In some works, the appeal to the senses seems to have to show, ironically, how illusory human relationships that have been turned into media events by the

6 This work has been analysed by George P. Landow (1997) and Samuel Archibald (2009), among others.

7 This is similar to postmodern reading, which focuses on the dissolution of identity, accelerated by digital technology. George Landow speaks, for example, (in a chapter about 'Reconfiguring the Author', but generalisable to other matters) of the 'Erosion of the Self' [Landow 1992, 1997: 90].

machine are. Others, in contrast, use this experience with the aim of broadening people's perceptions. In both cases, however, the real body is engaged, aroused by several perceptions at once (this is the principle of multimedia works), but also prompted to manipulate the machine or to take a stroll alongside/inside it. In this case, the real body confers a materiality on the work, not only because it allows it to be produced, but also because it becomes one of the materials within it and, according to Friedrich W. Block, one of the 'signifiers' (Block 1998, 2000: 81). Mario Costa sees in this the main illusion associated with 'neotechnology', which 'seems to extend the body but in reality […] renders it increasingly external to itself and increasingly just one object among many' [translated from the French] (Costa 2003: 117 and 123).

A PHYSICAL READING

A second approach focuses on the place of the body in the reading activity. Far from being disembodied, the reader of a digital work is often required to participate physically (characteristic of hypermedias, in particular). There is no doubt that digital literature requires a greater physical presence than any other form of reading. This gives rise, incidentally, to a practical difficulty: the body effectively makes a return, insofar as it manifests itself through tiredness or pain, and tests its relationship to the machine under constraint.

In the same vein, we should mention interactivity, which is undoubtedly the most frequently discussed of digital experiences and the one that is most readily associated with computers. Whether real (technical) or illusory (a process), interactivity involves a physical intervention in the reading, which Serge Bouchardon divides into three modes: navigation, manipulation and the introduction of data (Bouchardon 2008-1 and 2009: 146). This type of work, designed to be manipulated (it 'expects an action from the reader', says Bouchardon, 2009: 172), imposes a truly 'incarnate' reading. Neologisms, in the form of blends, have emerged to account for this new method of intervention, such as wreader in English and *écrilecteur* or *lectacteur* in French.

More generally, many authors attempt to recreate a 'materiality' from the reading activity by forcing the reader, through renewed, although sometimes uncomfortable, reading situations, to become aware of their activity. This is what Annie Abrahams does with great humour in *Separation/Séparation* (2001–2003), by regularly interrupting her reader with signs explaining how to read or how to relax. This approach often consists in attempting to extend the methods of interaction beyond just one click by imposing what Carrie Noland calls 'digital gestures' (Noland n.d.). Philippe Bootz and Serge Bouchardon, for example, both lead the reader into a sensuous experience, where the gesture of reading becomes a caress. Natalie Bookchin and Jason Nelson seek out new gestures from games. Jeffrey

Shaw and Dirk Groeneveld, Eduardo Kac and Jean-Pierre Balpe explore modes of spatialisation in the reading activity. This includes the possibility of moving around the work to make sense of its variations, as with Kac's or Richard Kostelanetz's holopoetry, which, according to Jacques Donguy, allows a 'spatial experience of language' (Donguy 2007: 300). Another example is the route, whether virtual or real, through a space that is saturated with text (Shaw and Groeneveld; Balpe). Confronted with a text conceived as 'plastic' (Saemmer 2007: 42), the reader is thus truly encouraged to read with their body. In a chapter justifiably entitled 'Incarnation' [*Verkörperung*], Friedrich W. Block speaks of 'shifting syntax' [*Syntax des Changierens*] (Block 1998, 2000: 82) and notes in this respect that 'the textual space is not just inhabited; through the user's activity, it is also incarnate' [*Der Textraum wird nicht nur belebt, sondern durch die Aktivität der Benutzer auch beleibt.*] (Block 1998, 2000: 81).

A REFLECTION ON IMMERSION

At least a third approach draws on cognition and immersion theories. The digital tool, in its multimedia dimension, allows us to construct a virtual space composed of texts, images and noises in which the body is actively engaged, even in situations where it is apparently passive. The appeal to several senses at once is not a feature that is specific to digital technology. However, the multimedia device through which the boundary between different modes of expression becomes extremely unstable has the ability to transform the spectator into a 'spect-actor'. It creates a synthetic, mediologic complex, which Dick Higgins, in 1966, suggested calling 'intermedia' (to distinguish it from multimedia, which juxtapose one another).

Some authors pursue this work on perceptions through 'live actions'[8] by offering a physical experience of walking around or of immersion. This is what was proposed, for example, in Jeremy Hight, Jeff Knowlton and Naomi Spellmann's 2002 *34 North 118 West*, where participants were able to hear stories about different locations in Los Angeles as a GPS system guided them towards the spot. Likewise, Jean-Pierre Balpe's 2005 *Fiction d'Issy* was an interactive, generative story, played out in urban space using text messages, electronic signs in the town and website displays. In 2002, Balpe, Jacobo Baboni Schiligi and Miguel Chevalier developed *MeTapolis*, an interactive, generative virtual reality installation, where the 'reader' was immersed in a 300 square metre visual, acoustic space (two- and three-dimensional images, spatialised sound), which he or she was encouraged to move into. Bill Seaman also produced works where 'meaning is experienced through sensual interaction in a virtual environment' (Seaman 2004: 237), in the

8 Like the 'live action role playing game' (or LARP), where players physically take on a character.

same way that it is in a real environment. Defending the idea that our thoughts are influenced by our perceptions, he sought, with *The Thoughtbody Environment* (2005), for example, to make us feel the unity of the body and spirit. For others, these immersion processes aim to give us an awareness of the incorporation of the being in space (this is the concept of the 'Embodied Being' put forward by Char Davies in *Osmose* in 1995). While space is presented for us to make sense of it through an experience requiring the whole body (gestures, movements, perceptions, sensations), it also therefore simultaneously becomes an interface.

We are prompted to 'gesticulate', move around and immerse ourselves. While it is obviously paradoxical—but interesting from the imaginary point of view—to create such a sensuous relationship with a machine, the call for a 'sensual experimentation' (Saemmer 2007: 58) undoubtedly brings a materiality to the reading activity, which then truly becomes an experience, an act that is like a performance.

TOWARDS AN 'ENHANCED' BODY?

If the 'return of the body' can express the anxiety that comes from the awareness of immateriality, conveyed most notably by the persistence of the imaginary of fragmentation, another approach is therefore to focus on digital intermediality and, to a lesser extent, on interactivity in order to develop the interaction of the body, the spirit and their environment.

The reflection required to extend the act of reading and, more broadly, the modes of producing meaning is one of the manifestations of this 'new alliance'. The desire to give the reader an awareness of the reading (or perception) process to prevent them from being a simple 'consumer' is certainly one of the characteristics of the experimental approach generally. However, the aim here is less to make the reader aware of the language or ideology underpinning the literature than to lead them into a construction that requires total participation, both intellectual and sensory.[9] This is what Bill Seaman called 'Recombinant Poetics' (Seaman[10] 2004: 231), 'a form of active looking/listening/interacting/understanding' (Seaman 2004: 229) within an evolving technological environment:

> The computer facilitates […] new forms of 'inscription'. It enables us to explore an extended multi-dimensional space, a virtual space that includes a collection of varying

9 It should be noted, however, that this type of experimentation seems to accompany any reflection on the medium. Hence, 'tactilism' was one of the avenues explored by Marinetti as a way of escaping from the book. In the same vein, Raoul Hausmann defined 'optophoneticism' as 'the cybernetics between vision and hearing', which engages the whole body.

10 This was also the title of Seaman's thesis: 'Recombinant Poetics: Emergent Meaning as Examined and Explored Within a Specific Generative Virtual Environment' (1999).

> media-elements. The 'performative' nature of this environment enables the construction of emergent meaning, where poetic construction is performed. (Seaman 2004: 231 and 233)

The aim here is no longer just to use action to help us understand the work or the artistic process, but to defend a cognitive approach where the intellect and our perceptions are jointly summoned to construct meaning or, rather, to make it 'emerge'. It will be clear that this involves a radical change in the way in which the reader is conceived. They no longer have to strive towards being the 'ideal reader', but must instead physically have an effect on the work: 'Your gestures make my words meaningful', said Serge Bouchardon in *Mes Mots/My Words* (2008).

All of these works continue, therefore, to question the relationships between human beings and the machine. For a number of artists, it is a matter of exploring and constructing new relational modes, where the computer is conceived as an 'enhancement', extension or supplement of the body. Espen Aarseth referred, in 1997, to the figure of the cyborg when describing the new relationship between the reader and the text. For the Australian artist Stelarc, 'the human body is somewhat obselete' (Stelarc 1995) and, according to Eric Sadin, the body is not a medium, but an interface that incorporates the technology to achieve an 'extended corporeality' [*corporéïté étendue*] (Sadin 2011: 14 and 39). Hence, technology allows us to reveal or improve the skills that our bodies ignore or underutilise.

Conversely, some artists consider the body to be the medium and the computer to be 'just one meaning-force-exchange mechanism in the landscape of living exchange' (Seaman 2004: 229). For Annie Abrahams, 'our body is the surface through which the machine has access to reality[11]' [*notre corps est la surface par laquelle la machine a accès au réel*] (Abrahams *et al.* 2008). This is very similar to the remark made by Jay David Bolter, who said that 'The immediate perception of the world is not open to the computer' (Bolter 1991: 224[12]). Human beings will, therefore, come to compensate the computer's shortcoming. Abrahams expressed this notion humorously when she wrote, 'Human beings are the sexual organs of the machine' [*Les êtres humains sont les organes sexuelles [sic] de la machine*] (Abrahams *et al.* 2008).

We might therefore subscribe to Mario Costa's explanation:

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11 Abrahams explains that she is quoting Ollivier Dyens *in* 'The Emotion of Cyberspace: Art and Cyber-ecology', Leonardo, Vol. 27, no.4 (1994), p. 327–334: "our body is the screen (the signifying surface) by which the machine has access to reality" (p. 328). See: http://www.bram.org/txt/indexuqam.html.

12 However, he saw in this shortcoming that 'The digital computer reconfirms the dichotomy between perception and semiosis as two aspects of mind, and it comes down firmly on the side of semiosis' (Bolter 1991: 224).

> Technology has transformed the notion of the body. What was once considered 'already given' and 'irreplaceably-given' has become just one more territory over which technology exerts its power. Technology becomes more and more internalised while the body becomes increasingly externalised. […] It is not just the notion of the body that technology changes, however, it changes the whole range of human experience […]. Neotechnology appears to 'extend' the body, but in reality it renders it increasingly external to itself and increasingly just one object among many. [translated from the French] (Costa 2002, 2003: 117 and 123)

We would want to qualify the pessimistic note that it ends on, however. For Friedrich W. Block, on the other hand, this evolution leads to a distancing effect, which clearly enables the 'reincarnation' [*Reinkarnation*] of the subject that postmodernity had made disappear (Block 1998: 86). Finally, the response from some of the works mentioned above is different again: the return of the 'material' seems to want to express the belief that the body is never purely 'organic' or isolated, but that it is part of a device (this is one of the aspects, for example, that Donna Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto' highlights) from which new representations and uses emerge.

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JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER'S *TREE OF CODES*: BOOK DESIGN AND DIGITAL SCULPTURING

Tatiani G. Rapatzikou

ABSTRACT *The intricate literary experiment* Tree of Codes*, in which American author Jonathan Safran Foer reworks a story originally written by Jewish-Polish writer Bruno Schulz, enforces a haptic as well as textual experience of the destruction caused during the Shoah. At the same time, it re-evaluates processes of writing, book-making, and reading, showing the interactive traits and possibilities of the 'classic' material book as it inserts itself in a medial context determined by digital and computational techniques.*

KEYWORDS *Book Design, Jonathan Safran Foer, Bruno Schulz, Materiality, Mediality, Sculpture.*

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Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010) is a book that stands in-between past and future book-making practices and literary traditions. Based on Bruno Schulz's collections of stories *The Street of Crocodiles* (1934), Foer's book takes book-making as well as the writing and reading of stories to a different level due

to the use of the die-cutting technique.[1] The print and digital design employed here reveals an intricate patterning of both language and the book form, which has led to a far more in-depth appreciation of the experience conveyed with matter and words constructively brought together for the creation of an enhanced textual as well as bookish experience. It is not the amount of text that has been transferred from Schulz's short story collection to Foer's work that matters here; the intricate relationships that are established in *Tree of Codes* between materials, typography, language, media and readers lead to a reconsideration of the printing practices employed when it comes to the publication of fiction works in addition to a re-appreciation of the literary experience itself.

With *Tree of Codes* being the outcome of a series of experimentations with the die-cutting technique, one comes to realize the amount of craftsmanship, both digital and material, that goes into the molding of stories, even though the content of the stories narrated here derives partially from Schulz's pre-existing narrative work that Foer has modified, exhumed or erased in his recent publication.[2] Michel Faber, the book reviewer for *The Guardian Online* describes *Tree of Codes* as an "*objet d'art*, composed substantially of empty spaces, […] a conceptual must-have" (italics in original), while Steven Heller from *New York Times Online* talks about "a text of cutout pages, with text peeking through windows as the tale unfolds." Certainly, the question that emerges here has to do with the kind of tale narrated. Could it be that *Tree of Codes* strives towards a multilayering and simultaneously carved-out effect if one considers the preceding text Foer's project draws on, or could it be that *Tree of Codes* tells the story of an enhanced and reconceptualized book form? If we wish to view *Tree of Codes* as an example of bookishness,[3] as this notion derives from Jessica Pressman's argumentation, this

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1 Due to its innovative printing, *Tree of Codes* won in 2011 the prestigious D & AD (Design and Art Direction) award in the Book Award, Book Design category. The whole endeavor is described as follows: "In 'Tree of Codes,' author Jonathan Safran Foer wrote a new narrative by carving it out of an existing book. The design brief was to make the die-cut text obvious, workable and readable, while maintaining an element of surprise to draw in literary, design and art audiences. Sara De Bondt worked closely with Foer to create a book that has the familiarity of a typical paperback, yet allows for a unique, tactile, and almost sculptural reading experience" ("Tree of Codes / D & AD").

2 Jonathan Safran Foer writes in the "Author's Afterword: This Book and the Book": "For years I had wanted to create a die-cut book by erasure, a book whose meaning was exhumed from another book. I had thought of trying the technique with the dictionary, the encyclopedia, the phone book, various works of fiction and non-fiction, and with my own novels. But any of those options would have merely spoken to the process. The book would have been an exercise. I was in search of a text whose erasure would somehow be a continuation of its creation" (138).

3 Jessica Pressman in her article "The Aesthetic of Bookishness in Twenty-First-Century Literature" talks about the "trend in novels published since 2000 […] it is an emergent literary strategy that speaks to our cultural moment. These novels exploit the power of the print page in ways that draw attention to the book as a multimedia format, one informed by and connected to digital technologies" (465).

means that it should be seen as part of an emerging aesthetic that "unites novels that pursue a thematic interest in depicting books as characters and focal points of narrative actions" (466). This brings to mind Ólafur Elíasson's, a Danish-Islandic artist's, comment, as marked on the backside of the *Tree of Codes* book cover, that Foer "deftly deploys sculptural means to craft a truly compelling story. In our world of screens, he welds narrative, materiality, and our reading experience into a book that remembers that it actually has a body." This further intensifies the fact that the remembrance of the material substance of the book is not a mere expression of nostalgia for an endangered material book form, but the remark for an alternative way of narrative interaction and textual navigation enabled by a re-envisioned bookish presence.

In this manner, Foer's book and the story contained in it has been carved out of Schulz's narrative, creating not simply another version of Schulz's stories but a tangible object within which language, working jointly with the die-cut formatting of the pages, reaches another level of physicality and visuality due to the print and digital technologies intervening in its typographical presence. Approaching it as a transmedial object, Foer's book invites readers to re-evaluate the semantic, material and technological significance of the book form not as a mere container of texts but as a generative mechanism that triggers different writing and reading patterns as well as variable textual formations that encourage a much more interactive engagement with the book medium itself. In her article "Old and New Medialities in Foer's *Tree of Codes*," Kiene Brillenburg Wurth says that "*Tree of Codes* sculpts the text by Schulz anew and in doing so expresses something essential about it: in its visual form—at a glance—it expresses themes of timelessness, time, dreaming and remembering that recur persistently in *Street of Crocodiles*" (2011: 4). Consequently, Foer's book is concerned with the activation of a much deeper effect that moves beyond the mere telling or retelling of a story—if we take into consideration Schulz's writings—that draws our attention to the poetic sensation created by the strong imagistic effect of the words used as well as their arrangement on the page due to the holed-out spaces crafted as a result of its die-cut format. This highlights what Steve McCaffery and bpNichol comment on in "The Book as Machine" where they claim that "only in poetry occurs this bridging point […] to a new way of perceiving in which the visuality becomes, not the end product of an interior psychological process, but rather the beginning of a whole *new* method of perception" (2000: 19, italics in original). If we take from *Tree of Codes*, for example, the following words—with the slash indicating the holed-out or die-cut spaces between them—such as, "the garden/ turned/ in its sleep, its/ back rising and falling as it breathed" or "August had expanded into enormous/ tongues of/ greenery" (12), we will notice that our eye does not only rest on the intensified visual or figurative effect that all the words simultaneously create but on the multiple sensations each one of them triggers in conjunction with the material qualities of the book page itself. In this case, perception is guided both

by concepts and matter, as is stimulated by the literary and digitally enhanced functions of language that prompt multiple allusions and connotations as well as multiple contexts of meaning.

Schulz in his essay "The Mythologizing of Reality" (1936), available online, talks about poetry as being "this tendency of the word to return to its nursery, its yearning to revert to its origins, to its verbal homeland," and about the poet as the person who "restores conductivity to words through new short-circuits, which arise out of their fusions. The image is also an offshoot of the original word, the word which was not yet a sign, but a myth, a story, or a meaning." It is this attitude, as it emerges from Schulz's own comments, towards the flexibility and plasticity in addition to the branching out potential of language that Foer attempts to explore in *Tree of Codes*. Besides, Schulz's attention to the poetic quality of words, as this derives from their animating and invigorating energy, finds direct application in the 3-dimensional material and narrative experience *Tree of Codes* spawns. With this work functioning as a semantic, visual and tactile mechanism, it enables readers to immerse into the experience it activates by directing their attention to particular punctuation marks, individual or clusters of words, as for instance in the line "the room grew enormous/ ,filled with whispers,/ a conspiracy of/ winking/ eyes/ opening up among the flowers on the wall" (27).[4] This brings to mind Johanna Drucker's observation that "even in its most conventional format, the book is a sculptural object. It has spatial dimensions, material qualities and a complex structure" (qtd. in Vogler 2000: 457). Equally to the image of a room growing in size or to the eyes opening up like flowers on a wall, as indicated in the example cited above, *Tree of Codes* transforms into a relief mural painting full of figures, shapes and colors conceptually drawing on the ones Schulz would create[5] or even on his illustrative descriptions found in stories such as "The Book"[6] or on the illustrations themselves appearing throughout his short story collection *Sana-*

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4 The slashes are used to indicate spaces or die-cut holes in the original text.

5 "Felix Landau, a Gestapo officer in charge of the Jewish labor force in Drohobycz, became aware of Schulz's talents as a draftsman. He directed Schulz to paint murals on the walls of his child's playroom. […] [A] documentary filmmaker, Benjamin Geissler, […] was able to find someone who had been in [Landau's] house […]. This person led Geissler to what was once Landau's child's room […]. Geissler rubbed at one of the walls with the butt of his palm, and colors surfaced. He rubbed more, and forms were released. He rubbed more, like doing the rubbing of a grave, and could make out figures: fairies and nymphs, mushrooms, animals, and royalty …" (Foer, Foreword vii–viii).

6 "And as the windswept pages were turned, merging colors and shapes, a shiver runs through the columns of the text, freeing from among the letters flocks of swallows and larks. Page after page floated in the air and gently saturated the landscape with brightness. At other times, The Book lay still and the wind opened it softly like the huge cabbage rose; the petals, one by one, eyelid under eyelid, all blind, velvety, and dreamy, slowly disclosed a blue pupil, a colored peacock's heart, or a chattering nest of hummingbirds" (Schulz 2008: 116).

torium Under the Sign of the Hourglass (1937),[7] with each one of them suggesting an alternative narrative thread.

This is the exact feel Foer's book title, *Tree of Codes*, creates while at the same time it highlights a branching out effect of intermediated causalities, juxtapositions and interrelations ignited due to the die-cut design, typography and textured quality of the book.[8] This echoes N. Katherine Hayles' claims in her study *My Mother Was a Computer* where she talks about "systems of representation […] particularly analog and digital" and "interfaces connecting humans with intelligent machines that are our collaborators in making, storing, and transmitting informational process, and objects" (2005: 33). What she proposes here is a completely different way of looking at books, no longer as mere containers of stories, but as nodes of "multiple causalities" (ibid.), with emphasis placed on the multiple loops they generate between the visual, verbal and digital inscribing mechanisms employed, and the readers' own embodied actions alongside the materials used. As a result, the malleable quality of *Tree of Codes* is further enhanced due to its ability to fuse linguistic and conceptual elements with material and physical actions extenuated by its die-cut format that allows for multiple entry and exit textual points to be crafted, as suggested by the variable sized die-cut grids created on each one of the pages.

What this reveals is the construction of an intricate network of various media, material and bodily interventions that bring to mind Jay David Bolter's words in *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* when he talks about hypertext which he describes "as a printed book that the author has attacked with a pair of scissors and into convenient verbal sizes […] but it [does not] simply dissolve into a disordered heap [but] […] a scheme of electronic connections [that] […] indicate relationships among the slips" (2001: 35); this comment could also be pointing towards relationships that can develop among the tools used and the initiator of the action as well, bringing them all together within an extended communication loop. In the case of Foer's book, Bolter's met-

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7 The stories from both Bruno Schulz's collections, *The Street of Crocodiles* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, were published in 1977 by Penguin Books in one volume with the title *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories.* The 2008 edition contains a foreword by Jonathan Safran Foer and an introduction by David A. Goldfarb. Both editions use Celina Wieniewska's translation from Polish into English.

8 It is quite interesting that each one of the words of the book title, *Tree of Codes*, is often found in different formations embedded in the die-cut text itself. This further reinforces the feel of another visual, verbal or even tactile sensation seeping through each one of the pages of Foer's book that calls for a different engagement both with the story and the book itself as a material and generative mechanism, as shown for instance in the lines "/we/ find ourselves/ part of the/ /tree/ /of/ / cod/ /es/" (92); "/our city/ is/ reduced/ to/ the/ /tree/ / of/ /cod/ /es./ "(94); "/the last secret of/ / /the/ tree/ /of/ /cod/ /es/ / /is/ that/ /nothing can ever reach a definite conclusion" (95); "/The/ /tree/ /of/ /cod/ /es was/ /better than a paper imitation" (96).

aphorical scissors change into a die-cut mechanism that intervenes in each one of the book pages morphing them with a different pattern, a process which in the long run can alter the readers' responses to and interactions with the content and the material substance of the book itself. Therefore, the way in which such material is and can be handled will gradually lead both to the enhancement and the alteration of the readers' understanding and appreciation of such printed documents that do not adhere to any of the recognizable conventional book formats employed by the book printing industry as far as the die-cut shape of the pages and the carved text printed on them are concerned.

Based on Alan Liu's argument about the digital text being a deformational document,[9] Hayles in her article "Combining Close and Distant Reading: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* and the Aesthetic of Bookishness" talks about the materially deformed status of the latter work due to its material fragility that sets obstacles to the turning or scanning of its pages along with any further digital or material manipulation (2013: 230). The complex and to an extent paradoxical relationship that grows between the digital and print here on the basis of Liu's and Hayles's argumentations leads us to a different appreciation of the constraints and possibilities each medium generates, which brings to mind Schulz's observation in "The Mythologization of Reality" about the "great and daring short-cuts and approximations" or the "new short-circuits, which arise out of their fusions" that lead to a variable understanding of language and the reality that is crafted out of it. In the case of *Tree of Codes*, the interplays that are triggered between mediums and media of expression activate an ongoing mechanism of interplays and de-formations that leads to even more synthesizing effects that derive from the die-cut typographical interventions that engineer linkages and seams between words, materials and media, an activity further enhanced by the readers' own choices, movements and explorations of and through the text. Consequently, everyone and everything is caught up into a process of *poesis* or making that molds and is molded by thoughts, responses and stimuli that derive from and are fed back into Foer's work every time the readers interact with it.

This practice bridges together a number of techniques, such as book design, printing, digitality and machine coding, that affect the way we think, read, and interact with language by enhancing and animating the connotative meanings of words, their sentential combinations, and the variable contexts and realities they build both literally and figuratively due to the die-cut format of the book. For

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9 Alan Liu in the online version of his article "The End of the End of the Book: Dead Books, Lively Margins, and Social Computing" claims that "[d]ocuments are *deformational forms*. On the one hand, documents *con*form to strict rhetorical and technical protocol—standard salutations ('To,' 'From,' 'Re,' 'cc'), paper sizes, data or transmission formats, and so on. On the other hand, documents are *de*formational because they atomize molar structures into modular, remixable components geared to industrial efficiency and postindustrial flexibility" (2009; italics in original).

instance, we read in one of its die-cut pages: "It was a dialogue/ / /swollen with/ / /darkness/ / / ./ / I heard my father's voice/ / / .I heard the windows shake/ /" (29). If we try to read this page again by letting it rest on the die-cut page lying beneath it, we will view the following text: "It was a dialogue/ /Mother/ /swollen with/ / / darkness/ / /and cobwebs, his eyes/ wept into a corner, waiting to be taken/ **ents**/ /in/ ./ I heard my father's voice/ / was almost overcome/ for many days/ / **ple**/ .I heard the window shake/" (29; 30, bolds mine). The animating potential of language we have already commented on lies exactly not in the kind of words printed on the page but in the augmented sensation the interlacing text in these two pages creates due to the embossed feel of the intersecting die-cut grids that gain depth by the holed geometrical incisions that appear at certain points on the material page. As for the letters I note in bold in the example above, they create a riddling or even playful effect as we cannot see or read them clearly through the holed-out page. This attracts the readers' attention, prompting them to guess the missing letters or syllables on the basis of the context(s) or meaning(s) they wish to formulate. This kind of reading activity demands from readers a different kind of textual or linguistic engagement that resorts to or combines a number of skills that result both from the understanding of the digital die-cut and holed-out patterning of the pages in addition to the words brought together along with the rhetorical, figurative, allusive and contextual relations that are created amongst them. This brings to mind Hayles's argumentation in her article "How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine" where she talks about a "disciplinary shift to a broader sense of reading strategies and their interrelation. […] [with] close, hyper, and machine reading each hav[ing] distinctive advantages and limitations; nevertheless, they also overlap and can be made to interact synergistically with one another" (2010: 65; 75). Seeing these comments in relation to *Tree of Codes*, one can claim that this book constitutes a multi-generational and ongoing feedback mechanism that places readers in the midst of artistic, literary, technological, and media action, while combining methodologies and disciplines that conceptually and materially sculpt alternative thinking circuitries and literacy abilities.

The various die-cut grid patterns adopted for each one of the pages in *Tree of Codes* somehow personalize the experience conveyed, which hence leads us to reconsider mass book production.[10] The treatment Foer's novel receives per page, as the video made available testifies, is indicative of the craftmanship opportunities offered even when printing in great numbers; it is still possible for literary

10 The online video "*Tree of Codes* by Jonathan Safran Foer: Making Of" made available via the Visual Editions website offers a brief overview of the die-cut design and printing processing used in the making of this particular book. Die Keure Printing & Publishing company in Belgium used a different die cut for each one of the pages of *Tree of Codes.* As for the book and cover designs, these were executed by London-based Sara de Bondt Studio and John Grey respectively. http://visual-editions.com/tree-of-codes-by-jonathan-safran-foer. 29 Nov. 2016.

practice, digital design, and skilled labor to compliment one another when it comes to fine artistic productions. If we consider the final stages of the making of *Tree of Codes*, that is not fully revealed in the available video but not totally invisible, we see that the writer's material transforms into narrative variants that guide the die-cutting machines in their page-carving activity, which is what creates the multiple narrative pathways Foer's novel opens up to. As a result, machines and digital coding in their interaction with textual material achieve a different level of narrative complexity to be further enhanced due to the intervention of the readers themselves when they get the final book in their hands. This step in the process adds another variant to the whole book and reading experience with the readers attempting to navigate through its die-cut pages. In another video entitled "*Tree of Codes* by Jonathan Safran Foer," also available via the Visual Editions website, the writer himself talks about what is possible in literature and what is possible using paper nowadays along with the comment about his book functioning as an interface where literature and visual arts intersect. What this brings to mind though is Drucker's comment in her article "Reading Interface" where she argues that "[w]e have to understand interface as a constitutive boundary space, not just a place of mechanistic negotiation […] [but] as a border zone between cultural systems, with all the complexity and emergent relations that suggests" (2013: 216). Assessing this observation in relation to *Tree of Codes*, one can claim that Foer's book marks a transition in the way we think and read, which may also generate further changes as to the way we perceive and respond both to the realities the book constructs plus our own external reality. The alternating die-cut grids on each page and their intertwining with the nestings created by the holed-out pages make our eyes drift from page to page as we try to make out our own story through the lines and words printed on them. It is this kind of confrontation with what looks familiar but is not, with what is expected to be structured but is not that takes us by surprise and gears us towards the development and adoption of new reading, thinking and interaction habits.[11] Let us take a look at the following example from *Tree of Codes*: " "lifelessness is only a disguise/ / / ./ / / / "/ / / his voice sank/ / / pressed/ / against the wall,/ / / /'We have lived for too long/" (50).[12] The open-ended citations that emerge here due to the placement of the double quotation marks on the page, owning to the die-cut carvings and spaces left and simultaneously created between words and punctuation marks, as indicated by the multiple slashes seen in the example above, accentuate the crafting quality of

11 "Reading has always been constituted through complex and diverse practices. Now it is time to rethink what reading is and how it works in the rich mixtures of words and images, sounds and animations, graphics and letters that constitute the environments of twenty-first-century literacies" (Drucker 2013: 78).

12 The double quotation marks that appear in the cited text also appear in the original and follow its intricate die-cut formatting. That is the reason why they have been kept intact here.

the text and the design that emerges if we look at the page both on its own right and in conjunction with the other die-cut pages preceding or following it. The effect that emerges is quite different, with the die-cut technique playing a crucial role in how the text transforms visually, verbally and materially in terms of its aesthetic and interface design, to use Drucker's term. What this makes us aware of, in addition to the presence of a book body, is that of the presence of the die-cutter and the die-cutting machine, since both of them are responsible not only for the production process, but also for the co-creation of the whole book endeavor with regard to the inscription method employed that also involves the book designers and the textual material providers, in this case Schulz and Foer. Hayles in her article "The Transformation of Narrative and the Materiality of Hypertext" sheds light on "[t]he *embodied* work of production [that] naturally results in enhanced appreciation for the works materiality," which she goes on to characterize as "open works" (2001: 23, italics in original). As a result, in *Tree of Codes* die-cutting transforms the book pages literally into embodied open works, in other words in expanded spaces of exploration whose making, writing and reading mechanisms bring production workers, designers, writers and readers together as they are all participants in the spatial, temporal, visual, verbal and tactile experience this book instigates. This marks a point of transition towards a re-evaluation of what a book is or what a book can do if seen not in isolation but as part of a network of embodied interactions within a broader trajectory of media development and reconceptualization.[13] This leads us back to Drucker's arguments about interface design where she comments on the "desire to expose interpretation rather than display its results" (2013: 218), which signals a major shift in the way a book should be regarded, conceptualized, handled and designed.

Roland Barthes, quite early on in his essay "From Work to Text" included in his work *Image Music Text* (1977), talked about the network abilities that the text has, since it can extend itself due to its combinatory, in other words, organic qualities: "the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*; if the Text extends itself, it is as a result of a combinatory systematic (an image, moreover, close to current biological conceptions of the living being)" (161, emphasis in original). This comment, in addition to all the argumentation that has preceded it in the present paper, turns its attention to the holistic and animating energy a text has with each one of its composite parts contributing to the shaping of the experience it brings forth. This kind of shaping takes spatial dimensions as shown, for example, in the following line from *Tree of Codes*: "/ /saw that resistance would be useless/ / / ./ / / /The walls/ /disappeared/ / / .The interior/ /formed itself into the panorama of a/ /landscape, full of/ /distance./ / i/ / wandered among/the folds/ /

13 In this light, it is also worth reading the commentary N. Katherine Hayles provides about the reactions triggered against the use of hypertext technology due to the fact that it was seen in isolation and not as part of a network of media developments. For more information, see Hayles 2010: 67–69.

,/ / /the land/" (117). Interlacing with the die-cutting spaces created on the page, the words used here create a particular reading but also spatial effect. In particular, the words "walls," "interior," "formed," "folds" and "land" almost work as material fissures that together with the words "disappear," "landscape," "distance" and "wondered" create an ebbing and flowing effect that alters and transforms the spatiality of the textual landscape on the material page. What visually works as multiple die-cut spaces also works as contracting and expanding mental spaces that morph, enhance, and sculpt each other. This mental and material sculpturing brings to mind the connection Hayles draws in her article "The Transformation of Narrative and the Materiality of Hypertext" between cognitive systems, materiality and art so as to shed light on how the transference between mediums affects the way we understand, process, and materially represent space. Specifically, she talks about sketching and the way it "enters actively into the cognitive process of artistic creation. As the artist works with the sketch, erasing lines, drawing arrows, rearranging objects and so forth, the external object becomes part of [the artist's] extended mind, not just recording but *transforming* [the artist's] thoughts" (2001: 31, italics in original). In a similar manner, *Tree of Codes* functions as a networked and transformative landscape for everyone who has worked cognitively for its formulation and construction. This has led to multiple textual arrangements, but also various linking structures that challenge conventional narrative sequence and architecture to their core, since it is this very core of their inner mechanisms that the *Tree of Codes* discloses, which at the same time reveals the perplexity of Foer's undertaking.[14] Moreover, the sculpted mental and spatial topographies that the *Tree of Codes* generates also allow for the performative qualities of the words themselves, with regard to their role, to emerge, as shown in the following example: "Only a few people noticed/ / the/ / lack of color,/ / / as in black-and-white photographs/ / /. This/ / was real rather than metaphorical/ / / / -a/ / / colorless/ / /sky/ / ,/ / / an enormous/ / / geometry of emptiness,/ / / a watery/" (90). What we find in these textual linkages are adjectives (such as "few," "black-and-white," "metaphorical," "colorless," "enormous," "watery"), nouns (such as "people," "sky," "geometry," "emptiness") and a verb ("noticed"), each one activating its own associations. The die-cutting shaped spaces that intervene between the words, phrases and punctuation marks diffuse sequentiality so as to direct our attention not only to the visual, tactile, verbal and material functions words perform but also to their elemental ability to craft meaning. This echoes Schulz's remarks in "The Mythologization of Reality" where he writes that when words "relax their strictures, when the word, released from such coercion, is left to its own devices and restored to its

14 "At times I felt that I was making a gravestone rubbing of *The Street of Crocodiles*, and at times that I was transcribing a dream that *The Street of Crocodiles* might have had. I have never read another book so intensely or so many times. I've never memorized so many phrases, or, as the act of erasure progressed, forgotten so many phrases" (Foer, "Author's Afterword: This Book and The Book", 139).

own laws, then a regression takes place within it, a backflow, and the word returns to its former connections and becomes again complete in meaning." This kind of return to the elemental power words in themselves have is facilitated in *Tree of Codes* by the die-cut format of the pages that energizes and extends the thinking process beyond the frame of the page through the exploration of the material flexibility of language itself that allows other combinations, such as semantic, verbal or syntactic to emerge.

Through all the arguments and examples that have been presented so far, Foer's richly textured and sculpted text does so much more than merely provide us with another intricate book object. It actually invites us to re-evaluate how the book medium is not simply transformed or subsumed by the cultural and technological forces that surround it but how its potentials can be enhanced. The movements the die-cutting machines perform on it, which are triggered by the coded language that is fed into the machines as this is patterned on the language the literary text employs, somehow choreograph our own reading movements caught up into a different kind of bodily and mental sculpturing. Moving beyond the boundaries set by conventional attitudes as to what a book is or what it can do, Foer here invites us to become part of its ever expanding material reality by setting in motion all the mechanisms that are stored in it. With *Tree of Codes* we are taking a step closer to a much more haptic engagement with literary practice. Such an active engagement with the materiality of books and languages enriches our perception, enhances our reading and learning skills, encourages energetic and creative thinking and makes us receptive to stimuli that strive towards an alternative, heightened, and certainly embodied mode of communication and artistic practice.

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THE CONFRONTATION OF MATERIALITY AND IMMATERIALITY OF SIGNS: REFLECTIONS ON JAPANESE CULTURE BY ROLAND BARTHES AND VERONIKA SCHÄPERS

Viola Hildebrand-Schat

ABSTRACT *Approaching the artist's book* Praise of the Taifun *by German artist Veronika Schäpers from a standpoint highly informed by Roland Barthes's thoughts while at the same time drawing from reception theory (Iser, Jauß), this essay suggests a semiotic reading of artist's books that pays close attention to their respective semiotic 'openness',* interstices, *and* interspaces *that produce a noteworthy ambiguity especially in works that negotiate the cultural differences between Japanese culture and 'Western' cultures.*

KEYWORDS *Book Art, Materiality, Immateriality, Semiotics, Japan, Veronika Schäpers, Roland Barthes, Durs Grünbein, Reception Theory.*

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Artist's books can be seen as a referential system of signs that benefits from different discussions as for example from the Mexican artist Ulises Carrión or from studies in literature, for example reception theory developed by Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauß. Confronting both positions—that of production and that of reception—I want to show that the essence of an artist's book unfolds when it is taken as a combination of signs.

THE AESTHETICS OF RECEPTION

Everybody knows what a book is. The book is connected with clear terms of reference, even if every reader has his or her own associations when thinking of a book. Given the apparent clarity and conformity of the term and the object it refers to, the strange dual nature of the book easily escapes conscious awareness. This duality is based on the specific material form or shape of the book and the immateriality of its content. Since approximately the 1960s, an ongoing discussion about authorship, the significance of text and the creative process has evolved. One of the leading contributors to this discussion is Ulises Carrión. His statements on textuality, text creation and authorship are unambiguous. He makes clear that an author does not write a book, but at best a text. On the question of a book's nature he answers that a book is a sequence of spaces and moments. Consequently, the book is an autonomous temporal and spatial sequence independent of text and literary form. These statements apply to the book in general. But Carrión then turns to the artist's book, which he terms as "new art". Characteristic for this new type of book is the responsibility of the writer or the producer for the whole process of conception and production. Subsequently, form and content become an intertwined entity. "Making a book means to realize the ideal sequence of space and time through a synchronic sequence of signs. They may be verbal or of other constitution."[1] Here Carrión expresses that everything concerning the book, its material as well as its ideal dimension, has to be taken as a sign or a cypher. This perspective with regard to the book finds a parallel in the research of Roland Barthes. Based on observations made during several stays in Japan, Barthes concluded that every human expression can be read as a sign. Not only scripture or design but every act of communication and cultural expression is in itself a sign. According to Barthes, gestures and actions are signs just as much as a product packaging and the preparation of food. The dense network of everything that is considered a sign and therefore a meaningful expression, is what the German conception artist Veronika Schäpers accesses in her works.

1 Carrión 1992, w. p.

AESTHETICS OF RECEPTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ARTIST'S BOOK

The discussion of the creative process within text production is not new. Literary studies are concerned with comparable considerations, essentially at the Konstanzer School represented by Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauß. Maurice Blanchot, Roland Barthes and finally Michel Foucault invoke "the death of the author". In negating the significance of an author for the text they turn to the aesthetics of reception and shift the reader into a position relevant for the text. A text becomes meaningful only in the process of being read, and with every reading the text is created anew. That means, a text is never a given fact. This basic assumption implies an "openness" of texts. In his essay *L'empire de signes* Roland Barthes speaks of blanks and elsewhere he uses the term "interstice", a term also used in translated versions of his text. The interstices lead to a multitude of modes of signification as well as to a general openness of the system of signs.

While the considerations regarding the death of the author in the field of literature studies concern primarily the text and its immateriality, the concept may also be transferred to the book, since the content of a book is affected in a comparable way by immateriality. So there is nothing new about pointing out the immaterial qualities of a book. It nevertheless becomes meaningful in the confrontation with the physical aspects of a book, such as the material of the paper, binding, and so on. The material aspects of the book have always attracted special attention, not just for their practical properties, but also for their interpretative qualities. The materiality of the book becomes the frame for the immaterial content. But materiality is by far not only the substance, or, as Aristotle has it, the *res* which serves as container for the ideas. It forms part of the essence of the content, providing the means that allow to aesthetically experience the art object in question. What appears to be at first glance two different and independent aspects of the subject "book", its content and the material that this content is connected to or transported by, really is more strongly connected and reflects more substantially on each other than the scholastic separation of substance and mind stipulates. And exactly this interface provides the starting point from which to identify the central determinant of the nature of the book. Here, one can find arguments for the perseverance of the book. Throughout centuries it competed with and withstood innovation, mainly of a technical nature. Against all speculation that developments in printing techniques and in particular the appearance of new media such as film, radio and eventually the computer would lead to the demise of the book, the book still exists and persists in spite of all other media. Obviously, the book is still accepted by readers and users. In fact, it even seems to benefit from the various innovations, incorporating some of their aspects and emphasizing those of its properties which new media lack. The book, thus, seems to satisfy some elementary needs through the sensual experiences conveyed by its material qualities. These also serve as sign posts which mediate between the mate-

rial presence and that which has to be explored. The book-as-material experience provides a concrete as well as an associative bridge from the factual to the contextual and, thus, makes the unspoken literally visible. In this intermediate space the artist's book has gained prominence because it bridges the fields of literature, art, bookmaking and text production. As it refuses to be firmly located in either field, it offers a completely new perspective and approach, rather than just serving as a bridging vessel. The artist's book combines qualities which have remained separate throughout the centuries. Text and images connect artistic concepts, philosophical ideas and literary topics. The sum of the different elements allows for an experience of perception which none of the individual elements can offer. It is affected by the typographical form, the interplay between picture, text and material of the book, but also by the handling of the book which is required by its specific mediality. New ways of reading as well as insights to the relationship of text and images and contextual items follow from the close interaction of the different parts of the book. Or, to put it differently, the artist's book combines signs from different sources which, through their form, create a new, distinct system. Roland Barthes takes the Japanese culture as such a system and absolves the signs from any claim of representing reality. (Or, to refer again to the Konstanzer Schule, i. e. primarily Iser and Jauß, the question of representation is shifted to the act of reception.) Instead, he points to a difference in the characteristics of the symbolic systems.[2] In particular the spaces void of information, the "interstices", become relevant for understanding. We can refer to these interstices when we try to explain the relevance of the artist's book. Beyond any materiality they offer such interstices or interspaces. They have become even more relevant since the artist's book, a topic hardly receiving attention until it had been fully embraced by the conceptual art of the 1960s, has gained prominence along with the advance of digital media: i. e. since the e-book has gained ground and many publications are available only as downloads.

VERONIKA SCHÄPERS'S WORK *PRAISE OF THE TAIFUN*

The significance accumulated in the signs of an artist's book and the openness of the structure, as emphasized by Barthes, leads to a similar lack of determination when it comes to the boundaries of the book. The interplay of the elements automatically introduces a new vantage point. The artist's book expands the limits of the normal book in and across many senses. The intentional use of materials and the utilisation of certain formal characteristics may subvert cultural as well as timebound conventions—notwithstanding the fact that processing and content are in a permanent reciprocal relationship and determine each other.

2 Barthes 1981: 14.

fig. 1
VERONIKA SCHÄPERS:
PRAISE OF THE TAIFUN,
2004

To demonstrate the possibilities of an artist's book, I will refer to the work of German artist Veronika Schäpers. The artist has graduated from the *Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design at Halle*. This university is one of the rare institutions with a department dedicated to book design and books as artwork. As multifaceted as the work of Schäpers is, her œuvre is permeated by a reference to Japanese culture which results from her own direct experience. Following her studies in Halle she went to Japan to become the apprentice of a paper manufacturer, after which she continued to work and live in Japan for about another 15 years. Her experiences with the Japanese way of life have become part of her artistic work and have since intermingled with those of Western culture. A convincing proof is the work *Praise of the Taifun* from 2004, which is a concertina-fold showing haiku (fig. 1). Closed, the book is not wider than 8.6 cm, but extended to its full length it is 2.58 meters wide and 36 cm high. In the work of Schäpers the material "paper" comes into focus. Paper has its origins in Asia where it has always attracted great attention, giving an additional emphasis to the choice of a very specific paper for *Praise of the Taifun.* The concertina-fold is printed on a Mitsumata-tsuchi-iri paper, which was created especially for this occasion. The quality of this paper is such that it resists rupture and at the same time is smooth and extremely flexible. These qualities conform with the intention of the artist. The whole surface of the concertina-fold is made up of five sheets into which strips of the same paper are woven, which is comparable to the art of textile weaving. From this technique results a grid which gives structure to the surface. The interwoven strips in their measures correspond to Tanzaku. Tanzaku

is the tall portrait format on which poems are traditionally printed in Japan. Schäpers prints the haiku only on these strips. Browsing the concertina-fold by fold, each column thus shows a text, which is followed by dates and location references that operate according to the same strict regime as the text (fig. 2). No more than two texts or two dates follow each other directly .

fig. 2
VERONIKA SCHÄPERS: *PRAISE OF THE TAIFUN*, 2004

The haiku Veronika Schäpers bases her work on were written in German by Durs Grünbein. The German text is followed by a translation into Japanese by Yuji Nawata following the same fixed grid. The translation of the haiku from German to Japanese is a curious twist, since the haiku is a quintessential Japanese form of poetry and deeply rooted in Japanese philosophy. Nevertheless, Grünbein has accomplished to adapt to the form. He accurately adheres to the rules of the haiku, conveying impressions from daily life that he picked up during several stays in Japan in 1999, 2002 and 2003. His haiku refer to observations of the Japanese city, mainly Tokyo, but also other places. Marginal glimpses are captured in the three lines of the haiku, which may be a noodle floating in a pond, two disputing crows or just the sound of steps. Beside the presence of city life, the traffic and modern means of transport, Grünbein's haiku also refer to the cultural background, for example a Japanese cult movie. The dates and names of places integrated in between the haiku allow the reader to follow the route of the author. Besides Tokyo and a number of places in the city, such as hotels or districts of the town, one can find Kyoto, Suruga Bay, Shizuoka and Miyajima.

The itinerary of the author, hinted at by the haiku and the dates, is taken up in the design of the concertina-fold. Already when choosing the material for her work, the artist aimed for an adequate reflection of urban life, which dominates the texts by Grünbein. The greenish-greyish colour of the paper invokes the image of concrete or asphalt and is the result of rough peat pigment mixed with the paper pulp.[3] The greyish surface is sprinkled with dark spots, which evoke associations of a map. Although this impression remains fragmentary, it accurately refers to the stages of the voyage of Durs Grünbein. His travel route was fragmentary, and consequently he only got into contact with parts of Japan rather than the whole of it.

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3 Cf. Veronika Schäpers: Durs Grünbein. Lob des Taifuns (pdf-document of three pages sent form the artist to the author of this text).

As a matter of fact the dark spots on the paper are fragments of Japanese signs the artist printed on the surface before the material was folded to a concertina-fold. The two signs signify 影 kage and 街 machi. Kage is the sign for "shadow", but also "outline" or "silhouette", "light" and "trace", while machi means „street". Both signs are chosen intentionally and refer to the texts by Grünbein. Originally, these signs stem from a painted calligraphy by Akiko Kojima. The Japanese calligrapher drew them with a broad brush on an enlarged format, so that the signs became larger than the paper. Subsequently, they were cut at the margins and fragmented even before they were printed. However, fragmentation is part of the concept of the work of Veronika Schäpers. The parts implicitly refer to the whole which, according to Japanese philosophy, can never be represented. Fragments as part of the whole recall the open character of the work.

CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY IN THE WORK OF VERONIKA SCHÄPERS

The haiku as a poetic concept, their representation in German and Japanese and the signs as underlying structure of the whole provide a manifestation of the idea of the artwork. It refers to a close interaction of the two different cultures represented by the "West" and Japan. It becomes literally visible with the conception of the concertina-fold. The haiku, a quintessentially Japanese poetical form, depends on a morphology which cannot be translated. Thus, the German version is only an approximation to its essential content, but will never capture the haiku as a whole. The concept of haiku in German language must appear as a sacrilege and the translation of a German haiku into Japanese seems almost perverse. However, it also seems that the double inversion redeems the deficiency. The German and the Japanese are brought into close contact through the technique of weaving, which is applied to the paper of the concertina-fold. Characteristics of the haiku are its precision, its reference to the present and its open form which is completed only during the act of reading. The haiku's statements, derived from short observations, mere glimpses, disclose neither feeling nor sentiment. It remains up to the reader to fill in the ideas and feelings and to create connections. "A haiku affords comprehension of the situation. The reader is asked to reject all individual current feeling in order to coordinate with those of the poet."[4] As a precondition for such empathy in the haiku, everything is left unnamed that can be expressed without words. Everything remains allusion and atmospheric implement and the words signify more than their verbal meaning. „Within all clearness the haiku has no subject, but exactly the double assumption provides the base for the open meaning," writes Roland Barthes. He continues to point out that no interpretation will yield results, "since the readability of the haiku is connected to the

4 Buerschaper 1987: 46.

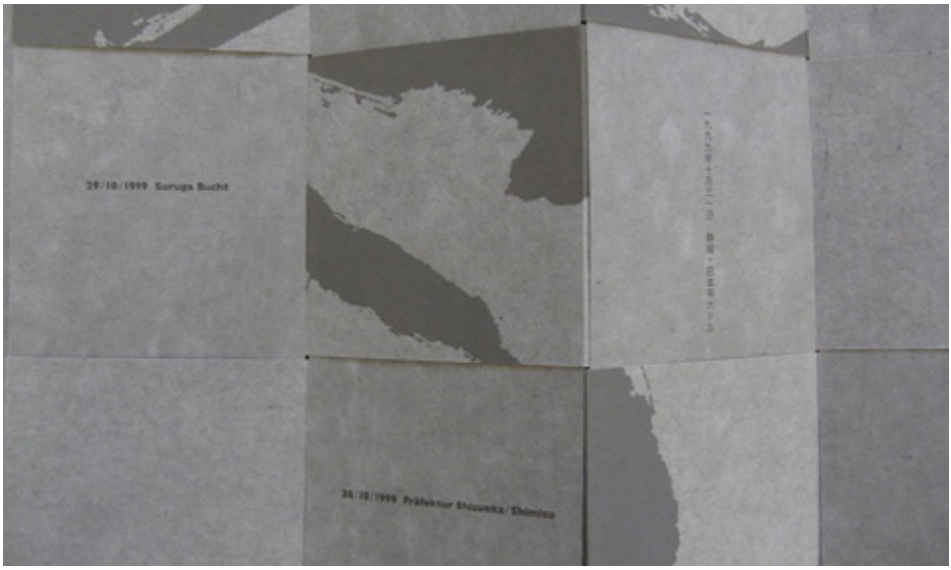

fig. 3
VERONIKA SCHÄPERS:
PRAISE OF THE TAIFUN,
2004

flowing speech."[5] Openness as a characteristic for this sort of poem finds its counterpart in the shape of the concertina-fold. As a folded book it could be continued into an infinite sequence (fig. 3). The segments given by the folds are not restricted like the pages of a book. They are not cut, but continue to the next fold without rupture. The concertina-fold as a total is not segmented by pages.

From this point of view it seems consequential that the artist has chosen the concertina-fold as her means of expression. The openness of the form corresponds fundamentally to the way of Japanese expression. Tsuneyoshi Tsudzumi in his *History of Japanese Art* repeatedly emphasizes openness as the philosophical principle permeating all areas of life and leading to a representation of the whole through segments. [6] A landscape is depicted by a branch, a garden by a flower and so on. The whole will be conceived in a section, the large will be restrained. The uncompleted alludes to a perfection never reached. Contrary to the concepts permanently present in Western thinking, differences between an inner and an outer space, nature and spirit do not exist in Japanese perception. Confucianism and Shintoism harbour a view of the world based on a continuous flow instead of contrasts. The relation between man and animal, animal and deity, nature and creature is marked by a continuously shifting transition. According to this notion even rocks and stones are animated. Also, art and life are not antipodes, but are

5 Buerschaper 1987: 98–99.

6 Tsuneyoshi Tsudzumi. Die Kunst Japans, ed. Japan-Institut Berlin, Leipzig 1929.

fig. 4
VERONIKA SCHÄPERS:
PRAISE OF THE TAIFUN,
2004

rather in a continuous process of merging with each other. Consequently, works of art are not separated from their surroundings by a frame.

With the concertina-fold Veronika Schäpers also refers to the historic provenience of the book, because the concertina-fold is an advancement of the antique roll. Since the 4th century, rolls of silk were commonly used in China for recording scripture and images. Since the nearly endless rolls were not feasible for use, they were folded into a sheet sized format since the 9th century, which, in the 10th century, developed into butterfly binding. The traditional book-roll requires specific handling. It can be viewed only in segments, never in its totality. This refers to Japanese philosophy as explained by Tsuneyoshi Tsudzumi—since life and art are not separated, reception is determined by segmented viewing. The handling of the roll follows the same philosophy. The *emakimono*, which is the term for a scroll with pictures, is no taller than 30 cm, but can be of a length which makes it impossible to get an overview. Indeed, it was never conceived for an overview, since it is scrolled with one hand while the other unrolls it. Thus the process of viewing is segmented, each moment confronting the viewer with a new segment of the whole. The concertina-fold can be considered a comparable way of perception, even more so because its folds already pre-determine a way of regarding it.

A further reference to cultural practise is given by the way of bookbinding used for the concertina-fold (fig. 4). In this case, a banderole instead of a cover serves as a package. Together with this sleeve the concertina-fold is put into a bag of vinyl and the bag itself is wrapped by a long vinyl string. The unpacking of the concertina-fold, therefore, becomes a sort of ritual, a part of the reception process.

With the term "paquets" Barthes (1994: 775–781) refers to the significance of the method of wrapping in Japan. He describes it as an invisible frame, which in fact encloses the wrapped good, but at the same time connects it to the surrounding space. The latter is a consequence of the disproportion of the content and the wrapping. Through the art of unwrapping, a Japanese package becomes a "semantic meditation" (Barthes 1981: 63.). The envelope receives in itself a consecration as precious, even if it is without value. Schäpers's remarkable choice of vinyl for the bag serving as packaging material for the concertina-fold alludes to this aspect. Vinyl contrasts sharply with the traditional material. The artist choses it exactly for this reason. Vinyl is a representation of the contemporary and, therefore, is an indicator for modern Japan. During her stay in Japan Schäpers became aware of a general attraction to new materials. People in Japan were very open toward everything new. "For them everything new enriches their life. New material and new techniques are challenges they like to be confronted with. This curiosity greatly impressed me and I gained inspiration from it. Especially in Tokyo I met with a completely uncritical fascination with new technology on the one hand and a strict adherence to tradition on the other."[7]

Attention should also be paid to the two stamps impressed on the sleeve of the concertina-fold. They are known under the term of *eki*-stamp or *eki*-seal. On one is written the word "Metro" in Latin letters, the other shows a train and the icons of some scenic landmarks. Stamps like these are common at points of interest, for example at particular train stations. They are openly accessible and all travellers can stamp their diary or other travel documents. Thus, the stamps become an authentic proof of the stages of a journey. They certify that a person has been present at a certain place and several stamps mark the route of the individual. Traditionally, stamps were used to indicate ownership. The different stamps on a woodcut or a drawing reflect the provenience of an artwork. In this way the stamps also become a mark of time.

THE OPEN SPACE OR THE BLANK IN THE CONSIDERATION OF ROLAND BARTHES

The conceptualization of signs in the work of Schäpers in a certain way demonstrates her understanding of the argument Roland Barthes presents in his essay

7 Veronika Schäpers in an e-mail from June 2, 2013 to the author.

L'empire des signes, published in 1970 after several stays in Japan. However, the focus on Japanese idiosyncrasy in the work *Praise of the Taifun* should not be taken as an illustrative adaption of Barthes's work. Moreover, here the different items are independent from each other and text and design act simultaneously, although in correspondence.

The approach has been described by Roland Barthes at the very beginning of his essay. Here we can read, »Le texte ne ›commente‹ pas les images. Les images n'›illustrent‹ pas le texte : chaque a été seulement pour moi le départ d'une sorte de vacillement visuel, analogue peut-être à cette perte de sens que le Zen appelle un satori ; texte, image, dans leur entrelacs, veulent assurer la circulation, l'échange de ces signifiants : le corps, le visage, l'écriture, et y lire le recul des signes."[8]

The understanding of Japan becomes clear through a glimpse of the symbolic. Barthes acquired his knowledge of Japanese culture not through images but through scripture. The *satori*, the loss of the senses in Zen philosophy, like scripture, produces a void in words and the void in words produces the words. From this void result the traces, with which the *satori* refers to gardens, gestures, houses, and faces. For Barthes primary signification is connected to further, not less significant, ones. Nothing exists for its own sake or for the sake of its function. Rather, everything, every gesture, every object, includes a symbolic meaning beyond its functions.

The pictures in Barthes's essay *L'empire des signes*, to each of which a separate page is dedicated, present a "subtext" to what the author writes. Picture and text do not interfere with each other. Nevertheless, some relationship can be seen. The textual description aims at interpreting everything as a sign: gesture, event, interaction come under the definition of Barthes's signs. Everything Barthes describes is seen as part of an all-encompassing Japanese culture of signification. This requires a fundamental openness of signs, which Barthes describes as blanks or permeable boundaries. He repeatedly refers to the importance of blanks, to which, under the heading of "interstice", he dedicates a chapter of their own as well as a correspondingly titled picture. Both are meant to equally show the openness of the signs as well as their reconciling function. All this is dominated by the structure of signs. A connection between the text and the following picture is drawn by the so-called "interstice". The connection may be a term, a keyword or something else. For example, the picture titled "interstice" depicts a Japanese woman arranging a curtain made of strings. Between the strings remains an interspace, referring to the concept of "interstice". At the same time the interspace is the main attribute of scripture, because without it letters would be unreadable. References like

8 The text does not comment on the pictures and the pictures do not illustrate the text. Each of them have an impact of their own, comparable to a visual flare and in correspondence to the loss of consciousness, termed as Satori in Zen. Text and image permit to change the significant from body, face, scripture, and mean the retreat of the sign." Barthes 1994: 745; Barthes 1981: 13.

this attribute a double meaning to the pictures as well as to the texts. In this case we find a chapter in Barthes's essay entitled also with "interstice". Here the author again pays attention to the arrangement of food and elaborates on the issue of the spaces in-between. This time he speaks of the void as basic figure of the interval, the interstice. "L'aliment rejoint ici le rêve d'un paradoxe: celui d'un objet purement interstitiel, d'autant plus provoquant que ce vide est fabriqué pour qu'on s'en nourrisse."[9] ("Nourishment meets with the dream of a paradox which is an object completely interspace itself. This becomes the more provoking since the interspace is conceived as nourishment.")

THE OPEN SPACE OR THE BLANK IN THE ARTIST'S BOOK

By confronting Schäpers's work *Praise of the Taifun* with Barthes's theory of signs, I do not want to assert an illustrative influence or even an inspiration of the former by the latter. Rather, I want to direct attention to how cultural differences in experiencing a work of art lead to an ambiguity of the sign[10] by pointing to the blanks within the sign itself, opening it up for interpretation. The artist's work refers to the blank and at the same time proposes a multitude of arguments full of virtuosity. *Praise of the Taifun* accomplishes a transfer of Japanese language to Western comprehension in manifold ways. Like Japanese writing, where meaning of symbols depends on context, Schäpers's work is not fixed to a single meaning. This makes Japanese writing often completely incomprehensible in the eyes of a foreigner, and is only one reason why Japanese expressions are so difficult to understand. Another is the importance of the specific context of each situation, without which a literal translation is virtually impossible. This is the starting point for the artist. By merging European concepts with Japanese aesthetics, she creates an atmosphere favorable to accessing the multitude of meaning.

Since the reception is not fixed to one interpretation, the blanks of the signs can also be given an adequate meaning. The whole procedure is dominated by openness, which also includes the ambiguity given by the blank of the sign. Already given in the printing material, it includes the type of text, the layout and finally the interplay of the different elements.

Barthes's engagement with a system of symbols foreign to him, inspired by his stays in Japan in 1966 and 1967, has not aimed to explain the signs in a self-reflexive way. East and West are not to be understood as realities to be differentiated against each other or led to a synthesis on the grounds of historic, cultural, philo-

9 Barthes 1994: 758.

10 Here in the sense of: the work of art as a complex sign.

sophic or political argument. Rather, the essence of the East should be seen in the difference to the symbolic system of the West (Barthes 1981: 13).

> "L'Orient […] me fournit simplement une réserve de traits dont la mise en batterie, le jeu inventé, me permettent de 'flatter' l'idée d'un système symbolique inouï, entièrement dépris du nôtre. Ce qui peut être visé, dans la considération de l'Orient, ce ne sont pas d'autres symboles, une autre métaphysique, une autre sagesse (encore que celle-ci apparaisse bien désirable); c'est la possibilité d'une différence, d'une mutation, d'une révolution dans la propriété des systèmes symboliques. Il faudrait faire un jour l'histoire de notre propre obscurité."[11]

By pointing to the difference of completely alien systems of symbols and signs, Barthes wants to direct the awareness to the limits of the symbolic order. He resumes, "Nous savons que les concepts principaux de la philosophie aristotélicienne ont été en quelques sorte contraints par les principales articulations de la langue grecques. Combien, inversement il serait bienfaisant de se transporter dans une vision des différence irréductibles que peut nous suggérer, par lueurs, une langue très lontaines".[12] Barthes undertakes a new conception of the signifier which includes all dimensions of a sign, but which are not included in the term representing the object.

CONCLUSION

Veronika Schäpers and Roland Barthes both approach Japanese Culture and benefit from an open approach to the system of signs. The openness results mainly from the foreign system which both are unable to read literally. Consequentially, they are even more aware of interpreting life and culture by the signs beyond writing. Their approach to Japanese culture occurs through observation of signs from daily life. Schäpers transforms her impressions into an artist's book; Roland Barthes takes it as a foundation for his essay *L'empire de signes*.

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11 "The orient […] merely provides me with a stock of items, which can be arranged by me. And if the game is invented, I will profit from a totally new system of symbols. I do not aim for another metaphysic or wisdom (although this may be attractive). I just look for the difference, the possibility of a change of the character of the symbolic system." (Barthes 1994: 747; 1981: 14).

12 "We know that the main concepts of Aristotelian philosophy were forced by the Greek language. How beneficial would it be on the other side if we could put ourselves in the position of the irreducible differences, of which a very remote language allows us a glimpse." (Barthes 1994: 748; 1981: 17).

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DO DIGITALLY INDUCED TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE BOOK MEDIA SYSTEM ESTABLISH A 'NEW LITERATURE', REQUIRE A 'NEW LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP'?

A BOOK / MEDIA STUDIES VIEW

Christoph Bläsi

ABSTRACT *This paper is driven by two fundamental questions: which are the major transformations that the book as a medium and the book industry as a whole are undergoing through the advent of digitalization? And in how far can the products of this new digital environment be understood as an altogether new sort of literature. If this new literature is on the rise, as this paper argues, then the analytical practices of literary studies as well as book / media studies must answer this new challenge with adequate new theories and methods.*

KEYWORDS *Book, E-Book, Materiality, Digitization, Digital Literature, Electronic Media.*

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INTRODUCTION

Starting from a 'materiality'-oriented media / book studies point of view (in a comparative literature context), this paper follows the research questions, 1) which relevant transformations of the book media system and the book industry are associated with digitization and 2) in how far all or parts of the output of the transformed book media system can or must be seen as a new literature. Not least, the latter might have bearings on the (scholarly) methods used to approach it.

In a turn that sounds like an oxymoron, but—as will be seen—does make sense, namely seeing the digitization of the book media system as an aspect of its 'materiality' (which does not seem to be an adequate category for bits and bytes, really), book studies are the discipline to take this up systematically. Book studies see themselves not exhaustively, but certainly to some extent as media studies of the book.

> „Book studies as a university discipline see themselves primarily as a humanities and cultural studies subject with corresponding methods and book historical, book management and media theoretic focusses. Taking the paradigm of the materiality of communication as a starting point, the book as a medium is the object of book studies as carrier of linguistic and pictorial signs and in its production, […] management and cultural contexts […]. The concept of book is a wide one and encompasses the various book forms including the distribution of book-like contents with the help of new media […]." (Rautenberg 2003: 125–126; translation C. B.)

Taking 'materiality' as a marked starting point for scholarly work on books and literature is what differentiates book studies as a discipline from typical literary studies or comparative literature approaches.

In the following, I will focus on fiction, literary and trade; I will, however, also be mentioning digital forms of books from other segments of the book communication, i. e. non-fiction, b2b, scholarly, etc. Among the fictional texts, I will concentrate on works beyond pure experiments, i. e. on such works that have a significance for the mainstream literary communication and the book market (as an economic construct), that are not unique prints, artefacts etc., but goods that are tradable and in fact traded. In book trade categories, we will be talking about e-books and in particular enhanced e-books, be they realised as e-books in a narrow sense (as EPUB 3 files etc.) or as book apps.

THE DIGITIZATION OF THE BOOK MEDIA SYSTEM

The beginning of the digitization of the book media system—a system that of course goes beyond the works of literature themselves—goes back many decades

and concerned the digitization of various process steps in the book production. From the mainframe digital typesetting of the 1960s to desktop publishing from 1984 onwards, the effects of these changes could typically not be detected on the output, the 'product' level. In particular, these effects—among them shorter times to market, lower costs, better conditions for content reuse and multiple exploitation—have not been and are not in the focus of literary studies. That digitization effects cannot be seen on the output is also true for online bookselling, the trading of printed books with the help of e-commerce, from the mid-1990s onwards. Not taking into consideration earlier experiments with texts on computers from the time they started to get used, books have been differently, digitally 'packaged' to a market-relevant degree only since 2007 or 2010, respectively: in 2007 Amazon introduced its Kindle e-reading device to the US market and in 2010 the world saw the advent of Apple's iPad. Up to concepts and metaphors, an old medium, the book, was emulated in a new meta-medium, the computer (in this case mostly computer-like mobile devices). The increasing use of such devices had measurable effects not only on book distribution, but of course also on some reading conditions and habits: reading from screens appears to require less mental effort (Kretzschmar et al. 2013) and seems to support the tendency to read in smaller chunks (Bläsi / Kuhn 2011). In particular, however, looking at the industry as a whole, a transition from a value creation chain to a value creation network can be observed: the author-publisher-book distributor-bookseller-buyer / reader chain, quintessential for many centuries, is being replaced by a more complex industry landscape, in which authors can turn to their readers directly by way of (digital) self-publishing, where IT companies such as Apple and Google play an important role etc. (Janello 2010). The latter developments as such, however, are again not visible on the product level, either, and are, therefore, not accessible to a purely text-based literary studies approach. Another—less noticable—top-level transition are the changes in the communication space around the book. Important phenomena in this respect are the increasingly important and effective digital assistance for the customer orientation on the complex book market (e. g. Vogel 2010) as well as books as points of departure for the exchange of ideas and the communication of identities in the digital sphere (all the way to social reading, which can also have effects on the products themselves [Pleimling 2012]).

As an interim result, it can be concluded that in the wake of the digitization of the book industry or the book media system, respectively, there is a whole range of interesting phenomena to be picked up and to be analyzed by media / book studies scholars. Up to this stage of observation, nothing hints at the emergence of a new literature, however: the ongoing processes can be described as a 'black box industry' which merely produces some of their products in a different packaging (with respect to digital forms of books in the fiction segment, we are talking about e-books without enhancements here). This new 'packaging' might indeed influence some dimensions of reading habits, facilitate an easier access to works of

art and strengthen the move to additional research tools and possibly even modified research paradigms (cf. Digital Humanities), but it does not seem to trigger or even require a genuinely new literary scholarship.

There are a few complications to this, however: reading from screens might not only require less effort, it might be different in more profound ways (Wolf 2008). To give one example: the display on a screen is typically not oriented on a double-page spread arrangement, which might have contributed to a specific impact and meaning. Also, among literary studies scholars, there are considerations that indicate an increasing awareness for the importance of 'material' factors—in the case of Murray e. g. for adaptation relations (i. e. relations between different manifestations of original contents: hardcovers, paperbacks, films, etc.).

Murray's own "[…] model aims at capturing the complexity of the adaptation industry and thereby to contribute to a long overdue materialising of adaptation theory" (Murray 2011: 12). To come up with an example for the potential fruitfulness of materiality-informed approaches that also connects to the digitization of the book media system, it suffices to look at the current ebook market: since Apple and Amazon fence off their respective e-book 'ecosystems' with the help of non-interoperable e-book formats, restrictive digital rights management measures, etc., the set of e-books available to users of a certain viewing technology is (unlike the case of printed books) to a certain degree controlled by US corporations, which connects aspects of economic power to aspects of the literary world—via aspects of (digital) 'materiality' (Bläsi / Rothlauf 2013).

(REALLY) NEW "PRODUCTS", ZOOMING IN FROM THREE TRADITION LINES AND NEIGHBOURING GENRES

Coming from literary theory / comparative literature, Beebee sees three dimensions of computerization, namely the hardware / physical one, the memory platform / digital one and the semantics / cyberspace one. He claims, "the third, semantic cyberspace dimension has relevance for the production of literature, whereas the second, digital dimension has relevance for the archiving and distribution of literary texts new and old" (Beebee 297, based on Floridi). These categories are not ours, but it seems possible to connect them to the transformations described so far: the transformations in production and distribution processes do not have such a significant effect on the product (i. e. the quiddity of literature) as they operate in hardware and memory dimensions. This would mean that, in Beebee's terminology, we will be talking about the above mentioned third, the "semantic / cyberspace" dimension in the following.[1]

1 See also I. Krzywkowski's contribution to this volume.

At this point, it is appropriate to think about the nature of the (additional) expressive options for an author—the creator of a text-based piece of intellectual property in the book media system—if, with respect to the artistic means, he turns against the book as a printed medium, deliberately going beyond the possibilities of print. These additional options form groups that can be labelled with the terms 'multimedia' and 'interactivity'. 'Multimedia' now usually means the integration of media elements other than text and image (from pictures to maps), i. e. of elements from time-based media, audio, video and animations. Manifestations of 'interactivity' range from active links via effects of geo-localization and interface alternatives all the way to virtual collaboration and social reading. In the form of augmented reality, the potentials of multimedia and interactivity coalesce.

To give an impression of what is possible with (some of) the additional expressive options mentioned, I will give a few examples from beyond the focus of this paper. Motivated by the fact that there is no explicit 'poetology' of enhanced e-books yet and the fact that different e-book "ecosystems" make cross-ecosystem solutions difficult (see above), Jürgen Neffe has proposed a concept he calls „Libroid" and applied it to the e-book version of his non-fiction book on Darwin (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sj8pAF9ikzc for a promotional video). A truly extreme manifestation of the idea to form a complex hypertext network of information chunks that can be navigated individually depending on the interest of the user is the concept of 'Semantic Publishing' by German start-up PAUX (https://www.facebook.com/paux.de/), where the information chunk granularity is down to single sentences or even concepts. These information chunks are connected by typed links. This enables better traceability and allows for an extended exploitability, e.g.—according to PAUX—the straight-forward reuse of content as computer-based training units. A similar idea from a different strand of research is to strip down content from book communication to basic triples as they are used in the Semantic Web, starting with metadata, data about books. This information is then integrated into the huge amount of information in the Linked Open Data cloud through coreference, or by way of ontologies. Users can then retrieve the data through software agents and use it for automated reasoning. Eventually, such a representation of texts from the book universe can be extended from metadata to object propositions, which would make book content available to agent reasoning (issues of intellectual property and revenue models left aside at this point).

While it has become a rather common practice to emulate old products onto the new medium / meta medium, in the meantime wholly new products have also been developed in the fiction realm. In our context, we have to limit the focus to enhanced e-books as traded goods. We have seen above that it is comparatively easy as well as inevitable to extend the scope of book studies to digital manifestations of books—especially once you have determined more generally what should be considered a 'book'. As long as there are no agreed criteria to be fulfilled specifically by book content—possible candidates for such criteria are

length, argumentative complexity, aesthetic pretension—, statements like the following constitute a challenge to the limited focus: "The direct literary impact of the internet has been most noticeable on minor genres and sub-genres, such as the epistolary novel, reborn as the e-mail or cell-phone novel, and the diary, which on the internet becomes a weblog or blog" (Beebee 301) and "'With the internet we face the paradox of writing without 'différance,' writing that is almost as instantaneous as speech, and privacy with no inside, since everything seems to be outside immediately'" (Lejeune according to Beebee, 301). The instantaneousness of internet writing tends to abolish common literary practices like a prolonged reflection on formulations, and the maturation of a text in the course of a more intricate editing and publication process. I cannot make a statement for literary studies here, but—as the name suggests—book studies are too much connected (not unconditionally, of course) to the book as a medium to be defined in a way that transcends purely 'material' manifestations. Blogs / web diaries and similar forms of expression are typically not in the scope of book studies, as things stand. Maintaining the chosen focus on enhanced e-books will, therefore, help to avoid the complex discussion on disciplinary limits in this context.

It is instructive at this point to have a look at the medial developments that lead to enhanced e-books, different tradition lines, we could say. A very important point in history with respect to the top-level content structure is of course the apparition of hypertexts as formations or networks of 'text chunks', which you sometimes can, but are not obliged to, traverse via a recommended 'linear' order among a variety of possible paths. If some of the content nodes in the network were not texts, but other media elements (e. g. images or videos), such hypertexts were sometimes referred to as hypermedia. There were numerous experimental implementations (by far most of them in the non-fiction realm, for notable exceptions see below), and, not least, in 1991, this idea became the cornerstone of Tim Berners-Lee's World Wide Web. For fiction hypertexts, Beebee claims that the "[h]ypertext has shown itself to be more suitable for lyric, especially lyric that explores the reader's relationship to the graphemes of language, than to narrative" (Beebee, 300). A product category that made hypertexts / hypermedia accessible to consumers were multimedia CD-ROMs, as they were assessed to be the spearhead products of the media development of the time and very popular around the mid-1990s; there are no representatives of this strand of considerable significance in fiction again, however. Text adventures can be seen as another important tradition line—one that can only be found in the fiction realm. They were constituted by texts with a certain kind of interactive intervention option, put very prosaically: depending on user input, different chunks of text or other media get displayed. If computer games proper can be generalised as adventures, in which, with the help of a more iconic use of sign systems (images, video, audio), user immersion is intentionally evocated, must remain open here: they can at least be seen as a parallel development. A stronger statement defining computer games as one of the

origins of enhanced fiction e-books right away is complicated by considerations like the following: "The demarcation line between electronic literature and computer games is far from definite; many games have narrative components, while many works of electronic literature have game elements" (Hayles 2008: 8). But saliently and more seriously also "[h]ow to maintain such conventional narrative devices as rising tension, conflict, and denouncement in interactive forms where the user determined sequence continues to pose formidable problems for writers of electronic literature, especially narrative fiction" (Hayles 2008: 16). And then there is a third line of tradition, 'electronic literature' (Hayles) proper, as it were. 'Electronic literature' as a genre has the distinctly experimental character of non-traded goods—and includes some of the early (fiction or literary) hypertexts. Consequently, Loss Pequeno Glazier (according to Hayles) sees electronic literature as best understood as a continuation of experimental print literature. "Hypertext fiction, network fiction, interactive fiction, locative narratives, installation pieces, 'codework', generative art, and the Flash poem are by no means an exhaustive inventory of the forms of electronic literature, but they are sufficient to illustrate the diversity of the field" (Hayles 2008: 30).

Having made our way through products along the different traditions and from outside the genre (non-fiction), let me conclude with two recent German market examples of enhanced fiction e-books, the products I concentrated on for the key issue of this paper: Ken Follet's "Säulen der Erde" is the translation of "The Pillars of the Earth", the enhanced e-book version of a printed trade fiction book (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NUjMaMkvLA for a video blog review), and "Apocalypis" is a 'born-digital' enhanced e-book product (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFzjrIbyQTM for a promotional video).

NEW FICTION / LITERARY PRODUCTS = NEW LITERATURE? WHAT ABOUT A NEW LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP?

If this is a new kind of product in the focus of academics, what can be said about it from a narratological perspective, what in terms of literary theory?

Marie Laure Ryan holds that a combination of text, pictures, movement, music and interaction makes immersion easier.

> "The limited narrative power of non-verbal media does not mean […] that they cannot make original contributions to the formation of narrative meaning. The affordances of language, pictures, movement, and music complement each other, and when they are used together in multi-channel media, each of them builds a different facet of the total imaginative experience: language narrates through its logic and its ability to model the human mind, pictures through their immersive spatiality and visuality, movement through its dynamic temporality, and music through its atmosphere-creating, tension building and emotional power. […] [T]hrough collaboration with sensorial signs, lan-

> guage-based narrative allows a fuller experience of the storyworld. In multi-channel media, the appreciator can directly see, hear, and maybe even interact with objects, and the imagination, relieved from the cognitive burden of simulating sensory data, can more easily immerse itself in the story." (Ryan: 29)

It is largely consensual that for many, if not all, works of art the medium adds significance and meaning, so that the so-called window metaphor of media is not adequate; this metaphor reads as follows: "[I]t is the function of a medium to disappear behind the content which it is to convey" (Urbich 2011: 17, trans. C. B.). With respect to literature, the view of the inadequacy of the window metaphor is given in a consolidated fashion by the following sequence of arguments from literary theory: "[…] [M]edia are—and this is the basic assumption shared by almost all positions of media philosophy—not so self-effacing in the execution of the transmission of content as they might appear in their transparency" (Urbich 2011: 17), "[…] 'because, in the process of the transmission, they mould the information in a constitutive manner'" (Münker acc. to Urbich 2011: 17): "[m]edia open up and format reality" (Urbich 2011: 17) and

> "[t]herefore, every medium adds to the matter it mediates dimensions of significance and enhances the texture of meaning with its own ontological, semantic and functional determinations. […] At the same time, the analysis of media is so urgent because it is informative with respect to the possibly unimagined preliminary conceptual decisions and ideological fundamentals, which are in the mental and technical machinery that help us to be in the world." (Urbich 2011: 17)

Urbich adds another interesting perspective relevant for this paper when he writes: "Artistic and literary work antagonize the tendency of every medium to make itself disappear by accentuating the technique of the formation and the process of its becoming form. […] Artistically moulded artifacts […] form as information how their medium yields meaning." (Urbich 2011: 120). "In this way, forms become the medium of their self-awareness and also the background against which new forms of the perception of reality can be obtained." (Urbich 2011: 121).

Thus, enhanced fiction e-books can and must be questioned not least about how their medial manifestation moulds the content and how they make their mediality an implicit or explicit object.

There are, however, also possible aspects of 'electronic media' on this side of mediality contributing meaning and a self-referentiality of the medium.

> "Much as the novel both gave voice to and helped to create the liberal humanist subject in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, so contemporary electronic literature is both reflecting and enacting a new kind of subjectivity characterized by distributed cognition, networked agency that includes human and non-human actors, and fluid boundaries dispersed over actual and virtual locations […]" (Hayles 2008: 37).

Moreover,

> "[f]orging connections between mind and body, performance and cognition, technical vocabulary and intuitive understanding, the works […] engage networked and programmable media not just as technical practices, but as integral components of understanding what it means to be human in a computational era" (Hayles 2011: 131).

What follows from all this? Analytic and interpretative approaches to enhanced fiction e-books require a new literary scholarship (only) in the sense that existing considerations—like the ones that a medium does not fully disappear behind the content conveyed, that a work of art can reflect on its mediality or that literature can give a specific voice to being human in an era—have to be applied and transferred to the new developments. This, however, typically involves profound knowledge of modern media technologies and possibly—this is not specific to e-books and does not apply to all enhanced fiction e-books, however—of aspects of living in the digital age. The technological part is captured very well by Hayles: "[T]he conditions in which a work is created, produced, disseminated, and performed always mark it in distinctive ways that provide openings for critical interrogation and media-specific analysis" (Hayles 2008: 27), "code must be considered as much a part of the 'text' of electronic literature as the screening surface" (Hayles 2008: 35) and "[c]omputation is not peripheral or incidental to electronic literature but central to its performance, play, and interpretation" (Hayles 2011: 44).

This 'enhanced' kind of literary scholarship on the basis of additional knowledge, competencies and reflection is a prerequisite to understanding the products mentioned—quite independently of the fact whether particular enhanced fiction e-books like "Die Säulen der Erde" or "Apocalypsis" are considered manifestations of a new literature or not.

CONCLUSIONS

The effects of digitization on literary communication, the book market and the book media system as a whole are manifold—from desktop publishing via online bookstores to new content forms. Only some of them are directly relevant to literary studies. Enhanced (fiction) e-books are currently among the most important types of digital forms of books—and they should definitely be immediate subjects of literary studies, since they do have features that cannot be seen just in analogy to possibly connected printed products.

This is not necessarily true for e-books without enhancements. But also for those (and for printed literature!) there are not quite as fundamental, but still important, impacts of digitization on literary scholarship: the access to texts is often much easier digitally (not least as a consequence of retro digitization efforts) and enables the adoption of digital humanities approaches from visualization and

virtual collaboration to the application of data mining and artificial intelligence methodologies.

Interesting aspects of enhanced fiction e-books are the possibility to 'enhance' the story beyond language as a medium by additional narrative options (interactivity, multimedia). This opens up options to reflect on the aspects of the enhanced mediality as well as extended options to reflect on the *conditio humana* in the contemporary world.

This new literary space—the one of enhanced fiction e-books—that is potentially highly interesting for authors, publishers and readers / users does not seem to be appropriately conquered yet. Book studies can give at least some reasons for this: not least, there have been just too few products (or at least experiments) out there. This, in turn, is seen to be a consequence of too few technical product, production and target device standards. There are very few authoring tools that make a development of more complex products easy and cost-efficient. Also, there are too many non-compatible target platforms, a pre-condition which multiplies production costs. The latter compares to the situation at the end of the 1990s, when no successful business could be developed emanating from a number of very ambitious and attractive state-of-the-art multimedia CD-ROMs—primarily due to the lack of conditions for effective production processes. What we see in the enhanced (fiction) e-book market are mainly products with few and limited enhancements. And they stem primarily from the low- to middle-brow and genre segments of the book market and apparently they neither expose the changes that new media have caused in the lives of people of our time, nor do they choose to reflect on their own mediality at a degree worth mentioning.

Especially the former is particularly regrettable, since enhanced (literary) fiction e-books might have the unique chance to be an attractive art form between the text-only novel and a new type of quality TV serials. British novelist Ian McEwan and German literary critic Richard Kämmerlings comment upon the strengths of these art forms. McEwan writes with regard to the first:

> "The novel has evolved highly effective conventions for representing the flow of consciousness. We can't do that so well in drama or in movies; you cannot get that close-textured feeling. You can't have that analysis that novels give. We don't have any other art form that has that interior access, opening up one mind to another's." (McEwan 2013: 13)

Kämmerlings, on the other hand, praises the new (American) quality TV serials enthusiastically:

> "The Balzac for our time. The novel of the present time is a DVD box: American serials such as 'The Wire' prove the emancipation of an epic form from the entertainment industry and have become a serious competitor to literature. […] No novel has absorbed me as 'The Wire'—that has to be understood as: 'The Wire' is a novel. One of the best

> ones. […] [There is] an audience valuing narrative complexity, self-reflection, dodgy tracks, and symbolic multiple encodings. […] More than cinema the new long-form narration poaches in its usual [literary, C. B.] terrain. […] We are witnesses of the birth of a new genre: a new epic large form is emancipating itself from the standardized formats of the media industry, which have produced it." (Kämmerlings 2010: 33, translation by C. B.)

It is between those two poles that the vanishing point of the enhanced (literary) fiction e-book might be—literary studies with the help of book / media studies will have to adapt and partly develop appropriately elaborated theories and methods to welcome this new genre.

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