Reading Today

Edited by
Heta Pyrhönen
Janna Kantola

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COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Comparative Literature and Culture explores new creative and critical perspectives on literature, art and culture. Contributions offer a comparative, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary focus, showcasing exploratory research in literary and cultural theory and history, material and visual cultures, and reception studies. The series is also interested in language-based research, particularly the changing role of national and minority languages and cultures, and includes within its publications the annual proceedings of the 'Hermes Consortium for Literary and Cultural Studies'.

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New perspectives on reading: an introduction

Heta Pyrhönen

In Aleksis Kivi's novel *Seven Brothers* (1870), the cornerstone of Finnish literature, there is an early scene in which the seven brothers are in the local sexton's house, trying to learn to read. In nineteenth-century Finland, literacy provided entry to adult life, for if one did not know how to read and could not recite the smaller catechism by heart, one was not allowed to marry. After two days, the going is still rough for the brothers:

> At a table in the main room of the sexton's house sit the brothers, mouthing the alphabet as it is repeated to them by the sexton or his little eight-year-old daughter. Open ABC books in their hands, sweat standing out on their brows, they pore over their lessons. But only five of the Jukola brothers are to be seen on the bench by the table. Where are Juhani and Timo? There they stand in the corner of shame near the door, their hair still tousled from the grasp of the sexton's strong hand. (Kivi 43)

The brothers are so humiliated by having a small girl teach them and so incensed by the sexton's rough treatment that they escape from his house through a window. It takes them a couple of tumultuous years before they are ready to apply themselves to this task again. Eventually, each of them learns to read. They can make sense of the Bible and, perhaps more importantly, read the newspapers, thus staying abreast of what is going on in the world. The youngest and smartest of the lot even makes himself a career in journalism.

There is, of course, a long way to go from learning the technical skills of reading to reading literature. In contemporary western world, the cares of these seven bull-headed young men seem remote. With near universal literacy, reading does not seem to pose any problems. Yet on a closer look, there are intriguing similarities and convergences between then and now. It is a truism that literature does not exist unless there is someone who reads it. We are used to thinking of reading as a meeting of text and reader. We are familiar with debates about which of the two dominates this encounter: do the embedded reception structures, conceptualized as, for example, the distinction between authorial and narrative audiences, guide the reader's response? Or is reading primarily steered by reading strategies that are institutionally formed? New dimensions were added to this debate, however, when it was realized that reading is not simply a matter of relating content to form, but also responds to a text's materiality. Juhani, the eldest of the brothers in Kivi's novel, squeezes the ABC book in his hands, as if trying to force its offering physically into his head. We tend to think of reading as a purely mental activity, while, for example, in the eighteenth century when reading started to catch on more widely, it was primarily regarded as involving the body. In Karin Littau's words, reading brings together two bodies, 'one made of paper and ink, the other of flesh and blood' (Littau 37). The covers, the quality of paper, the fonts and layouts of books affect our reading. This physical dimension was better recognized in earlier times, when reading aloud was a common practice. The seven brothers read aloud, as if the sound of the voice helped them to catch on faster to the tricks of reading. Indeed, sensing the voice reverberate in the chest emphasizes the physical nature of reading.

Today, the growing awareness of its physicality involves a heightened perception of the effects of reading. Besides whetting our imaginations and challenging our intellect, reading affects our emotions. It supplies not only occasions for interpretation but also opportunities for feeling. Reading may excite us, make us weep, make us angry and anxious, or soothe us. It is because reading moves us in many ways that we find it pleasurable – or even painful. An important realization garnered from discussions and debates about reading concerns the fact that reading is historically variable, and physically as well as emotionally conditioned.

In his *Bring on the Books for Everyone*, Jim Collins places the renewed interest in questions relating to reading within the current cultural context. These issues, he argues, cannot be adequately discussed by referring solely to the triad of author, text and reader. Never before have

so many people learnt how to read. Project Gutenberg's digital versions of over 50,000 public-domain books and Google's venture to digitize the libraries of five research universities are examples of the unprecedented availability of books to these readers. New delivery systems such as Amazon, and blockbuster film adaptations of both classics and high literary fiction, as well as numerous book clubs, book sites, internet chat rooms and reading apps shape the contexts and expectations of readers. There are new agents on the scene such as bloggers, who have usurped much of the authority that literary critics and academics used to have as gatekeepers of literary value and acceptable modes of reading (Collins, *Bring on the Books* 2, 4, 7, 9).

Hence, Collins emphasizes that what is needed today is 'a redefinition of what literary reading means within the heart of electronic culture' (*Bring on the Books* 3). This redefinition targets all the key areas of reading: who reads, how we read, what we read as well as where we read (4). We should add 'why' – the reasons and goals of reading – to this list. In this context, it is worth noticing that such scholars as Collins and Rita Felski point to the rich variety of so-called ordinary or lay readers in their urge to academic scholars to rethink reading. Do we have an accurate picture of the rationales and goals of lay reading? Moreover, academic readers are also lay readers, which reminds us of the fact that one's roles may be multiple and overlapping while reading. Felski emphasizes that reading is much more varied, complex, and often also unpredictable than literary theory has hitherto acknowledged (Felski 136). We could learn valuable lessons, not only about reading but also about literary works, by being more open minded about the diverse goals and conventions of reading. After all, reading for pleasure and reading for study, for example, are shaped by different strategies.

Reading difficult texts

Reading Today reflects some of the issues raised by the current contexts of reading. The first group of chapters tackles what may be characterized as a rather traditional set of questions, in that it considers features that make reading difficult. The seven brothers' difficulties result not only from having to learn the alphabet and string letters together to form sensible words and sentences, but also from the demanding nature of the text. The diction and style of the smaller catechism was not familiar to Finnish peasants even though it was written in their native tongue. Moreover, the ethical teaching that the catechism provided was both

ideationally and conceptually demanding. Like all readers, the brothers encounter unfamiliar worlds, strange expressions and wilfully distorted forms that make even the most skilful readers pause and fret. They have to labour hard in order to sketch the new perspectives the text provides, learning simultaneously how to create a world mediated by language. Complex textual passages make us aware that reading is a matter of both comprehension and interpretation. They may tax us with ambiguous words, imprecise syntax, contradictions between what the text says and what it does. As Jonathan Culler points out, when we read literature the task, then, is not primarily to resolve these stumbling blocks in the way of reading. Instead, such purposefully complex passages or even whole books call on us to ponder what tactics and techniques we should resort to while reading in order to deal with challenges to our understanding and interpretation. Culler characterizes this response as directing attention to 'how meaning is produced or conveyed, to what sorts of literary and rhetorical strategies and techniques are deployed to achieve what the reader takes to be the effects of the work or passage. Thus it involves poetics as much as hermeneutics' (Culler 22).

Most obviously, various types of experimental fiction whose goal is to explore and break against the boundaries of conventions provide ample examples in light of which to examine the question of reading challenging texts. By definition, experimental literature complicates reading by refusing to fit to the familiar, the conventional and the already known and, for example, by defying attempts to make it yield a narrative. In these ways, it purposefully makes access cumbersome. Typically, the academic study of reading has found such texts particularly rewarding. In the first chapter, Natalya Bekhta considers cases that verge partly or wholly on the unreadable – at least, on first reading. By impeding sensemaking and interpretation, these cases compel readers to consider not only what accounts for unreadability but also how it can be overcome. Such texts require careful and innovative rereading in order for readers to be able to devise new reading strategies that fit and do justice to the difficulties the texts present. Thus, a suitable (re)reading in this instance refers to safeguarding purposefully the text's strangeness as well as finding pleasure and meaning, for example, in affective responses. Whatever strategy a reader comes up with, the upshot is that readers are ingenious in finding modes and strategies that respect that which is challenging, yet nevertheless find ways to deal with it in a meaningful way. Hence, texts that appear unreadable do not usually remain in this state.

A demonstration of what reading a contemporary experimental novel may require follows, as Laura Piippo tackles *Neuromaani*, a

non-linear, rhizomatic text that cannot be read in a sequential manner. Instead, readers are forced to make choices about their reading paths, many of which lead either to a dead end or to a character's death. During reading, they are made to turn the book around in their hands, as well as skip and skim its pages. One set of instructions would even lead to making the novel physically unreadable by drilling a hole in it and tying it up. Piippo concludes that a fitting reading strategy is a materialist one that pays attention to this book's material being, such as its covers and the way they feel. From there, attention moves to narrative materials that are linked with the book's cultural-historical context. Having to handle the book physically as well as struggling with reading produces affections, various bodily states in the reader as a response to reading. Hence, books such as *Neuromaani* compel us to approach reading as an integrated, holistic experience.

Vesa Kyllönen and Juha-Pekka Kilpiö meet the challenges of reading from specified angles. A major incentive to reading fiction is learning about new things such as unfamiliar worlds, historical eras, remote cultures and so on. What happens when novelists intentionally cram their books with information about virtually everything? What becomes of the role of knowledge in reading when there is simply too much information for anyone to process? Kyllönen probes the functions of such excesses in contemporary encyclopedic novels that strive to be about every conceivable thing. With this genre, readers encounter the challenge of handling what he calls an overheated system, an illusion of the totality of knowledge. By tracing and imitating the strategies characters use in handling information, readers may form a sense of specific structures organizing its overflow. Readers part ways with characters, however, in learning to see the artificial and local nature of all such structures. Hence, all attempts in encyclopedic novels to control the abundance of information, not to speak of mastering it, are bound to remain chimeric.

For his part, Kilpiö focuses on what he terms *kinekphrasis*, a particular form of intermediality that deals with verbal representations of cinema and any form of moving pictures in literature. By discussing Mark Z. Danielewski's *The House of Leaves*, Kilpiö suggests that we relate what Espen Aarseth calls textonomy, an examination of how a book functions, to textology, a study of how different media are discussed in the discourse as well as the kinds of meanings these media are assigned. Kilpiö, too, uses the characters' explorations as cues to what the novel's readers are doing while trying to interpret the layered commentaries and metatexts. He concludes that the discourse

among various medialities provides the weightiest nexus to reading such books as Danielewski's.

Reading in contemporary multimedia environments

Let us now briefly return to the seven brothers' difficulties in learning to read that resonate with the contemporary situation. Part of their humiliation stems from the fact that the sexton's eight-year-old daughter teaches grown men to read. Many readers today face a similar situation of having to ask for help from their children or teenagers in order to learn to read in contemporary multimedia environments. A host of new challenges has emerged, thanks to changing reading habits required by these environments. New technologies have created new platforms on which to read: we have desktops, laptops, e-readers (Kindle), tablets (iPad) and handheld devices (phones, iPod Touch). By presenting the content in the age-old familiar format of the page, a rectangular surface with a limited amount of information and accessed in a particular order, they appear to provide a similar reading experience to that of a book (Manovich 73). Yet these platforms also add new dimensions to the page format. For example, the graphical user interface presents information in overlapping windows stacked behind one another. This organization resembles a set of book pages, but the user-reader can not only go back and forth between pages but also scroll through individual pages. Consequently, the traditional page turns into a virtual one that is managed by scrolling up and down in a window (Manovich 74). One must learn how to manage these devices, which offer all kinds of possibilities. Many books combine different media that require skills of clicking, tapping, mousing and navigating in a vast media environment. Further, one can now adjust the text's font or the brightness of its background; while reading, one may immediately look up strange words in a dictionary or search for inter-textual or intermedial allusions in the web. Lev Manovich observes that the inclusion of hyperlinks in the computer page format defies familiar notions of hierarchy, because the various sources connected through hyperlinks have equal weight. He argues that this innovation has had two significant consequences. It reflects the contemporary suspicion of all hierarchies, favouring the aesthetics of collage, and it 'flattens' the reading experience. This flattening effect arises directly from the lack of hierarchy, as individual texts infinitely lead to other texts with no particular order (Manovich 76–7).

This general sense of flatness may have invited a questioning of the symptomatic model of reading, associated with both ideological critique and psychoanalysis. This symptomatic practice seeks a latent meaning behind a manifest one, for it holds that a text's meaning lies in what it does not, cannot, or ought not say. It is the task of reading to dig up these signifying layers that constitute the text's 'true' meaning. In this view, the textual surface is not thought to require close examination; therefore, it is seen as superficial and deceptive (Best and Marcus 4). Yet what is called surface reading pays attention to what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible and not hidden or hiding in texts. It looks *at* the surface instead of looking through it. It insists that reading tactics bent on problematizing, interrogating and subverting texts have completely forgotten the complexities of literary surfaces. Surface reading thus treats, for example, the textual surface as materiality, as hosting complex verbal structures of literary language, as evoking affects, and as enabling critical descriptions of what a text actually says about itself (Best and Marcus 9–13). Thanks to its rejection of the depth hermeneutic, it takes texts at face value, focusing on what is said literally. To use Sharon Marcus's example, when female friendships in Victorian novels are not read as a veil for forbidden lesbian desire, one notices that these relationships frequently remain central even after the protagonists' marriage. Hence, letting friendship mean friendship highlights visible features in these novels that symptomatic reading has paradoxically made invisible (Best and Marcus 12).

The new reading devices raise questions about their effects. Apparently, reading on an electronic platform differs from reading a hard copy. Do its material properties require a new reading strategy? One solution has been to distinguish between deep or slow and quick reading strategies that consider the specific goals of reading. Slow reading is related to the New Critical practice of close reading that lingers over textual details and analyses form and structure, as well as constructing and negotiating meanings. Scholars such as John Miedema and Tom Newkirk observe that this practice, however, also refers to the deliberately unhurried pace of reading as an antidote to the skimming, skipping and click-and-go strategies associated with quick reading. The latter is typically linked with electronic reading platforms. Whereas quick reading does not aim to retain the content of reading in long-term memory, slow reading, in contrast, may even be considered a type of meditative exercise.

Undoubtedly, the nature of reading expands when we are reading on a platform that enables the download and playing of literature, films, television programmes and songs from the same sites and on the

same device. Reading becomes a new kind of activity when it is combined with intermediality – with viewing and listening. Anna Weigel and Matti Kangaskoski, in their respective chapters, use examples of works existing in printed and electronic versions in order to compare how reading a printed text differs from reading the same text on an electronic device, such as a tablet or a smartphone. Weigel focuses on transmedial and interactive literature featuring complementary music, interviews, pictures and film trailers that readers access via a specially designed app. Although print and electronic versions convey the same narrative, they do not provide the same reading experience, she concludes. Transmedia storytelling requires us to broaden the concept of the narrative text, as its auditive and (moving) pictorial elements interrupt and even disturb the reading experience. These same elements, however, also deepen our understanding of the story world as well as enabling a rounded emotional involvement.

Kangaskoski emphasizes the different reading strategies required by print and digital texts. The conventional reading tactic of following a linear, preorganized sequence that can be applied to the print version of Stephanie Strickland's *V* cannot profitably be applied to its digital version. Given the fact that the latter makes possible an astronomical number of possible combinations and reading trajectories, reading cannot but trace each reader's unique, individual path. Consequently, reading becomes a playful putting together of subjective and personal collages that possibly no other reader ever assembles. This strategy is becoming increasingly familiar from what Collins calls play-list culture ('Use of Narrativity' 654), which prizes an individual reader's choices as a means of identity formation as well as expressions of the self.

Self-recognition in reading

Seven Brothers reminds us of the fact that reading has been thought of as having nutritional value: the Bible, as the primary reading matter, was held to nourish both body and soul. Even if we no longer entertain such religious views, we nevertheless tend to hold on to the idea that reading has remarkable positive effects on us. It expands our horizons by allowing us to experience lives beyond our own, to see what the world looks like from other points of view and to watch characters who are not us but who resemble us (Schwarz 13–15). Harold Bloom reminds us that the fundamental goal of reading is the development of the self. In his view, reading is the most healing of pleasures because the mind

is expanded, not anaesthetized. As Daniel Schwarz remarks, reading calls upon us to respond fully, with every dimension of our being (15). Felski concurs, observing that literary theory offers few tools for exploring lay readers' experience and has difficulties conceding that literature may be valued for different, even incommensurable reasons. Readers frequently feel accosted by books: they have a sense of being 'addressed, summoned, called to account' whenever they see aspects of themselves in the text they are reading. Such an experience may be evoked by characters, specific situations, questions and challenges these characters face, the emotions events evoke, styles of diction, and so on. These passages provide moments of recognition, when readers appreciate something that is deeply familiar to them yet realize its simultaneous strangeness, for they see it from a new point of view. Literary texts provide them with different personas, perspectives and vocabularies to help them examine and ponder themselves. What was perhaps a diffuse intimation or a vague sensation becomes visible and acquires a distinct shape during reading. Hence, reading becomes a means of gaining better self-knowledge.

Achieving a better-tuned sense of self is but one benefit, however, for often the experience of recognizing oneself in a book involves the feeling of being included in a community of like-minded creatures. Therefore, recognition often provides comfort as well as alleviating loneliness. Collins links these views to the current understanding of reading as a form of self-transformation. Among the goals of reading today is the endeavour of shaping the self so that one becomes, as it were, 'truer' and 'closer' to oneself. In fact, for many readers it has a real therapeutic element that helps them to deal with all kinds of personal issues. Consequently, reading is transformed into a form of self-help (Collins, *Bring on the Books* 10–11).

Yet, as Felski points out, the significance of reading cannot be reduced to address readers only as individuals. Having the validity of one's experience acknowledged invites readers to engage in social diagnosis and ethical judgement as well, as, for example, postcolonial literature has amply shown. The sense of affiliation created through reading makes groups and communities visible, gives them a voice, and enables them to participate in sociocultural and political debates through literature.

Stefano Rossoni, Vappu Kannas, Serena Cacchioli and Ryanne Keltjens take on such issues as these in their chapters. Rossoni discusses how two famous readers, Don Quixote and Madame Bovary, problematize reading through their intense efforts to interpret the world around

them. Their misguided activity enables readers of these novels to probe the textual strategies through which narrative shapes the sense of our lives as well as providing access to our emotions. In spite of their delusions (or perhaps thanks to being delusional?) these two characters nevertheless carve out a space of freedom in their reading that, Rossoni argues, is a location of sensuality and pleasure. Therefore, these two figures probe the affective effects of reading.

Kannas considers these effects from another perspective when she analyses the written responses of Finnish readers to L. M. Montgomery's books in order to consider what a love-filled reading experience is. *Anne of Green Gables* and *Emily of New Moon* have been the objects of readers' passionate embrace for decades, but the academic context has long disparaged reading based on emotions and loyalty. Yet reading in childhood and young adulthood supplies for many the most memorable and lasting experiences that often are repeated regularly through rereading. Arguing that these encounters are based on equality among author, text and reader, as well as a sense of a reading community, Kannas concludes that, thanks to the emotional staying power of these books, they become parts of the self.

Serena Cacchioli in turn examines a humorous bestseller, *The Novel Cure*, the purpose of which is to offer bibliotherapy for various ailments. While probing the therapeutic potentiality of reading is still largely an unexplored field, what makes this case intriguing is that its versions in various languages differ from one another. Translations were intentionally adapted to each nationality's stereotypical conceptions of the types of psychic and physical problems it suffers from. Cacchioli's comparison thus targets both playful notions of what cures 'national' illnesses and adaptive translation strategies.

Keltjens provides yet another perspective to reading as self-improvement by considering the role of literary criticism in educating Dutch middle-class readers about what and how to read. In particular, she focuses on the critic Gerard van Eckeren's activities as a critic whose self-appointed task was to try to disseminate such knowledge about literature as would enable the growing middle class to enjoy reading both emotionally and intellectually. In Van Eckeren's reasoning, if reading experiences are pleasurable, readers may be encouraged to venture outside their comfort zones, at least occasionally trying texts more intellectually demanding than middle-brow bestsellers. What is noteworthy in his criticism is its inclusion of emotions as an indispensable component of reading if it is to have a lasting impact – a view that is only now being taken up in earnest.

Of the seven brothers, the brooding Simeoni is most deeply affected personally by learning to read religious texts: they feed his depression and gloominess. Simeoni fully throws himself into the Bible's apocalyptic visions, the frightening effects of which invade his mind whenever he is binge-drinking. This rather bleak example reminds us of the widely ranging emotions literature evokes in readers. That literary texts have this capacity to make us feel supplies a strong reason for engaging in reading. In fact, Jenefer Robinson insists that many works must be experienced emotionally if they are to be properly understood. For one thing, readers not only resort to their cognitive abilities in filling in textual gaps, but also draw on their emotions in doing so. Readers' emotional responses are indispensable in understanding characters, narrated situations and the significance of events, for example. Consequently, if we are to form a full appreciation of all aspects of reading, we must learn how emotions enter into interpretation and how they manage and guide readers' responses through the manipulation of literary form. Further, if Robinson is correct in her claim that literature – and the arts more generally – are among the most effective means for an education of emotions, it is a pressing concern for literary research to study how that education takes place through reading.

Reading in context

Although the seven brothers are illiterate for the most part of Kivi's novel, they are masterful narrators. In many scenes one of them tells others a story or recites a poem. When these oral stories, some of which are based on folkloric material widely known at the time of Kivi's writing, are incorporated into a novel, their meaning changes. The present volume concludes with an examination of the role context plays in reception. Marjo Vallittu probes context's significance with the help of film adaptations of novels, as the (potential) differences between the text to be adapted and the resulting film adaptation enable her to put her finger on the underlying reasons for these alterations. By building a model of a textual context, understood as the overlapping core shared by the adapted text and its adaptation with extratextual contexts, comprising such elements as intertextuality, temporal frameworks, and director's intentions and audience's expectations, she examines the circle of reception and interpretation enabling viewers to 'read' a film adaptation.

Reading Today acquaints its readers with various strategies and techniques of reading and their theoretical underpinnings. Although

there is a good deal of variation among these strategies, they do share a common platform: reading still matters. Perhaps, in today's media clutter, it matters more than ever before. Reading skills are in demand, if one is to navigate the contemporary overflow of literary and other texts. These skills involve an arsenal of different tactics and a shrewdness to judge what tactic to use with different text types and purposes of reading. There is often a shared goal: namely, to understand how exactly texts are put together, how they create meaning and how they affect us. Moreover, whatever tactic one opts for, the use of the chosen tactic requires practice and skill. Thus, one may say that learning to read, whether for study or pleasure or any other purpose, is a life-long task.

The varied chapters of this collection reflect the issues concerning readers and reading that interest young scholars within the Hermes Consortium for Literary and Cultural Studies. Their first drafts were discussed at the University of Helsinki during the Consortium's annual meeting in June 2014. The Hermes Consortium is a longstanding collaboration among the University of Aarhus (Denmark), the University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Charles University (the Czech Republic), University College London (UK), Justus Liebig University of Giessen (Germany), the University of Helsinki (Finland), the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium), the University of Lisbon (Portugal), the University of Montpellier (France), the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison (USA). The editors wish to thank the members of this Consortium for their feedback and commitment to this volume, and also Pielpa Ollikainen for her invaluable help in compiling the index.

Part I
Reading challenges

1
Reading experimental literature: unreadability, discomfort and reading strategies

Natalya Bekhta

In what follows I discuss unreadability and its relation to reading and interpretation of experimental literature. What precisely does unreadability mean? Where can it be located? How far does it impede reading and can it be overcome? I want to address these questions within the frameworks of narratology and literary pragmatics, and suggest that in some cases, if not most, unreadability is a productive textual quality: it forces the reader to look for new reading strategies. Located in the text and in the reader, unreadability may be described as a reading difficulty as well as its effect. It is produced by complications on the levels of textual comprehension and interpretation. In other words, the reader, if encountering a text that resists sense-making or meaning-making, is faced with a problem of finding reading strategies that would 'fit' the given text and help uncover its meaning.

I discuss the unreadable in relation to comprehension and interpretation, which – inevitably, it seems – will draw on examples from what is considered experimental fiction. I start by looking into the phenomena of readability and unreadability, their effects and connotations. To understand the causes of reading difficulties, I then adopt Nils Erik Enkvist's pragmatic approach towards understanding literature and test it on the examples from Futurist poetry by Mykhajl' Semenko and from Gertrude Stein; these texts are typically considered 'unreadable'.[1] Dealing with these texts leads me, in the final part of the chapter, to discuss reading strategies that are at play before, during and after reading unconventional fiction. Some of these strategies, such as naturalization, have already been described in detail but nevertheless need revisiting, and some that have been observed just recently, such as 'Zen reading', need closer scrutiny.

Unreadability: its meaning, location and effects

Essentially, 'unreadable' simply means 'incapable of being read'. This happens, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), because the text is '1. Illegible through ill-formed or indistinct characters', or '2. Not interesting, enjoyable, or engaging enough for the reader to continue reading', or '3. Physically inaccessible to a reader' (*OED* s.v. 'unreadable').[2] In literary critical language, however, this qualifier encompasses questions as to why certain texts are more difficult than others to understand and whether these reading difficulties can be overcome, leaving physical illegibility aside. Often used as a synonym for 'uninterpretable', 'unreadable' also frequently refers to 'experimental' (see Federman 24; Orr 131).[3] But all three qualifiers escape a more precise description.

In search for more precision let me start from the opposite position: what does it mean if one says that a book is 'readable'? Readability has many connotations as well: from legibility, comprehensibility, clarity, to more subjective judgements of being 'easy, enjoyable, or interesting to read; written in a lively or attractive style' (*OED* s.v. 'readable'). As Raymond Federman, a writer of experimental fiction himself, puts it, readability is 'what reassures us in a text … of what we already know, what comforts us because we easily and pleasurably recognize the world (at a glance) and ourselves in the world (at another glance) in what we read' (26). The pleasure of recognition and familiarity seems to be crucial here. Federman's formulation of readability reminds us of Jonathan Culler's description of reading as a process of naturalization. Culler observes that literature in general – and not just its experimental specimens – is

> something other than ordinary communication; its formal and fictional qualities bespeak a strangeness, a power, an organization, a permanence which is foreign to ordinary speech. Yet the urge to assimilate that power and permanence or to let that formal organization work upon us requires us to make literature into a communication, to reduce its strangeness … The strange, the formal, the fictional, must be recuperated or naturalized, brought within our ken, if we do not want to remain gaping before monumental inscriptions. (Culler 134)

To naturalize, in general, means to *understand* literature, that is, to understand it as having a communicative function and 'to bring [a text] into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some

sense, natural and legible' (Culler 138). In the formal sense, then, a readable text is familiar in its form and conventions and its story is constructible. In an ontological sense, which is also implied in Federman's and Culler's descriptions, the familiarity of a readable text can be described in terms of a recognizable world to which it refers. Federman compares readable with realist: 'That comfortableness of readability is there because the text sends the reader back to reality, or allows the reader to play his little mental cinema of realism beyond the language' (28). If this mental cinema of realism means the rolling out of a story, then a readable text is such that can be narrativized and its storyworld is easily constructed and understandable. In this case, however, there is no direct correlation between such two meanings of readability as (1) the ease of recognition of the narrative's storyworld and (2) a quality that makes a text interesting to read. If anything, in laying bare all its tricks or offering no complications such an 'easy' narrative may become quite boring and, in this sense, unreadable. I return to this type of unreadability while discussing Stein's text below.

Narrativization, more generally, refers to a process by which a text is read as a narrative. In the definition of Jan Alber, 'the process of narrativisation consists of giving narrative form to a discourse for the purpose of facilitating a better understanding of the represented phenomena' (Alber, 'Narrativisation' 386); that is, it is a process of emplotment or search for a story. Alber goes on to specify that 'when readers are confronted with difficult or even potentially unreadable texts, they consciously look for ways to recuperate them as narratives' (387). But, if conscious narrativization is a default or privileged approach to an understanding of a fictional text, as Alber implies, what happens if the text obstructs a reconstruction of a story or, more radically, resists narrative logic altogether? I suggest that it is precisely this failure to 'recuperate' certain texts as narratives that can produce the anxious effects of unreadability.

Unreadability, then, is something that cannot be easily narrativized – for the texts whose form is conventionally expected to be narrative – or naturalized otherwise. In other words, an unreadable text cannot be tackled with the help of usual reading strategies. Tanya Clement, for example, observes this about Stein's *The Making of Americans*, whose 'repetitive form, critics argue, renders the reader's usual processes of making meaning useless' (Clement 362). The 'usual' established processes and strategies are those that rely on the dominant conventions of reading and writing existing at a given point in time, which, in turn, draw on the dominant critical-philosophical approaches to literature. Thus, for

example, the novelistic genre conventionally assumes a narrative form, and so in the case of a novel such as *The Making of Americans* the reader sets out by expecting its sentences to construct a story, with characters and events, by providing information relevant for this construction and by omitting insignificant or already-mentioned details, and so on. A usual reading strategy also proceeds by noting relevant formal information for a subsequent overarching interpretation.

Such linear progression through an 'unreadable' text can easily fail: in Stein's text, it will fail because of the sheer abundance of formally significant but story-unrelated information, among other things, which almost demands some sort of computational aid to be processed. But more of this text later. Unreadability is thus often mentioned in the context of negative reactions from readers: Alber, for example, talks of experimental or unusual texts as causing 'considerable, sometimes unsettling interpretative difficulties' ('Impossible Storyworlds' 80): 'feelings of discomfort, fear and worry' (83). Another narratologist, H. Porter Abbott, describes the pain of reading such 'difficult' texts – albeit in a different context for unreadability – coming from the reader's strive to naturalize ('Unreadable Minds' 461), 'the frustrating discord … between the experience of reading and the attempt to create a satisfactory overarching interpretation' (*Real Mysteries* 11). For Federman it is something that 'disorients us in a text' (27).

For the purposes of figuring out what causes this frustrating unreadability and where the roots of the readerly disorientation are located in the text, I would like to take on Enkvist's model for understanding literature. Even though unreadability is located both in the text and in the reader, I shall not address the latter side here in much detail: a cognitive approach would be able to tackle this issue better, with attention to what reactions certain textual features prompt up to what cognitive models and modes of comprehension are activated when readers engage with texts that are difficult for them. Nevertheless, in my attempt to suggest specific textual sources of unreadablity with the help of Enkvist's model the reader is inevitably implied. According to this model, the reader's engagement with literary texts proceeds through levels of intelligibility, comprehension and interpretation. Reading is, essentially, understanding or interpretation, the assigning of meaning to a text rather than a mere ability to reproduce the sounds of the letters on a page (see Rabinowitz 15; Best and Marcus 1), and this understanding can be explained in terms of an interplay of strategies – or procedures – on three levels.

On the starting level of understanding, on the level of *intelligibility*, a text is clear and readable if one recognizes its phonological, lexical and syntactic structures (Enkvist 7). If we are not able to do so because we do not know the language or physically cannot make out the text, this constitutes a fairly simple illegibility and I would like to dismiss it from this discussion. If we are able to do so, we go on to assign a definite meaning (or, a semantic structure) to the text, that is, we *comprehend* its linguistic structures. And then we go on to a more abstract pragmatic level and *interpret* the text or, as Enkvist puts it, 'build around that text a scenario, a text world, a set of states of affairs, in which that text makes sense' (7). So, reading proceeds from the lexical-syntactic to the semantic and ends in the pragmatic.

Such movement of textual understanding, of course, is not unidirectional, and the relations among the three levels are quite complex. The comprehension of a literary text – and here I would like to further Enkvist's argument – is, for example, even more complex than semantic-linguistic comprehension and often already involves (automatized) strategies of naturalization (i.e. certain strategies of interpretation). In general, however, the three distinctions are useful for locating reading strategies and the processes behind them, and can thus help to point out the source of reading difficulties. This model, moreover, applies as well to narrative texts as to non-narrative ones.

Thus, unreadability and the accompanying feelings of discomfort come, arguably, from difficulties on the levels of comprehending or interpreting a text or both, but not on the level of intelligibility. This effect of discomfort comes from a repetitive frustration of the attempts to understand the text locally – when the text fails to make sense on the level of comprehension – or from the inability to link what is being read within a totality of an overarching interpretation. And if the text fails to become meaningful for the reader on one of these levels, then it fails to become interesting, pleasing or easy, and thus readable. Unreadability, to reiterate, arises either from a relationship between textual difficulties or unusualness and readerly disinterest. At the same time, it can be overcome by finding a suitable reading strategy that will get readers through the text or, in other words, will allow them to gather the information necessary to make an interpretation. Before discussing what these ways of reading may be, I propose to take a closer look at several examples of experimental texts that are habitually treated as unreadable: two Futurist poems and a modernist novel.

Examples of the unreadable

Futurists, aggressively going after conventional metre, syntax or general intelligibility of poems, make a good example of the difficulties on the first two levels of reading: on the levels of intelligibility and comprehension (which are always at play at the same time during reading).[4] To make matters more linguistically interesting, let me consider the poems by a Ukrainian poet-Futurist, Mykhajl' Semenko (1892–1937).

The first poem offers a complication on the level of intelligibility. Thematically relying on romanticist images of an idyllic scenery that soothes souls, the poem violates the syntactical rules of Ukrainian by splitting and recombining words and parts of sentences in new ways. Here are its four first lines with a transliteration (to eliminate potential illegibility for non-Ukrainian speakers) and a version of these lines in a standard syntax:

VI	VI
тихоплеще сярічка душі	tykhoplesche sjarichka dushi
кнійсхиливши сясплять комиші	knijskhylyvshy sjaspljat komyshi
біломісяць урічці заснув	bilomisjats′ urichtsi zasnuv
тишу небайземлі пригорнув	tyshu nebajzemli pryhornuv
Standard syntax:	
Тихо плеще ся річка душі,	Tykho plesche sja richka dúshí,
к ній схилившися сплять комиші.	k nij skhylyvshysja spljat komyshí.
Біло(-)місяць у річці заснув,	Bilo (-) misjats′ u richtsi zasnuv,
тишу неба й землі пригорнув.	tyshu neba j zemli pryhornuv

(Semenko, *Kvero-Futurism*)

This text is phonologically and lexically intelligible: knowing the language, the reader has no difficulty in recognizing separate words and roots of words, prepositions and endings brought together or split in defiance of the syntactical rules of Ukrainian. But some syntactical decisions remain unintelligible and, hence, some comprehension conclusions cannot be arrived at. Working through the level of intelligibility of this poem, the reader has to engage procedures from higher levels too: for example, her knowledge of rhyming patterns to decide where to put the correct stress. The change of stress on the word 'души'/'dushi' changes the meaning of the phrase 'плеще ся річка душі': 'plesche sja richka dúshí' means 'this river splashes the souls' and 'plesche sja richka dushí' means 'this river of the soul splashes'. But since the rhyming word 'komyshí' has a fixed stress, this ambiguity can be solved. The phrase 'bilomisjats″,

however, can mean both 'bilo [adverb] misjats" ('moon, whitely') or 'bilo-misjats" ('white moon'). As its syntactical position is unintelligible, on the level of comprehension this phrase's two meanings exist simultaneously, forcefully making the reader aware of the semantic paradigm of the language. These problems with intelligibility do not make the text unreadable but enrich its comprehension and interpretation. However small these complications on the level of syntactical intelligibility, they foreground the moves in comprehension. The most striking feature of this text becomes apparent in reading it aloud: easily recognized phonological and lexemic structures make the reader automatically, through intonation patterns, fill in their syntactic functions, which the text then instantly defeats. This peculiarity of syntax can be interpreted as a statement against the automatization of language use through conventions and learnt structures. The poem itself then becomes a play with the conventions and trite lyrical language of romanticist poetry.

Thus, the first poem, even if not entirely intelligible, is comprehensible and interpretable. The next Semenko text is intelligible only phonologically and, in a very limited way, lexically. It is thus completely incomprehensible but nevertheless could be interpreted:[5]

СТАЛО ЛЬО ТАЛО	STALO LJO TALO
АЛО РЮЗО	ALO RJUZO
ЮЗО	JUZO
БІРЮЗО	BIRJUZO
ОСТАЛО КВАЛЬО МАЛО	OSTALO KVALJO MALO
ЛЬО	LJO
О	O

1914, Kyiv (Semenko, *Derzannja*)

This combination of letters is phonologically intelligible, some lexemes – the roots of some words – can be recognized (e.g. *málo* can mean 'little' or 'it had') but the text is essentially incomprehensible and thus unreadable. Both those who speak Ukrainian and those who do not are in the same position here. Even though speakers of the language may find some familiar roots, it is impossible to assign to them any definite semantic meaning or syntactic functions. But, if an adequate reading strategy is applied, this unreadability can be overcome: if we accept that comprehension is not important for this poem, we skip it and move to the pragmatic level of interpretation. There we can look for ways of explaining the function and meaning of the text, for example, with the help of our knowledge of futuristic poetry

as such, where semantic comprehension is not required. Generally, as new types of texts, for which there were no previously established reading strategies, become widespread, and readers become more and more trained in new conventions of reading, the unreadability effects diminish (cf. Orr 123).

My third example is an excerpt from a perfectly intelligible prose text that is also comprehensible (to those who speak English) but nevertheless a very likely candidate to be put down in frustration as unreadable. Why? Stein's *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress* is a bulky text of over 900 pages that 'defeats meaning making' (Clement 361) because it is repetitive, seemingly chaotic and unsystematic, is called 'a postmodern exercise in incomprehensibility' by its critics (361) and makes its local or global interpretation difficult. Interpretation, when viewed as a search for patterns and structures, fails, because on this level Stein's text becomes too much for the reader to process, with all its repetitions and obscure syntax. An unreadable text 'clogs the machinery', to use Enkvist's metaphor (18), by offering information too great in density that becomes difficult to organize and, hence, unreadable. In the case of *The Making of Americans* this overload is in syntactic information that yields very little new semantic information and thus not much for the reader's default method of constructing a story. Despite narrative expectations provoked by the novel's title ('a history of a family's progress'), it is difficult to read as a linear temporal unfolding of a story about a family because of its peculiar syntactic arrangement. The syntactic patterns evidently bear a lot of significance for the text's meaning but they are too intricate in their interrelation and only very minutely different from each other in their alternations to keep track of during a usual reading.

As an example of the novel's progression I suggest looking at the following excerpt from its first section, where Henry Dehning and his children are introduced. I also list two paragraphs preceding this excerpt (in shortened versions) to demonstrate the interrelation of repetitions between adjacent paragraphs as well as within one paragraph:

> **'Yes', he would often say to his children** […]. **Not that he**, Dehning, was ever very dreadful to his children […]. **No it is only by long** equal living that […]. **No, they only really can** get rid of such a feeling […]. **But mostly** for all children […].
>
> **Not, we repeat**, that the Dehnings had much of such a feeling […] **But always** they had something of that dread in them […].
>
> **'Yes', he would often say to his children**, 'Yes I say to <u>you children</u>, you have an easy time of it nowadays doing nothing.

Well! What! yes, **you** think you always have to have everything you can ever think of wanting. **Well I guess yes**, **you** have to *have your horses and your teachers and your music and your tutors* and *all kinds of modern improvements* and you can't ever do things for yourself, you always have to have somebody there to do it for you; **well, yes you children** have an easy time of it nowadays doing nothing. **Yes I had it very differently** when I was a boy like George here who is just a lazy good for nothing. I didn't have *all these new fangled notions*. I was already earning my own living and giving myself my own education. **Well! What! yes! well I say it to you**, you have no idea what an easy time you children all have nowadays just doing nothing. And my poor mother, peace be with her, she never had her *own house and all kinds of servants* to wait on her like your mother. **Yes, well, your mother** has everything I can give her, not that she don't deserve everything I can give her, Miss Jenny is the best girl I know and she will always have it as easy as I can make it for her, but you children, you never have done anything yet to make it right that you should always be having everything so easy to you. **Yes, I say to you**, I don't see with *all these modern improvements* to always spoil you, you ever will be good to work hard like your father. **No all these** *modern kinds of improvements* never can do any good to anybody. **Yes, what, well, tell me**, you all like to be always explaining to me, **tell me exactly** what you are going to get from all these *your expensive modern kinds of ways of doing*. **Well I say, just tell me** some kind of way so that I can understand you. **You know I like to get** good value for my money, I always had a name for being pretty good at trading, **I say, you know I like to know** just what I am getting for my money and **you children** do certainly cost a great deal of my money, **now I say, tell me**, I am glad to listen to you, **I say you tell me** just what you are going to do, to make it good all this money. **Well what, what are** *all these kinds of improvements* going to do for you.' (Stein 35–7; my emphases)

The paragraphs from this excerpt (and from a larger context of this section) seem to share a rhythmic patter of affirmation and negation. The paragraph with Dehning's direct speech significantly relies on almost exclusively affirmative sentence beginnings, although the nature of this significance remains unclear for the reader. The paragraph reproduces some of the repetition patterns of the novel: *The Making of Americans* relies on longer and shorter variations of patterns, repeated in, for example, radiating relationship where the longer variants set the base theme

for a paragraph, opening and closing it. Shorter variants differ from each other only minutely or not at all. In the quoted paragraph, the rhythm is set by the affirmative, similar or same openings of sentences and clauses (marked in bold) and the father's speech circles around two major themes: that his children have it very easy nowadays, unlike he had in his time (underlined marking), and that this is because of all kinds of modern improvements (marked in italics) whose value he questions. The effect from reading a narration structured this way becomes stupefying after several pages.

Whilst to interpret Semenko's poems, readers did not need to comprehend them unambiguously (that is, they did not need to assign exclusive meanings to certain words or phrases) or did not need to comprehend them at all, to interpret Stein's novel readers need to rely on information that is comprehended. But how does one hold all the information relevant for interpretation in mind? A reading strategy conventional for a novel – that is, proceeding in a linear manner; recognizing the text's language and syntax; assigning semantic meanings and, on their basis, constructing the novel's story – does not bring much. And as there is no story, there is, arguably, not much motivation to go on reading. So, what a particularly persistent reader can do is to look for another reading strategy and circumstances in which this text can have meaning.

In the case of *The Making of Americans* an ingenious solution has been offered, for example, by Clement, who used digital tools to 'distant-read' the book by using text-mining tools and 'looking at the text "from a distance" through textual analytics and visualizations' (361). Having processed the novel's repetitions computationally, she was able to establish meaningful patterns that divide the novel into two structurally significant halves: the first half produces a narrative about a family and the second half functions 'to develop complexities and contradictions that complicate the knowledge produced in the first half … by using the same words and sequences introduced there, but using them in variation' (373). Moreover, within the two halves taken separately the repetitions stand in particular relation to each other. As Clement was able to establish, for example, there are alternations between the narrative and the repetitive sections in the first half that, once visible, can then be interpreted. In Clement's interpretation they serve as a comment on 'the circular nature of the Hersland family identity (in terms of its physical, familiar inheritance) and its history (in terms of its telling)' (376). But this already leads me to the question of what other reading strategies are at play in comprehension and interpretation of difficult texts and what their developments are.

Reading the unreadable

Describing the nature of unreadability, I mentioned that it is a quality of texts (and, simultaneously, an effect on readers) that cannot be easily naturalized or narrativized. While Enkvist's three-level model offers an understanding of the roots of unreadability and its effects, strategies of naturalization and narrativization contribute to a more specific description of procedures of reading. In what follows I shall give a short overview of these strategies and suggest that they have been predominantly extrapolated from and tested on narrative prose fiction. In other kinds of literary texts, they inevitably fail.

Naturalization in the broad sense refers to the act of reading itself (Culler 160): that is, to the act of understanding literature. In a more specific way, naturalization refers to five groups – or levels – of reading strategies that are involved in comprehension (naturalization of the first three levels) and interpretation (levels 4 and 5) of literature (Culler 140–59). In a nutshell, these strategies put a text in relation to what makes it comprehensible. Naturalization thus implies an act of relating a literary text to: (1) the 'real world', which means conformity (of a literary text) to what one believes is possible, or masking of 'the text's own laws' (139) and genre conventions, which makes the reader believe a text conforms to reality; (2) culture and cultural knowledge, which explain how readers comprehend stereotypes and culture-specific references – what is considered 'normal' or 'decent', and so on; (3) conventions of the text's genre, author's style, period and artistic agenda that 'make certain relevant expectations operative and thus … permit both compliance with and deviation from accepted modes of [comprehension]' (147); and (4) writing in general or narrative act in particular. Naturalization of level 5 stands somewhat apart, being a complex strategy of navigating within specific intertextualities that are at play, for example in the recognition and comprehension of parody or irony. Today Culler's model remains one of the most comprehensive, although unnatural narratologists have recently suggested several overviews of reading strategies at work in the understanding of difficult texts. These observations, for example in Alber ('Impossible Storyworlds', 'Unnatural Narratology'), nevertheless directly rely on the model of naturalization levels.[6]

In the descriptions above of the traditional reading strategies, as well as reading according to the new ones, I have already partially invoked the naturalization practices of level 3. Culler calls them 'models of a genre' (145), which subsume various strategies of making a

literary text intelligible, ranging from a general understanding of fiction to a specific set of literary norms of a genre (e.g. of Futurist poetry) and of a particular author's style and aesthetic-political agenda (e.g. Stein's views on the functions and form of the novel). These conventions make a text intelligible but, as Culler notes, are very often invoked in order to be subverted (148) and thus go hand in hand with the strategies of level 4. Naturalization level 4 groups those devices that aim at exposing 'the artifice of generic conventions and expectations' (148), which contributes to my enquiry into the reading strategies of experimental texts. As Culler himself notes, a naturalization procedure of this level 'becomes the most important' in reading of such texts because 'in one sense it has the advantage of being less reductive than others, for it need not resolve a difficulty but can recognize that what requires interpretation is the existence of a difficulty more than the difficulty itself' (151). This type of naturalization means taking into account implicit or explicit information, often from the text itself, that the text is not following literary conventions or does not make its meaning comply with generic expectations. Introductions to eighteenth-century novels or metacommentary work this way explicitly.

My examples above go about subverting the conventions of comprehension and interpretation applicable, for example, to romanticist poetry and narrative novels more subtly through formal experiments. A successful reading of these texts thus takes into account that the limits of literature's potential are only constrained by the limits of language. To naturalize a text this way means to interpret it 'as a narrator's [or author's, NB] exercise of language and production of meaning' and 'to read it as a statement about the writing of novels, a critique of mimetic fiction, an illustration of the production of a world by language' (Culler 150). This strategy, for example, describes the skipping of comprehension in Semenko's poems as an irresolvable difficulty, or recognizes the interpretative potential in these difficulties with intelligibility.

Thus, difficulties on the levels of intelligibility and/or comprehensibility, as I already mentioned, do not impede interpretation, even if they are irresolvable. To quote Enkvist again: 'a text is interpretable to those who can, under the prevailing circumstances, build around it a text world – or scenario, if you prefer the term – in which that text makes sense' (9). Strategies of naturalization, especially those of the levels 3 and 4, explain the processes of such 'world-building' in the reading of the poems above: identifying the genre of these texts as poems activates a certain set of reading conventions that are then modified according to the placement of the poems – in this case, in the tradition of Futurism,

which further suggests how these particular difficulties in intelligibility can be interpreted. The matter is more difficult with *The Making of Americans*. The novel extends the logic of the two poems, in that it defies syntax and complicates semantic comprehension but, at the same time, it cannot be naturalized and 'solved' with the same tactics. Being a prose text, it resists narrativization strategy (level 3) and may be seen as relying on lyrical logic (level 4 as a break in a convention of the novelistic form). But the sheer volume of possible meaning patterns, allusions and semantic ambiguities that can be constructed within the 900 pages of the novel does not encourage the same close reading as the four lines of the first Semenko poem would. The unreadablity comes from the intolerance for this scope of repetitions and patterns, as the reader's attempts to trace the novel's structural meaning or to progress by constructing and engaging with its storyworld, characters, action and so on are not rewarded.

Interpretation as the ability to build a text world or a scenario is, in other words, a possession of adequate reading strategies for the text. Readability, to reiterate, depends as much on the reader as it does on the text: the goal of reading, the situation of reading, the reader's education or familiarity with the given genre and its context, language skills, concentration and so on. Certain texts, for example, already signal the need for a new approach before reading: the cultural status of, for example, James Joyce's or Stein's novels, will invite the reader to prepare for a 'difficult text' with 'accompanying books necessary to "read" the primary texts' (Orr 124), which include criticism, biography, interviews, annotations, companions, guidebooks, commentary and so on. But even having prepared myself for *The Making of Americans*, I might not be able to 'read' it: I might get bored with failing to make sense of the text, or frustrated or otherwise uncomfortable with it.[7] Such resistance to reading this novel is caused by the its resistance to one particular strategy of reading, namely, to narrativization. Orr, referring to Stein, Samuel Beckett and Joyce, describes these texts as 'non-linear', in that they 'announce their beginnings again and again, [and] there either are no characters or the characters are mere tokens, almost grammatical subject placeholders subservient to the rhythms and seemingly unmotivated variegated flows, repeated phrases, and stops of language' (Orr 125–6). In other words, the structures and progression that he describes as non-linear are, in fact, non-narrative. Thus, in order to be read, texts that resist narrativization have to be processed (comprehended and interpreted) with the help of a new, more fitting reading strategy. Looking for a story will be frustrating as there is no story to uncover. Clement's data-mining approach, mentioned above, is one such example of going through a non-narrative novel

that opens up new possibilities for its interpretation after reading, outsourced to a computer.

This still leaves the question of what to do during reading of a difficult, obscure text that is also frustrating for these reasons. Unnatural narratologists have been suggesting approaches to difficult (as well as already naturalized) texts that can illuminate the reading process in these cases, but most of them either repeat the model of naturalization or implicitly rely on narrative logic of the texts under discussion: for example, strategies that aim to resolve textual difficulties with reference to storyworld logic mirroring that of the 'real world' (see Alber, 'Unnatural Narratology'). *The Making of Americans* announces a family story of generations, yet at the same time it does not offer a narrative that could help structure the havoc of meanings. To get through the novel, without the help of the computer, one needs different expectations for the kind of meanings the novel will produce – different from those for narrative novels – but also a different attitude to the reading process.

To conclude this section, I would like to look into one potentially productive suggestion, the so-called *Zen reading* mode (rather than an active 'strategy'): that is, reading with less or no pressure to make everything cohere and signify. Zen reading, without having any meaningful ties to Buddhist tradition and practices, has been called as such by Alber in a few of his articles on reading strategies. It is 'a radical alternative to … moves of sense making' (Alber, 'Unnatural Narratology' 454) – moves that are, arguably, inherent to human nature. They are, as Culler observes, 'one of the basic activities of the mind. We can, it seems, make anything signify' (138). Arguably, these moves are what then frustrate the reader in a text such as *The Making of Americans*, as the novel refuses to satisfy them. And so, if surrendered to accepting obscurities as they come, the reader might find pleasure in understanding or in naturalizing at the more basic levels of intelligibility and comprehension – for example, in admiring rhythmical sentence patterns – and leave out the more overarching connections and interpretation. An idea similar to that of Zen reading has also been put forward by Susan Sontag in her essay 'Against Interpretation' as the call for resisting the naturalizing translation of 'the elements of the poem or play or novel or story into something else' (7) – something this text is not – and accepting the work, together with one's affective responses to it.[8]

So, in other words, Zen reading is a way of recognizing, accepting and preserving the estranging or frustrating effects of unreadability that resists the default responses to the text (cf. also Abbott, 'Unreadable Minds'; Gallop). Zen reading is, basically, a reading mode – rather

than a strategy – that can overcome emotional and physical discomfort caused by the inability to easily comprehend and interpret certain texts. However, it has two implications that come out of its descriptions: a passive, contemplative one and a productive one aimed at meaning-making. It remains a question whether a passive contemplation can be convincing when we deal with unreadability as an overarching textual strategy: a mere recognition that a poem is unreadable would mean putting it down, stopping short of reading and thus denying its understanding.[9] In Culler's vocabulary, Zen reading will mean avoiding certain types of naturalization, those of higher levels, which 'one cannot avoid … if one seeks to speak of literary works' (160). On the one hand, then, Zen reading is not about postponing interpretative conclusions; it is about not making them. In this sense, it is complete as a reading mode as such. On the other hand, Zen reading might be conceived of as a pre-interpretative strategy or during-the-reading mode that cuts off (stereo)typical inferential walks or conventional sense-making strategies and is promising in that it opens up a text to fresh perspectives. In this case, it is an initial stance that should be followed by an interpretation, if the reader wants to create a scenario in which the textual elements can cohere and make sense.

Conclusion

A text is likely to be deemed unreadable if the reader encounters difficulties in comprehending it, and if adequate strategies of either interpretation or reading – or both – are not available or not looked for. But if the reader accepts the difficulties as a textual strategy, she can look for ways of building a scenario around the text in which it will be readable. After all, the discomfort of the 'unreadable is, by and large, unendurable', and 'one way or another, readers will find some strategy to make it go away' (Abbott, 'Unreadable Minds' 435). As is often pointed out, we can make nearly anything signify. Even with the most obscure Futurist poem 'the results', as Orr comments, 'are never nonsensical, meaningless, because of the ingenuity and desire of the interpreter' (129). At the same time, if 'the readers' predilection to discover coherence and fill in everything that is needed to make a complete reading takes precedence' (Orr 130), then such readers run into difficulties when struggling with coherence and complete readings of certain experimental novels. A conscious effort to work against such immediate meaning-making moves can be a helpful strategy of getting through difficult texts, as the idea of Zen reading suggests.

To sum up, unreadability means a number of things: from illegibility to difficulties in interpretation or readerly disinterest. In this chapter, my goal was to look into the textual roots of unreadability, rather than to support or discourage one of its meanings. Taken as a difficulty in the text, unreadability can refer to complications on one – or all – levels of textual understanding, mostly referring to the incomprehensible and uninterpretable. Since these levels are interrelated during any reading, unreadable as uninterpretable derives from the level of comprehension: if the amount of comprehended (semantic) information is more than 'what the relevant [reader] can comfortably handle under the relevant circumstances' (Enkvist 18), such texts resist interpretation. The two poems I offered as examples of unreadability on the levels of intelligibility and comprehension are unreadable in terms of certain strategies of naturalization unless the reader accepts the impossibility of comprehension and skips to the level of interpretation. *The Making of Americans* is unreadable in terms of semantic density unless the reader looks for a new way of processing it. Thus, ultimately, unreadability does not exist.

2

Information and the illusion of totality: reading the contemporary encyclopedic novel

Vesa Kyllönen

Digitization, new media and the rise of information technologies affect the narrative strategies literature exploits today. The encyclopedic novel is an excellent example. In the history of literature, it has been held as an ideal book about everything, a form of the novel that could basically integrate every conceivable kind of narrative material (genres, styles, discourses, even media). As a complex and hypertrophic form of narrative, the encyclopedic novel has typically set for itself the task of reflecting both its times and its culture in a maximalist fashion. However, in the Information Age, this aim needs to be re-evaluated. Information, in the sense of the diversity of available cultural knowledge, may even be seen to threaten the existence of the encyclopedic novel. In what ways is this narrative modality able to cover the 'culture of plenty'? Is not the goal of providing an encyclopedic representation of culture in all its dimensions an impossible task in the first place?

The exponential growth of information led Edward Mendelson, the pioneering scholar of encyclopedic novels, to reserve a special place for Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). For him, this novel was a fictional encyclopedia of 'newly-forming international culture, created by the technologies of instant communication and the economy of world markets' (Mendelson, 'Gravity's Encyclopedia' 164–5). Moreover, *Gravity's Rainbow* was a unique encyclopedic narrative in which 'an order based on information' was established (Mendelson, 'Encyclopedic Narrative' 1272). Interestingly, whereas Mendelson treated the encyclopedic narrative as a genre for the chosen few, since the 1970s we have witnessed a global, but mostly American, trend of encyclopedic novel. After *Gravity's Rainbow*, both the first generation of postmodernist authors

(Pynchon, Don DeLillo, William Gass) and the second generation following it (Richard Powers, David Foster Wallace, William T. Vollmann) have produced, in America alone, a host of similar novels. In studying them, scholars have used a wide range of concepts to describe the contemporary encyclopedic novel: Tom LeClair's 'systems novel,' Frederick Karl's 'mega-novel,' Stephen J. Burn's 'encyclopedic novel' and Stefano Ercolino's 'maximalist novel' are the best known. However, despite the different definitions, the novels themselves continue the legacy of Melville, Joyce and Pynchon by reflecting 'the inherent limits of the encyclopedic undertaking itself' (Herman 137). This undertaking embodies the encyclopedic ideal of knowledge: that is, a conception that the diversity of cultural knowledge can be hierarchically organised. The later tendency is that in the contemporary encyclopedic novel, the limits of this undertaking become ever more visible.

Pynchon's invention was to apply the idea of entropy to narrative form. Alongside the overall rise of information and communication technologies, this application has, ever since, pushed the encyclopedic novel to reconsider its ideal of knowledge. Today, information is not only a systemic basis of international culture but also a force that corrodes the general anthropocentric standpoint of knowledge. Given that data systems store and process data, human knowledge relies increasingly on the functionality and accessibility of these systems. Inevitably, this development affects the way encyclopedic works have been held as symbols of universal knowledge (Herman and Van Ewijk 167). It is especially the illusion of the totality of knowledge – one of the most important features of all encyclopedic novels – that comes under suspicion.

As an epistemological narrative, the encyclopedic novel is fundamentally an act of window dressing. It gives the reader an illusion that the novel – not to mention the author who wrote the novel – masters contemporary narrative means and cultural knowledge (LeClair, *Art of Excess* 1–6). Synecdoche plays a crucial part in creating this illusion. The use of technical jargon, for instance, makes the reader believe that the novel's (implied) author knows everything about the given topic. Within this illusionary sphere of knowledge, it is the epistemological whole that matters. While an encyclopedic novel contains tens of minor characters, fragmentary snapshots, stylistic shifts, runners and loose ends, together all these elements are bent on making the reader pay attention to the sense of totality. Why is all this told? What kind of a world system does the encyclopedic form constitute? And what purpose – if any – does the information excess serve? These questions are necessary guidelines for the reader.

In what follows, I discuss the reading of contemporary encyclo-pedic novels from the vantage-point of information. More specifically, I look at how information affects the illusion of totality that the encyclo-pedic novels strive to represent. The concept of information refers here to the epistemological content of the narrative that appears as a system, or a network of minor systems. This sense of a system is produced in co-operation between the reader and the narrative form. On the one hand, this system works through 'feedback effects and autoregulatory mecha-nisms' (Johnston 32): the size and specificity of the system is dependent on the reader's participation in creating connections among the minor systems, between the parts and the whole. On the other hand, the book as such remains a relatively exclusive medium, and it enables only a fixed number of possible connections. Thus, not only is a system such as an encyclopedic novel formulated via co-operation, but also the narrative form regulates interpretative possibilities. However, from the reader's standpoint, this system is overheated, as it transmits too much data. Too much is told: with contemporary encyclopedic novels the amount of information 'becomes too high for the receiver to process, to sort and integrate within his operative categories' (LeClair, *Art of Excess* 14). Yet it is this overheating that is at the centre of the attempt to make meaning in these novels.

As exemplary novels of this trend I investigate Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988, *Il pendolo di Foucault*) and Richard Powers's *The Gold Bug Variations* (1991). There are several reasons why these novels are suitable for closer scrutiny. First of all, both build systems by describing several statecrafts, genres, jargons and spheres of culture. However, by doing so, they simultaneously problematize their own for-mal roles as systems of knowledge. Second, both novels create a shared illusion of totality by removing the protecting wall – that is, the narra-tive distance between the reader and the storyworld. In this respect, both explicitly encourage the reader to participate in creating connec-tions between the systems. Finally, both novels reserve, as I argue, a spe-cial position for data systems. Computers especially serve as a platform for narrativizing the content and purpose of an encyclopedic novel as a system.

In general, contemporary encyclopedic novels emphasize more and more the excessiveness and exhaustiveness of epistemological content – the information overload – and this tendency asks the reader to adopt new reading strategies. Encyclopedic novels not only absorb their cul-tural contexts but also represent the overflows of this culture. As one of the characters puts it in *The Gold Bug Variations*, 'information is never

the same as knowledge' (Powers 15): the latter can be only a 'rough translation' (639) of the former. Hence, the encyclopedic novels of the Information Age admit the overall impossibility of encyclopedic projects that are, fundamentally, local projects aiming to establish universal systems of knowledge. Part of this admission aims to make the reader aware of the fallacies concerning these projects.

An artificial semiotic system guided by the electronic machine

Foucault's Pendulum provides a fitting demonstration of constructing a system of knowledge. The protagonist-narrator Casaubon has reservations about the community of wannabe-authors he and his associates in a publishing company are in touch with daily. According to Casaubon's colleague Jacopo Belbo, these aspiring authors work by the short circuits and are obsessed with the Templars. Moreover, these 'Diabolicals' believe that everything proves everything else: that everything is connected, *tout se tient*. In order to amuse themselves, Casaubon, Belbo and another colleague, Diotallevi, begin to reinterpret a supposedly arcane message that an aspiring Diabolical author has forgotten at the publishing house. They call their parody the Plan, as it aims to give a more detailed account of the Templar conspiracy than the original author's version. But what begins as a simple mocking game with references turns later into large-scale paranoia – into a semiosis in which each phenomenon and sign is taken as a symbol that refers not to itself but to something else. The crucial thing with *Foucault's Pendulum* is that it encourages the reader to engage in this 'diabolical' type of semiosis in the course of reading.

When Casaubon tells of these past events and the Plan, his narrative strategy is motivated not only by the goal of describing their actions but also by misleading his audience. As a narrator, Casaubon attempts to lure the reader into accepting a paranoid worldview. As he thinks that the tragic consequences of their interpretative game can only be atoned for by passing the semiotic problem onwards, his narrative makes the reader the recipient of this problem. Of course, depending on the reader's level of credulousness, Casaubon's alienated semiosis – a mind game according to which nothing is what it seems and everything contains a secret – may turn out to be just a private joke or a worthwhile world-explanation. His overall purpose is, however, loyal to contemporary encyclopedic novels. If Casaubon's narrative has one overriding intention, it is transforming the reader through directing his or her interest 'from personal and

individual to the common and global' (LeClair, *Art of Excess* 5; Ercolino 2). In the larger picture, this purpose agrees with the primary goals of the encyclopedic novel. Besides mastering cultural knowledge and establishing an ostensibly universal system, the encyclopedic novel controls the reader's field of vision (LeClair, *Art of Excess* 1–3). An inherent part of its narrative strategy is to make the reader believe in the synecdochic relations it advances, and encourage him or her to apply these 'truths' to culture. In other words, the encyclopedic novel encourages the reader to create an illusion of totality.

Hence, neither the guiding idea of Casaubon's semiotic system – *tout se tient*, which leads us to seek secrets even from places where there are none – nor the strategy he uses is new. *Foucault's Pendulum* is, after all, a maximalist duplication of Jorge Luis Borges's 'Death and the Compass' (1942; 'La muerte y la brújula') – that is, again, a duplication of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Purloined Letter' (1844). Whereas Poe's story criticizes the established methods of detection and the supposed superiority of latent contents over manifest contents, 'Death and the Compass' parodies the ultrarational cosmos of classical detective fiction in which neither short circuits nor chance play a part. The contribution of *Foucault's Pendulum* is to emphasize the random nature of valuable information. Casaubon and his colleagues use a computer called Abulafia to randomize both the data they adopt from the Diabolicals and their own way of thinking. Keeping in mind his purpose, Casaubon includes a small-scale encyclopedia of Diabolical ideas – covering nearly 200 pages of the novel – with his narrative, but in the end, the backbone for this arrangement is Abulafia. The algorithmic program of the computer helps Casaubon and his colleagues to find new connections and thus to build a 'labyrinthine web of mutual referrals' (Eco, *Limits of Interpretation* 27). The raw material for this undertaking consists of esoteric literature.

According to this random, twisted semiosis, a thing speaks not so much of itself as for the others. A sign simply refers to other signs instead of standing on its own. Hence, the rule of thumb is that basically anything and everything can matter. Encyclopedic novels foster the maximalist illusion of representing totalities, systems of knowledge that absorb everything (Herman). In *Foucault's Pendulum*, the project of building such a system is explicitly represented. In this respect, the other side of Casaubon's narrative strategy is to pay attention to the fact that the mechanical reproduction of metaphysics may twist, even transcend, the actual system of relations in extra-mental reality. In other words, the synecdochic representation of the world may replace the actual world, if we forget the things themselves.

To develop this idea, Eco's novel takes advantage of the newest technology of its time. From the current perspective, Abulafia is, of course, a very modest model of computer. It contains only a word processor and a program into which one feeds data, chooses the number of lines and gets 'a new composition each time. With ten lines you can make thousands and thousands of random poems' (Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum* 374). But Abulafia's primitive appearance should not fool us. Like the Kabbalistic art of *gematria*, which Casaubon, Belbo and Diotallevi also use, even the most rudimentary form of computer can produce a countless number of permutations, especially if someone with an *idée fixe* manipulates it. The Electronic Machine is, after all, stupid: as Belbo explains, 'it doesn't believe, it doesn't make me believe, it just does what I tell it' (237).

In building a semiotic system, Abulafia's influence illustrates two things. First, as data systems, computers treat data very differently from humans: they organize the character strings without understanding their meaning. Hence, the outcome is often strange, for programs such as the one in Abulafia care only about the occurrences of signs, not their semantic content. Nevertheless, when the reasoning in general is outsourced to data systems, the games with computers are able to reveal new hidden, but non-existent relations between phenomena. Second, information insidiously comes to play a greater role than knowledge. Abulafia is the key instrument in producing a version of semiosis that emphasizes not so much what is (semantically or historically) true to us as what is possible, poetic and interesting. Whereas knowledge is basically a form of human readiness to behave in a functional way in different circumstances, the computer shuffles the existent network of relations that constitutes these circumstances. When one, for instance, wears an overcoat when it is cold outside, for the computer the information content of a concept such as 'cold' may refer to winter, an unfriendly person or a flu. Only a few of us would think on such a basis: for example, that emotionally cold people are in fact people whose favorite season is winter. But as *Foucault's Pendulum* demonstrates, according to Abulafia's non-transparent logic, this would certainly be a suitable option.

But if Abulafia plays a crucial role in the development of the Plan, its presence affects the way Casaubon organizes his narrative as well. With the aid of the computer, Casaubon and his associates have produced a world-explanation that not only absorbs actual extra-mental reality (and our knowledge about it) but also replaces it with a new, information-based semiotic system. For people such as Casaubon and Belbo, for whom 'Hamlet is more real than janitor' (342), this replacement was at first pleasant. But as it ends with tragic consequences

(Belbo is killed, Diotallevi dies from cancer and Casaubon is waiting for a Diabolical lynching mob), Casaubon decides to write down what has happened in order to get free of the Plan and his own paranoia. As he ponders, 'if you invent a plan and others carry it out, it's as if the Plan exists. At that point it does exist' (619). However, instead of trying to convince the others of the non-existence of the Plan, Casaubon chooses to move to the opposite direction. The new plan grows in the shadow of the old: the twisted semiosis can be represented as a narrative but in a way that makes the audience either believe in it or build a system of its own. Hence, the encyclopedic account serves a specific purpose. Abulafia has taught Casaubon that the world can be seen simply as an informational system of relations. This view, in turn, makes it possible that for an outsider even a personal, synecdochic representation of totality – the one Casaubon is narrating – may appear convincing. In fact, a representation like his may even subvert the worldview the reader has held reliable.

In practice, *Foucault's Pendulum* embodies a key aspect of the contemporary encyclopedic novel. It overloads the novel with detailed encyclopedias and other minor knowledge systems in order 'to reflect the accessibility and relevance of technical information' (LeClair, 'Prodigious Fiction' 16) or, in this case, occult information. Yet it does so in order to emphasize not only manipulative narrative strategies but also the artificial nature of each represented system of knowledge. Moreover, contemporary encyclopedic novels use concrete data systems in their plots to transcend 'the social politeness of most realism' (LeClair, 'Prodigious Fiction' 16). They are contracts between the form and the reader, but they also aim to transform the reader. This transformation of readership actualizes itself as the reader starts to pay more attention to the problematic presence of information in the actual world than that in the novel. In this way, the systems outside the narrative also begin to transform.

Framing the systems of knowledge

Foucault's Pendulum relies on a paranoid narrative strategy and directs the reader's attention to the problems and artificialities concerning the illusion of totality of knowledge. Other contemporary encyclopedic novels share this same pursuit. *The Gold Bug Variations* pictures the totality in a more complicated way than Eco's novel. It has, however, 'a too-earnest concern for readers' (LeClair, 'Prodigious Fiction' 16) – that is, it treats readers well (see also Strecker 70). Both novels share a

friendly tone and an affection for analogies, but they use these strategies for different aims. Whereas *Foucault's Pendulum* plays with the reader's mind on the one hand and reveals the dangers of mechanically produced semiotic systems on the other, *The Gold Bug Variations* offers a much more positive synthesis of art and science. More than simply a 'science novel', it is a successful demonstration of C. P. Snow's famous thesis concerning 'the two cultures', namely a seamless integration between science and humanities (Herman and Lernout).

Powers's novel consists of three intertwining and quest-driven narrative threads. In the first, set in 1983, Jan O'Deigh, a librarian in New York City, gets a request to find a certain man from the records and identify him. The man in question is Stuart Ressler, who works night shifts in a data-processing firm, but Franklin Todd, the customer, suspects that he once did 'something objective' (Powers 27). It turns out that in 1957/8 Stuart was part of Cyfer, a research team in the University of Illinois that investigated the genetic coding process. Suddenly, however, Stuart withdrew. Stuart's motive for disappearing from the field of science is the first mystery Jan and Franklin begin to investigate. Subsequently, however, this enquiry not only launches a central metaphysical detection process in the novel but also justifies other threads. The second narrative thread follows Stuart's time in Cyfer and his grand-scale quest concerning the self-manufacturing of living matter. Nevertheless, it is the third and chronologically the last thread that ties these two mysteries together. The year is 1985 and Jan is alone. She and Franklin have had an affair but have broken up. One day Jan receives a note from Franklin informing her of Stuart's decease. Jan decides to take a sabbatical from work and 'put things right' (25). As she senses, Stuart's story has become her story. But besides telling Stuart's story, Jan decides to track down his life theme, 'the world awash in messages, every living thing a unique signal' (86). From the start, Jan has understood that information is everywhere: it precedes the words and beings, whereas most sciences are nothing but information-based systems of knowledge 'in imbedded frames' (88).

Information as such forms a fundamental problem in the novel. Whereas knowledge may be said to be 'information-caused belief' (Dretske x) covering things we are aware of, it is difficult to say to what exactly the concept of information refers. Jan's definition problem becomes the reader's dilemma: it is equally difficult to pinpoint what Powers's book is actually about. As Joseph Dewey explains, this novel 'indulges at maddening length arid passages of information, imbedded seminars on genetics, evolution, contrapuntal music theory, northern Renaissance art history, computer systems programming – interminable

displays of arcane information for its own sake' (52). This spectrum only raises another question: if, as Dewey suggests, *The Gold Bug Variations* is about information, what frames should one give to this information?

One key topic in the novel concerns heredity and evolution. The genetic coding problem Cyfer grappled with in 1957 addresses information at the core of all biological life. DNA does not leave the nucleus but, according to Stuart, sends out 'a courier, a single-strand RNA molecule … This messenger strand carries its transcription of a base sequence … to the ribosomes, where protein synthesis takes place' (442). The problematics of information in the novel should be considered against this background: life on earth is a cryptosystem of signals, or notes. It is a network of variations in which variations spring from one base of four nucleotides: guanine, adenine, thymine and cytosine. These 'four notes' form 'the interior melody from the day of creation' (11). Hence, the diversity of life consists of countless combinations of these notes, whereupon information indeed forms a background of noise to knowledge, our awareness of the huge variety of life forms.

The same can be said of the narrative of *The Gold Bug Variations*. As with *Foucault's Pendulum* or Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), Powers's novel enables different reading strategies. Besides the generic level (detective story, adventure story, love story) all three novels have a background level of 'overdoses of information' (Dewey 52). But as this second, ostensibly excessive level of information is elementary both for the encyclopedic illusion of totality and for the existence of the generic level of reading, the genre-oriented reader cannot entirely skip theoretical parts either. Hence, *The Gold Bug Variations* is both a love story and a study of information sciences alike. Simultaneously, however, there would not be a love story without issues of information. Similarly, on the plot level, the love affair between Jan and Franklin took place 'in the shadow of an unnamed correspondent' (41), and while this third party was, in their case, Stuart, his own 'love triangle' (40) in the past sprang from the white noise of information. As Jan sees it, if 'science was that man's perpetual third party, the scientist himself was mine' (41).

As a narrative, then, *The Gold Bug Variations* frames the private lives of its protagonists with the coding problems of molecular biology, and turns them into informational issues. For the reader this means that the protecting wall is removed and the common motifs of observing nature or, say, forming couples are shown in a new light. In this respect, the illusion of totality in the novel directs the reader to reconsider the epistemological frames he or she applies outside the reading situation, in everyday life. Specifically put, the epistemological frames of

the novel – how information precedes knowledge, love, understanding, reproduction – raise the reader's consciousness in two senses. First, these frames expose power mechanisms of life in and around us. Second, they replace nature's fundamental principle of cause and effect with the principle of correspondence (LeClair, 'Prodigious Fiction' 24).

The first aspect of this correspondence concerns the sequence of events. As *The Gold Bug Variations* draws remarkable analogies between Jan and Franklin's affair and what happened in 1957/8 in Stuart's personal life, the reader becomes a third party in making these analogies. The thread describing Stuart's years in Cyfer is introduced in the third chapter, but as this thread begins with heterodiegetic narration, it differs from the other threads that consist of Jan's diary entries and her first-person narrative. The sudden switch in narration, then, enables the reader to distance him- or herself from Jan's standpoint and discover the variations on which the analogies are based. For instance, the third chapter, in which Stuart arrives in Illinois, helps the reader to compare the ages of the protagonists. In 1957, Stuart is 'green at twenty-five' (43) just as, in 1983, Franklin is 'a man in mid-twenties [*sic*]' (26). Jan turns thirty in 1984, whereas Jeanette, with whom Stuart falls in love in 1957, is 'also near thirty' (49). In 1983, when Stuart becomes a mentor to Jan and Franklin, he is about the same age as his own mentor in Illinois, 'grand old molecular man' (46), was in 1957. As these corresponding relationships hint, later in the novel when Jan and Franklin struggle with their relationship, their problems resemble those that broke up Stuart and Jeanette.

The novel's title reflects another level of the correspondences the reader is encouraged to pay attention to. Three narrative threads are composed around the structure of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (1742), covering two arias and thirty variations between them. Simultaneously the presence of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Gold-Bug' (1843) in both Powers's narrative and its title alike hints that, like Poe's story, the novel deals with cryptography. In this respect, *The Gold Bug Variations* exploits two different art forms: music and narrative. But different art forms are not the only thing the novel combines. As Luc Herman and Geert Lernout have argued, Powers's narrative uses the idea of translation to let the reader 'understand abstract scientific knowledge through a representation of the arts', whereupon 'science in turn informs the interpretation of several works of art' (152).

Powers's novel pictures minor, though still complex, systems of knowledge in corresponding relation to each other. Hence, whereas it was fundamentally computer-driven semiosis that expanded the

epistemological content of *Foucault's Pendulum* and produced the illusion of totality, in *The Gold Bug Variations* the same effect is accomplished with the idea of variation. Powers's novel capitalizes on several, ostensibly autonomous, systems in the same context. For Stuart, Bach's *Goldberg Variations* are a rough analogy for the genetic coding problem, and thus his 'best metaphor for the living gene' (579). Similarly, the variation-based coexistence of several systems of knowledge redirects the reader's attention to the possible analogical relations between arts and science elsewhere in the culture.

Reading systems

Casaubon, Belbo and Diotallevi used Abulafia to create new connections in the world of *Foucault's Pendulum*. Similarly, in the later sections of *The Gold Bug Variations* Stuart, Franklin and Jan decide to exploit data systems to help their supervisor, Jimmy. Partly because of their previous action, Jimmy has suffered an aneurysm. The pay-cheque benefit that Stuart has secretly programmed to be given to Jimmy has left Jimmy without insurance coverage. In the hospital, the staff discover this billing irregularity in Jimmy's pay-cheque and threaten to bar his hospitalization. To help Jimmy, Stuart, Franklin and Jan build a mutation of the data system they have managed during the past years: 'the point was to make their baby look, feel, and behave exactly the same as the template, the original operating system. But be the serpent underneath' (589). Their serpent, the bug in the system, is a piece of code that makes otherwise flawlessly behaved printers and bank machines around the city paste in 'innocuous little slips' (617), announcing the hopeless situation of 'a certain stroke patient' (617). With this hack, Stuart, Franklin and Jan publicly pressurize Manhattan On-Line to return Jimmy's cover.

This kind of 'elaborate game, an intellectual challenge, momentarily divorced from real-world consequences' (590) is common to both Eco and Powers's novels; further, it should be seen as an integral part of contemporary encyclopedic novels. In fact, encyclopedic novels are elaborate games as such. Being simultaneously both traditional and experimental alike (Karl 155), they are open systems with designers and programmers as protagonists. Hence, the encyclopedic modality of the narrative is often brainstormed and produced by the main characters, which, in turn, confirms the assumption that the fictional encyclopedia is an expanding network of relations. The protagonists and narrators begin to create connections, and as the reader finds this network fascinating,

he or she continues the project. As Trey Strecker suggests, 'not essence but relation – narrative circulation – opens the encyclopedic field' (69). Therefore, it is precisely this game with relations, 'the feedback effects and autoregulatory mechanisms' (Johnston 32) of the plot and form that eventually, in co-operation with the reader, gives birth to the illusion of totality.

The reader, the protagonists and even the computers of the story participate in drawing relations, together giving fuel and content to the narrative process. Hence, the encyclopedic novel is, by nature, in motion. Narrative circulation also explains its internal dialectic, the simultaneity of 'cosmos-function' and 'chaos-function' (Ercolino 114–18). The constant dual motion of forming and dissolving is dependent on how each agent draws analogies and other connections between explicit and implicit sub-systems, between manifest and latent contents. In other words, as there are several agents who attend to the establishing of the maximalist network, the appearance of the contemporary encyclopedic novel is that of *chaosmos*. While certain elements seem to keep the whole in order, others embody the opposite: the detailed digressions and minor encyclopedias within the narrative, for instance, pull the epistemological content apart.

Ever since Pynchon's early applications of entropy, encyclopedic novels have been open systems. The increasing co-creation between the reader and the narrative – and, hence, the obvious removal of the protecting wall – implies, however, a fundamental leak. Since the reader is now sucked into the game of narrative circulation, information describing the storyworld leaks into the world outside of the book. In fact, it is the separation of the inside and the outside that breaks down: information multiplicity brings 'a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)' (Deleuze and Guattari 25) onto the same level.

Despite defying structural organization, novels such as *Foucault's Pendulum* and *The Gold Bug Variations* nevertheless have an 'intense order' (Karl 155). To manage chaosmos, both novels turn to strict structuring devices. Powers's novel is composed in accordance with the structure of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, whereas Casaubon uses the tree-model of Kabbalistic Sefirot as the basis of his narrative. However, these strategies of composition should be seen, before anything, as human attempts at cognitive mapping, expressions of matching the experiences of the protagonists with the global system of information (Jameson 51–4). Unlike Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996) and Roberto Bolaño's *2666* (2004), for instance, *Foucault's Pendulum* and *The Gold Bug Variations* represent the more reader-friendly form of the contemporary encyclopedic novel,

as in both the narrator supplies the reader with concrete tools for organizing the epistemological material.

Nevertheless, whatever help the reader receives from narrators, the key problem remains. What persists is the question of the primary nature of information in the contemporary world system in relation to the role of knowledge. The information-driven world is a chaotic world of noise: vulnerable, open and full of contradictions. As the contemporary encyclopedic novel attempts to absorb elements of this culture into its form, it is a long, choral and digressive narrative, but simultaneously also a narrative mode, in which even the heterogeneous elements form a structural symbiosis (Ercolino 77; Johnston 14). For this reason, it would be tempting to call it an assemblage or a text mosaic. But as the text mosaic is neither a structural nor a hierarchical entity in a fixed sense, novels such as *Foucault's Pendulum* and *The Gold Bug Variations* escape definitions of this sort. Instead, in both novels, the reader confronts not only a centrifugal narrative composed around a particular structuring device but also the fact that this structure has a tree-like, hierarchical identity. Moreover, the appearance of encyclopedic novel as assemblage refers more to illusions: the assemblage form is rather a part of the illusion of totality in these novels than an actual mode.

In order to describe accurately the form that the illusion of totality takes in the contemporary encyclopedic novel, the notion of centrifugal composition seems fitting. In such a composition, parts flee the secret foundation; hypertrophy of the information content becomes more important than some fixed centre (the key event or theme) around which the information is being organized. In this respect, the encyclopedic novel is a totality in a form of pseudo-tree that only suggests that 'knowledge cannot be recognized and organized as a global system', and provides instead '"local" and transitory systems of knowledge' (Eco, *Semiotics* 84). Locally, nothing may be invented: as Casaubon confesses at the end of his narrative, 'we only arranged the pieces' (618). But if these local systems are applied to a larger context, they turn into fakes, nasty jokes. Such jokes, as Casaubon's girlfriend puts it, are like selling 'lotions that make lost hair grow back' (541). In this respect, illusion does not concern only the narrative as such; it also concerns those application possibilities the narrative offers the reader. The totalities the encyclopedic novels represent are always more or less local – even when they speak for the universality of these totalities. Hence, these systems can be used not as handbooks to other spheres of culture, but as obscure and manipulative analogies of each other.

As regards centrifugalism, the relation between the root and the branches, even centrifugal narratives have centres, whether hidden or not. *Foucault's Pendulum* and *The Gold Bug Variations* are two examples of narratives that explicitly foreground their centres. Much talk in *The Gold Bug Variations* relies on the base of four notes that produce variations. Respectively, the key metaphor in Eco's novel is Léon Foucault's pendulum and the illusion it gives to its observer, a fixed point in the universe according to which everything is arranged. Aptly, however, the first of these centres is vague and non-transparent, while the other is simply an illusion.

One should not, then, cross the brook for water, as it comes to definitions. The narrative as such is still set within the limits of a physical book. Certainly, there may be a potentially infinite labyrinth of synecdochic relations invented and developed in the co-play among the reader, characters and computers. But the encyclopedic novel is necessarily a network that has its base, along with the concrete foundation of sentences. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would call this combination of network and base a radicle-system: although 'the principal root has aborted' (6), the encyclopedic novel still imitates the world. The information multiplicity in the narrative reflects the solid connection between the book and the world, maintaining still the primacy of the latter. In this respect, information indeed forms the base, whereas all that follows – variations, systems, the totalities of knowledge – is but window-dressing in which the reader begins to believe. And like the fixed point of Foucault's pendulum, information is everywhere.

3

The brain in our hands: the materiality of reading *Neuromaani*

Laura Piippo

> So, you have taken yourself quite a handful here with this book. Many others have probably forsaken this endeavour after a couple of pages. First fall those who lack either one or both of the two main preconditions of learning, namely resiliency and liberality. Luckily you're not cut from the same cloth; you don't give up that easily, otherwise you wouldn't be reading this footnote.[1]

Neuromaani (2012), a Finnish experimental novel by Jaakko Yli-Juonikas, is indeed quite a handful. Its non-linear structure, combined with a vast amount of themes, motives, references, characters, footnotes and intertexts, creates a rhizomatic narrative that is difficult to handle or grasp. The title of the book translates as 'neuromaniac' or *nouveau roman*, already giving the reader some hints regarding its style and its thematic and literary origins – here we clearly have a work that challenges our conceptions of reading and handling prose literature.

    This chapter focuses on reading the special characteristics of *Neuromaani*'s ergodic structure and material body, and the affects and affections the novel produces. It is important to clarify the distinction between the concepts of affect and affection (see Colebrook). Understood in the Deleuzian sense, affection refers to the state of the affected body and includes the presence of the other body that produces the affection (Deleuze, *Spinoza* 63–4). Therefore it is a relation. Affects, on the other hand, create these different kind of affections – the codependent state of both the affecting and the affected body – depending on the bodies involved. Affects do not come down to affections, even though the latter presume the former (Deleuze, *Kriittisiä* 214). In this

chapter, I discuss the affections created in the reader's engagement with *Neuromaani*.

Neuromaani is a novel that on various levels challenges the traditional views on linear reading, and the book as a finished, polished and closed object. The most striking feature of *Neuromaani* is indeed its sheer excessiveness, and with its 650 pages it is also literally quite a handful. But how does it handle the reader, and how could it be handled 'properly'? Bearing in mind the focus on affections and acknowledging the sheer vastness of *Neuromaani*'s layers, features and quirks, a solely thematic or textual reading falls short. Therefore, I will introduce the principles of a more materialist approach to reading, simultaneously showing its analytical potential. After briefly introducing *Neuromaani*, I will map out the theoretical premises as well as the concrete tools and precise goals of my reading. These notions are then applied to the key features of *Neuromaani*: (1) its position in the field of, especially, Finnish literature; (2) its ergodic and linked structure; and (3) its metafictional elements. In the conclusion, I will sum up the affections caused by the previously mentioned elements in order to observe the pattern they form.

Patient and prescription: on *Neuromaani* and the materialist approach

To start from the beginning – the material body of the work – let's judge the book by its cover. *Neuromaani* is very appealing to both the visual and tactile senses. Its covers are designed by Markus Pyörälä, a renowned cover designer of contemporary Finnish literary works, probably best known for his collaborations with experimental writers. This feature strengthens the work's ties to this literary tradition. It is indeed a very vivid and beautiful piece of art and received the prize for the most beautiful Finnish book in 2012 (Koivuranta). The cover is of a lively pink colour, and when turned upside down and opened at the centrefold, it depicts a red and blue graphic illustration of the nervous system of the human brain and spinal cord. The lines of the spinal cord then continue as two bookmarks, hanging from the cover of the book. The texts and markings on the lower half of the front cover resemble those of an academic dissertation or other scientific publication. One might ask what is the purpose or benefit of describing a book's cover or feel, but from a materialist point of view this has everything to do with the process of mapping out the different elements that form the experience of a literary work. Focusing

on the look of the book also leads us to consider the materiality of the reader.

In terms of plot, *Neuromaani* can be viewed as a fragmented narrative about a convict named Silvo Näre, who has been consigned to a mental institution for mental and neurological examination, and as a story about a fraud pertaining to sizeable research funds committed by two neuroscientists assigned to examine Silvo Näre. These scientists are called Paavo Riekkinen Señor and Jr, a reference to real-life Finnish neuroscientists, the father and son Riekkinen, the former of whom was sentenced to two years in prison for defrauding research funds. This starting-point provides a good example of the way the novel mixes fact and fiction. There is also a curious character called Gereg (whose name intriguingly resembles that of Georges Perec), but it is uncertain whether he exists on the same plane as the other characters or is just a voice in Silvo Näre's dysfunctional mind – or even the other way round.

The chapters are quite short and (almost) all of them end with the possibility of choosing how the story will continue: the reader is usually presented with at least two different chapters with which to proceed. If readers try to read the book in a conventional manner by moving linearly from page to page, or from one chapter to the next, they are bound to lose track of the plot completely. Readers are provided with instructions on how to proceed, making choices based on their emotions, ethics or sense of humour – the novel is, after all, very humorous, and full of both subtle and banal comic variations. Sometimes they even seem to be left with no choices, thus shattering the newly created illusion of freedom:

> No alternatives are being presented or given; the poor soul can't shake off its obsessions; the heavy hand of fate squeezes you, feels you up, mangles and manhandles you, and enslaves you mercilessly; and therefore you, too, are robbed of the right to make independent choices. From now on, in order to proceed with your adventure, you are forced to follow the orders that are given to you. Turn to chapter 132.[2]

But all the choices the readers make will inevitably lead to loops or dead ends. Therefore *Neuromaani* is always already unfinished, and linear reading strategies will always collapse.

So from the initial pages on, readers are challenged to find a suitable reading strategy for this puzzling book. Such a strategy, however, cannot rely on the thematic framework alone, and a solely narratological approach will also miss the mark by a mile. Readers who try to construct

a coherent narrative, to assign a key metaphor or a discursive framework, are also quite soon left to their own devices, feeling puzzled. There are too many narrative or thematic routes to follow, and each of them – no matter how promising it may seem at first glance – will let the reader down. It also seems very difficult to keep the characters alive (and finish the book). No matter how the reader chooses to continue the story, the characters tend to end up dead surprisingly often, repeatedly forcing one to go back a few chapters for another go.

In order to find a suitable reading strategy for such a challenging narrative structure and a mixture of textual styles and layers, it seems reasonable to start from the very beginning: from the book as a material object, the sole existence of which always precedes the actual act of reading. Even if its contents are ungraspable and difficult to map out, at least its material body provides a solid starting-point for reading. The book as a material body is the container of all its textual material(s), but also a creator of affects and meanings. This material, so to say, signifies on its own (Dolphjin and Van der Tuin 15). This so-called materialist approach to literature seeks to map out the book in its entirety, combining its textual contents – subtexts, paratexts, allusions and so on – with its material and historical conditions such as the author, reception, editing process, different readings, acts of reading and, of course, the material body of the book. Here 'discursive' or 'textual' is actually always already material as well (Barad 148).

Nevertheless, the aim of this particular reading – or the materialist approach in general – is not to present a complete, fixed interpretation of a literary work, but rather to open it up to new possibilities for further readings and links, shedding light on areas formerly left in the dark. This point of view does not abandon the textual or linguistic aspect of literature, but emphasizes that the experience of an artwork always consists of both matter and meaning (Dolphjin and Van der Tuin 91). The focus of this kind of materialist reading lies primarily in the material traits and affects of the book, and much less on its textual and thematic analysis. The latter are mentioned only when they support the analysis of the former. The materialist point of view, then, provides not only the starting-point for the analysis but also its main question: what are the affections produced in the reading of *Neuromaani*? How do they make us feel and what do they make us do?

The materialist reading of *Neuromaani* presented in this chapter seeks to map out at least some of the novel's material aspects: its connections to both the postmodernist and the Finnish traditions of the novel, as well as its textual contents and unreadable qualities, such as look and

feel. Here the use of the term 'material' follows the definition offered by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, referring to both the actual and the virtual materiality of the book. For Deleuze and Guattari, the actual and the virtual are equally real, but differ from each other in quality (Taira and Väliaho); not everything that is virtually contained – or immanent – in this world is or becomes actual. Actual is our everyday world at the present moment in time; virtual on the other hand refers to all its possible and impossible pasts and futures (Taira and Väliaho 75; Grosz 228). According to a widely cited quotation, '"virtual" is not opposed to "real" but opposed to "actual", whereas "real" is opposed to "possible"' (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 96–8). In this sense, the materiality of literature is created in a process in which actual objects emerge from the virtual (Deleuze and Parnet 148). Literature itself is 'permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities and by singularities' (Deleuze and Guattari 11).

Talking about the materiality of a book, or the reading of it, one should also include the virtual aspects – for example, the possible reading strategies, what-ifs, implicit and explicit allusions, reader's reactions, and the very act of reading – in the analysis. By following and mapping out the lines of different forms of repetition[3] in *Neuromaani* – the compulsory rereading of chapters, the genre-related traits such as metafictional elements and the use of found material – and by following its dual-core impulse of simultaneously binding and breaking apart, it is possible to analyse closely the material aspects of reading *Neuromaani*.

Medical background: *Neuromaani*'s history and close relatives

Neuromaani's closest relatives can be quite easily identified because of its connected and ergodic structure and the striking number of metafictional elements that place the novel within the postmodernist tradition (Waugh 2). According to Brian McHale's definition, only works with clearly metafictional elements can be considered postmodernist (*Postmodernist Fiction* 9–10). He also points out that these works tend to juxtapose different registers and discourses and overlap various ontological levels with different spaces and feelings (227). This tendency is also present in *Neuromaani*:

> And there I was, in the lousiest sailors' bar in Rio de Janeiro, celebrating this new millennium of great hopes and fears, rounded

up with the good old usual suspects: Small, S. A., Perera, G. M., DeLaPaz, R., Mayeux, R. and Stern, Y. 1999, and all we had in mind was 'Differential regional dysfunction of the hippocampal formation among the elderly with memory decline and Alzheimer's disease'. *Annals of Neurology* 45. 466–72.[4]

Neuromaani is related to several prominent works in the postmodernist tradition of the novel. It shares, for example, the pseudo-academic discourse with *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski; the hallucinations and psychotic atmosphere with *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) by Thomas Pynchon; the overwhelming footnotes with *Infinite Jest* (1996) by David Foster Wallace; and the embedding of large bodies of documentary material with *La vie mode d'emploi: Romans* (1978) by Georges Perec.

These novels also represent an assemblage of distinctively experimental works. 'Experimental' by definition questions the dominants, tastes and structures of current literary and cultural fields (Manninen 26). It is literature that poses the ontological question of its own *literaturnost*: is this literature, or could it be? And if it is not, what is it then and why (Bray et al. 1)? These novels are also examples of literary works that use excessive numbers of (source) materials and/or footnotes.

In the Finnish context, experimentalism has, especially in the 2000s, concentrated on poetry. Even though the Finnish tradition of the novel is strongly characterized by realism – later on also by modernism – and its style and ideals, a few exceptional works have been produced along the way. For example, such novels as the excessive pseudo-historical *Harhama* (1901) by Irmari Rantamala; the fragmented and partially ergodic novels *Nonstop* (1988), *Semtext* (1990) and *Interface* (1997) by Markku Eskelinen; and the expansive metafictional novel *Romaanihenkilön kuolema* (1985) by Matti Pulkkinen differ significantly from mainstream novels in their own respective periods (see Helle, Joensuu, Kurikka, Lindstedt, Peltonen). *Neuromaani* alludes to several of these novels (Yli-Juonikas 344, 336, 495).

There seems to be no other previous novel in the Finnish literary tradition that resembles *Neuromaani*'s footnote- and reference-laden composition, or its style and ergodic structure. *Neuromaani*, however, pays homage to the tradition of digital literature and hypertext novels, such as *Hegirascope* (1997) by Stuart Moulthrop (Eskelinen, *Kybertekstien* 1). It is nevertheless important to bear in mind that regarding structure and narration, on an ontological level the digital platform and the traditional book do not differ from each other (Eskelinen, *Cybertext* 22).

In comparison to the historical avant-garde movements, works of contemporary experimental prose do not seem to follow or stick to a clear political agenda or manifesto, even though they often include elements of some sort of activism (Haapala 299–300; Katajamäki and Veivo 11–16). *Neuromaani* is no exception to this rule. Curiously enough, recent examples of literary experimentalism in Finnish literature follow in the footsteps of the realist tradition: they are aware of contemporary social dynamics and problems (Rantama). This tendency is, however, subtler than that of the historical avant-gardes, relying more on affects than representations.

Brain scans: the reader's place(s) in *Neuromaani*'s structure and composition

Neuromaani's structure and composition can be considered to be ergodic (see Kursula, for example). The term ergodic, coined by Espen J. Aarseth, is often defined as follows:

> In ergodic literature, nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text. If ergodic literature is to make sense as a concept, there must also be non-ergodic literature, where the effort to traverse the text is trivial, with no extranoematic responsibilities placed on the reader except (for example) eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages. (Aarseth 1)

Neuromaani consists of 229 chapters, most of which include directions for proceeding through the book. The first two chapters function as a preface of sorts: after them, the reader must choose a path to follow, to proceed either to chapter 146 or 122 (Yli-Juonikas 17). This structure resembles the choose-your-adventure gamebook genre, a hybrid between role-playing and traditional literary fiction. It also mocks this heritage by forcing the reader to read the same chapters repeatedly, and by failing the reader even when one meticulously follows the orders, or order-words, given in the text:

> I am a clueless slob; I need the help of a personal trainer, your help that is to say. Attention, wake up. It's morning; the interactive part begins. Now you have to decide whether I get up and start exercising or stay in bed. If you want Gereg to start the *exercise*, turn to chapter 146. If you prefer *passivity*, turn to chapter 122. If, on the

other hand, you are a true brainiac like the neuroscientist Paavo Riekkinen Señor and you can handle large ensembles, you can go forth in a more traditional manner or jump from one chapter to another in a random order, completely disregarding the instructions. It is way too straining for the brains of a regular forgetful moron, the plot won't hold together, but you can always try …[5]

Following the suggestions, or more accurately orders, works up to a point. After that, the obliging reader faces a dead end in a repetitious loop of chapters with no way out. The reader is bound to fail, either by proceeding with her reading or by following the orders, and is thus denied the feeling of being a 'sufficient' or 'competent' reader. As the traditional page-to-page reading clearly is not the suggested reading strategy for *Neuromaani*, with no given directions the reader is left to her own devices and with the constant worry of reading wrongly. And not all the choices the reader is forced to make are harmless: some of them inevitably lead to either the death or severe mutilation of one of the characters, and the reader's only real choice is between different weapons – or one can always give up reading completely and toss the book aside. Moving from one chapter to another, either by following the provided instruction or the reader's own decisions, produces quite a significant affection: the reader loses the air of seriousness and competence in the eyes of possible observers, because she is turning the book round and round and going back and forth in the text, and these activities do not fit into the pictured ideal of immersion in a piece of high literature.

The whole composition of *Neuromaani* is networked in more ways than one. Mimicking the academic style of writing, with footnotes, references and citations, it urges the reader to look these references up in order to find a key metaphor or the hidden meaning of the text. These endeavours are nonetheless often doomed to fail. Some of the references are correct and accurate, leading to other texts, but some are fictional, leading either nowhere or to somewhere completely unexpected. For example, journals and articles mentioned are often mixtures of both fact and fiction, like the aforementioned article in *Annals of Neurology*. A game of chess, referred to as an actual historical game in chapter 58, can be traced back to a game depicted in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* (1938).

Such mixing up of textual material is common in postmodernist fiction (McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* 202–3) and interesting from the perspective of the affections of reading. The conscientious reader who tries to track down and map out every quotation and reference very soon becomes overwhelmed with the sheer quantity of material, and even

sooner feels betrayed by the book: the links that initially seem to be vital clues turn out to be plain mockery of the reader's endeavours regarding the topics at hand:

> The slavish way of hanging on to external advice doesn't seem very wise if the alternative is to navigate without any artificial rules. I therefore encourage you to plan the schedule of your sightseeing all by yourself. Do whatever you want, go wherever you please – that is my new principle and it oozes scientific and philosophical realism and urges you to innovate inquisitively and open-mindedly.[6]

The large quantity of referenced material – whether actual or virtual, already existing or purely fictitious – affects the reader, creating a strong feeling of uncertainty and inadequacy: am I missing something important, should I try harder, am I not competent enough? One may apply different strategies in order to arrange the cognitive quantities of the novel (see Kyllönen, for example). There is, however, so much to map out that it would be nearly impossible to do so within what is considered the 'normal' time limit for reading a single book. Therefore the affection, the feeling of lacking in either skills or knowledge, is general rather than merely subjective.

Traditional reading moves linearly from page to page, from start to finish in a straight line, only interrupted by possible pauses in reading, such as, for example, when the reader leaves the book on the nightstand and goes to sleep. But with *Neuromaani*, the act of reading looks different. In the possible outsider witness's eyes, the reader appears to skim haphazardly back and forth through the book, having no consistency of consideration, seemingly paying no attention to or having any respect for what he is reading. The reader might even turn the book round and round, observing it in a way that makes him seem completely oblivious to the concept of a 'book' and how one should approach it.

These antics continue *Neuromaani*'s project of juxtaposing different textual spaces and styles: the cover of the book mimics, to an extent, the style of an academic study – for example, the name of the author is presented with the epithet 'Dr Alt Med, M.H.Q.S, G.T.o.t.D.' – which broadens the gap between the supposed fictional and narrative content of the book and its cover. They also leave – and this is a very crucial matter in this analysis – the reader torn between the conventions of reading a novel and the orders and instructions given in the book. The poor reader, who appears utterly clueless with the book, is merely to play by the rules the book lays out. This reading strategy leads, however, to a

double failure – both in the social context of a 'competent reader' and in proceeding through the book itself, since the instructions eventually lead to a dead end.

This focus on discontinuity, however, also brings up another matter: it forces us to reconsider the so-called traditional reading, pictured earlier. Do we really read in a straight line, focusing meticulously on every single word and syllable? Do we not, in fact, skip over some sentences, guess the words, go back a few chapters to revisit a particularly hilarious or exquisite scene, or even turn to the very last chapter to discover the identity of the murderer and ease our tension? Academic reading is, if possible, even more discontinuous. Studies and articles are skimmed through in search for possible references and sparse key points. Yet when it comes to prose literature, we still tend to think of the act of reading as continuous, uninterrupted and linear. The non-linear reading of *Neuromaani* may also make the reader more aware of her reading when reading other literary works.

Metafictional elements of *Neuromaani*: reading with power tools

As was seen above, the most striking metafictional elements of *Neuromaani* are the links between chapters. With impressive frequency the book also addresses – or, more truthfully, mocks and even namecalls – the reader, and gives some specific and straightforward instructions for reading and handling the book:

> Close your eye, place the book 15 cm away from your face and focus on the number 150 in the upper-left corner of the textbox for three minutes. Then open your eye and move your gaze slowly down and right; focus on the diagram, the middle-section of the beaker-shaped blob that says 'dada'. If you did everything right, you'll be able to observe what sort of 'running costs' the considerable funds received from the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation, TEKES, and appointed to Neuropositron in 2010 were actually spent on.[7]

In chapter 113 (Yli-Juonikas 322–3), precisely at the centrefold of the book, the reader is told that Silvo Näre's corpus callosum is damaged and needs to be fixed in order to get his psyche – one of the suggested metaphors for *Neuromaani*'s structure – to function. To rebuild or install the corpus callosum, the reader must drill through the pages, loop the

two attached bookmarks through the holes and tie them together in a somewhat complicated manner.

This procedure causes several affects. Again, as in the case of skimming through the pages and turning the book round and round, the reader is brought even further away from traditional ways and bodily manifestations of reading. What is new here is that if the reader decides to follow the given instructions, he destroys the very body of *Neuromaani*. Silvo Näre's psyche and neurons are now fixed and functioning, but the reader can no longer observe this new development, since it has become impossible to turn the pages. Taking the instructions literally destroys the act and possibility of reading itself. This is no longer only a fictional actualization of the matter, since there is at least one documented case of the act of rebuilding the corpus callosum. This act was conducted, documented and later exhibited in a blog-post by the editor of *Neuromaani*, Antti Arnkil (Arnkil).

This is a unique and vivid example of the process of actualization and virtualization in reading. The reader actualizes the orders of the book by drilling through it, thus finishing one possible line of reading. This whole new actualization of *Neuromaani* – a drilled-through, unreadable version – is indeed 'embedded in a "mist" of virtual images' (Pisters). The book is permanently rendered unclosable, and the reader is forced to come up with new ways of using and placing it as an object – be it on the mantelpiece or in the dustbin.

Conclusion: the brains are in our hands

What sort of interpretation or reading does the material focus on *Neuromaani* provide us with? Even when *Neuromaani* offers us various pleasures of the text, it also denies us the pleasure of completing or finishing it. The reading will never be complete in the same sense as it is with more traditional novels. The material quirks, like referenced bookmarks and page numbers, which fade towards the end of the book, make the reader more aware of the process of reading, not allowing her to settle down or immerse herself in the story or the act of reading. The metafictional elements, such as addressing the reader and referring to the *Neuromaani*'s entity as a literary work, continue to cause and enhance this affect.

The at least seeming impossibility of properly finishing the book because of its overly complicated structure and excessive use of textual materials and references is another important point of this reading. It

takes the feeling of uncertainty to another level, which also seems to be an expected affect, since the book openly comments on and mocks the struggles the reader is bound to face. We are given numerous silly or false clues and soon learn not to trust anything the book states or suggests. The book also gives us different kinds of orders and instructions, from plain ridiculous or questionable to borderline immoral, forcing us to question the suggested behaviour in a more serious manner:

> Now you need to decide quickly. Will Silvo grab a shovel and free his father from the web of an electric outburst by hitting him in the back with the shovel? Turn to chapter 215. Or will you just stand by, looking as daddy is fried? Turn to chapter 18.[8]

It is quite easy to let a fictional character fry on an electric fence, but when asked to destroy the book by drilling a hole through it, we should wonder what might come next and whether we should still follow the orders.

This moral ambiguity also draws our attention to how we perceive reading from an external perspective, and therefore also to the definitions of what is considered normal. The person pretending to read *Neuromaani* would probably seem more coherent and competent than the one trying to complete the book's deeds, which is also one of the thematic aspects of *Neuromaani*: the traitorous academics flourish, while the scrupulous perish. The affects of this theme, however, are much more tangible and strong when enhanced by the materiality of the book; the affection would not be as vivid if it were only represented in a narrative. The same applies for other affects of the materiality of reading *Neuromaani*: they are embodied in us as affections, and therefore stay with us far longer than a regular reading session. This is probably the single most important affect of the material reading of *Neuromaani*. It leaves the future open and the reader's brain muddled with uncertainty and discomfort, ready to create new virtualities with whatever the reader chooses to pick from their brain next.

4

Explorative exposure: media in and of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*

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Even though there has been considerable interest in the medial and material features of literature in recent years, the different research fields may not have converged in quite the same way as media themselves are said to have done. There is a distinct line of enquiry devoted to media as interface (with print versus digital as the most hackneyed example) and quite another to media as subject matter (ekphrasis, the musicalization of fiction and so on). Certain works, however, call for a joint approach. In this chapter, I examine mediality as it cuts across Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), from cumulative representations in the storyworld to the physical presence of the book itself.

Espen Aarseth's study *Cybertext* makes a useful distinction between *textonomy*, the study of textual media, and *textology*, the study of textual meaning (15). In analysing *House of Leaves*, it is worthwhile to determine its media position according to Aarseth's typology, but also to carry the notion of media over to the textological analysis. The former reveals how the book actually functions, and the latter how different media are discussed in the discourse and what kinds of meanings they are assigned.

By now Danielewski's novel has generated almost as much academic commentary as the fictitious documentary film *The Navidson Record* in it. But the ways in which the two medialities, both within the storyworld and on the textual surface, inform and affect one another have not been thoroughly analysed. Reminiscent of but also going beyond Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), it consists of several narrative layers where narrators mediate, comment upon and obviously distort the texts of the preceding narrators, thus throwing into relief all manner of epistemological instabilities. The layered commentaries and metatexts

are realised by way of different fonts and their disposition on the page, but the salient typographic variation also reflects the volatile ontology of the storyworld. The novel's discourse is mainly based on the representation of the fictitious film. Thus, it uses a form of intermediality that I suggest could be called *kinekphrasis*: building on the traditional rhetorical term *ekphrasis*, I use this neologism to designate verbal representations of cinema or other forms of moving image. In addition, the visuality of the novel's text (layout, fonts, colours, footnotes) is foregrounded so that the characters' explorations in the storyworld are iconically transposed to the act of actual reading, navigating the forking text and operating the book. This makes the novel *ergodic literature*, where 'nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text'. The term is composed of the Greek words *ergon*, meaning 'work', and *hodos*, meaning 'path'. The required effort is physical, or 'extranoematic', and entails selection. Thus, the reader's movement through the text involves something other than the standard practice of turning pages when reading a traditional novel (Aarseth 1–2).

My reading, then, deals with the confluence of kinekphrasis and ergodics. This enables us to address the activity of reading on more than one level. *House of Leaves*'s kinekphrasis is a critical reading of *The Navidson Record* by a character in the storyworld. This embedded reading is in turn set up against the actions of the actual reader, who must in effect become a user: manoeuvre the book, turn it around, leaf back and forth to follow the notes, use a mirror to decipher a piece of mirror-writing, and so on.

House of Leaves is about a photo-journalist named Will Navidson and his family, who discover that their new house opens a portal to an immense labyrinthine underground space that defies the laws of physics and proves impossible to map. Navidson and his companions search the space and record their explorations on film and video. This material he compiles into a feature-length documentary, *The Navidson Record*. The most extensive diegetic level is a scholarly exegesis written about the film by an old man named Zampanò living in Los Angeles. The work is left unfinished at his death. The material is discovered, transcribed and compiled into a book by one Johnny Truant, a young man working in a tattoo shop. Truant also provides an extensive commentary of his own and reveals, among other things, that Zampanò was blind – an unlikely candidate to do film studies – and that *The Navidson Record* is itself fictitious, Zampanò's make-believe. The outermost level is that of unnamed 'editors': an amended version of Truant's manuscript, ostensibly making the book the reader is actually holding *House of Leaves by Zampanò with*

Introduction and Notes by Johnny Truant, 2nd Edition. In short, a reading of a reading of a reading.

In the text the diegetic levels are separated by different fonts. For the most part Zampanò's discourse occupies the body text and his sources are given in the footnotes (the other studies about the film obviously being fictitious, while most of the other theoretical and literary sources are real and cited correctly according to academic practice). Truant's discourse is placed mainly in the footnotes. Quantitatively, the editor's role is the least significant and is limited to the paratexts and some amendments to Truant's notes.

Zampanò's discourse forms the kinekphrastic core. Also titled *The Navidson Record*, it purports to be an academic thesis complete with the appropriate references and stylistic decorum. As is the custom, it goes through and synthesizes the previous academic and critical reception of the film and claims superiority over earlier efforts because of its meticulous close reading and the most apposite interpretations. The analysis follows the film chronologically, scene by scene and even shot by shot, and recounts the unfolding narrative in overt detail. In a sense this gives away that the film probably does not exist in the storyworld either, since the narratee clearly is not expected to have seen it. This does not, of course, diminish its signifying potential in the least.

Cybertextual analysis should be first grounded in textonomy and proceed from there (Aarseth 15), so I begin by addressing the work's media position and then move on to the intermediality within the storyworld.

Cybertext theory and *House of Leaves*'s media position

While *Cybertext* can be seen as a critique of and improvement on the hypertext theory that prevailed in the 1980s and 1990s conducted by George Landow and Jay David Bolter among others, Aarseth calls for a new understanding of textuality in general. Cybertext theory signifies a perspective on all textuality and resists any essentialist distinctions between digital and print media (Aarseth 17–18). In addition to introducing ergodic literature, Aarseth makes a terminological distinction between *scriptons* and *textons*. Scriptons form the output, the signs that are actually presented to the reader. Textons comprise the reservoir from which they are created (Aarseth 62).

Even though Danielewski's novel is routinely referred to as ergodic literature – it says so in Wikipedia (s.v. '*House of Leaves*') – so far it has not been placed in Aarseth's textonomical typology. Generally, it has been

analysed with reference to hypertext and digital media (e.g. Chanen, Hansen, Pressman). Oddly enough, its engagement with the cinema has not received particular attention either. Although Paul McCormick mentions its 'typographic montage' (64), he discusses primarily the ways in which *House of Leaves* confronts cinema as a cultural form in the media environment of the 1990s. My analysis, in turn, zooms in on the textual and material devices used in representing the moving image.

Cybertext theory conceptualizes the text as a triad consisting of the operator, the verbal signs and the medium, which are interdependent (Aarseth 20–1). Instead of describing the alleged essence of separate media, the theory presents a typology where individual works can be placed and where they can be observed in relation to each other. It is built on seven variables (Aarseth 62–4):

(1) Dynamics: both textons and scriptons can change, or scriptons alone can change while textons stay the same, or both can be static.
(2) Determinability: in a determinate text the adjacent scriptons are always the same; in an indeterminate text they are not.
(3) Transiency: scriptons may be either transient or intransient; in other words, they either have a temporal dimension or they do not.
(4) Perspective: if the user can become a person in the fictional world, the perspective is personal. Otherwise it is impersonal.
(5) Access: the user's access to scriptons may be either controlled or random. Aarseth mentions the codex, or the bound book, as a typical example of the latter.
(6) Linking: if there are links in the text, they can be either explicit or conditional. The conditional links do not function always but only under certain conditions.
(7) User functions: as this variable is the most important to my analysis, I quote it directly:

> Besides the interpretative function of the user, which is present in all texts, the use of some texts may be described in terms of additional functions: the explorative function, in which the user must decide which path to take, and the configurative function, in which scriptons are in part chosen or created by the user. If textons or traversal functions can be (permanently) added to the text, the user function is textonic. (Aarseth 64)

The typology has later been expanded with new variables (see Eskelinen). I deal with some of them in the end section of the chapter, but for *House of Leaves*'s actual media position the original ones suffice.

When placed in the typology, *House of Leaves* yields the following values: it (1) is static, (2) is determinate, (3) is intransient, (4) is impersonal by perspective, (5) can be accessed at random, (6) has explicit links and (7) has an explorative user function.

Some of these categorizations are due to *House of Leaves* being a printed book. For example, transience – that is, scriptons appearing or changing over time – cannot be realized in print, for the time being at least (Eskelinen 37). A printed text need not necessarily be static, since in a typical gamebook the textons stay the same but the scriptons change because the reader may realize a different string of signs on each reading (Aarseth 68–9, table 3.1; Eskelinen 390n19). At least in part the question comes down to reading conventions. *House of Leaves* is meant to be read in full, or at least there is no indication to do otherwise, which makes it static.

Random access, on the other hand, is intrinsic to the codex in general, but in this case it is called to mind more distinctly. Because of its framing as a mock scholarly volume, *House of Leaves* includes an index at the end. The index is a strange one, in that it presents not so much the significant concepts and proper names but a kind of frequency analysis on even such words as 'and', 'for' and 'out', and significantly some that do not exist, designated 'DNE' (except that, by way of the liar's paradox, they do exist in the index). The index in general, and the obvious insinuation that the 'non-existent' words are merely concealed somewhere (for clues, see for example Hayles, 'Mapping Time'), encourage the reader to take advantage of random access and dip into the book more freely.

In the loop

Aarseth's examples include a text with the same media position as *House of Leaves*, Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963), where the reader is allowed a choice between two paths through the chapters. *House of Leaves*'s ergodics, however, is more complex. The explorative user function is mainly brought about by links and the forking layout of the text. At its most simple, a link leads the user from one place in the text to another. Terminologically, *link* signifies the connection between source and destination. What appears at the scriptonic level is more precisely called an *anchor*. The way the anchor is made to stand out – for instance the colour blue designating hyperlinks – is called a *cue* (Gunder 212–13, 222). Mark B. N. Hansen suggests that the word 'house' printed in blue throughout *House of Leaves* makes a 'pseudoserious

reference to the blue highlighting of hyperlinks on Web pages' (598). Links indeed figure conspicuously in the novel, but the word 'house' is not one of them. The links in *House of Leaves*, to apply Anna Gunder's (213–16) terminology, are all analogue, but there are both internal and external links. They are mostly realized as footnotes modelled on academic references.

A typical typographical link in an academic text has two phases: first from the superscript number in the body text to the corresponding number at the foot of the page (internal) and then to the material outside the book (external). In *House of Leaves*, it is mainly the internal ones that are used for ergodic purposes, although the principles of both are problematized. In Gunder's (217–19) terms, an ordinary typographical footnote is bidirectional and homoanchoral both at source and destination. In other words, the superscript number (or similar) in the body text leads to that same number in the footnotes, and that same number from the footnotes back to the body text again – two directions, one anchor at each end. A footnote amounts barely to a minimum degree of ergodics, but in *House of Leaves* annotation coincides with 'concrete prose', to use Brian McHale's (184) complementary term to the better-known concrete poetry. Both the link source and the destination are coded to match, but their location in the book goes against the convention. In chapter 9, or the 'Labyrinth' chapter, the typographical balance and hierarchy between the body text and footnotes is disrupted. The notes are distinguished typographically and attributed to narrators on different diegetic levels, each commenting on the preceding ones. However, since ergodics is a particular level distinct from narration (Aarseth 92–5), I will first deal with the actual use of the text and return to the narrative issues below.

Since the text in chapter 9 is laid out in multiple columns, both vertical and horizontal, in geometric patterns varying in shape and size, in mirror image, upside down, and so on, locating the link destination becomes laborious. Source and destination may also be several pages apart. Even though Gunder (222–3) quite correctly points out that in a printed text there cannot be any hidden links, since the link must be indicated by a cue for it to be a link at all, finding the link destination is left to the reader (unlike in a digital text, where clicking on the anchor brings forward a new lexia). In *House of Leaves* the search for the destination is particularly foregrounded, and by the same token an inherent medial feature of the codex, namely random access, is charged with meaning.

The bidirectional linking is short-circuited, however, when there are subordinate notes leading to more notes instead of back to the source. In chapter 9 the superscript number 135 leads from the 'body text' to

footnote 135. This footnote leads both to an external destination – Daniel Hortz's fictitious book *Understanding The Self: The Maze of You* – and internally to footnote 129, located three pages back. Note 129 aptly quotes Derrida on the centre not being the centre and diverges to two notes, 130 and 137. Note 130 leads to successive but not forking notes, so finally there is an end-point. Note 137 leads, by way of some intermediate stages, to note 135 where the reader began, thus creating a feedback loop. To be able to continue the reader must step outside the loop, retrace her steps and try a different path.

What is more, two mismatched systems have been used to code the anchor cues: one based on consecutive numbering consistent with the rest of the book, the other on the international ground-to-air emergency signals, or more precisely their typographical renderings, since the actual signs are meant to be built from natural materials on a scale big enough to catch the attention of an aircraft. (A chart explaining the symbols can be found in a photograph in the Appendix II C.) In the numbered links the source and the destination may be pages apart and they require constant flipping back and forth, but they at least conform, by and large, to the numerical order. Page numbers lose their significance – only to be semanticized later – but one can assume that footnote 133 is in the relative vicinity of 132 and 134. The emergency signals have no such order, so the path from source to destination is more challenging, indeed more ergodic.

If a typical gamebook produces a particular sequence of scriptons on each reading and so allows or urges the reader to ignore parts of the text, *House of Leaves* works differently. Rather, the implicit urge to go through all the textual material predominates. Lexias containing several links do not in fact offer the reader alternative paths. If a link appears in the middle of a lexia instead of the end, and the reader follows it, she must also make sure to come back and read the rest of that lexia. If a lexia contains more than one link, the reader is not so much allowed a choice as expected to follow all of them as far as they lead, so as not to miss anything. Here ergodic work is related to work ethic, for it appeals to the reader's sense of completing the task, reading absolutely everything there is in the book.

All speculations on authorial intention aside, I claim that cybertextuality and the explorative user function have been inscribed in the novel's discourse as well. Among Aarseth's strict nomenclature that eschews metaphor, naming a user function 'explorative' may seem almost flightily poetic. When characters in *House of Leaves* enter the strange labyrinthine space, these journeys are labelled 'Explorations' in the discourse: first 'Exploration A' and then numbered from one to five. 'Exploring' has been

frequently transposed from the literary object language to the critical metalanguage (*sic*) but its cybertextual implications have been overlooked. Furthermore, *Cybertext* and the scholarly thesis in the novel, *The Navidson Record*, share some of their theoretical framework. The labyrinth chapter draws heavily on Penelope Reed Doob's *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages*, an actual book published by Cornell University Press. Doob's study and its analysis on different labyrinthine structures such as the unicursal and the multicursal maze have likewise inspired Aarseth's (5–9) distinction between texts with only one possible path and those with several.

The examples of printed ergodic literature in Aarseth mostly exploit the spatial dimension. Ergodics is based on the layout (Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*) or the disposition and linking of lexias (Cortázar's *Rayuela*, the gamebooks). This is of course apparent already from the definition of ergodic literature as requiring non-trivial effort 'to traverse the text'. The emphasis lies on physically passing through the text. This type of ergodics does dominate in *House of Leaves* as well, but there is in addition a brief passage that requires a different kind of effort. At the end of the book, Appendix II E compiles letters written by one of the characters in a mental institution. Paranoid about the staff reading and manipulating her letters, she encrypts one with an acrostic. The key is given in a previous letter, which obviously makes little sense cryptographically, but in the absence of the narratee's responses, the reader is left to decipher the message.

Aarseth does not specifically discuss cryptographic techniques, but his most general definition of cybertext as those 'texts that involve calculation in their production of scriptons' (75) would seem to accord with linguistic steganography, the practice of concealing texts within other texts. Even though deciphering the acrostic does not pose an enormous challenge – it is after all a traditional form of constrained writing, and there are no glitches or further complications – it obviously differs from reading straight through and requires non-trivial effort.

Having determined the novel's media position, I zoom in on the discourse and the storyworld. This does not mean disconnecting it from the media ecology, however, for here the notion of media is realized as intermediality.

Kinekphrastic intermediality

According to Irina Rajewsky, the three basic types of intermediality for the analysis of particular texts or media products (instead of more

general media-historical perspectives) are the following: (1) medial transposition, where a media product is created through transformation into another medium, such as in adaptation; (2) media combination, or multimedia, where more than one conventionally distinct medium or medial form of articulation come together, such as in theatre or cinema; and (3) intermedial reference, where only one medium is materially present but (a work in) another medium is referred to, such as in ekphrasis (Rajewsky 51–3). With regard to cybertext theory, we could say that media combination or multimediality is more likely to affect the work's media position and it should be taken into account in the texto-nomical analysis. The intermedial reference, in turn, would seem to fall on the textological side.

A large portion of the discourse in *House of Leaves* consists in the verbal representation of a fictitious film titled *The Navidson Record*. To signify this particular subtype of intermedial reference, I have suggested the neologism *kinekphrasis*, by which I mean the verbal representation of cinema or another form of moving image. The signifier obviously builds upon *ekphrasis*, defined by James Heffernan as '*the verbal representation of visual representation*' (3; emphasis in original). The study of ekphrasis has tended to focus on static artworks such as paintings and statues, and understandably so, since such depictions have a distinct tradition from the *Iliad* onward. However, I would like to emphasize the particular sensorial and semiotic challenge that cinema sets to a printed text. *House of Leaves*, in particular, proves that representing temporal and moving images brings about a form of intermediality quite unlike traditional ekphrasis.

Kinekphrasis comprises a wide range of genres and forums, literary, journalistic and private alike. For the present, however, I will limit my discussion to the literary context, where, I think, the most medially conscious cases can be found. *House of Leaves* has, to my knowledge, the most extensive kinekphrasis in literature.

If we were to imagine, for the sake of argument, a kind of kinekphrastic degree zero, it would most likely consist in an ostensibly neutral and objective description of a spatial setting, characters' appearances and their outward actions, shying away from depicting the consciousness. On these grounds much of the French *nouveau roman* has been routinely labelled 'cinematic'. Compared to this hypothetical kinekphrasis, Zampanò's *The Navidson Record* is the exact opposite.

As any analysis of a film, Zampanò's exegesis verbalizes *The Record*, carries it to the linguistic realm, contextualizes it and assigns meaning to it. Even though there are lengthy passages recounting the events in the

film, lexically the analysis is marked by the abundance of abstraction, the kind of words most often used for thematic analysis:

> Myth makes Echo the subject of longing and desire. Physics makes Echo the subject of distance and design. Where emotion and reason are concerned both claims are accurate.
> And where there is no Echo there is no description of space or love.
> There is only silence. (Danielewski 50)

Such theoretical categories or generalized emotions cannot be visually present in the film. Here, then, Zampanò's discourse engages in abstraction and interpretation.

The labyrinth chapter is characterized by lengthy non-narrative sections. There are gargantuan lists detailing the influences on *The Navidson Record*, such as books, films and documentary film-makers. Likewise, the interior of the house is meticulously catalogued, but this time, by way of negation, listing what is not to be found there. It is, so to speak, de-described. The characters in the film are obviously viewed from the outside, but that does not restrain Zampanò from speculating readily on their mental state, motivations and feelings. Against the film's iconic semiotic mode, the kinekphrastic discourse pits its own symbolic mode and, instead of imagistic images or camera-eye narration, amplifies the conceptual qualities of language. The film is overdetermined with semantic excess. From the point of view of actual readers, this kind of discourse highlights the difference of the interpretative from the explorative user function and drives a wedge between them.

Among the literary kinekphrases, *House of Leaves* is peculiar also in that the representation of cinema, the kinekphrastic discourse, is realized as the kind of text that foregrounds its own mediality and requires ergodic use. Here the two medialities, the represented and the present, are folded upon one another. Yet at the same time there is a fundamental break between them: here we, the readers, have the book, the material object in its substantial heft, in which we invest our embodied presence, since it comes into being only through physical manoeuvring, turning it around, flipping the pages back and forth and so on; and there a film, represented by text with medial qualities quite unlike its own and placed three diegetic levels below – a film (meta-metadiegesis in Gérard Genette's nomenclature) that, moreover, is not only fictitious but is fictitious in the storyworld, conjured up by a blind man.

The ontological cut

How, then, do these different medialities come together? According to N. Katherine Hayles, *House of Leaves* is an exemplary *technotext*, her term for literary works 'that strengthen, foreground, and thematize the connections between themselves as material artifacts and the imaginative realm of verbal/semiotic signifiers they instantiate' (*Writing Machines* 25). This description seems to capture the novel quite well. With regard to the term itself, however, it could be argued that every text is, one way or another, already technological from its production.

In his theory of postmodernist fiction, Brian McHale holds that there exists a 'major ontological "cut"' (180) between the material book object and the fictional world depicted within it, and this cut is particularly foregrounded when the text's materiality obtrudes upon the reader. This concept of an ontological cut seems to me most useful, and we might even invest it with an additional cinematic meaning. In a technological and material sense, a cut between two shots marks both a break and a seam.

Furthermore, Didier Coste has coined the term *graphopoeia* to complement the familiar concept of onomatopoeia at the graphic level (88). More generally it falls under Peircean iconicity – one-third of the well-known triad – where sign and meaning are related by similarity.

Since Zampanò's diegesis is basically one long kinekphrasis, the problems of representing the moving image verbally figure in it throughout. There are particular sections, however, where the issue is specifically materialized and embodied – that is, transposed from the merely discursive domain to the level of the printed text and the book as a medium. The most conspicuous is chapter 10, 'The Rescue (Part One)'.

Zampanò describes a scene in *The Record* where Jed Leeder, a member of the team exploring the underground space, is unexpectedly shot in the head by the team leader, Holloway Roberts, maddened during his wanderings in the labyrinth. By chance, the event is captured by Navidson's camera and the killing is included in the film. The polysemous word 'shot' figures conspicuously throughout the scene. Zampanò mentions that the brief passage has been subject to a detailed frame-by-frame analysis rivalling that of the Zapruder film of President Kennedy's assassination. He goes on to identify the individual frames:

> one bullet pierced his upper lip, blasted through the maxillary bone, dislodging even fragmenting the central teeth, (Reel 10; Frame 192) and then in the following frame (Reel 10; Frame

193) obliterated the back side of his head, chunks of occipital lobe
and parietal bone spewn out in an instantly senseless pattern use-
lessly preserved in celluloid light (Reel 10; Frames 194, 195, 196,
197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, & 205). (Danielewski 193)

Thus the death takes up 14 frames of film, from frame 192 to 205
on reel 10: a fraction of a second at standard projection speed. All this has
to do with film technology at the most basic level. What is notable is its
representation beyond the merely discursive. In the book, 'frames' 192 to
205 on reel 10 are placed on pages 192 to 205 in chapter 10. Here, then,
a page of the book is explicitly equated with a film frame. However, this
should not be taken as an attempt merely to mimic cinema, a desire some-
how to turn text into moving image. Even viewing a film frame by frame
goes against the whole point of cinema as a medium, since it eliminates
the movement – the presentation surface is in fact turned intransient.
In classical narratology, it is precisely with regard to speed that the
question of the physical surface comes up, if only ever so shyly. Genette
remarks on speed:

By 'speed' we mean the relationship between a temporal dimen-
sion and a spatial dimension (so many meters per second, so many
seconds per meter): the speed of a narrative will be defined by the
relationship between a duration (that of the story, measured in sec-
onds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years) and a length (that
of the text, measured in lines and in pages). (87–8)

Genette's corpus, however, consists of medially unmarked print literature
(Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*). In *House of Leaves*, what also
matters is the amount of text on a page.
Graphically the text in the passage is made up of a single line that
traverses the page and continues horizontally across several spreads.
This obviously affects the rhythm of actual reading and thus goes beyond
the traditional parameters of narrative speed. What is more, it concen-
trates attention on what is probably the most automatized aspect of read-
ing – namely, turning a page. Here the fundamental material limit of the
substrate is saturated and charged with meaning. In the course of the
sentence 'A life // time // finished / between // the space of // two /
frames' (Danielewski 197–201) – where the discourse even summarizes
Genette's point about time being represented as space – the break created
by the gutter and the edge of the page occurs no fewer than four times: an
ontological cut, then, in more than one sense of the term. Although the

textual gestalt is very much foregrounded, it is in fact non-figurative. The horizontal line represents nothing on the film, and the white space taking up most of the page is in direct opposition to the labyrinth's pitch-black interior.

Cybertext embedded

All this hinges on the question of iconicity, graphopoeia and the connection between the medial layers. The basic critical response with regard to form and content has been that *House of Leaves* is both a book about a labyrinth and a book as a labyrinth. This, however, is only the first branch on the way. Since different media positions are extensively thematized in the storyworld, they deserve a closer look.

Even though its origin, makers and purpose remain unknown, the disposition and functioning of the labyrinth are conscientiously described in *The Navidson Record*. It seems infinitely malleable and is able to alter its shape at any time without physical constraints. It also seems to react to the emotional state or the movements of anyone who enters it. If we were to consider this labyrinth a piece of ergodic art in a broad sense – though it is debatable whether there are any signs to be read – it would certainly prove textonomically dynamic, indeterminate, personal and explorative by user function, to name only the most dominant features. Moreover, it would call for more recent, additional textonomical parameters put forward in Markku Eskelinen's *Cybertext Poetics* (35–6), such as the user position and its subtypes, namely, positioning and mobility. The house is a site-specific work and depends upon the user being in a particular location to access it (positioning), and it requires bodily movement, travelling within the work (mobility). One should bear in mind, however, that this is a work envisioned in the storyworld alone, and the actual user exists at more than one remove from it.

In representing the film representing the labyrinth, Zampanò frequently points out how the space seems to resist all forms of documentation and technological representation; it absorbs the light that is vital to cinematography. On the other hand, the film displays formal artistry with perfectly timed jump-cuts and beautiful compositions of lush colours. Despite its pronounced formal features, however, the film's media position in no way differs from a standard feature film. It allows nothing but the interpretative user function. A complexly dynamic ergodic text, the labyrinth, is represented by a medially conventional film. In addition to formal and medial reflections and resemblances,

then, there are cases where the medial layers are pitted against one another and do not cohere.

To conclude, I hope to have demonstrated that the status of Danielewski's novel in contemporary media ecology is even more vexed than it might at first appear. It has been said to simulate and reflect upon digital environments. And, quite the opposite, it has been said to revalorize the printed book and all its possibilities. Either way, what matters most when actually reading the novel is not its alleged ideological stance but how it functions and how the user might operate it best.

I believe the above attests to the need for the methodological distinction between textonomical and textological analysis – so as to move from the former to the latter and account for their mutual exchange. Moreover, even textological analysis should not neglect mediality, especially in cases such as *House of Leaves*, where media abound in the storyworld.

There is a peculiar oscillation at work between the medialities in *House of Leaves*: a disjunctive feedback loop, a cut in the sense of both break and contact. Its media position and intermediality certainly interconnect, but not to mimic and reassert one another; rather, in light of this dual mediality, this double exposure, and viewed against one another, different medial means and material resources can come forth. It may be that the discordance between the medialities in *House of Leaves* is the nexus most laden with meaning. And if the work itself pre-empts and banalizes interpretation in the traditional sense, all the more reason for the reader to find meaning in its use.

Part II
New strategies of reading

5

New reading strategies in the twenty-first century: transmedia storytelling via app in Marisha Pessl's *Night Film*

Anna Weigel

> New media invent not just new forms of fictions, but also new means of perceptual manipulation. As such they present audiences with new opportunities for experiencing fictional worlds.
>
> <div align="right">(Littau 7)</div>

Introduction: changing reading habits in the twenty-first century

The emergence of new media at the beginning of the twenty-first century has massively altered the production, distribution and reception of contemporary novels. According to various reports and surveys from market researchers, electronic book, e-reader and tablet sales have constantly increased since their appearance on the market (e.g. Zickuhr and Rainie), and could even overtake the sale of paperbacks in the United States and Europe in the next few years. This development raises several questions. How does media development alter our reading habits? Will we be reading electronic books on digital devices or is the printed novel still up to date? Umberto Eco and Jean Claude Carrière have already discussed the pivotal question of whether the printed book will disappear as a result of the internet, in a volume the title of which is symptomatic of the whole discussion: *This Is Not the End of the Book: A Conversation Curated by Jean-Philippe de Tonnac*. According to Umberto Eco:

one of two things will happen: either the book will continue to be the medium for reading, or its replacement will resemble what the book has always been, even before the invention of the printing press. Alterations to the book-as-object have modified neither its function nor its grammar for more than 500 years. The book is like the spoon, scissors, the hammer, the wheel. Once invented, it cannot be improved. (Eco 4)

With reference to Eco's statement, I will take a closer look at the situation the contemporary book market finds itself in – characterized by the coexistence of two worlds, namely those of the traditional printed book and of the electronic book. Indeed, it is undeniable that we are now facing a paradigm shift that will alter our perception of reading and writing. After the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1450, we are now in the midst of another turning-point in printing and reading history: 'the computer promises new environments for fiction, but also engenders the fear that we are nearing the end of the book' (Littau 4). The much proclaimed shift from print to digital reading will not only concern hardcovers and paperbacks; newspapers, magazines and journals are also affected by the transition.

However, the rise of new media does not only determine the text's materiality, it can also influence the way contemporary novels are read. According to Littau, 'computer technology is not just transforming both our concept of what a text is and what it is to make books, but also changing our experience of reading and writing' (35). Recent developments in the publishing world have shown that reading becomes a new kind of activity when it is combined with viewing and listening. Hence, more and more print, as well as electronic books make use of new technological devices by relocating the reading process to the internet, or by using various media to narrate the story. Because this form of transmedial and interactive literature across multiple media formats is on the verge of becoming an integral part of contemporary writing, this chapter also seeks to explore new ways of perceiving and reading literature.

In order to exemplify these recent changes, I will first focus on new technical developments in the twenty-first century and the manner in which the book market now straddles print and electronic media, asking: what are current reading trends and how does transmedia storytelling enrich the reading experience of printed as well as electronic books? Furthermore, I will provide a close analysis of a transmedial novel that can be experienced in multiple ways: Marisha Pessl's thriller *Night Film*, published in 2013, can be read both in paperback and as an

e-book. Additionally, the best-selling American author of *Special Topics in Calamity Physics* (2006) developed an app for her second novel, *Night Film*, in co-operation with her publisher. The so-called '*Night Film* Decoder' can be downloaded from Pessl's homepage. Thus, by employing this application, the transmedial reader of the (e-)book has the option to dig deeper into the story. Extra material – for example pictures, interviews and film trailers – can be experienced on smartphones or tablets. While analysing the intermedial references and transmedial elements in *Night Film*, I will discuss the following questions. First, how does the novel respond to the influence of electronic media? Second, how far does reading *Night Film* as a printed novel differ from reading the text on smartphones or tablets? Third, do readers need to change their reading strategies for this kind of transmedial and interactive literature, which features complementary music, interviews, pictures and film trailers via app? Moreover, I will elaborate on the reading strategies and choices unique to readers of the printed and electronic versions of the books, respectively. Finally, I will return to the question of reading in the twenty-first century and propose possibilities for further artistic innovation for electronic as well as printed books.

The book market, caught in between: electronic versus printed books

In the centuries since the invention of the book, it has perpetually had to respond to historical, cultural and medial influences. In the past decade, new technological developments have substantively affected the way contemporary books are produced, distributed and read. Emerging technologies such as e-readers, iPads and tablets have entered the book market and threaten to undermine the status of the printed book at large (Simanowski 15). This decade of transition can thus be regarded as a latency period of the printed book towards the new digital age of the electronic book: 'On the time scale of the 450-year history of the printed book, the digital book is not just a work in progress, it is still in its embryonic stage' (Pochoda 525).

Increasing numbers of people now purchase novels for digital devices instead of buying paperbacks. This trend points to certain advantages and implications of the e-book: the digital counterpart of the book is lighter, one can store and carry thousands of books on one device, and it is perfect for travelling or reading at night. Furthermore, readers have immediate access to citations and notes and can make use of the built-in

thesaurus or translation functions. Many e-book readers also try to emulate the visual qualities of printed books, such as page layout, typeface or page turning (Pochoda 525). In this way, the e-book resembles the paperback in many of its details. Also, in contrast to printed texts, tablets or iPads can easily integrate coloured pictures or other documents into the novel. Additionally, recent figures underline the fact that the cost of electronic books will drop in the near future because of the marginal costs of production and dissemination. Thus, even now, many books are published solely in electronic form.

Nonetheless, the emergence of digital reading devices is also accompanied by decided disadvantages for customers: 'Readers will spend a lot of time hassling with forgotten passwords, expired credit cards, and being locked in to the wrong device or mobile service contract for years of time. They'll lose their own libraries, notes, and even their own writing when they switch vendors' (Lanier 339). It could also happen that some books cannot be accessed on every device, and that readers who are not as familiar with new technology will feel excluded. For this reason, publishing houses try to satisfy modern and traditional readers alike by offering electronic as well as printed versions of the same text.

Remarkably, many people still favour printed books, even though buying e-books online with just one click is usually much easier. We need to ask ourselves: what makes paperbacks and hardcovers irreplaceable – even in the digital age? Although print is anything but cheap and takes up a lot of space on the shelves, people have various reasons for buying 'real' books. According to Phil Pochoda, former director of the University of Michigan Printing Press, printed books convey essential personal and social information, saying a lot about the person who is reading them: 'Physical books transmit manifold latent as well as manifest signals about social position, cultural values, intellectual achievement and aspiration, professional identity and status, aesthetic convictions, and personal accomplishment' (523). When we walk into an office or a personal library, we often take a look at the different volumes on the shelves because they tell us something about the owner: 'books are routinely presented to friends and family, deans and colleagues, for reasons that are both social and professional; they are primary signifiers of identity both of the benefactor and the recipient' (Pochoda 524).

Furthermore, public libraries and bookshops exist as physical places to meet and to talk about literature. Many book lovers enjoy the personal recommendations of librarians and prefer the direct exchange about novels when walking into a bookshop. Online book forums, in contrast, can be quite impersonal. Moreover, paperbacks

and hardcovers also serve a nostalgic function, as they can be passed on within families and carry emotional value when they have been preserved over generations. Children might keep some of the books of their grandparents and will eventually give them to their descendants, allowing books to 'simultaneously provide both a physical and intellectual connection across the generations' (Courant 539). Others, potentially, love the characteristic smell of old or new books and will therefore always favour the smell of printing ink on time-worn books over a cold and hard tablet screen.

With the book market firmly planted in both the old and the new, publishing houses will invest in fields that offer great potential for electronic and traditional books as well. It is simply a matter of time until larger numbers of '[b]ooks will be merged with apps, video games, virtual worlds, or whatever other digital format gets prominent' (Lanier 338). This mode of transmedia storytelling is on the verge of becoming an integral part of contemporary literature. The newly emerging concept, first coined by media scholar Henry Jenkins, can be defined as follows: 'Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story' (Jenkins, 'Transmedia Storytelling and Entertainment' 944). Some books thus take up new media formats and simultaneously 'blur the boundaries between reality and fiction by connecting their book-bound body to the virtual world of digital information' (Pressman 467).

Increasing numbers of paperbacks and electronic books respond to the new media influence and changing reading habits by leading readers to the internet and by inducing them to research or read online: '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' (Pressman 465). In doing so, printed as well as electronic books have developed 'new incarnations and readerships' (Pressman 467).

Combining novel and app: reading Marisha Pessl's *Night Film*

Margaret Atwood's statement ('Do new technologies change what plot devices are available for writers of fiction? … The answer is, of course.

So it has always been' (quoted in "Writing Bytes")) reveals that contemporary novels have indeed been greatly influenced by new technologies. Many literary texts seem to respond to media development by integrating intermedial references[1] to the internet and modern communication devices on the levels of story and discourse. Whereas lovers in epistolary novels of the eighteenth century, as for example in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1749), or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), once wrote letters to each other, the protagonists in contemporary fiction write e-mails, Facebook and Twitter messages to one another, as for instance in David Lodge's *Thinks … (2001), Giok Pink Ang's *10,276 in Two Months: A Novel. An Unlikely Facebook Love* (2012) or Caroline Kepnes's *You: A Novel* (2014). Other novels go one step further by transforming the text with the support of other media into a transmedial reading experience.

This section, therefore, focuses on a contemporary intermedial and transmedial novel that reflects the recent technical and medial developments on various levels: Pessl's *Night Film* is unique in the way it integrates (new) media into the reading process, and it is likely to become a model for future transmedial and interactive mystery novels. By using the '*Night Film* Decoder' app, readers receive additional information about the background story and (minor) characters. Here, then, I will not only discuss different reading strategies and various intermedial and transmedial elements of the novel, but also pinpoint the differences between the paperback and electronic book version.

In the first place, it is striking that the recipient of the novel can choose between different reading strategies. Taking into account the e-book and paperback/hardcover versions of the thriller, there are a total of three options in approaching the transmedial story.

First, it is possible to read the novel only. It can be regarded as the 'mother ship', or the 'single source or ur-text where one can turn to gain all of the information needed' (Jenkins, 'Transmedia Storytelling 101') to comprehend the storyworld. The book is completely self-sufficient, and the recipient can enjoy reading the thriller without using the '*Night Film* Decoder' app at all.

Second, after having finished the literary text, the reader can dig deeper into the story by using a smartphone or tablet. This is the manner in which Marisha Pessl and the publishing house (Hutchinson) suggest the novel should be read. In the final section of the book, labelled 'A note about the interactive elements of *Night Film*' (Pessl, *Night Film* 595),[2] Pessl encourages her readers to investigate on their own by downloading the '*Night Film* Decoder' app, developed by her in co-operation with Hutchinson:

> DEAR READER, If you want to continue the *Night Film* experience, interactive touch points buried throughout the text will unlock extra content on your smart-phone or tablet. These hidden Easter eggs include new images and audio. If you have a device with a rear-facing camera (connected to WiFi or a cellular network), please follow these steps to access the bonus content. (Pessl, *Night Film* 595)

Readers need only scan a recurring bird image in the printed and electronic version of the novel, causing a red 'Play' button to appear on the screen of their device. Through pressing the button, some of these symbols reveal extra visual and audio content. However, *Night Film* has a closed entry point, which means that it is not possible to use the 'Decoder' without reading the book at all.

Third, the user can also skip between novel and app and the interactive elements.[3] It can be an enjoyable experience for readers to search for the recurring bird symbols in the novel and then scan the page to discover what is hidden behind them. However, constantly switching back and forth between book and digital device can also interrupt or even disturb the reading process. Also, the recipients have to carry both book and tablet or smartphone at the same time, which makes reading difficult on buses and trains or on holiday.

Last, with regard to the three transmedial reading options, it becomes evident that '[a] book won't necessarily be the same for each person who reads it, or if the same person reads it twice' (Lanier 338). Accordingly, this makes it all the more challenging to compare the individual reading processes of different people.

In order to comprehend better the use of the application and the various media formats in the novel, a short plot overview is necessary. *Night Film* is set in New York in October 2011, and centres on the life of the investigative journalist Scott McGrath, who is trying to unravel the mystery of a suspicious suicide committed in an elevator shaft in a Chinatown warehouse. The victim is Ashley Cordova, 24-year-old piano prodigy and daughter of the enigmatic horror film director Stanislas Cordova, who is supposed to have a strange interest in children. The public has not seen the reclusive film-maker for decades. Cordova produced and shot his 15 horror films on his property, 'The Peak', in upstate New York, where he lives with his family. All of his movies focus on the innermost human fears, and are so horrifying that they are only shown in underground tunnels by his fanatical fans, the so-called 'Cordovites'. Together with the 19-year-old coat-check girl Nora Halliday and the punk Hopper, Scott McGrath is trying to shed

light on the mysterious suicide and the Cordova family. During their investigation, they gather information on Ashley's past, interview various film stars and witnesses in the New York area, inform themselves about black magic and superstition, and watch Cordova's horror movies in an attempt to spot hidden details.

Instead of writing a conventional crime novel, Pessl decided to create a story that integrates a variety of new media formats and applications on the levels of story and discourse. Right from the beginning it becomes obvious that the storyworld level of the characters is profoundly influenced by modern communication devices and the internet. Nearly all the characters, with the exception of Ashley, use new media for leisure and entertainment, communication, or searching for information. By stating that 'Ashley used no social media – which in this day and age means you don't exist' (Pessl, *Night Film* 224), Emma Banks directly and succinctly characterizes her freshman room-mate. Although Ashley seems to live in her own 'media free universe', the other characters constantly reflect on media development:

> It appeared in the Internet age, *pianos*, like physical books, were fast becoming culturally extinct. They'd probably stay that way unless Apple invented the iPiano, which fit inside your pocket and could be mastered via text message. *With the iPiano, anyone can be an iMozart. Then, you could compose your own iRequiem for your own iFuneral attended by millions of your iFriends who iLoved you*. (194; emphasis in original)

Other characters – for instance, McGrath, Nora and Hopper – conduct various Google searches in their attempt to penetrate the mystery, for example on the Cordova family (e.g. 24, 219), suspects (e.g. 112, 358), actors (e.g. 269, 362) and important New York locations visited by Ashley (e.g. 214), and they make use of the online encyclopedia Wikipedia for foreign word definitions and explanations (e.g. 246, 517, 576). Furthermore, the characters also watch YouTube videos (e.g. 308), and use BlackBerrys (e.g. 232, 234), e-mails (e.g. 344, 507, 563) and blogs (e.g. 577) to communicate. Whereas most of these intermedial references are just mentioned in the novel, some are visually and typographically distinguishable from the main text: for instance iPhone text messages that are displayed in speech bubbles (e.g. 68–9) or e-mail messages that imitate the layout of a real e-mail program with an inbox, address bars, attachment signs and exact sending dates, as well as digital signatures (e.g. 88, 291).

In addition to these intermedial references to modern communication devices, the book also integrates facsimiles of websites. Directly after the prologue, the story begins with a *New York Times* online article on the supposed suicide of Ashley Cordova (3) and an online chat on the website vulture.com of the *New York Magazine* (4). The reader of the novel might reasonably believe that the screenshots are authentic because both *The New York Times* and the *New York Magazine* exist in extra-textual reality. There are even faked URLs, newspaper sections, and search and comment fields, as well as Facebook Like, Twitter, Google +1 and inShare buttons, which resemble the proper homepages in every detail. What follows is an 18-page photo slideshow from *Time* entitled 'The Last Enigma', illustrating Stanislas Cordova's life story, featuring photographs of the genius together with family members or colleagues, and detailed background information on the reclusive film-maker (5–22).

However, Pessl does not only employ intermedial strategies to narrate the story; she also transforms her novel into a transmedial one. If readers decide to use the '*Night Film* Decoder', the act of reading is transferred from the (e-)book to smartphone or tablet. Because the extra content of the app is not included in the novel, the reader knows that the visual and auditory input of the app may challenge, counteract or even negate the storyline of the novel. Since the detective plot (Pyrhönen 103–4) is highly fragmented, consisting of a multitude of texts, pictures and audio-visual elements, it is comparable to the architecture of a hypertext through which the reader has to 'navigate' to solve the mystery. While finding a way through the textual 'labyrinth', the reader comes across documents that include flashbacks, ellipses and foreshadowing. Therefore, the change of the medium/device not only carries meaning; it is also a trigger of suspense.

All in all, the transmedial reader is confronted with ten bird images that allow access to additional input. By scanning the bird symbols, the app user encounters several visual documents, appearing on the smartphone or tablet: for instance, a secret course syllabus of the Columbia University School of the Arts, 'SPECIAL TOPICS IN CORDOVA: DARKLY ALIVE AND TOTALLY PETRIFYING' (Pessl, *Night Film* 15; '*Night Film* Decoder'), Cordova's fifteen film posters in chronological order (Pessl, *Night Film*' 170; '*Night Film* Decoder') or a found 31-page diary that contains drawings, notes, pictures, vouchers, dried flowers and handwritten entries (Pessl, *Night Film*' 516; '*Night Film* Decoder'). Since the diary is that of the actress Lulu, a minor character who appears just twice in the novel, the content of the app opens up a completely new perspective on the plot and expands the breadth of the storyworld.

Furthermore, the app features various audio recordings that present the story from a different point of view or contribute to the fictional authentication of the story. Examples include an interview with the convict Hugh Thistleton in the radio show 'Crimes after Midnight' (Pessl, *Night Film* 18; '*Night Film* Decoder' scan 2); Ashley's 'New Patient Assessment' at the psychological clinic Briarwood Hall, to which she had been sent (Pessl, *Night Film* 45; '*Night Film* Decoder' scan 4); a seven-minute audio version of T. S. Eliot's poem 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (Pessl, *Night Film* 352; '*Night Film* Decoder' scan 9); a live recording of the Academy Awards (Pessl, *Night Film* 182; '*Night Film* Decoder' scan 8); and the first chapter of the fairy tale *The Mysterious World of Bartho Lore*, which is written and read by Marisha Pessl herself (Pessl, *Night Film* 180; '*Night Film* Decoder' scan 7).

Moreover, by integrating short musical pieces into the reading process, Pessl exemplifies that audio material may influence the reader's emotional state of mind in a particular way. On page 37, the reader is supposed to scan a bird symbol that is placed on a CD cover. In the novel, investigative journalist McGrath discovers an article about Ashley's musical talent, together with a CD, in a plastic bag. Whereas the image of the article is integrated into the printed novel, the 'real' music can be accessed via app (Pessl, *Night Film* 36; '*Night Film* Decoder' scan 3). For those who do not have a digital device, the sound of the music is described in the novel: 'The first few bars were high-pitched, insistent, so fast and assured, it seemed inconceivable that the person playing was just fourteen years old. The notes rippled, softened for a moment before stirring up into a furious outburst, like a machine gun exploding sound into the air' (37). Here, of course, the question arises as to whether book and music are able to describe the scene in the same way. Does the music distract the reader from his readerly imagination of the scene? Is it just an adaptation of the written text? In her article on transmedia storytelling, Marie-Laure Ryan comes to the conclusion that '[s]ince different media have different affordances, giving them different expressive power, it is virtually impossible for two different media to project the same world' (368). Thus, such audio contributions – in contrast to the written text – not only influence the reader's perception in a particular way, they are also a special means by which to deepen the audience engagement and to map the fictional world (Jenkins, 'Transmedia Storytelling 202'). According to James and de Kock, 'such a multimodal "reading" experience is additive rather than deficit-inducing' (114). Of course, it is hard to tell how traditional readers and digital natives react to that kind of

enhanced literature, but it would be worth going deeper into this emerging field of research.

With the help of the app, it is even possible to access short films, which may also affect the reader's emotional involvement in the story. After having scanned the homepage of Blackboards, a fan website devoted to the film-maker, one of Cordova's film trailers, called 'Lovechild', is shown on the smartphone or tablet (Pessl, *Night Film* 89; '*Night Film* Decoder' scan 5). The trailer, set in New York City, depicts two starring police officers and a suspicious man, as well as two anxious young women. Fear and suspense are mainly created through thrilling music and the abrupt change of scenes. Moreover, recurring symbols in the novel, such as black birds and the colour red, are referenced in a number of ways: e.g. red lipstick, red lettering, red finger nails, blood in the bath tub, a red eye etc. (scan 5). In this manner, the conventional reading process is complemented with audio-visual elements in order to rope the reader more effectively into the storyworld.

Reading *Night Film* as paperback and e-book

Because a novel's meaning is inextricably connected to its material manifestation, it is not sufficient to concentrate solely on a text's linguistic or poetic code; rather, the book's anatomy should also be examined: 'physical forms of a text … affect not just a given text's meaning but therefore also the way in which it can be interpreted' (Littau 24). Therefore, it is worth investigating the different incarnations of *Night Film* as paperback and e-book versions. The fact that we are dealing with both a multimodal and transmedial text already reveals that it was predestined for electronic publishing – it is important to note that the electronic book (c. $7) is much cheaper than the hardcover (c. $20) or paperback (c. $14),[4] which is not surprising given the many pictures that are integrated into the novel.

The electronic edition of *Night Film* can never be perceived the same way as the printed book, and it is interesting to investigate the similarities and differences. Basically, the reader should be able to experience the same text on the digital device, but in rare cases page numbers, layout and the size of the characters are similar to the paperback version. Hence, the reader is able to decide, to some extent, on the format. Interestingly, in Pessl's novel the actual order of some pages has been deliberately changed. The aforementioned 'Note about the interactive elements' (Pessl *Night Film* 595), for instance, has been moved from the final section of the printed novel to the beginning of the e-book, which

is definitely uncommon. Apparently, the author and/or the publisher decided to guide the e-book users directly to the interactive elements of the app. Thus, in contrast to the printed version, the reader of the e-book is instructed to download the '*Night Film* Decoder' before becoming immersed in the story. The decision to alter the order of the pages can certainly be ascribed to the changing habits of today's readers. Publishers seem to adjust not only the text's materiality and plot according to the customers' preferences, but also the interactive features.

Surprisingly, the *Night Film* e-book does not make use of state-of-the-art technology. Instead of linking the bird images directly to the interactive elements with the press of a button, the reader of the e-book must consult another electronic device – e.g. a smartphone – to scan the electronic pages.

So-called 'enhanced' or 'amplified' electronic books (James and de Kock 107) that feature interactive elements, as for example Andreas Winkelmann's *Deathbook* (2013), provide a direct link via a click, which greatly simplifies and accelerates the reading process. If the publishing house had opted for providing direct access to the transmedial material, the application would then, of course, only make sense for the printed book. Because the e-book industry is steadily growing, readers will certainly witness further far-reaching changes in the (electronic) publishing industry in the next few years.

Conclusion: the media threat as an opportunity for the novel

Because we inhabit a rapidly changing media landscape, it is nearly impossible to escape new electronic developments. Huge companies, such as Amazon, Samsung and Apple, have already flooded the book market with new technological devices enabling users to buy electronic books easily. Hence, many people have already changed their reading habits and possess e-book readers, tablets and iPads. However, recent figures show that the sales of hardcovers and paperbacks are rising again and that the printed book is still in great demand (Alter). Instead of offering a prognosis about whether the printed book will disappear because of the influence of new media, it is worth looking at the possibilities and opportunities this situation presents for electronic as well as printed books.

One might easily frame the media influence as beneficial for the further development of the physical book, as well as its electronic counterpart. According to Jessica Pressman, 'the threat posed to books by

digital technologies becomes a source of artistic inspiration and formal experimentation in the pages of twenty-first-century literature' (465). Over the years, books have responded to media development by, for instance, transforming their 'outward appearance' and integrating links or digital audio and visual materials. Authors as well as publishers have become more flexible, in that they can now freely decide on the type of publication befitting the story they want to tell. Some transmedial novels, such as Winkelmann's *Deathbook*, are, because of their interactive character, predestined for electronic publishing, whereas other stories could benefit from the tactile nature of paper, as for instance Jonathan Safran Foer's conceptual artwork *Tree of Codes* (2010), in which words are deliberately cut out, or the experimental novel *S* (2013), written by J. J. Abrams and Doug Dorst, which features real, touchable objects such as postcards, photographs and letters, as well as a hand-drawn map written on a napkin.

Undoubtedly, customers will influence the publishing industry with their decisions regarding what they read and how they read. The example of Marisha Pessl's thriller *Night Film* has shown that contemporary readers are faced with a number of options, including the choice of the book, the material (paper or tablet) and the reading strategy (use of new media and apps or not). Recipients must adjust their reading strategies according to the concrete realization of the text, while also having the possibility of choosing which incarnation of the text is best in line with their preferred reading strategies. It would be worth investigating precisely how great an impact the materiality of the texts has on their perception. Readers should, therefore, be aware of the fact that printed and electronic texts are never the same.

Furthermore, I have attempted to elucidate that the reading process changes profoundly when reading is combined with other activities: for example viewing and listening. Transmedia storytelling is a comparatively new literary practice that enables readers actively to interact with the narrative text and to investigate on their own. With the example of Marisha Pessl's *Night Film*, it becomes evident that, on the one hand, additional auditory and visual elements can interrupt or even disturb the reception process. On the other hand, audio contributions or film trailers might also enhance the understanding of the storyworld and can even affect the reader's emotional involvement. It makes a dramatic difference whether the narrator describes a protagonist playing music with his or her own words, or whether the reader can actually listen to the musical piece via smartphone. In this case, the concept of the narrative text needs to be broadened. In addition to

written words, visual and auditory input can also shape the constitution of a literary text.

In the next years, it is likely that printed as well as electronic books will use the influence of new media as inspiration and opportunity for further artistic innovation by becoming increasingly interactive and transmedial art forms. By connecting narrative texts with the virtual world via app, computer game or online companion, transmedial formats can enhance the recipients' interest in the characters, as well as their emotional involvement in the story. Finally, readers will be empowered to decide what kind of stories they prefer, and whether these are best experienced in print or electronic format.

6

New reading strategies in print and on digital platforms: Stephanie Strickland's *V*

Matti Kangaskoski

How does reading digital poetry differ from reading print poetry? In this chapter, I discuss the differences between print and digital platforms in both the concrete act of reading and in the strategies of making sense of what one has read. I present the differences through a case study I call *V*, a combination of works of poetry by Stephanie Strickland. These works offer a rare case for a cross-platform examination, since they exist in four different forms – or emanations[1] – on three different platforms. *V* consists of a print book and a web application published in 2002, and a print book along with an iPad application published in 2014, all of which share the same textual content. These emanations invite reading strategies that are both alternative and complementary to each other. In *V* the strategy of close reading is combined and juxtaposed with a new reading strategy, which I propose calling *vertical* reading. In vertical reading the meaning of the poem is formed in an active relation to the reader's subjective experience at a particular moment. Finally, I suggest that these different strategies of reading are not limited to poetry but reflect a broader change in the contemporary reading environment, permeated by networked digital technology.

To enable the analysis of works on multiple platforms, I first distinguish between data and processes (Wardrip-Fruin). This distinction is useful for separating the textual and other data from how the data are presented and how they can be accessed. A related term is 'database' and the concept of database logic (Manovich), which I use to investigate the logic behind different strategies of reading. I proceed to form a preliminary close reading of the print books, *V: Waveson.nets/Losing L'Una* (2002) and *V: WaveTercets/Losing L'Una* (2014), and then examine

the digital applications, *V: Vniverse* (2002) and *Vniverse* (2014),[2] paying attention to the differences that emerge. The print books invite a trad-itional close-reading strategy, since the poem's recurring themes, figures and patterns make it an intricate, interpretable totality. Furthermore, it is full of references to both eastern and western mythology and religion, literature, new media and science. Because the digital emanations share the same text with the printed ones, they shift the focus to the question of *how* they can and should be read. In anticipation, suitable tactics seem to defy habitual (linear, sequential, totalizing) close reading, suggesting instead strategies that are based on play, subjective experience and the arbitrariness of choice. These diverse reading strategies are, on the sur-face, incompatible with each other, but in the four emanations of *V*, they are brought together.

The meandering *Vniverse*: an ancient goddess and other means of grasping the world

Data as related to (digital) literature include text, images, sound files, specifications of story grammars, declarative information about fictional worlds, tables of statistics about word frequencies and instructions to the reader (Wardrip-Fruin 47). To be precise, it is the textual data of *WaveSon.Nets/WaveTercets* that are the same in all the emanations of *V*: that is, in the print books and the digital applications. Paratexts including information for readers on how to structure their reading differ, however. The print books also host a poem called *Losing L'Una*, which is not present in the digital applications I discuss. Further, processes refer to the 'processes actually carried out by the work' (Wardrip-Fruin 47), which is an optional category; not all works, like conventional print books, require separate processes to display the data.[3] These processes can be anything from hyperlinks to temporal control, or various kinds of text generation, for example. The data, the processes and the reader meet at the interface, which means 'the point and/or modalities of com-munication between two systems' (Therrien). In short, the interface is the concrete, material platform on which the interaction between the work and the reader happens.[4]

The data of a codex[5] consist typically of words and possibly images, while the interface is the whole codex. There are no processes to be car-ried out by the work as such. However, the codex form of *V* offers two alternative starting-points for reading. The books (both in sonnet and ter-cet form) are invertible, as they may be read by starting from either end.

One end begins with the *WaveSon.nets* (*WaveTercets* in the 2014 book), while the other starts with *Losing L'Una*. The poems meet in the exact centre of the book, thus forming a perfect 'V' when held open. Another clue to the importance of reading strategies on the thematic level is this excerpt from *Losing L'Una*: 'Gentle Reader, begin anywhere. Skip anything. This text / is framed / fully for the purposes of skipping.' Parts of *Losing L'Una* foreground the analogy between reading and understanding the world, which is then shown in action between the platforms of the *WaveSon.nets/WaveTercets* and their digital applications. Considering *Losing L'Una* in detail is, however, a task for another article.

Let us dive into the *Vniverse* through the printed form, *WaveSon.nets*, whose dedication reads as follows: 'For Simone Weil, her life & thought, / her need to touch; / her gut, her mouth'. It beautifully reflects the work in a microcosm of lines, as *V* presents an attempt both to think and to touch the world, to grasp it through the intellect and the tactile senses, through abstraction and materiality.

To investigate this attempt further, I (close) read the first sonnet or five tercets and then offer a condensed summary of the rest of the poem, as well as a hypothesis for an interpretation. Here is the first sonnet:

> If you understand virginity,
> you understand abstraction, you understand V –
> V which is flight, and you understand VVV,
> i.e., ric-rac, the earliest recorded
>
> symbolic motif, Cassiopeian breasts pouring forth
> a Milky Way, a.k.a. zigzag,
> world-over water, meander, serpentine
> cupmark U adjoining its inverse, upside down
>
> U (please imagine), yourself,
> optimizing, as you do not lift but leave
> your point (become pointed) pressed hard
> to bone to pull that bone
>
> writhing on your point, twist it one way,
> then the other – a rhythm method making
> your water mark.

Virginity, as the poem says, is both concrete and abstract, and indeed, *V* as a whole oscillates between concreteness and abstraction. Virginity

is an abstraction that denotes something untouched, a fresh view, but being a virgin is a factual, physical matter. Furthermore, the 'V' shape dominates the first sonnet and runs through the whole poem in various ways as an underlying figure. The letter and the shape are foregrounded to such a degree that understanding its meaning may be said to be crucial for a full[6] interpretation of the (abstract level of the) poem.

So, what does the 'V' shape mean? It can mean anything, but the end of *WaveSon.nets/WaveTercets* guides interpretation to a specific direction. The half-a-dozen books suggested for further reading in order 'to go forward/to go back' include such subjects as voodoo, fractal geometry, cultural history and Simone Weil's published notebooks. Among these suggestions is Marija Gimbutas's *The Language of the Goddess* (1993), which, on further investigation, provides a key to one of the abstract levels of the poem. According to Gimbutas, 'V' is an ancient sign of a Neolithic goddess (c. 2500 BCE, although some evidence points to an even earlier era): 'the great mother who gives birth to all things from her womb' (xvi). This goddess is both a life-giving creatrix and a death-wielding destroyer. Death in this context is not a negative phenomenon, but a necessity for renewal, rebirth and regeneration; creation and destruction are inextricably related to a cyclical conception of time, in which destruction is a necessary element of creation. The 'V' shape – the sign of the goddess – is a concrete trace: a sculpted, engraved or painted figure to be found in sculptures of bone, ivory or stone, and later in pottery, statues and wall paintings. Other symbols for the goddess include vulvas, triangles, breasts, chevrons, zig-zags, meanders, cupmarks (xix), the bird (29), the snake (129), the bull, the bee and the butterfly (265). All of them are also encountered in the poem.

Let us look further at the way the first sonnet constructs the visual signs of 'V', and how this is connected to the creation of life it describes. The 'V' shape is everything that forms the shape $\vee\vee\vee$, as seen in the third line. This connects to ric-rac, which Gimbutas mentions as the 'earliest recorded symbolic motif' (19). We find this motif in 'zig-zag', the constellation of Cassiopeia, 'meander' and 'serpentine', and even the 'U' that 'become[s] pointed' forms a 'V'. In the last three lines an action of 'writhing' – twisting first one way, then another – also forms the pattern of consecutive 'V's. In the following sonnets not quoted in this chapter the 'V'-pattern is further strengthened by numerous allusions: 'Fallopian horns', 'wave forms' and 'vibrations' are additional visual connections to the shape of 'V'. Also vulva, lens and water (all symbols of the life-giving goddess according to Gimbutas) are introduced. Thus, in the

first five sonnets 'V' as a symbol of the goddess and its various functions have a powerful presence, providing a significant means of grasping the poem's world.

In the subsequent sonnets, the abstract meaning of virginity as a fresh way of seeing the world is reinforced by a description of a form of (immaculate) conception (Son.net 1), followed by a period of incubation and birth (Son.nets 2–3). This fresh way of seeing is needed, since the poem describes a pull between the scientific means of making sense of the world and a mythical one. For example, in Son.net 4 one reads 'If you understood red, but – you cannot; / for you understand web / glistening in sunlight as stronger than steel / per ounce'. The two views, understanding 'red' or understanding (scientifically) that a (spider's) web is stronger than steel per ounce, rule each other out. The dictionary understanding of 'red' is not enough, since, in Son.net 2, we have already read the following instruction:

> If you understand red, you understand ruby,
> you understand light bubbling up struck seam
> first morning cliff; you do not
> mock the real

V creates a language game of its own in which words such as 'red' and the sign 'V' gain new meanings, particular to this language game. 'Red' means many things in the poem, and among these things it can be seen as representing an alternative, mythical way of understanding. This includes at least the understanding of 'ruby' and 'light bubbling up struck seam'.[7]

There are many more means of understanding in *V*. Other ways of organizing and understanding the world include the natural sciences, such as mathematics and physics (fractal curves, quantum particles, Cantor dust); philosophy (Wittgenstein, Plato, Simone Weil); numerology (the numbers 28 and 128 are significant); folklore and history (children's songs, the tale of St Columba and the Mermaid); voodoo rites; the tarot deck and its belief system; Greek myths (Procne, Philomela); information technology (data structures, coding, Virtual Caves); games; and, of course, art and literature. To explain and interpret all these references is, albeit rewarding, an enormous undertaking. For the purposes of this chapter it shall suffice to form a general hypothesis and look at what kind of reading strategies the poem invites. The general hypothesis I offer is, simply, that *V* is about grasping the world by different means. It clearly foregrounds the human need to understand the world and the

different attempts and means through which this need manifests itself. This claim is further corroborated by the title; a poem named *Vniverse* is likely to be about understanding the world and its surroundings. Thus, *V* tackles the common philosophical truth that the world does not present to us directly. We can only reach into the world through our intellect and through our senses. That the time span of the poem ranges from the Neolithic to the times of information technology shows that humans have always tried to understand the world they see, but also a world they cannot see – a world beyond the immediate physical grasp. Consequently, we have a multitude of ways and a multitude of attempts at grasping the world. The means of making sense of the poem is analogous to the means of making sense of the world: a move from explanation and concrete matter (the signs and elements of the poem) to an abstraction, a hypothesis for interpretation.

What kind of a reader does the print *V* invite? First, the poem's style is far from straightforward. It requires a slow reading with its fast cuts (in the sonnet form the turns in thought are traditionally called *voltas*) in subject matter or thinking. Second, the flow of images is at points breathtaking. For example, Son.nets 2 to 3 move from *vulva* to *lens* to *entrance* to *labyrinth* to *water* to *lens* to *drop on stone* to *see through to life and a depth*. Third, the poem has a vagueness, a semantic openness, that requires patient deciphering. Many words or letters, like 'V', gain more precise meanings only in connection to the many intertexts. Extra- and intratextual references abound. Thus, the printed *V*, the *WaveSon.nets/ WaveTercets*, requires a diligent close reader, who not only 'doublereads' by moving back and forth in the text during the first reading but also rereads the work in its totality. *V* flows between sonnets (and tercets) seamlessly, without breaking the thought where the lines break, which also generates a back-and-forth movement.

A thorough reading of *V*, at least in my case, requires careful annotation of references in the text and those to the other sources. The printed page is well suited for this kind of reading since it stays still (unlike many digital poems) and is easy to make markings on. According to Matei Călinescu (1993), such 'doublereading' is already a rereading during the first reading. It includes the concrete back-and-forth movement 'along the horizontal or syntagmatic axis of the work; but it also consists of the reader's attempt to "construct" … the text under perusal …' (Călinescu 18–19). After the annotating and doublereading, rereading begins. As Călinescu describes, rereading is quite literally the repetition of the previous act of reading, but 'more

importantly, it is the rediscovery of an already known text from a different vantage point' (8). As is clearly visible, the background assumption for this kind of reading is that of a unified whole, an intricate totality in which all elements make sense and cohere. The concrete act of reading as well as the logic of making sense of the work change as we move to the digital platform.

Having established a preliminary sense of the kind of reading the print emanations call for, let us now turn to the digital applications and their respective reading strategies. I first briefly present the Shockwave web version *Vniverse* from 2002 as a starting-point, and then turn to a more thorough discussion of the iPad application *Vniverse* published in 2014.

Reading strategies in the digital *Vniverse*

The Shockwave web version of *V: Vniverse*[8] presents a starry sky (see Figure 6.1) that the reader can explore by operations such as mousing over and clicking. When mousing over a star, a constellation linking several stars forms (see Figure 6.2). Next to the selected star, a number, a keyword and a tercet appear. If clicked upon, the whole sonnet from which the individual tercet was taken emerges. It is then possible to proceed to the next sonnet in the numerical order by clicking 'next' under the appearing sonnet or by entering numbers from 1 to 232, with which we get the corresponding tercets in their respective places.

A few possible reading strategies emerge: (1) random, (2) following the constellations, (3) following the numerical order or (4) following
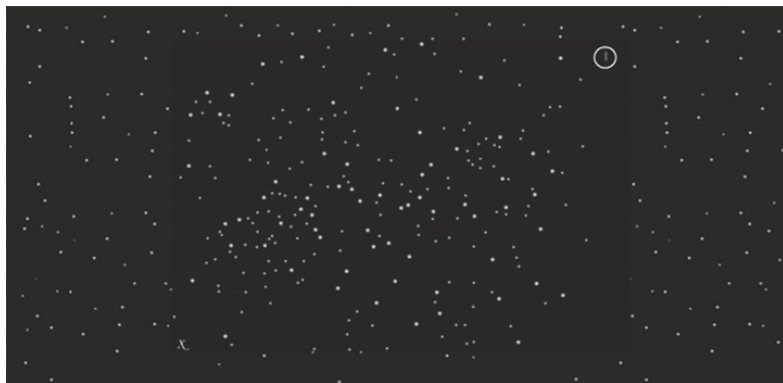
Figure 6.1　The opening screen of the *V: Vniverse* Shockwave application.
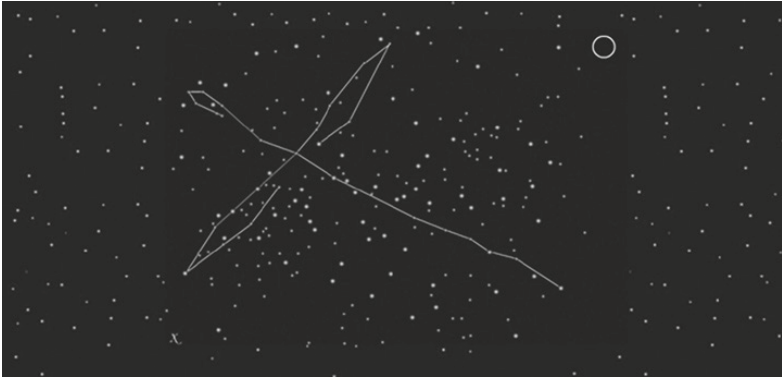
Figure 6.2 The Dragon Fly constellation.

the links sonnet by sonnet. Notably and somewhat disappointingly, the host website gives the reading instructions along with a starting-point for interpretation. Giving reading instructions, however, brings forth the fact that reading a print book is conventionalized to the extent that instructions are not needed, whereas digital poems have no such clear and determined conventions.

The iPad app resembles the Shockwave application, but has more possible reading strategies. Moreover, operating the tablet, with its 'hands-on' tactility, is different from operating a standalone computer.[9] Upon opening the application we enter the same starry sky, but now in the left corner of the screen we find the words 'Draw', 'Constellations', 'WaveTercets' and 'Oracle' in neat, tappable boxes with round edges (see Figure 6.3).

In the 'draw' mode, readers can draw their own constellations. Upon touching a star, a corresponding keyword appears, but the word starts to fade soon after. One can then tap on stars randomly or glide fingers across the screen so that lines connect the stars. The words fade quickly but the lines stay so that the corresponding stars and their 'meaning' can be revisited without haste. In my reading, for example, I combine only a couple of stars at once and take delight in the small glimpses of the universe: 'lining–signs–life', 'data structures–you–feedback', 'R2–OC–tilted', 'ritual–tango–delicacy–owl' and so on. It works effortlessly and feels exciting at first, but soon I am faced with the question of what to do with my reading. Where do I start? When do I stop? I can write my first initial, 'M' (which, apropos, according to Gimbutas, is also a sign of the goddess), and get 'nails–trembling–lilting–open–relaxation–silent–subside–cell'. I have a habit of cutting my nails too short and sometimes I tremble.
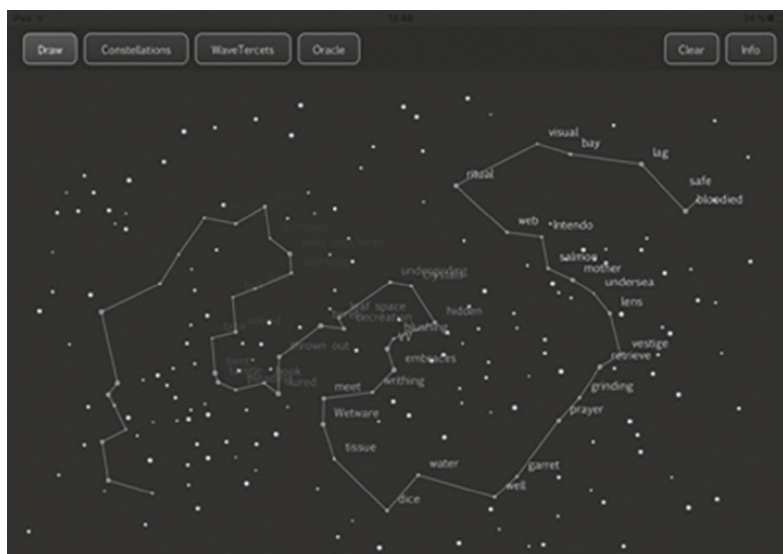
Figure 6.3   A pattern drawn in 'draw' mode, where some words have already faded. *Vniverse* iPad application.

I would like to be open and relaxed and not subside into a silent, cell-like being. Is this kind of reading allowed? Let us explore the application further before drawing conclusions.

In the 'constellation' mode the reader can explore the constellations one at a time instead of having to find them out by herself, as in the Shockwave version. Here, the stars will give tercets instead of simple words. Where to start and where to proceed is entirely up to the reader, but the constellations are not random. They form a selected set of tercets: for example, in the constellation of the swimmer one finds tercets from 1–15 scattered around the constellation.

'WaveTercets' mode is a complete break-away from the Shockwave version, as it is time-based and plays the poem for the reader without her active participation. The tercets start from 1 and advance in a steady, legible pace all the way up to 232. The individual tercets remain readable, but there is no time for understanding. Going back is more difficult, since one would have to memorize the stars where the tercets appeared. The screen remains tappable and one can jump to a random star, from where the poem proceeds in numerical order. Letting the app roam through all the tercets would take only about 30 minutes, but my patience, at least, wears thin very soon.

The 'oracle mode' is also a new place to start. The reader can pose questions to the work, now functioning as the oracle. The questions are:

Whose body?
How to know?
Why care?
What do I love?
Where to build a bridge?
When did you say?
Which one?

When a question is selected, the poem replies in the form of random tercets and/or keywords. There is some variation in the functions of the questions, but the main gist is to give personalized answers to the reader. The reader can ask the poem what he loves and the poem will answer. I got the tercet no. 180, keyword 'feedback':

and organisms, resonant feedback
is required. Encounters of a special, precarious
sort. To claim a sense of company that survives

The tercet is accompanied by the words 'dust' and 'Precession'. Answering a personal question in this way makes me seriously consider the attract-iveness of resonant feedback and precarious encounters. I appreciate good feedback but the notion of 'precarious encounters' does not resonate with me. I do like, however, the idea of a 'sense of company that survives', which I interpret as the *feeling* of having long-lasting friends. But then, when I ask 'Why care?', the answer is 'Salmon'. This does not seem to require deep analysis. Asking questions of a textual, aleatory work can be seen as an allusion to divinatory works such as the Chinese *I Ching*. *I Ching*, or *The Book of Changes*, has been used for millennia to divine the course of action the questioning person should take. I shortly return to this practice. The last two questions contain ways to orientate in the textual universe. One can 'teleport' to a numerically chosen tercet or take a look at the whole sky with numbers attached to all stars.

Whereas the textual data of the poem present ways to grasp the sur-rounding world in various ways – conceptual, mythical, tactile, concrete and abstract – the iPad app provides various ways to explore the poem's textual data, and from various angles. The print poem explores ways of understanding and accessing knowledge of the world, while the digital applications explore ways of accessing and dealing with the poem. The

readerly advice from *Losing L'Una* to 'begin anywhere' or to 'skip anything' is materialized in the affordances of the digital platform. In sum, as regards reading paths in the digital applications, we have at least:

(1) a linear, but uncontrolled reading;
(2) a linear, but temporally controlled reading;
(3) aleatory pairings with questions asked by the reader;
(4) aleatory pairings within the syntagmatic elements of the text;
(5) an informed, organized reading with the numbers of the stars;
(6) an informed reading by following the constellations;
(7) readings that exploit random access and non-linear progression.

So, what we have is a pluriverse, one that readers can access from multiple entry points, which they are necessarily compelled to do, too.

In the iPad application the reader has more guiding information, but also more room for exploration in the form of playing than in the print books or the earlier Shockwave application. The iPad application concretizes the need for touch mentioned in the dedication to Simone Weil, bringing tactility into the explorations, and grasping the universe hands-on. As we can see, the digital application creates reading paths that are impossible with the print text.

V as database and vertical reading

We have seen that various reading strategies make many approaches possible, but here I limit myself to a general exploration of a change in the logic of reading, and then to an examination of the 'draw' and 'oracle' modes. To tackle the changes in the logic of reading, I use new media theorist Lev Manovich's concept of database logic. By investigating this concept, we find an alternative strategy of interpreting the poem.

Database logic, according to Manovich, reverses the dominant logic of meaning-making; narrative; and, by extension, reading. Let us first, however, establish what is meant by database, and to what extent it applies to *V*'s different emanations. According to *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* (2014), a database is essentially

> a system that comprises (1) the data container, consisting of tables and structures that house discrete data units; (2) the database management system – the software package that allows for housing the data in its respective container and for retrieving, filtering, and

changing it; and (3) the users who browse the data and understand it as information. (Paul n.p.)

Not accidentally, the definition covers much of what is thought to be essential to digital literature in general: the data; the processes through which the data are retrieved, explored and possibly even changed;[10] and, obviously, a reader/user. Only the interface is not explicitly mentioned, but evidently a database also needs an interface to be used in the first place. Thus, both the Shockwave and iPad applications of *V* are databases. The data are the text of the poem, and the various functions covered above are the retrieval and filtering methods of this data.

Manovich claims that when a database comes into play, a reversal in the means of understanding – logic – takes place. To illustrate this reversal of logic, Manovich adopts two key terms from the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure: the syntagm and the paradigm. Saussure defines syntagmatic relations as 'those referring intratextually to other words copresent within the text and paradigmatic relations as those referring intertextually to words absent from the text' (quoted in Paul n.p.). In Manovich's use, the syntagmatic dimension is typically a linear sequence, while the paradigmatic consists of a differently (e.g. non-linearly, non-causally) organized set of elements related to a word. Manovich then postulates that in the dominant logic of making sense of fiction, the narrative represents the syntagm, while what the narrative draws its meaning from represents the paradigm. He explains: 'In the case of a written sentence, the words that comprise it materially exist on a piece of paper, while the paradigmatic sets to which these words belong exist only in the writer's and reader's minds' (Manovich 48). The syntagm is thus explicit, and the paradigm is implicit (perhaps the result of close reading). In the case of the print *V*, the linear, numbered sonnets and tercets on the pages of the book represent the syntagm, whereas the world the poem invokes, the whole horizon of possible interpretations, represents the paradigm.

To make the reversal happen, the paradigm is likened to the database, and the syntagm to the personalized trajectory that the reader takes through the database. According to Manovich, the database represents the world as a 'list of items, and it refuses to order this list' (44), unlike the syntagm-narrative that creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items or events. Furthermore, he maintains that 'each [logic] claims an exclusive right to make meaning out of the world' (44).

In the database logic, the reader has the paradigm in an unordered list form from which she proceeds to make meaning. This meaning – for the reversal to happen – has to be likened to the syntagm. After the reversal,

the paradigm is explicit, while the syntagm is implicit. Thus, the syntagm–paradigm pair is reversed. According to Manovich, 'database (the paradigm) is given material existence, while narrative (the syntagm) is dematerialized. Paradigm is privileged; syntagm is downplayed. Paradigm is real; syntagm is virtual' (49). The nature of this reversal becomes clearer when we look at the way in which it takes place in the digital *V*. Although a reversal happens, it is not quite the one Manovich suggests.

In the digital *V* the database consists of the textual content of the poem that is accessed through the various ways described above. For example, the 'draw mode' in the iPad application does what Manovich describes: the sky is the paradigm and the trajectory chosen by the reader is the syntagm. Hence, the particular syntagms result from the reader's choices: they are not fully preorganized by the work. More generally, the operations enabled by the digital applications substitute for the linear, preorganized sequence logic of print the logic of sampling and playing, the logic of accessing a differently organized set of items in a different way. The paradigm, however, is not literally explicit, although it really is – virtually – there. Moreover, the data are still in the 'base', in the background, and the reader has alternative ways of accessing them. 'Syntagm is virtual' is true in the sense that choosing the trajectory of reading largely depends on the reader's decisions. The reader's particular trajectory is not present in the structure of the database except as an enabled possibility. But Manovich's formulation of the reversal is imprecise. First, as he himself points out (Manovich 46), it is questionable whether the random trajectories the reader chooses form a narrative. His definition of the syntagm, however, hinges on this equation with narrative. Second, the meaning of paradigm is altered in the reversal. The paradigm that is created by a novel, a film or the print *V* does not correspond one to one with a database. This paradigm, as defined above, cannot be a fixed set of elements in the form of a list, as a database can. These qualifications notwithstanding, the comparison is illuminating and leads us to the big change: instead of a reversal of the syntagm–paradigm pair, there is a substitution in the logic of treating the database and in the logic of making meaning. This is a substitution in the logic of reading itself. The logic of the syntagm-narrative is replaced by another logic, one for which we do not yet have a conventional term. This is partly because, in databases, there is no single way of retrieving and filtering information, and consequently no uniform logic behind these diverse operations. Instead, these logics can be various. In the digital *V*, they include play, collage and arbitrariness.

As a result, the digital *V* challenges yet another reading convention. This is the age-old obligation to treat the work as a unified whole, which

includes the ideals of intentionality and coherence. This convention of making meaning holds that an artwork is an organized set of elements that follows an intersubjective logic; further, all its elements have meaning in relation to each other. Although nothing prevents us from cutting a print book into pieces or reading it in a piecemeal order (the access of a codex is, technically, uncontrolled), we are bound by convention to read them as totalities and to form readings that take the whole work into consideration.

The database logic and the digital applications of *V* challenge these traditional assumptions by offering approaches that make this kind of reading unproductive – if not impossible. This is especially true for *V*, which exists in both digital and print form. Trying to perform a traditional close reading of the digital applications of *V* is futile, since one can access the same text in print without the extra effort. The digital applications direct the reader's attention to the platform and the ways in which these applications play with possible reading strategies and interpretations of the poem.

Reading the digital *V* in the 'draw' and 'oracle' modes is the clearest example of an alternative logic of reading. The goal (and, by the same token, the result) of reading, the act of reading, and the relationship between the reader and the work is changed. The goal is not to gather first textual details and then make them cohere by finding patterns, or to uncover the work's inner logic and then make conclusions based on this logic. Rather, the goal is to form ephemeral, passing connections that are subjective and, thanks to the reader's active participation, personal. With 232 stars in the sky, the number of possible combinations and trajectories is astronomical; the combinations for only 2 stars amount to more than 50,000, and here the reader has all the stars and their combinations at their disposal. This means that a single reader probably follows a path that is unique (although fully reproducible) – a path not taken by others in exactly the same way. My trajectory with the figure 'M' was 'nails–trembling–lilting–open–relaxation–silent–subside–cell', which I can make meaningful to myself, but it seems unnecessary to try to find a general sense for it – except for the statement that we indeed *can* make almost anything mean something.

The reader's subjective participation is foregrounded and encouraged even further in the oracle mode, which actively invites the reader to ask questions, even very personal ones. This involves the reader's imagination in a similar way to reading a horoscope. In fact, and as mentioned earlier, the oracle can be seen as an allusion to an ancient divination method well known from the Chinese *I Ching*, or *The Book*

of Changes. *I Ching* has been and is being used as an oracle that either encourages a particular course of action or warns against it. In *I Ching*, the reader holds a question in her mind, and then either throws coins or forms a hexagram with yarrow stalks. This hexagram is then used to navigate to a relevant chapter of the *I Ching*.[11] The logic of divination in the 'oracle' mode is dissimilar to all others enabled by the various platforms. Even if the reader's participation is required in navigating through the *Vniverse*, the meaning of random paths is still primarily related to other elements in the poem. The reader gets selected glimpses into the database, behind the stars. For example, when I encounter the word 'breasts' in the 'draw' mode, my first thought is to continue reading and see how it relates to the other elements of the poem (and having close-read the print versions, I know it is related to the goddess). The words gain their meaning thanks to their relation to each other and the context they create. In the 'oracle' mode, however, I am asking a question of the text – for example, 'What do I love?' – and since the reply is always different (the possibilities are practically inexhaustible), this reply is to me uniquely. The reply acquires its meaning in relation to me, and less in relation to the other elements in the poem. To restate, in other forms, such as the print *V* and even most of the digital applications' reading strategies, the meaning of the encountered words stay in the work,[12] on the lateral – or syntagmatic – level, in connection to other words in the database. But in the oracle mode the meaning is formed in relation to me, the ephemeral reader. In contrast to the lateral relation, we could call this a vertical relation.

Conclusion: the convergences of digital and print *V*

The shared textual content of *V* and its general interpretation as presenting ways of understanding the world bend to and support well the digital applications' playful reading strategies, as the work is, on both a thematic and formal level, about exploring the universe and trying to form a trajectory, an order to an unordered universe. Without these means of making sense, the universe is – for us humans – a chaos. And these means can vary: 'Misfits may form / completely independent patterns / of their own, as beats in music, / or moiré in silk' (*WaveSon.net* 41). The form of the digital applications adds the logic of play and game into the means of understanding and grasping the world. The reader is looking at the sky and trying to find patterns, getting glimpses behind the stars, trying to make sense.

By comparing the platforms and by using Manovich's study on database, I presented a general difference in the logic of interpretation. Database logic reverses the logic of assigning meaning by making the explicit syntagm-narrative implicit and, respectively, the implicit paradigm-database explicit. In the case of the digital *V*, a reversal happens, but with qualifications. After the reversal, neither does the syntagm necessarily invite a narrative logic, nor is the paradigm-database explicit per se, although it is a fixed set of elements. Furthermore, the iPad application of *V* encourages reading strategies that are more subjective and less intersubjective, producing meanings that are ephemeral and playful. That the iPad application invites alternative reading strategies is emphasized by the fact that the same textual content is found in print; the print version favours a close reading that treats the material as a totality and relies on the notion of the work's coherence and unity.

In addition to reflecting the ancient method of divination found in *I Ching*, the logic of reading the iPad application resembles that of the contemporary online environment. The everyday online environment is more and more personalized, since not only advertisements but also news and other content are being tailored to the needs of the individual user based on his browsing, shopping and other tracked habitual actions. Such personalization is even more aggressive in the social media environment, where the 'meaning' of the content is increasingly 'vertical' – more in relation to the user and less in relation to other content. In addition, this environment encourages the binary reactions of 'like' or 'dislike', which further strengthens the vertical strategy of interpretation. Following Manovich, who posits that different logics of interpreting art claim to have an 'exclusive right' in showing us how to make sense of the world, we could stipulate that the changes in reading habits in the online environment have more general repercussions for how people make sense out of the world around them. Consequently, the exploration of changing reading habits is ever more important.

This exploration, however, is only one of the reasons why the various versions of *V* offer a fruitful case for comparative exploration. They demonstrate that print and digital literature can coexist happily; also, they show the differences between the two platforms. Since they have different modes, what could be better than to close-read one and play with the other? As was shown, both reading strategies are needed in order to get the best out of the four emanations. In the age of digital culture, it is invaluable to find ways of integrating the print and digital platforms. *V* shows how they can be made not to compete with each other, but to complement each other.

Part III
Reading affectively

7

Rethinking reading through the novelistic discourses of *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary*

Stefano Rossoni

I draw attention to the representation of reading and readership in Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. These two works have never been more relevant than now, when the new technological supports such as e-book readers and tablets are competing for readers' attention with the printed text because of the increasing inter-mediality they offer, and the way they open new paths in the text-based disciplines. *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary* offer a distinctive perspective on the relation between reading and interpreting, addressing the notion of 'symptomatic reading' meant as a practice that 'encompasses an interpret-ive method that argues that the most interesting aspect of a text is what it represses' (Best and Marcus 3).[1] In particular, I aim to point out how Cervantes and Flaubert, through their two alleged 'misguided' readers Don Quixote and Emma Bovary, probe the affective content of reading.

I examine the reasons why Don Quixote and Emma Bovary have been perceived as misguided readers and discuss the way reading as a leisure activity illuminates critical understanding of these characters. Specifically, I argue that Cervantes's metaliterary reflection on Don Quixote's practice of reading displays narrative as an essential cognitive tool through which we understand our everyday experience, and show how Flaubert's response to it in *Madame Bovary* offers a way of accessing emotional complexity.

Don Quixote's influence on Flaubert

The influence of *Don Quixote* on Gustave Flaubert is well known and has been explicitly acknowledged by the French author. Soledad Fox

underlines that Flaubert's 'love of literature was initially inspired by a children's edition of *Don Quixote*' (78). In an 1852 letter to Louise Colet, Flaubert wrote that his literary roots were to be found in Cervantes's work: 'We carry our homeland with us in the soles of our shoes, and in our hearts, we unwittingly carry the dust of our dead ancestors … The same goes for literature. I can find my origins in the book that I knew by heart before I knew how to read, *Don Quixote*.'[2] *Madame Bovary* is perhaps the work of Flaubert's that best expresses his engagement with Cervantes's legacy, and Flaubert's contemporaries saw the link between the two novels clearly. Harry Levin mentions Emile Montégutes, who wrote in an 1876 article that 'just as Cervantes dealt the death-blow to the chivalric mania with the very weapon of chivalry, so with the very devices of the romantic school Gustave Flaubert has demolished the false ideal that it brought into the world' (Levin, *Gates* 246). As this quotation suggests, an intuitive analogy between the novels connects Emma's desire to emulate the heroines of the Romantic novels she is fond of to Don Quixote's attempt to live like a hero of chivalric romances.[3] As Levin points out, *Madame Bovary* is mock-romantic, where *Don Quixote* is mock-heroic (*Gates* 248).

Between life and imagination: two misguided readers

In fashioning protagonists whose actions are inspired by reading, Cervantes and Flaubert seem at first sight to present Don Quixote and Emma as misguided readers. In particular, both authors play with narrative modes and use novelistic illusion to depict the reality that frustrates their characters' fantasies. Following Bernard Shaw, *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary* have been regarded as expressions of the conflict between life and the imagination. The impression of reality that they generate is such that Erich Auerbach describes both novels as powerful descriptions of everyday life. Cervantes's work is described as 'a comedy in which well-founded reality holds madness up to ridicule' (Auerbach 347). Similarly, Levin, while observing that such an impression is no more than the outcome of the conventions associated with the real, recognizes in *Don Quixote* 'the prototype of all realistic novels' ('The Example' 47). He goes on:

> Cervantes … discovered that he could give his book the special effect of vividness and solidity by repudiating all bookish precedent.

By disenchanting his readers, he could cast a spell of his own. By attacking literary illusions, he could capture the illusion of reality. He could attain realism by challenging the conventions that gave literature its frequent air of unreality. ('The Example' 43)

In exposing the lack of verisimilitude in Quixote's interpretations, Cervantes stresses the verisimilitude of his own work. This effect is created by adopting the picaresque 'realistic' mode of representation as a counterpart to Quixote's imagination, which is inspired by chivalric romance and fantasy. This opposition is ironically displayed in the interaction between the aspirant chivalric hero Don Quixote and the realist *pícaro* Sancho.[4]

Like *Don Quixote*, *Madame Bovary* has been considered an exemplum of realism. Emile Zola, for example, regards Flaubert's work as 'the prototype [of the naturalistic novel] … the exact reproduction of life, the absence of any novelistic element'.[5] In *Madame Bovary* the exposition of Emma's readings plays a crucial role in creating an illusion of reality. The contrast is between her literary imagination, which, according to Levin, recapitulates the romantic movement (*Gates* 257), and the impersonal third-person narrator, which confers the sense of a neutral and objective perspective characteristic of realism.[6] As in *Don Quixote*, this interplay between different modes of narrative representation is embodied in the opposition between two characters, Emma and her husband Charles, and in 'the incongruity between Emma's high-flown sentiments and Charles's pedestrian bumblings' (Levin, *Gates* 258). On a more figurative level, Frederik Tygstrup suggests a counterpoint between Charles's heavy and pulsating corporeal presence 'given over to its naturalness and unable to mobilise a spiritual impulse' and 'the shimmering, fragmentary and fetishised image of Emma, which … constitutes the body as an imaginary-spiritual entity' (473). This emphasis on Emma's body is particularly striking in that she uses her reading as a key to understanding her emotions and physical sensations. In *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary* these metaliterary interactions emphasize the delusional outcomes of their misguided readings: unable to live the sense of reality the other characters inhabit, Don Quixote and Emma conform their lives respectively to the fictional narrative orders of chivalric romances and Romantic novels.

Prompted by the way in which Don Quixote and Emma read and its lack of 'verisimilitude', the actual reader is invited to reflect on her own act of reading. As Levin underlines, 'Cervantes … could appeal to common sense by inviting readers to compare their reading with their experience; he could turn literary criticism, as Américo Castro has shown, into a "critique

of reality"' (*Gates* 43). Thus, initially, the metaliterary dimension of *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary* reassures the actual reader about her ability to keep the imagination separate from her lived experience. Metaliterary practice in such a light addresses critically the power of suggestion of reading.

The power of suggestion and textual production

In order to examine the central role that reading plays in Don Quixote's and Emma's lives, let me refer to René Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. Even if Girard does not focus on the question of readership explicitly, the impact of reading on Don Quixote and Emma is at the heart of Girard's theory of mediation conveyed in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. Taking into account the works of Cervantes and Flaubert, along with Stendhal, Marcel Proust and Fyodor Dostoevsky, Girard argues that in these narratives the subject is incapable of choosing the object of his own desire and borrows it from another subject, a mediator. Introducing the mediator into the subject–object dialectic, Girard proposes a triangular model to explain the dynamics of desire in literature. According to this theory, the ideal of knight-life, the object of desire that Don Quixote pursues, is not the expression of his spontaneous desire, but has been chosen for him by his model, Amadis. In the same way, Emma's desires are shaped and mediated by the romantic heroines of the romances she is fond of. Reading is the agent of this mediation of desire and undermines the reader's spontaneity.

Girard links the increasing power of suggestion of reading to the material aspects of textual production. Indeed, he highlights the role of printing and of the multiplication of copies involved:

> The constraining force of the illusion grows as the contagion spreads and the number of its victims increases … Models and copies multiply more and more quickly around the bourgeois who lives nonetheless in the eternal – eternally ecstatic before the latest fashion, the latest slogan … As always in Cervantes, the literary aspects of suggestion are particularly emphasized … There is a gradual transition from chivalric novels to serial romances, to the modern forms of collective suggestion that become increasingly abundant and obsessive. (Girard 104)

The invention of printing spreads a 'contagion' that, as Hillis Miller notices, also reaches Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim and Jane Austen's Catherine Morland, who are 'morally corrupted and led to have absurd

expectations about themselves and about the world by reading novels' (Miller 95).[7] In Girard's and Miller's analyses, the emphasis on the dangerous effects of reading is associated with the success of the novel form. Furthermore, Raymond Geuss stresses that the idea of the dangerous effect of reading 'was not linked to particular morally questionable contents, but to the novel as a form' (24), and Walter Reed shifts our attention to the question of the novel as a printed text.

In referring to the influence of printing technology on literature coupled with the rise of the novel form in particular, Reed claims that 'the raison d'être of the novel is the ambiguity introduced into literature by the technology of the printed book' (25). The ambiguity Reed alludes to arises from the new model of production that characterizes the printed text, which does not involve 'a community of listeners attending to an epic "song", or a member of an aristocratic coterie glancing over poems circulated in manuscript' (25). Furthermore, the novel differs from other literary genres in that it is consumed in private by an individual. According to Reed, Cervantes was the first to realize the existence of 'a new cultural being – the reader' (76); this new emphasis on the role of the reader is announced in the prologue, which directly addresses its 'idle reader' – in the original Spanish 'Desocupado lector'. The relation between readers and texts (both manuscripts and printed works) is at the centre of *Don Quixote*'s narrative universe in print: once his library is destroyed, Don Quixote makes the world the theatre of his adventures. This becomes more evident in one of the final chapters of the novel, where Don Quixote goes to Barcelona and enters a printing shop. As Robert Alter describes it:

> he witnesses the process of proof-drawing, type-setting, revision, and is treated to a disquisition on the economics of publishing and bookselling (2:62) … At such a moment we can hardly forget that Don Quixote himself is no more than the product of the very process he observes, a congeries of words set up in type, run off as proof, corrected and rerun, and sold at so many reales a copy. (4)

The scene exposes the fictional status of the novel. Even if Cervantes was not the first to denounce the fictional status of his own work, Reed observes that, while the self-conscious dimension embodied by the play-within-the-play in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is 'a critical awareness of the theatre' (89), *Don Quixote* displays a heightened awareness of the printed text and its technology. The acknowledgement of the increased force of illusion that the printing press enables through the multiplication

of copies, which Girard also highlights, coexists with the awareness of the change in reading habits. Expressed by Cervantes's address to the reader, the understanding of these changes configures reading not only as a more isolated and individual experience, but also as a leisure activity for an idle reader. In view of this metaliterary awareness and Flaubert's engagement with Cervantes's work, I suggest that the influence of texts on Don Quixote's life and Emma's goes beyond the uncritical adoption of a particular literary model by each one of them and should be investigated in more depth.

Reading and its pleasures

Don Quixote does not merely imitate his model, Amadis. Many critics have emphasized that his imagination is not involuntary or shaped by reading passively. Reed points out that the protagonist 'internalizes his experience of books and performs them' (77); Alter notices that Cervantes's protagonist appears 'to be at once the creator and protagonist of his own fictions' (21). Moreover, Don Quixote not only adopts an active mode of reading, but is also aware of the fiction he is projecting. Referring to his beloved, Dulcinea, he states clearly that she is a product of his imagination:

> In the same way, Sancho, because of my love for Dulcinea of Toboso, she is worth as much as the highest princess on earth. And yes, not every poet who praises a lady, calling her by another name, really has one. Do you think the Amaryllises, Phyllises, Sylvias, Dianas, Galateas, Alidas, and all the rest that fill books, ballads, barbershops, and theaters are really ladies of flesh and blood who belong to those who celebrate them? No, of course not, for most are imagined in order to provide a subject for their verses, and so that people will think of them as lovers and as men who have the capacity to be lovers. And therefore it is enough for me to think and believe that my good Aldonza Lorenzo is beautiful and virtuous … and I can think she is the highest princess in the world … I imagine that everything I say is true, no more and no less, and I depict her in my imagination as I wish her to be in beauty and in distinction. (Cervantes 219)

Comparing the idealization of Dulcinea to the poets' need to have a subject for their verses, Don Quixote reveals his awareness of the

rules of poetic and literary imagination and presents himself as a creator. Paradoxically, his creative response to his readings is articulated through his awareness of the fictional nature of his fantasies, while at the same time requiring a suspension of disbelief. Don Quixote's words may be seen as an oscillation between madness and lucidity, but I argue that the 'logic' driving him is suggested in the dialogue that he has with the Canon:

> Be quiet, your grace, and do not say such blasphemies, and believe me when I tell you what you, as an intelligent man, must do in this matter, which is to read these books, and then you will see the pleasure you derive from them. If you do not agree, then tell me: is there any greater joy than seeing, before our very eyes, you might say, a great lake of boiling pitch … enclosed within the seven castles of the seven enchantresses which lieth beneath this blackness. (Cervantes 455–6)

Don Quixote deprives reading of any moral or ethical concern. His radical innovation is placing pleasure at the centre of his activity as a reader. Similarly, the chivalric fictions he projects, like his idealization of Dulcinea, need only satisfy the pleasure of his imagination. Even though the pleasure of reading that Don Quixote describes is more of a reassuring pleasure than the destabilizing one described by Roland Barthes ('Effect of the Real') – a moment of bliss that disrupts orthodoxy – the consequences of Quixote's pleasure still challenge the previous tradition represented by the Canon, in which reading is regarded as a means to educate and to transmit knowledge. Don Quixote's undisciplined fictions of the self aim to satisfy his pleasure in the text. I would like here to refer to Carry Nelson's conception of literature 'as a unique process in which the self of the reader is transformed by an external verbal structure' (4). Even though Nelson's analysis does not focus on *Don Quixote*, I believe this notion illuminates the affective relationship these characters establish with chivalric romances and romantic novels respectively.

The representation of reading in *Madame Bovary* emphasizes its pleasures. Like Quixote, Emma interprets her life as a text and becomes the protagonist of her own fictions: 'She was the beloved of every novel, the heroine of every drama, the vague *she* of every volume of poetry' (Flaubert 235). Emma shapes her life according to what she reads and, as the narrator writes, she tries 'to find out what exactly was meant, in real life, by the words "bliss", "passion", and "ecstasy", words that she

had found so beautiful in books' (32). The urgency with which she embodies and lives this question is at the core of the novel and drives it. In her attempt to understand the meaning of pleasure as represented in romances and to inhabit this representation of pleasure, Emma adopts an active attitude (as Don Quixote does) that will lead her to challenge the limitations imposed on women in nineteenth-century France. Reading exposes, using Baudelaire's words, the 'virile nature of the blood that courses in her veins' (251). Mario Vargas Llosa, like others, notices that in pursuit of the dreams that reading romances has generated in her Emma assumes the role of seducer. In her relationship with Léon, after the man's first approach, Emma starts playing a more active and dominant role: she goes to Rouen to visit him, she asks him to dress according to her wishes and she almost orders him to write poems for her. Charles, Léon and Rodolphe – all the men who have a relationship with Emma – are submitted to her dominant and demanding attitude. In his 'most erotic novel' (Carter 13), *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, Italo Calvino creates the incipits of ten imaginary novels, engaging his actual reader in a literary love game, and writes: 'What makes lovemaking and reading resemble each other most is that within both of them times and spaces open, different from measurable time and space' (156). Similar to lovemaking, when the individual faces a less socially shaped and more instinctive experience, the space of reading is not confined between the first and last word of a book, but is open to the relationship that the reader, in the privacy of her room or studio, establishes with the text. In drawing the original literary paths along which the imaginations of Don Quixote and Emma have grown, Cervantes and Flaubert each emphasize the performative nature of the act of reading.

The interplay between lived experience and its verbal articulation

In *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary*, the representation of reading, which initially exposes the implausibility of the protagonists' fantasies, gradually reveals their struggles to shape a narration responsive to their desires. On the one hand, the language Emma derives from her readings is described as an obstacle to understanding what she feels:

> Having tried a few times without success to ignite a spark of passion in her heart, and being, moreover, incapable of understanding what she did not experience, or of believing anything that

did not manifest itself in conventional form, she soon came to the conclusion that there was no longer anything extraordinary about Charles's love for her. (Flaubert 40)

On the other hand, the same reading that shapes her understanding is a means to engage with her life. In suggesting that the meaning of Emma's life is generated in the form of a narrative, *Madame Bovary* echoes Cervantes's work. In *Don Quixote*, the sense that the understanding of our life is generated as a narration emerges most clearly in the moment when the protagonist meets Gines de Pasamonte, a character 'who represents not so much the *pícaro* as the picaresque genre' (Allen 130): Gines declares that he aims to write a book about his life that will be cast in the genre of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the prototype of picaresque narration:

'[B]ut if you want to know about mine, know that I'm Gines de Pasamonte, whose life has been written by these very fingers'.
'He's telling the truth', said the commissary. 'He wrote his own history himself, as fine as you please, and he pawned the book for two hundred *reales* and left it in prison.'
'And I intend to redeem it', said Gines, 'even for two hundred *ducados*'.
'Is it that good?' said Don Quixote.
'It's so good', responded Gines, 'that it's too bad for *Lazarillo de Tormes* and all the other books of that genre that have been or will be written. What I can tell your grace is that it deals with truths, and they are truths so appealing and entertaining that no lies can equal them.'
'And what is the title of the book?' asked Don Quixote.
'*The Life of Gines de Pasamonte*', Gines replied.
'And is it finished?' asked Don Quixote.
'How can it be finished', he responded, 'if my life isn't finished yet? What I've written goes from my birth to the moment when they sentenced me to the galleys this last time.' (Cervantes 184–5).

The conversation between Quixote and Gines, as well as the one with the Canon and many others, displays what Claudio Guillén describes as *Don Quixote*'s 'active dialogue with the generic models of his time and culture' (128). Expressing Gines's ambition to write his life according to the picaresque's literary conventions, Cervantes suggests that no fictional representation can directly engage with reality, but that only conventions

allow us that engagement, and narrative conventions in particular that we associate, however indirectly, with our notions of the 'real'. Gines's attempt to make a meaningful text out of his life mirrors Don Quixote's desire to give meaningful life to a text (*Amadis de Gaula*) and addresses the human need to give form to our experience.

The case of Gines's literary work is particularly significant because it shows that even the picaresque, the genre that counteracts Quixote's chivalric fantasies, stems from – borrowing Nelson's words – the encounter between the self of a writer (and not just a reader) and a verbal structure. Casting reading and writing outside any disciplinary context, revealing its affective component, *Don Quixote* enacts the ineluctable relationship between a subject's experience and its verbal articulation. Cervantes presents the story of Don Quixote as the translation of the work by the fictional author Cide Hamete Benengeli, and within it stories-within-the-story proliferate: as Carroll Johnson observes, within *Don Quixote* the entire world presents itself as a text to be read and interpreted (90). This aspect of the novel also involves a real episode. In the second volume, Don Quixote learns that someone has written a book inspired by his life. The volume relating to a sequel of his adventures to which Don Quixote refers was not written by Cervantes, but by another writer under the pseudonym of Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda. The book was published in the ten years that passed between the publication of the two original volumes, which appeared in 1605 and 1615 respectively.[8] As Carlos Fuentes argues, for the first time in the history of literature a character becomes aware that he has been read by someone else. When Don Quixote is told that other characters have read Avellaneda's version, he stresses that he does not recognise himself in that work. Realizing that his new chronicler may not be trustworthy, Don Quixote tries to reappropriate his life, fictional in any case, questioning the other characters' reading of his story. In this way, Quixote configures language (through reading) as a means to probe his experience outside the different versions of his life that actual as well as fictional authors, and fictional characters, try to impose on him.

On the basis of these considerations, the view of Don Quixote and Emma as misguided readers and the interpretation of the interaction between different narrative discourses in terms of an opposition between reality and imagination appear to be oversimplified. In particular, the heightened metaliterary awareness expressed in the dialogue of Gines and Quixote evokes the interplay between the various so-called 'realistic' modes of representation that underpin both Emma's readings and her sexual experience. Engaging with Roland Barthes, Jonathan Culler

underlines that *Madame Bovary* displays two different notions of realism: on the one hand, 'realism as the representation of a world that fits our models, an object of knowledge and analysis'; on the other, 'realism as the *effet de réel*, the confrontation with the facticity of a world that is just there, resistant to signification' (Culler 694). The former is described as a matter of the codes that provide us with a sense of verisimilitude (*livresque*). The latter is the outcome of those moments when storytelling is suspended, the characters and the plot fade into the background, and the stage is taken by descriptions of objects and everyday life. These descriptive moments, which Gérard Genette calls the 'silences of Flaubert', are apparently devoid of a causal connection to the narrative and evoke an external reality that is not subordinate to human sense-making (*effet de réel*), but instead imposes its presence on us. In *Madame Bovary* silence becomes the third element in the interaction of love and reading:

> All was silent; a mellow sweetness seemed to be coming from the trees; she could feel her heart beginning to beat again and the blood flowing through her body like a river of milk. Then she heard, in the distance, from the other side of the wood, on those other hills, a vague, long-drawn-out cry, a voice that seemed to linger in the air, and she listened to it in silence, as it blended like a melody with the last vibrations of her tingling nerves. (Flaubert 143)

The contrast between the silence of the outside world and the images derived from the literature of romance (such as 'a river of milk') directly connects to Emma's physical sensations. Flaubert not only exposes the unreality of Emma's dreams and the fragility of her illusions, but, as Leo Bersani suggests, also 'uses the literature of romance to illustrate how poetry is made from the life of senses' (181). Relating one of Emma's meetings with Léon, Flaubert exposes the impossibility of articulating the sensations she is experiencing outside the romantic language of romances:

> Had they nothing else to say to one another? Their eyes, at least, were full of more urgent messages, and, while forcing themselves to utter commonplaces, each of them felt overcome by a similar languor; it was like a murmur of the soul, profound and unceasing, audible above the sound of their voices … Future joys, like

tropical shores, project a natural indolence that drifts like a per-fumed breeze across the vast spaces that precede it, and those who journey there are lulled by its enchantment, and never even wonder what lies beyond the unseen horizon. (Flaubert 85).

The narrator seems to stress the romantic artificiality of this frag-ment of experience, but at the same time, the romantic romance style seems ironically the only way capable of expressing Emma's emotions. Exposed in *Don Quixote* through the metaliterary dialogues between the protagonists, the need to give a narrative form to our life in *Madame Bovary* involves an oscillation between the opacity of the language that precludes our understanding of experience, and a highly formulaic romantic style that presents itself as the only way to express bliss and passion. In *Don Quixote* the urge of the protagonist to read his life as a chivalric adventure reveals the tension between our lived experience and the human need to shape an understanding of it as a narration. While Cervantes focuses on our struggles to translate experience into texts and the mutual influence between texts and life, Flaubert explores what hap-pens after emotions are translated into text and codified. By looking at emotionality through this quixotic lens, Flaubert's metaliterary discourse investigates the effect that past literary models have in mapping our feel-ings and emotions.

Conclusion

Studying these representations of reading sheds light on the different concerns that Flaubert's response to *Don Quixote* articulates. If *Don Quixote* explores how pervasive the textual processes are by which we shape the sense of our lives through narrative, by adopting a more linear narrative structure in *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert shifts the focus of this metaliterary reflection and questions the limits of language that prevent the comprehension of our experience and its crucial role in articulating our feelings and sensations, making them accessible to us (even if in con-ventional forms).

Despite these different concerns, both *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary* can raise the contemporary reader's awareness of the power of received knowledge and, at the same time, question this very power by emphasizing the performative nature of reading and the autonomy given to the reader, both actual and fictional. In this autonomy lies the para-dox of *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary*: their protagonists' sensuous,

acritical readings enhance the potentialities of metaliterary reflection for the actual reader. Don Quixote's and Emma's reading becomes pivotal in the respective authors' codification of the cultural form that has resulted in the genre of the novel as we have come to know it – a genre that 'involves special structural possibilities for reflexivity, intertextuality and the distancing of the reader from the read' (Geuss 24).

On this basis, and in view of their awareness of the printed text, I suggest that *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary* offer a privileged perspective through which to consider the significance of metaliterary discourse in examining the effects of a technical progress, such as the invention of printing, on our understanding of reading. On the other hand, the intensity of Don Quixote's and Emma's engagement with reading deletes any critical distance from the text. In this regard, let me refer to Susan Sontag, who, at the end of her essay 'Against Interpretation', writes that '[i]n place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art' (10). I believe that Don Quixote's and Emma's undisciplined practice of reading respond to her call for an 'erotics of art' and give life to an erotics of reading, in which their desires enact 'the pure, untranslatable, sensuous immediacy' of reading (Sontag 14, 9). Through the reading their authors give them, the characters Don Quixote and Emma each engage with texts by creating a verbal space that incorporates the literary forms responding to their desire, and distance themselves from traditional reading modes and received knowledge.

The examples of Cervantes and Flaubert should induce us to explore the spaces of freedom and metaliterary reflection, pleasure and affectivity that the new reading technology may open for us, and to question how the genre of the novel may display the encounter between the self and a digital text. Besides the possibility of surfing a digital text, the interaction of a verbal text with other media can open our experience of reading to new and unknown paths. Wherever these changes will lead us, the impact of this new technology can be understood only by considering the relation that it establishes with the undisciplined reading embodied by Don Quixote and Emma Bovary.

8

'Emily equals childhood and youth and first love': Finnish readers and L. M. Montgomery's *Anne* and *Emily* books

Vappu Kannas

In *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf asks, in the voice of Bernard, one of the novel's six characters: 'What is the phrase for the moon? And the phrase for love?' (246). Woolf, a British coeval of the Canadian author L. M. Montgomery (1874–1942), articulates beautifully the complexity of language, but the enigmatic questions can be broadened to cover the difficult task of finding words to describe reading, and, more specifically within the scope of this chapter, reading Montgomery's *Anne* and *Emily* novels in the Finnish context. What indeed is the phrase for something that seems to be as hard to catch as the moon – in other words, the multifaceted act and experience of reading? Furthermore, what is 'the phrase for love' in reading? For in examining the reading responses to Montgomery's books, one encounters an overflowing amount of love and affect: emotions as varied as passion, envy, hatred and pleasure, but nevertheless always love for the characters and the books and the act of reading.

In this chapter, I examine a collection of texts about the Finnish reader responses to Finnish translations of Montgomery's *Anne* and *Emily* books. Montgomery's popular novels about the red-haired orphan Anne Shirley and the poet Emily Byrd Starr, often referred to as *girls' fiction*, have been available in Finnish for a considerably long time. This has made it possible to pass on the books from one generation to the next, particularly from mothers and grandmothers to daughters and granddaughters. The first *Anne* novel, *Anne of Green Gables* (1908; trans. *Annan nuoruus-vuodet*), was translated into Finnish in 1920, and the first Emily novel,

Emily of New Moon (1923; trans. *Pieni runotyttö*), in 1928. As Finland is a bilingual country, with Swedish as the other official language, it is noteworthy that the *Anne* books were already being translated into Swedish from 1909 onwards (see for example Warnqvist, "I experienced a light"; Ahola and Koskimies, *Uuden Kuun ja Vihervaaran tytöt*). In fact, the first *Anne* books were initially translated into Finnish from Swedish, not from English (see Kannas).

However, my primary material is a book compiled and edited by Suvi Ahola and Satu Koskimies, *Uuden Kuun ja Vihervaaran tytöt* [*The Girls of New Moon and Green Gables*] (2005), which contains 57 out of the 222 letters the Finnish Literature Society received as the result of a public questionnaire carried out in 2003. It was the first time Finnish reader responses to Montgomery's classic books were collected and published, and the importance of the survey is thus substantial. The book also inspired a similar survey in Sweden a few years later, *Besläktade själar* [*Kindred Spirits*] (2009), edited by Åsa Warnqvist, which demonstrates its international impact as well as the popularity of Montgomery in the Nordic countries. I scrutinize the Finnish reader responses and examine what they can tell us about reading in general, the emotional aspects of reading and reading the female *Bildungsroman* in particular in the Finnish context. As most reader-response theory has traditionally focused on male authors and texts, as well as a generalized though distinctly male reader, it is paramount to widen the scope to fiction aimed mainly at girls and female readers. What is more, analysing what the readers themselves have to say about their own reading experiences can broaden our view of reading and the role of emotions in reading.

The girls of New Moon and Green Gables

In 2003, Montgomery's Finnish readers faced this petition, which was circulated through newspapers, home pages and e-mail lists:

> What have the *Anne* and *Emily* books meant for you? … Describe in your own words what comes to mind when you think of L. M. Montgomery's *Anne* and *Emily* novels, or use the following questions as the basis of your recollection: How old were you when you read the books? Did you read them several times? Did your reading experience change? Which parts do you remember particularly well? Did you prefer one of the series? Have Montgomery's books

affected your life, for example your writing habits? (Makkonen 11; excerpts and quotations from the anthology are my translations)

The phrasing of the petition already guides the responses in a certain direction – that of recollection – and are bound to shift the focus of the texts from describing instant readings to remembering moments of reading in the past. The questions nevertheless offer the readers good signposts, since they do not encourage interpretation, but rather aim to comb through historical details ('How old were you when you read the books?') and evaluations of the reading experience itself ('Did your reading experience change?'), as well as emotional responses and concrete effects of reading ('Have Montgomery's books affected your life?').

The anthology does not merely consist of the readers' letters, but also includes short essays on Montgomery's life and works, facts about Prince Edward Island where Montgomery was born, historical details, pictures of Montgomery and her books, and memorabilia from the readers' collections. It is clearly intended as a treasure trove for Montgomery's Finnish readers, and the book caters for a general audience of readers rather than academia, which shows in the fact that the editors' foreword does not offer any theoretical framework for interpreting the texts or the project itself. The then-head of the Finnish Literature Society archives, Anna Makkonen, does mention Philippe Lejeune's *Cher cahier* (1990) in her foreword as an inspiration for the project, but the main focus of the project was collecting actual reading responses rather than introducing theory or any analysis of the responses (10). The book is divided into several sections by themes, such as one on Anne and one on Emily. The sections also cover broader topics, for instance the novels as life guides, the transference of the books from mothers to daughters and their influence on becoming a writer.

The texts in the anthology are, with the exception of one letter, written by women, the oldest of whom was born in 1926 and the youngest in 1990, covering almost all of the twentieth century and more specifically the time period during which Montgomery's books have been available in Finnish. Among the readers whose texts are included in the collection there are several professional writers, but also many teachers, librarians and journalists, which is a telling fact in itself, not merely because one can find a connection with Anne and Emily's love of language, studying and writing, but because these readers are prone to be skilful with the workings of language and apt to depict their reading experiences in writing. In other words, they might have an enhanced tendency to find 'the phrase for the moon'. Becoming a writer or an author is indeed one

major theme found in the texts, one that was emphasized by the editors in asking several professional Finnish authors to share their experiences of Montgomery's books for the collection (Ahola and Koskimies 9).

The organization of the anthology moves roughly from texts of childhood memories to more interpretative adult responses. I concentrate on letters that deal with the actual reading experience rather than those of a more detached perspective. In most letters these two perspectives intertwine, and not to a small degree because the questions probed by the questionnaire encouraged the readers to contemplate both childhood and adult experiences. However, following David S. Miall's thoughts on how the study of reading should have its focus on emotion and cognitive responses rather than on the interpretation of texts, the writings by Finnish readers that strive to articulate the reading moment and its effects on the self offer a particularly fertile ground for my analysis. Hence, I prefer examining texts that focus on depicting the effects of reading rather than interpreting what is read.

The specific Finnish context of the material is relevant. Although I do believe that emotions in reading are universal – in that all reading evokes emotion regardless of the nationality of the reader – 'interpretative communities' may differ (Fish 171). With a specifically defined group of readers under examination it becomes clear that although a generalized 'Finnish' reader is impossible to establish, Montgomery's Finnish readers do share several cultural, linguistic and social characteristics that surface in their reading experiences. For example, Seija Tiisala, one of the anthologists born in 1933, mentions how she understood perfectly why the people of Avonlea, the fictional home town of Anne, are so appalled by the blue hall in *Anne of Avonlea* (1909) after Joshua Pye accidentally paints it with the wrong-colour paint (35). She writes: 'A blue house was a horror for the Finns too in the 1940s – only Russians had blue houses!' (Tiisala 35). Such culture- and time-specific readings could not be understood by a Canadian reader, for instance, or even by a Finnish reader of Montgomery born in the 1980s, like myself. The remoulding of the Avonlea landscape to fit the Finnish reality during and after the Second World War indicates that interpretative communities are definitely 'made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts' (Fish 171).

Notably, the only male response in the collection is found within the context of war. Dr Hermanni Haapoja, born in 1920, shares his experience of reading the *Anne* books at the Finnish–Russian front during the Continuation War (1941–4). Haapoja describes how his 14-year-old sister sent him the whole *Anne* series at the front, where he read the books

and circulated them among the men of his company (69). According to him, the books were on the move for over two years as the reading-deprived soldiers devoured them (Haapoja 69). Although the anthology contains only this one letter from a male reader, several others – the various Finnish soldiers – are mentioned within the letter's narrative. The context of the front gives an accepted environment for the men to read the novels that have since been categorized solely as girls' books and children's literature, and Haapoja mentions that the men thoroughly enjoyed reading these books. This example demonstrates how social spaces affect the kind of texts we read and that historical realities do play a part in the analysis of readers and reading.

Fleeting moments of reading

Before examining the reader responses in more detail, I will briefly problematize the concept of reading. Examining textual accounts of past reading experiences brings out questions that are quite different from those in an actual test situation, where readers would comment on texts while reading. One might ask if what happens when we read can even be depicted. As Jonathan Culler has noted in relation to the seemingly unproblematic term 'experience', experiences of reading are 'divided and deferred – already behind us as something to be recovered, yet still before us as something to be produced' (82). In other words, the moment/s of reading always escape us, and the relationship between the reading moment/s and their retellings is somewhat analogous to the relationship between life and memory.

Yet, the reader-writers in Ahola and Koskimies's collection try to depict their fleeting reading moments, and while Culler's point of experience being always deferred is apt, one can look into the recollections of reading without assuming that they offer a clear-cut penetration of the reading act itself. What has to be remembered is that the readers of Montgomery's works are also writers, who depict a neurological, physiological and emotional phenomenon – reading – in textual form. Thus, how well the message is delivered depends on the anthologists' abilities to express themselves in writing. To be sure, 'to speak of the meaning of the work is to tell a story of reading', as Culler has demonstrated, and readings of texts should be seen as stories of reading texts (35, 69).

What kind of approach should one use in analysing the reading memories that Montgomery's texts have evoked? Most reader-response

theory does not actually look into the reading moment itself – recollections of reading or instant readings by actual readers – but instead tries to locate textual meaning in either the text, the reader or somewhere between them. As Wolfgang Iser has mentioned, the text and the reader 'are far easier to analyse than is the event that takes place between them' (21), and probably because of this, most theories of reading eventually lead to a monism, such as Iser's, 'in which reader or author supplies everything' (Culler 76). Ideas theorized by scholars such as Iser, Fish and Norman Holland, among several others, are unarguably valuable when trying to understand the workings of the text–reader communication, but what lacks in these theories is their omission of the effect of reading: that is, asking what makes reading so important to a person or a community.

If one is to follow Culler's idea that reading itself is a type of narration – textual recollections of reading being definitely so – then one should analyse these recollections as any other narratives. The dialogic mode of reading that Patrocinio Schweickart suggests in her essay 'Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading' offers a good starting-point for this type of analysis. In Schweickart's feminist way of reading, there exists a mutual relationship among the author, text and reader, without the domination of any party. However, as an important addition, Schweickart continues that reading and writing about a text is seeking to connect not only with the author but also with a community of other readers, something that resonates with what the readers of Montgomery's texts attempt to do in Ahola and Koskimies's collection (Schweickart 88). Notably, many of them also seek to connect with the characters in the novels: more specifically with Anne and Emily, as many of the texts are addressed to them or written as letters to the characters.

Schweickart's dialogic mode of reading feels refreshing also because it touches on one of the aspects of reading overlooked in other theories: emotion. Miall argues that cognitive poetics has ignored the role of emotion in reading and that it is exactly this overlooked aspect that makes literary interaction unique (133, 151). In other words, reading is not only about communication, but is also an aesthetic and emotional act. Miall asserts that the focus of most reading theories on interpretation rather than on experience has some definite drawbacks, with test results proving that interpretation in instant reading moments is quite rare and only takes place later (129–30, 137). With this shift of focus first from interpretation to the experience of reading, and then from excavating textual meaning to examining the role of emotion, the letters of Montgomery's Finnish readers can be more profoundly analysed.

What happens, then, in the reading moment according to the Finnish reader responses? Emotion comes across most powerfully from the texts, materializing in the words of Vuokko Kostamo: 'I recently reread the *Emily* books again and cried. I cannot explain why' (89). Miall's claim for including more of Susan Sontag's 'erotics of art' in the analysis of reading seems definitely valid (Miall 139). There is something deeply emotion-driven in Montgomery's books that permeates the anthologists' accounts of reading them. Indeed, it is not so much that Montgomery's books are emotional or sentimental, although they can be that too, but that her readers have such a close relationship with them that reading becomes an emotional experience. Therefore, it is not the content of the text but the long relationship the readers have with the books and the characters that matters the most in establishing the emotional effect. Suzanne Keen, who has studied the role of empathy in reading, notes that character identification 'lies at the heart of the reader's empathy' (68). She continues that 'childhood reading, recalled across the decades, provides examples of many readers' most memorable … empathetic reactions to fiction' (69).

Thus, even I as a reader am overcome by feeling when I study the Finnish reading responses, since I have a life-long relationship with these books and their characters. This shows how a once-removed reading experience still has the power to make one emotional. Sontag's call for an erotics of art appears in several readers' descriptions of the concrete and corporeal effect reading Montgomery's books has had on them (14).

Many anthologists borrow words from bodily feeling when depicting their pleasure in reading Montgomery's novels. What individual words or names of places and characters sound like in the *Anne* and *Emily* novels gave 'tremors of pleasure' to Annina Holmberg reading as a child (195), while discovering the books for the first time and reading through them made Erika Kokkonen 'buzz with satisfaction' (206). Similarly, the bridge over the Lake of Shining Waters, where Anne and Gilbert meet in *Anne of the Island* (1915), sends 'chills to the spine' for Taru Heikkinen (113). The fact that the readers illustrate the reading moment with erotic language, trying to find 'the phrase for love', is not surprising, since diving into Montgomery's *Anne* and *Emily* books is clearly a bodily experience. Reading the novels is thoroughly physical as well as emotional. Furthermore, the corporeality of the reading experience comes across in several readers' use of the metaphor of eating in their texts. The books 'taste' best when read in certain places, and the readers 'devour' them, as they would binge chocolate.

In order to establish a context in which to understand the emotional and corporeal reading of Montgomery's texts I introduce two terms: *paracanon* (Stimpson) and *ludic reading* (Nell). In her essay 'Reading for Love: Canons, Paracanons, and Whistling Jo March', Catharine R. Stimpson defines paracanon as the readers' alternative canon of books, in which the main establishing factor is the passionate and loyal relationship – one could even say love affair – that exists between the reader and the book (958). The paracanon can be a 'conserving, preserving force' quite like the canon, a notable fact in explaining the longevity of Montgomery's novels (Stimpson 971). The concept of paracanon, albeit rather vaguely defined, is helpful and insightful when examining Montgomery's readers, not only because Montgomery as a writer continues to some extent to be shunned from the official canon, but also because her readers are so thoroughly guided by their love for the books. What stimulates the readers of Montgomery's work is not 'an expert's … interpretative flurries', as Stimpson notes, but 'self-willed, self-authorized rereadings' (970).

Victor Nell, on the other hand, examines reading for pleasure and ludic readers from a psychological point of view in his study *Lost in a Book*. The term 'ludic' comes from the Latin *ludo*, 'I play', and Nell defines ludic readers as 'addicts' who read both high- and lowbrow literature in large quantities (2, 4). The aspects that Nell finds in texts that are consumed by ludic readers concur with Montgomery's work: they are formulaic, repetitive and usually realistic fictional stories, in which the same story patterns may get repeated and the readers' suspense does not play a big role, since they already know what will happen (58–60). This also explains why ludic readers enjoy reading the same book over and over again (58).

While it is clear that Montgomery's novels are not formula stories, such as the *Nancy Drew* books or Harlequin novels, they do share features Nell mentions. The *Anne* and *Emily* novels come in a serial format, and even though Montgomery herself detested this fact, her readers tend to love it. There is also plenty of repetition of familiar material, which might explain why the books feel so safe. Furthermore, the main reason to read Montgomery's work is not the expectation of suspense – after all, the readers know how the novels will end, because they have read the books several times – but the safety in immersing oneself in a familiar fictional world. In addition, most of Montgomery's novels have set-endings culminating in marriage in a befitting, heteronormatively accepted way. This is yet another feature that Montgomery herself was not pleased with, but that is clearly satisfactory to most – although not

all – readers of her fiction. Part of the reading pleasure thus comes from the familiarity of the story and the repetition of readings, since most of Montgomery's Finnish readers read the books multiple times throughout their lives.

The two terms offer tools with which to examine reading that is deeply rooted in pleasure and love, without making this type of reading seem less important or non-intellectual. Since Montgomery's books have so long been defined either as lowbrow, escapist entertainment or children's stories, many of her Finnish readers describe how they learnt to hide their love for the books in official contexts such as universities, the traditional safeguards of literary canon. Some anthologists have even adopted this ideology and become more 'sophisticated' readers through institutionalization, which shows in their reader responses. According to Keen, this is a common phenomenon, in which students learn to suppress discussion of certain emotional responses in the academic or other official settings (73).

In the light of Nell's and Stimpson's work, as well as Miall's and Keen's studies discussed earlier, it is notable that empirical studies show all kinds of reading to be leisurely or escapist by nature, whether highbrow or lowbrow, in contrast with the established dichotomy of 'bad' and 'good' literature and reading (see Miall 137; Nell 4, 32). According to Ahola and Koskimies ('Love and Controversy' 239), the anthology they edited served as a type of affirmation for many Finnish readers, an official and public approval for showing their affection for the books.

Reading the female *Bildungsroman*

Janice A. Radway's classic study of female readers of romantic fiction in *Reading the Romance* (1984) and Tania Modleski's *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (1982) explore the questions that surface when examining female readers and their reading habits, especially in relation to romance fiction. While both studies are ground-breaking in their subject matter, Radway's ethnographical and Modleski's psychoanalytical approach do not work particularly well in analysing the reading responses of Montgomery's readers, mainly because Montgomery's books are not romance fiction in the strictest sense. Nevertheless, the readers' letters, all 222 of them, and the gendered aspects of the reading experiences, do call for further study. When considering identification with female characters especially, the readers' letters provide interesting information about how female readers

might read and identify differently with the so-called girls' fiction than with other types of fiction.

Considering how many readers connect the reading of the *Anne* and *Emily* books with a life-altering autobiographical process, it is not surprising that most of them read the novels for the first time when they were the same age as the two heroines. In the letters, the most common age for first readings is between the ages of 10 and 13, while at the beginning of the *Anne* and *Emily* series, Anne and Emily are 11 and 10 years old respectively. Reading thus becomes not merely mirror-like, with the young readers reflecting themselves in Anne and Emily, but also an active transformation, in which the readers learn the art of self-narration. Suvi Ahola draws attention to this aspect by stating that the *Anne* and *Emily* books make excellent tools for autobiographical reading: '[The books] clearly help their readers reflect on their own lives, even reshape them' ('Love and Controversy 244).

What comes across most poignantly in the Finnish reader responses is definitely akin to Holland's view that we use the literary work to symbolize and replicate ourselves (124). Anna Kyrö reminisces about how she used to spin up sentences that depicted herself in the third person, a characteristic she adopted from Anne, and gives an example of one such sentence: 'Slowly she walked home from school. Something was troubling her mind although everything around her was so beautiful' (31). As Kyrö learns to see herself from the outside, to fictionalize herself, she takes part in Holland's interaction with the work, 'making it part of our own psychic economy and making ourselves part of the literary work' (Holland 124). Characteristically of reader-response theory, Holland continues: '– as we interpret it' (124). Rather, I would claim, we become part of the literary work and vice versa *as we read*, during the reading and rereading, but also during the reminiscing when the work continues to live within us.

Kyrö continues her reading response to the *Anne* books by stating that after she had read them, literature was no longer only about stories, but also about language (31). She identifies with Anne, who has the same name as she does, and knows without even opening the books that they talk about her, the Finnish girl reading the book (30). After Kyrö begins writing a diary, her vocabulary is affected by Anne's language, making it more colourful and full of expressions such as 'the depths of despair', which are later worked into school assignments (31). One of the most prominent Finnish authors and a passionate Anne fan, Pirkko Saisio, depicts a similar 'tainting' by Anne's elaborate language. Saisio, whose adult prose is notably declaratory and minimal, is accused

of using 'bad Finnish' and overly ornamented language by her Finnish teacher in elementary school (22). Young Saisio is appalled: 'Apparently my Finnish teacher has the nerve to allege that … Montgomery writes bad Finnish' (22).

With this newly acquired understanding of language the readers observe their environment with different eyes after having read the books. They compare real people to fictional characters and real places to fictional settings. One of the most helpful practical skills that Montgomery's novels seem to offer to these Finnish readers is their example of how to change circumstances by imagination. This is clear in the comment by Seija Tiisala, to whom the character of Anne gave hope during the ugly years of pre-puberty, when she had to wear the dreary clothes of wartime Finland: 'In the middle of gloom one can imagine beauty, as Anne does, and one's appearance might even improve gradually, as Anne's does' (36). Tiisala continues that Anne gave her courage to face her own little moments of resistance (36).

The readers thus become creators who imagine a changed world and control it by imagination, language and role play. According to Nell, the spell of storytelling emerges from the narrator's own sense of power, 'the awareness that a recalcitrant audience may be bent to one's will and swayed by one's moods' (48). Similarly, with autobiographical self-narration, the reader-narrators of Montgomery's books alter the world around them, but also weave a spell about their own lives, employing the storytelling magic Nell describes. The Finnish readers clearly do not have much better alternatives for a female version of the *Bildungsroman* than Montgomery's *Anne* and *Emily* novels, for most depict how fundamentally the books have altered their lives.

The relationship the readers have with the books and their characters can best be described in terms of friendship. 'Friendship cannot be measured. Friendship is not about liking or admiration. Friendship is accepting the other as she is, with faults, virtues and all', as Minna Salonen aptly depicts her relationship with Montgomery's books (66). Kuisma Korhonen underlines the specific nature of textual friendship by stating that unlike real-life friendships, textual friendship is based on absence, which is both temporary and spatial (16). Thus, it does not matter that Anne and Emily are absent from the readers' real lives. In contrast, they inhabit a space that is more private and more instant. Even when they are not reading the books, the readers carry the characters within them. Wayne C. Booth draws attention to the fact that after the early twentieth century referring to books as friends has declined strikingly (171). Looking at several nineteenth-century texts, Booth concludes that for the

nineteenth-century reader-authors, 'the language of friendship was not enough; only words of love spoke strongly enough for what books inspire' (171). For the Finnish readers, the 'words of love' Booth mentions are the most apt for speaking about their relationship with Montgomery's books.

This type of relationship echoes Schweickart's dialogic way of reading, as well as the idea of the paracanon. Although Judith Fetterley's reasonable point of the immasculation (the inscription of women to male values) of the reader by the text and the female readers' need for resistance also surfaces in the reader responses to Montgomery's work, it is more common that the reader has a dialogic relationship with the text (xx). Possibly because the books offer much needed role models for the female readers and aspiring writers, the Finnish readers are for the most part not immasculated by the text. Nevertheless, as Fetterley maintains, we can indeed be instructed and shaped by literature, as well as moved by it, and Montgomery's texts do raise a fair share of conflict in the readers concurrently with love and pleasure (viii).

Several readers mention that they were disappointed by Anne's and Emily's example and Montgomery's decision to lead her characters along certain paths and not others. Some of this disappointment would not be so heartfelt unless the readers had first identified so strongly with the main characters. On the opposite end, however, one encounters accounts in which the Finnish readers depict a lack of identification with the text. One of these readers is Laura Ruohonen, a Finnish playwright. She explains how her childhood feelings toward Emily were a mixture of both jealousy and disappointment. To begin with, young Ruohonen was annoyed by the fact that Emily's diary was so invincibly better written compared to her own childhood one (119). Furthermore, Emily was allowed to wear long dresses and hence look like a dreamy poet on the cover of the book (119). Despite, or because of, this jealousy, Ruohonen feels that there is something false about Emily, and she is utterly disappointed with both Emily and Jo in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868–9) when they marry instead of becoming real writers (Ruohonen 120).

Furthermore, several others recount how disappointed they felt with Montgomery's decision to marry her characters off and not give Anne and Emily the glorious futures they deserved. Anna Leena Ahonen compares Montgomery to Diana in *Anne of Green Gables*, who had to murder the characters of her stories when she did not know what to do with them (Ahonen 51). In her opinion, Montgomery's decision to lead her main characters into the safe haven of marriage is equivalent to Diana's murderous conduct (51). Often these frustrations emerge in the later, more adult rereadings, when the readers notice aspects Montgomery

leaves unsaid or presents in a way they cannot accept, either through a character or the narrator. 'As a child I loved Montgomery's text as it was', Ahonen observes (53). As an adult, writing her master's thesis on the *Anne* series, she learns to read between the lines and with a more critical eye (53–4).

Montgomery's books are undeniably full of controversy that the readers sense while reading. On one hand, they offer important feminist ideas for the Finnish girls – such as the importance of education and following one's dreams, as well as 'striving for spiritual and physical independence' (Rantanen 117) – but on the other, they disappoint the readers when all of their expectations are not fulfilled, filling them with real anger. In these instances, or during the more analytical rereadings, the readers' trance of reading is disturbed and they read against the grain, following Fetterley's idea of the resistant reader. What is interesting in the Finnish reading responses is that ludic reading and resistant reading take place simultaneously, neither overriding the other. Even though the readers may feel sad that the adult Anne does not feature in the later *Anne* novels, they still devour them over and over again.

Conclusion

Considering everything discussed above, it becomes apparent that what the Finnish readers of Montgomery's books are trying to find phrases for is not a single instance of reading, but rather a life-long string of readings and rereadings. Correspondingly with Fish's ideas of the reader actually writing the text while reading (or interpreting) it, Montgomery's novels change as the readers' lives and the readers themselves alter (Fish 171). Indeed, the readers' relationship with the books is modified throughout their lives. Riina Katajavuori, a Finnish author, depicts this process by explaining how her favourite book in the *Emily* series changed as she grew, starting from *Emily of New Moon* when she was young to *Emily's Quest* (1927), the final book in the series about the adult Emily, when she had become a grown-up author (Katajavuori 128–9). Thus, while rereading, the readers return to their older selves and childhood, to previous readings of certain actions and motifs in the books, and they reassess the history of the reading process as well as themselves.

It is clear that, while Montgomery's books provide immensely pleasurable moments for the readers, they also provide something that goes beyond pleasure, something that lasts longer than the immediate

reading moment. According to the Finnish responses, the best books are the ones that cease to be books and become part of the readers' lives, continually reassessed and re-examined through reading. We should not try to cram Montgomery's work into the acceptable canon, but redefine the concepts of serious and popular literature, as well as the shifting boundaries of reading. Clearly the stronger the emotional tie to the book, the stronger its impact on the readers.

As this chapter has made clear, for Montgomery's readers her books are thoroughly important and precious. Perusing the Finnish reader responses, however, I am urged to find an even stronger imperative: the books are identities, memories and parts of the self, the text becoming inseparable from the reader in the reading process. 'Emily equals childhood and youth and first love', writes Kaiju Harinen, summarizing the comprehensive effect Montgomery's books have had on most Finnish readers (Harinen 78).

9

'The miraculous secret of a good book': representations of the reading experience in Dutch middlebrow criticism

Ryanne Keltjens

In the springtime of 1936, the well-known middle-aged Dutch critic Gerard van Eckeren[1] (1876–1951) opened one of his book reviews in the family magazine *Eigen Haard* (*EH*) with the following lines:

> There are some 'pleasant' books lying on my writing desk. With 'pleasant' books I mean those books that invite you to take them into the garden in the evening, to enjoy them in a cosy corner under the flowering lilac or jasmine, with a cup of fragrant tea, after a satisfying working day … In the coming weeks, I want to demand your attention for such 'pleasant' novels. All too heavy and gloomy reading matter would not suit this glorious spring season, would it? (*EH* 1936)[2]

With this vivid description of what an enjoyable reading experience might be like, Van Eckeren must have appealed to his readers. Most of them had probably been working during the day, at home or at the office, and were longing for some diversion in the evening. According to Van Eckeren, 'pleasant' books could provide these tired readers with relaxation and enjoyment in their spare time. As a self-made man and a book lover, Van Eckeren had succeeded in occupying a central position as a cultural entrepreneur in the expanding Dutch book market of the interwar years, strategically combining different roles. He was a famous novel writer and critic, but also ran a successful publishing company and edited one of the most influential informative Dutch book magazines of

the period, *Den Gulden Winckel* (*DGW* (*The Golden Shop*), 1902–42). In his book reviews, he repeatedly thematized the reading experience and the emotional effects of reading, encouraging his readers to enjoy the pleasures of literature.

Such a celebration of the pleasure of reading can be considered typical for a specific kind of literary criticism in the interwar years that is often referred to as middlebrow. The reading experience was an important topic in literary reviews and in critical debates of the time in general, but the connection between reading and pleasure was certainly not something all critics agreed upon. For middlebrow critics such as Gerard van Eckeren, the mediation of literature to the general public was the main goal of their work. Representations of the reading experience in middlebrow criticism should therefore be associated with idealistic ideas about the dissemination of culture and the elevation of general taste. In this chapter, I investigate van Eckeren's objectives and his conceptions of the audience underlying these representations. As I argue, the specific reading attitude Van Eckeren propagated should be considered in relation to the radical institutional transformation of the Dutch book market in the 1920s and 1930s.

A short history of middlebrow criticism

In the interwar years, more people than ever before had learnt to read, and had got into contact with literature. This was mainly due to compulsory education, which was introduced in the Netherlands with the Education Act of 1900. The new upcoming middle classes profited from this process of democratization, and, in particular, the number of women among the reading audience increased notably. Furthermore, literature became accessible for larger audiences because of increased wealth and because books had become cheaper as a consequence of technical improvements in the production process. All of these changes resulted in the considerable growth of the book market, and the bestseller becoming a common phenomenon in Dutch literature (Van Boven, 'Laat óns' 45–7; 'Bibliopolis'). These developments in turn caused radical changes in the institutional structure of the Dutch literary field. Newly founded and existing institutions responded to the changed composition of the reading public and the commercial opportunities of a bigger sales potential, resulting in new types of cultural entrepreneurs and the use of new media and genres (radio, the interview) for the dissemination of literature (see Rubin; Radway). Just as in Great Britain, the United

States and other western countries, these modernization processes led to heated debates on issues such as cultural authority, literary quality and the task of literary criticism (see Van Boven and Sanders; Collini; Brown and Grover).

Because of the striking parallels with the British historical context, Dutch literary scholars have recently adopted a methodological concept used in Anglo-American research on the interwar years: the concept of middlebrow (Van Boven et al.). This term was originally coined in the 1920s, when the existing notions of highbrow and lowbrow apparently were no longer suitable to describe the cultural situation in Great Britain and the United States. The rise of new middle-class reading audiences on the one hand and the recognition of modernist and avant-garde forms of literature on the other caused an increasing need for the literary elite to distinguish themselves. The concept of middlebrow was primarily used to indicate a new type of cultural consumer: the middle-class reader. In relation to industrialization processes, a reasonably educated social class of white-collar employees had arisen, which is often referred to as professional-managerial class, taking a position on the social scale between the manual workers on the one hand and the owning elite on the other. These new reader groups had received reasonable (literary) education and had enough spare time and financial means at their disposal to read and buy books (Radway 250; Ho 13–14; Humble 10). Middlebrow readership was associated with limited intellectual capacities and an inferior sense of literary taste corrupted by the commercialism of popular (lowbrow) culture. In a rather pejorative way, they were described in *Punch* in 1925 as 'people who are hoping that some day they will get used to the stuff they ought to like' (quoted in Macdonald 7), indicating their middle position as well as their supposedly pretentious attitudes (Van Boven et al. 304–5; cf. Humble 13).

Second, the term middlebrow was used to indicate books that combined aspects of highbrow and lowbrow literature. Lowbrow referred to the standardized cultural products of the entertainment industry, predominantly romance and adventure dime novels that could be purchased at newspaper stands and railway stations. The term highbrow usually indicated the representatives of literary modernism, such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, whose works were conceived as 'high' culture and were accessible for the happy few only (Collini 116). Middlebrow literature was said to obscure the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture as a dangerous combination of commerce and culture (see Humble 11–12). In the words of middlebrow research pioneer Janice Radway, middlebrow books were 'products that supposedly hid the same machine-tooled

uniformity [as lowbrow books] behind the self-consciously worked mask of culture' (222). Well-known examples of novels that have been associated with the middlebrow are Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and the works of Agatha Christie (Ho 83–4; Humble 4).

In sum, the concept of middlebrow was used to disqualify a certain segment of the literary field that was conceived as a threat to 'real' or 'high' literature and culture, because it would blur the distinction between art and commerce. The emergence of the term reflects deeply felt anxieties about processes of cultural change and questions of cultural authority, which gained urgency in times of a rapidly expanding book market and simultaneous modernization processes (Brown and Grover; Van Boven et al. 304–5).

Although no equivalent of the term middlebrow existed in the Dutch common language, previous research has indicated that comparable institutional mechanisms can be perceived in the Dutch literary field of the interwar years (see Van Boven and Sanders). Dutch 'highbrow' author-critics objected to the same phenomena as their British colleagues. They expressed severe criticism of the general, middle-class reading audiences, as well as the popular books they were reading. Moreover, these highbrows polemicized against cultural entrepreneurs such as Van Eckeren, who defended and – even worse – promoted such books as good reads and openly participated in the more commercial side of the literary field. Especially in the 1930s, the offensive attitude of these highbrow author-critics gave rise to fierce polemics and the hardening of the critical debate.

Another similarity to the English context is the highbrow, modernist perspective on literature and literary quality that dominates our present-day image of the interwar years, because of its canonization in literary studies and literary historiography. Other tendencies have successfully been wiped out of our collective memory, or they used to be seen as irrelevant. In current research, the concept of middlebrow is employed to reconsider the literary culture of the interwar years from a different perspective, taking these literary phenomena that existed next to and in interaction with modernism into account. The historical disqualifying and pejorative connotations of the term are dropped, and middlebrow is used as a 'descriptive shorthand' (Rubin xix), mainly to analyse two aspects of interwar literary culture. First, scholars study literary texts that were historically considered middlebrow and were therefore often excluded from the literary canon, resulting in a lack of scholarly attention (see Humble). Second, the term middlebrow is used to describe practices of cultural mediation and dissemination in the interwar years.

This type of research focuses on the distribution and reception mechanisms of literature aimed at unlocking literature and other forms of 'high' culture to the newly composed audiences. Examples of such mechanisms include serialized 'quality' fiction (cheap editions of literary classics), radio reviews and book clubs (see Rubin; Radway).

In the latter sense, the concept of middlebrow is also applicable to literary criticism – more specifically to forms of criticism that wanted to provide the general audience with literary guidance and education. Although there has not been a lot of attention to literary criticism in Anglo-American research in relation to the middlebrow, research into the Dutch context has shown that the notion of middlebrow can be fruitful when applied to this specific context (Sanders; Van Boven and Sanders). The concept is used as a heuristic tool to shed light on critical practices that have, for the most part, been neglected in literary historiography. The aim is to adjust the current image of the period by calling attention to practices of cultural mediation, which played an important role in the rise of popular literary culture.

The key figure in middlebrow criticism was of course the reader. The reader had been at the basis of the emergence of middlebrow culture in the first place and now longed for information and guidance in literary matters, which cultural entrepreneurs such as Van Eckeren were willing to provide. Studying middlebrow criticism therefore means a rehabilitation not only of certain cultural products, entrepreneurs and practices that have been neglected in the course of time, but also of the reader as an important force in literary history.

Gerard van Eckeren: a middlebrow critic

In the 1930s, Gerard van Eckeren had made a lightning literary career as a critic, publisher, magazine editor and a writer of several psychological novels in the realist tradition. Since his youth he had been passionately fond of reading. Later in his life, he successfully made a business of his favourite pursuit. He started writing in his high school years and worked in several bookshops, before taking up a position as a critic for the monthly book magazine *DGW* in 1902. At that time he had already made his debut as a literary author. A few years later he was appointed co-director of Hollandia, a publishing house known for its instructive non-fiction series, which also published a broad range of middlebrow novels and popular periodicals, including *Den Gulden Winckel*. From the moment he was appointed editor-in-chief of *DGW* in 1907, Van Eckeren

was able to carry a lot of weight with the editorial policy and contents of the magazine.

With his critical and editorial work, Van Eckeren wanted to bring literature and the reading public closer together. He wanted, in his own words: 'to infuse life with literature'. He regarded literature as an important force in the lives of individual readers, as it was in his own life. To Van Eckeren, and many other Dutch middlebrow critics, the pleasure of reading was a means for gaining knowledge (literary taste, cultural education), and reading would therefore stimulate the mental development of the reader and of society as a whole. As a critic, his main concern was to stimulate his readers and to show them the best books the market had to offer, combining democratic ideals of culture dissemination with commercial objectives.

Den Gulden Winckel was a periodical for 'book friends' that aimed to 'employ every possible means to stimulate people, to incite them to read and of course also to buy books' (*DGW* 1927). The magazine would meet the readers in their demands for information and guidance concerning literary matters in times of a saturated book market – complaints about the 'book flood' were often heard in those days. Besides, *DGW* served the interests of the publishing house Hollandia as a means of advertising, with co-director Van Eckeren in a strategic position as its editor-in-chief (Laan 220–1; Benjamins et al.). As the periodical's title indicates, the editors made no secret of their commercial aims. The magazine dealt with divergent aspects of literature and the literary field, and used several journalistic genres, such as informative articles, columns and the relatively new phenomenon of the author interview (see Dorleijn). Its book reviews covered a wide range of publications, both fiction and non-fiction, in original (foreign) languages as well as in translation. *Den Gulden Winckel* was directed towards a broad audience and was correspondingly affordable. Van Eckeren was an editor-in-chief until 1929, and kept working as a critic for *DGW* until 1935.

From 1934 until 1939, Van Eckeren worked for another popular periodical: *EH*, where he was in charge of his own review section, called 'Book of the Week'. *Eigen Haard* was established in 1874, as an illustrated family magazine in the tradition of its successful German counterpart *Die Gartenlaube* (1853). It provided a combination of cultural guidance, education and entertainment for a general, educated audience (see Maas). The title *Eigen Haard* can be translated as 'One's own Hearth', indicating its national as well as its domestic objectives: the magazine wanted to promote Dutch art and artists in particular, and was meant to be read at home, literally at the fireside. It was directed towards a specific, but large, group of

readers – namely 'the bourgeoisie … the best part of our nation' (*EH* 1875). In its title and nature *EH* appears to create an imagined community (see Anderson) of Dutch bourgeois readers, engaging in civilized conversation on cultural matters. In line with the character of the periodical, Van Eckeren rhetorically created an atmosphere of friendship in his reviews, addressing his audience as 'friends' (see Sanders 330). The tone of his reviews was conversational, as he often used the first-person pronoun 'I' and addressed his readers as 'you' (see Pollentier 132). Besides, he frequently used the inclusive pronoun 'we' ('we, reader and critic …'), suggesting a high level of equality between the critic and his audience. Rhetorical strategies such as these added to the sense of community *EH* created, and promoted the image of Van Eckeren as a reliable literary guide from their midst.

Representations of the reading experience

In his critical reviews in both periodicals Van Eckeren's own reading experiences were a recurring topic. He stated that he loved his job, because 'what could be more delightful than being allowed to be absorbed in beautiful works of art, and to inform others about one's own emotions!' (*DGW* 1925). Van Eckeren described the pleasure of reading as an emotional experience, capable of influencing the reader's daily life. A good book was able to impassion the reader, to keep him or her awake at night, and to evoke pleasant thoughts during the day. In an early review he had called this emotional effect the 'miraculous secret' of reading:

> What could it be, this miraculous secret of a good book? You read it and something strange happens inside you. You become so light and so pleased, that every time you look up during your daily occupations, happily surprised, you try to remember what the cause was of this happiness. Until, all of a sudden you realize: it was that book … (*DGW* 1909)

Representations of reading experiences such as this one tell us more about his intentions as a critic than about the actual experiences of his readers. This quote and the one I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter contain various assumptions about the daily occupations of his readers (work), normative statements about reading habits and behaviour (pleasure and relaxation are good for you), and ideas about the emotional experiences readers go through (positive feelings popping up during the day) – probably based on Van Eckeren's own experiences.

These can be considered quite explicit instances of what Erwin Wolff has called the *intended reader*, the historical reader whom the author had in mind while writing.[3] According to Wolff, traces of the intended reader can be found in a text: for example in the way the author addresses his public or the norms he imposes upon them. Besides norms about reading practices and experiences, these representations express value judgements about the kinds of books one should read to get these positive emotions – in this case 'pleasant', or 'good books'. These kinds of statements contain (often implicit) ideas about quality distinctions and literary hierarchy. This is illustrated by the lines directly following the previous quote, when Van Eckeren writes 'With most books you do not get that experience; it is proof of the fact that only a few good books are written' (*DGW* 1909). With these words Van Eckeren urged – or 'interpellated' (Althusser) – the reader to share the literary hierarchy he propagated.[4]

Like most other critics in the interwar period, Van Eckeren roughly distinguished three levels of literary quality. At the bottom of the scale were the products of the entertainment industry. In the Dutch case, these were often (poor) translations of foreign success novels, such as the works of Marie Corelli and the Nick Carter detective series. Van Eckeren hardly ever reviewed lowbrow books, but often referred to them as examples of low-quality writing. The highest level consisted of the scarce works of high art, of divine beauty. This category, for Van Eckeren, included prose by the still well-known highbrow poet J. J. Slauerhoff, but also the work by Top Naeff, a popular woman writer whose work was regarded as out-dated by the intellectual elite and is largely forgotten nowadays: a typical representative of Dutch middlebrow literature, we would say, with hind-sight. The fact that Van Eckeren included an author such as Top Naeff in the realm of high art shows that he used other criteria than his highbrow colleagues to determine literary quality. In between high and low Van Eckeren distinguished a broad category of 'pleasant' books of reasonable quality, comprising the majority of books on the market. Each of these categories was associated with different kinds of reading experiences, reading practices and social classes. Although this distinction of three levels was far from unique, considering the comparable English categor-ies of highbrow, lowbrow and middlebrow books, his critical evaluation of these kinds of books shows his mediating programme.

The 'pleasant' reading experience Van Eckeren propagated was particularly associated with the popular, realistic, middlebrow novels dominating the book market in terms of quantity. These books were pre-dominantly written by women, although some male writers from the

prewar generation, including Van Eckeren himself, were also considered part of this 'scene' (Van Boven, *Een hoofdstuk apart* 33). Most of the books Van Eckeren reviewed belonged to this rather broad category, although he often emphasized the quality differences within this 'middle sphere'. According to Van Eckeren, the best of them provided a good and healthy read, and he enthusiastically encouraged his readers to enjoy these pleasant novels. About a novel by the woman writer A. van Hoogstraten-Schoch he wrote, for example:

> Here is a book that is no work of art and still a good read. Because it reveals a healthy spirit and a soft, bright sense of humour … you can get tired of art sometimes and it is a good thing that there are such books you can take up without having to get annoyed about their emptiness and inanity. (*DGW* 1919)

Van Eckeren characterized these books as pure, real, healthy and sensitive, indicating the constructive values they expressed and their positive effects on the reader's well-being. More than mere escapism these works offered a confrontation with other people's lives and choices, inviting readers to empathize with their fellow human beings and reflect on their own moral and ethical considerations. At the same time, reading them resulted in a pleasant, mood-enhancing experience in which you could get lost and forget about everyday life. Van Eckeren associated this pleasant reading experience with leisure time or vacation, and the peaceful space of the house and the garden. Pleasant books were used to 'spend some of your calm vacation hours' with (*EH* 1936), or for relaxation after daily work, as I indicated in my introduction. They were typically read with a cup of tea within one's reach, underlining the domestic nature of the experience (see Humble). Furthermore, Van Eckeren emphasized that these were books without pretentions, accessible to every kind of reader and highly readable, in contrast with the intellectual efforts some other works demanded (see Ho 8).

The pleasant reading experience of middlebrow literature was contrasted with the non-domestic, or as he called it 'unheimisch', reading experience of a different category of books Van Eckeren presented to his readers. Besides middlebrow literature Van Eckeren occasionally reviewed 'modern' books, including works that are now considered typical of high modernism and are still well known. In 1927, for example, he reviewed Carry van Bruggen's stream-of-consciousness novel *Eva* (1927), which is nowadays generally considered a modernist work. This book incited a quite different reading experience:

A book like *Eva* may seem strange to many. It forces your thoughts, your imagination in a direction you are not used to letting your thoughts and imagination go in. It will seem 'unheimisch' to you at times, because you will not find a home to settle your thinking cosily and comfortably. (*DGW* 1927)

These kinds of difficult books demanded a different approach from readers. They should have had the 'self-discipline to keep on reading and keeping track of the leitmotiv' (*EH* 1938) and therefore needed to invest larger amounts of time. A certain level of concentration and intellectual effort was indispensable in reading these books, according to Van Eckeren. He described this reading experience as an entirely rational enterprise, in contrast to the emotional, pleasant reading experience of middlebrow literature.

For Van Eckeren these different reading experiences were not directly linked to his ideas about literary quality. Some of the works he considered high art yielded reading pleasure and belonged to the realist tradition, whereas he often rejected 'difficult', 'modern' books because they lacked an emotional dimension. He stimulated his audience to read the best books from both categories, but he used different rhetorical strategies to prepare his readers for a 'difficult' reading experience.

In his review of the novel *Gesloten grenzen* (*Closed borders*, 1935) by J. K. van Eerbeek, Van Eckeren incited his readers to take on the challenge of this difficult reading experience. He opened his review by stating that this novel was 'not what is called: a pleasantly readable book', clearly drawing a boundary between the two modes of reading. The reader should be aware that reading this book was 'some kind of literary adventure.' Too many readers, however, were 'too withdrawn for such experiments' (*EH* 1936). In this particular case, Van Eckeren made quite an explicit connection between this withdrawal and specific social classes. He wrote:

Let's admit it once again: the human mind is lazy by nature. We don't like to exert ourselves; we prefer to listen to music we already know, and we preferably sway to the style we are familiar with from our school books. We could not expect otherwise from a petty bourgeois, who leaves his bed at eight in the morning, makes his sandwiches with jam at half past eight and starts his activities at nine where he left them behind yesterday. His reading fits into his life like his cinema attendance, or his bridge evening. (*EH* 1936)

According to Van Eckeren bourgeois readers were often hesitant concerning literary experiments. To them, reading had the same status and function as going to the movies or playing card games. It is clear that Van Eckeren rejected this evaluation of the act of reading. With great rhetorical skill, he switches from the inclusive use of 'we' (human beings who are lazy by nature) in the first lines to the excluding 'he', the 'bourgeois' with his monotonous daily regime and lack of judgement in cultural affairs. Apparently, he was speaking about the middle classes here, using the Dutch word *burger* (translated as 'bourgeois'). The *burger* has commonly been considered the backbone of Dutch society, which historically knew a relatively low degree of social stratification from an international perspective. In other words, almost every Dutch civilian was a *burger*, including Van Eckeren himself – even though he considered himself a highbrow. Although the stratification of Dutch interwar society differed from the situation in Great Britain and the United States in this sense, the mechanisms of cultural class distinction apparently functioned largely in the same way. His rhetoric becomes even more significant if one realizes that the audience Van Eckeren addressed here probably consisted primarily of exactly these *burgers* because this review was published in *Eigen Haard*, which was pre-eminently directed at a bourgeois audience.

As the review continues, it becomes clear that this inclusion–exclusion strategy comprised an invitation to readers to behave differently when it came to their reading practices. Van Eckeren opposed the bourgeois reader to the creative artist, who was 'an adventurer, with the desire and courage repeatedly to break through the smooth surface of the earth to search for secret underground passageways, leading towards virgin life territories'. It was the 'truly good reader's' task to 'follow him [the artist] on his way bravely' (*EH* 1936). Van Eckeren challenged his audience to become such truly good readers and leave their bourgeois mentality behind, which represented a different attitude towards the more difficult reading experience some books demanded. Capitalizing on his readers' sense of class-consciousness, Van Eckeren urged them to exert themselves and become part of an imagined community of better bourgeois readers.

The previous example indicates that the representation of the reading experience also entailed class distinctions. This observation is further supported by Van Eckeren's attitude towards the entertainment industry. He consistently associated reading for entertainment with the masses, those who frequently visited the movie theatres and thus had no idea about literary quality at all. The way Van Eckeren wrote about these lowbrow readers indicates that his intended readers belonged to

higher social ranks. Lowbrow readers were searching for sentimental, simple stories; easy clichés; and quick satisfaction. Instead of the healthy pleasure middlebrow books provided, the lowbrow reading experience consisted solely of superficial relaxation, resulting in a dumbing down of the reader and consequently of society as a whole. Van Eckeren associated lowbrow reading with the railways, because these books could be purchased at railway kiosks and were particularly suited to reading while travelling, as they were so straightforward that the reader was always able to catch up with the storyline even if he was distracted by other passengers. Van Eckeren characterized the lowbrow reading experience as 'the easy swiftness of railway reading' (*EH* 1935). It must come as no surprise that he rejected this reading practice. Lowbrow reading was dangerous, because it ruled out all mental activity, and capitalized on the 'blind impulses of the instincts of the masses' (*EH* 1936). In this sense, it had the same effects as the dangerous temptations of the cinema.

Conclusion

In his reviews, Van Eckeren propagated a twofold message about the reading experience. In the first place, he encouraged his audience to enjoy 'pleasant' books, using his own love of literature as a rhetorical means to meet the demands of his intended readers. His conception of literary quality was safeguarded by drawing a clear line between the healthy pleasure of middlebrow reading on the one hand and the superficial relaxation of lowbrow reading on the other. Second, Van Eckeren tried to stimulate his audience to rise above their own class and be receptive to 'modern' literature. His critical practice reflected the common reading practice of the time, when middlebrow books were widely read and often became best-sellers, whereas (modernist) experiments sold badly (Van Boven, 'Laat óns' 50). By connecting to his intended readers' behaviour and needs, using inclusive rhetorical strategies and familiar representations of the reading experience, Van Eckeren created an imagined community of readers in need of literary guidance.

Van Eckeren's attitude towards his audience and the literary production of his time differed fundamentally from his highbrow colleagues. These critics rejected the emotional experience of reading as a childish need, because real works of art demanded intellectual effort. Other kinds of reading experiences were considered irrelevant, or even dangerous. To them, the division into pleasant and intellectual reading experiences functioned as a rhetorical strategy to exclude popular

books from 'official' literature and to distinguish themselves as literary connoisseurs (Van Boven, 'Het belang' 15). Consequently, I argue that Van Eckeren's representations of the reading experience were not just meant to meet his readers' demands, but also functioned as an institutional position-taking in the contemporary debate. With his ideas about literary hierarchy and his idealistic goals Van Eckeren represented an alternative perspective, drawing attention to the reader and the reading experience (see Van Boven and Sanders; Sanders). The concept of middlebrow has proven useful to make this perspective visible again, offering new insights into the development of a flourishing literary culture as it still exists today.

10

The healing power of books: *The Novel Cure* as a culturally tailored literary experiment

Serena Cacchioli

The Novel Cure, from Abandonment to Zestlessness: 751 Books to Cure What Ails You, by Susan Elderkin and Ella Berthoud (2013) is a book based on *bibliotherapy*: the idea that it is possible to heal any kind of modern ailment, either physical or psychological, by reading books. For every ailment, the two authors recommend a supposedly appropriate novel as a cure. I will examine its Italian version, entitled *Curarsi con i libri: Rimedi letterari per ogni malanno*, published, the same year as the original, by the Sellerio publishing house in Palermo, which is fascinating from the point of view of translation.

This book caught my attention for two reasons. First, it claims to be a demonstration of the healing power that reading has for people, even though the topic is addressed from an ironic and witty point of view. Second, it is interesting as an editorial project because for all the different languages into which the book has now been translated, such as Dutch, Italian and German, adaptation rather than traditional translation has been the chosen strategy. In various national editions, the editor adds assorted collective or individual ailments, specific to each country, drawing on stereotypes and actual current problems, as well as adapting the reading 'cures' to the taste of target-language readers.

Rather than just a rhetorical device, bibliotherapy is a widely recognized form of therapy, which consists of the use of selected readings as a therapeutic adjuvant in medicine and psychiatry. Generally, it is the psychologist, in collaboration with the patient, who decides what kinds of books are to be used to help solve personal problems in specific situations. Bibliotherapy has been used as a tool mostly in psychological and social studies, but it is much less studied in its connection to literary

research. In *The Novel Cure* the authors begin with the general idea of bibliotherapy, setting up a list of possible ailments with a list of corresponding healing books. However, in addition to psychic disturbances, they include such physical ailments as 'broken leg', 'diarrhoea' and 'hay fever'. Given its tongue-in-cheek approach, *The Novel Cure* is primarily a playful self-help book.

From this perspective, *The Novel Cure* goes against the tide of the contemporary conception of reading, giving back to the act of reading its power of illusion with its possibilities of identification. It issues an invitation to readers to surrender to the power of another reality in which they can become another person and take part in any conceivable adventure, reacting to the book personally and emotionally, rather than in a hermeneutic way. As the Italian editor states in the introduction, reading and illness have, since ancient times, been associated, and the thaumaturgic power of words has always been universally recognized. Just as writing can be considered therapeutic – in order to overcome a crisis, or an obsession – reading can have this same function. Reading a novel can

Reading as a healing activity calls for serious attention. In literature, the material sphere of consumption and the abstract sphere of reception are always related, and the correlation between reading and disease is far from metaphorical. The history of reading confirms this relation; starting from the eighteenth century, people feared the side effects of silent reading: for example, the physical damage provoked by immobility and eyesight problems. From a psychological point of view, the history of reading involves multiple examples of occasions on which 'to read with pathos meant to read pathologically' (Littau 75). Such reading is linked to passive consumption, over-identification and loss of self. In her study of the reader character in literature, Karin Littau describes insightfully how literature has portrayed the dangers of reading: it has moved from the passionate reader (*Madame Bovary*), to the frightened reader (*Northanger Abbey*), to the tearful reader (*The Sufferings of Young Werther*). These figures were typically featured in nineteenth-century literature, while the twentieth-century modernist novel rejects identification as a fitting mode of reading by not allowing readers to forget that they are reading. These novels promote a self-reflexive role for the reader. Hence, literature transforms itself from an illusion-maker into an illusion-breaker. Hand in hand with this change, the expectations placed on readers shift: they are actively to interpret books, which replaces the aesthetic moment of reading with a hermeneutic one. This shift means, as Littau points out, that the reader evolves from a sensuous being into a phenomenological being.

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be therapeutic in the same way as having a good conversation with a true friend; it helps to discover life in all its possibilities, to learn to know better what being human really means.

It is impossible to say if *The Novel Cure* actually has real healing power for readers. Among the readers' opinions that I found on the best known Italian readers' social network, *Anobii*, 840 people claim to own the book and 91 comments were posted at the time of my writing (23 August 2014). Most comments are positive. They do not focus on the factual 'healing power' the book had for readers, but mainly focus on the irony of the idea. Also, readers consider the experiment an interesting editorial project. The positive comments are about the 'encyclopedic culture' that emerges from the book, the humour that permeates it, the possibility of using it as a guide to steer the reader through the ever-broadening panorama of published books. What readers also found appealing is that it recommends less-known novels and neglected authors, therefore opening up the possibility of discovering a larger range of literatures. The negative comments are very few, and concern mostly the repetitiveness of some advice, especially about the books targeted at teenagers. Some suggestions are felt to be too 'elementary'. The fact that some of the cited books have not yet been translated into Italian also raised objections.

The translations of *The Novel Cure* are curious examples of the 'translation as adaptation' strategy, as they include parts that are completely rewritten and therefore have no equivalent in the source text. In translation studies, adaptation is normally applied to only a very limited range of texts, such as websites with commercial goals or advertisements that adapt themselves to the taste of different consumers, children's literature, or theatre texts changing in accordance with each performance and language requirement. Although *The Novel Cure* surely has commercial goals, I believe they are not primary, and I can tell this by examining the type of books advised (for example, low presence of recent bestsellers or commercial novels). Therefore, there was no urge to adapt it to market constraints. While it does supply a long catalogue of stimulating books that we could possibly buy, however, its chief interest surely is to share with readers the idea of literature as a cure. This notion comes across from the writers' choices for 'novel cures', as well as their idea that each country has its own typical ailments.

Prompted by these observations, my main questions are:

Why is the book therapy that is designed for one country not employed in another? Why do we receive different literary cures for the same ailment?

> Why do we need to adapt the advice about what to read to different national contexts, despite the globalized world in which the concept of world literature is becoming increasingly meaningful?
>
> How does the cure for 'identity crisis' change from the UK to, for instance, Italy? Is this concept of identity crisis – an experience that is personal and public at the same time – different for every country?

By comparing the English original, *The Novel Cure*, with its Italian translation, *Curarsi con i libri*, I examine which factors matter in the adaptation process. This analysis helps us to distinguish which aspects are culturally specific and which are broadly shared as regards the idea of literature and the act of reading. I will mostly analyse how Italian literature is approached in both language versions of the book.

According to target-oriented theories of translations (Toury 2012), any translator has to decide between two opposite choices. The first is to make an adequate translation,[1] that is, keeping close to the original and realizing a foreignizing translation. The second is to make an acceptable translation, where acceptability means adherence to the norms that generated the original text, but adapted to fit the target culture. Hence, in the first case translations are dominated by features of the source language, possibly generating incompatibilities with the normal cultural practices of the target language, while in the second case the features of the source language move to a secondary position in the translator's estimation about what to keep, what to discard, and how. Evidently, this target-oriented method can change in its forms, levels and coherence depending on the type of texts to be translated. In both choices, a logical priority characterizing the context, rather than value judgements, steers the translator: when possible, the translator leaves some hints in the translated text so that readers perceive that they are reading a translation; when it is not possible to leave such signals, the acceptable translation turns into a domestication or a real adaptation.

If one takes into consideration each entry and looks at it separately, *Curarsi con i libri* can be considered an acceptable translation. Yet if we look at the book as a whole, it must be regarded as an adaptation, thanks to the additions and changes made to the original version. However, a translation is always a combination or compromise between the pressures of the two poles of adequacy and acceptability. In this case, I will focus on the overall view, rather than on the micro-level of each entry.

The choices made concerning adaptation and translation reflect the general goal of the book. It has been written for an audience who want to heal their true or imaginary ailments with books: an audience, in short,

who want to be told what to read besides enjoying a cultural game. The choices of books cannot be too predictable, for if readers already knew all the listed titles, they would not be prompted to discover new novels and new authors. Furthermore, the books should be neither too rare nor too strange, because readers should be able to find them easily. The authors of *Novel Cure* prescribe only fiction, and with the sole exception of some classics, they concentrate on books written in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One important aspect for the translated versions of the book in different countries is the lower availability of writers and books from the Anglo-Saxon world that dominate in the original version. Besides this pragmatic issue, other decisive criteria for the adaptations are based on the different features and reading habits of each audience.

The Italian version enters, therefore, an already existing literary polysystem, offering a particular and context-specific idea of reading. The final version of the book results from the joint work of the translator, Roberto Serrai, and the editor, Fabio Stassi. The translator has made an adequate translation, while the editor has adapted and modified the original book. The editor states that, if the original suggestion has not been translated into Italian, he has searched for works of the same type. Moreover, he has relied on the valuable advice from a recognized Italian psychologist and bibliotherapist, Rachele Bindi.

Comparing the English original to its Italian adaptation

The opening note of the Italian version is contradictory. On the one hand, it tells us that we are going to read a little literary experiment, as the book is published at the same time in various countries throughout Europe, each with its own translator and editor. *Curarsi con i libri* claims to address readers and librarians worldwide because 'ultimately the novel is the first and the most successful example of globalization' (12). But, on the other hand, if one takes into consideration that the translated adaptations differ greatly from one another, this statement must certainly refer to a culturally tailored globalization. The note explains also that various professionals from the publishing world worked on the Italian version. It means that purchasing the publication rights included the possibility of adapting the book to suit each language into which it has been translated. In every country, the editor's task consisted of joining the factual translation of the book to the rewriting of some parts, as well as writing additions that fit the specific target language and culture. In the Italian version, the editor's note explains that a group of people belonging to

the Italian publishing house Sellerio first decided to intervene mostly in the lists. Alongside the headings of specific ailments with suggestions for novels to cure them, *Curarsi con i libri* includes many lists entitled 'The ten best novels for …' (for example, 'The ten best escapist novels', 'The ten best novels to read on plane'). Thus, through a corporate decision and discussion, several people from the publishing house came together and changed the titles of the lists, and therefore the books themselves, to fit their conception of what is proper for an Italian audience. This left the editor with the task of writing or rewriting the new headings and the titles and books' descriptions. The editor, Fabio Stassi, for instance, also completely rewrote the texts about books by various authors, such as Bi Feiyu, Borges, Chamoiseau, Cortázar, Eloy Martínez, Frisch, García Márquez, Giménez-Bartlett, Guimarães Rosa, Mann, Richler, Saer and Tournier, taking into consideration the different perspectives Italian and English readers have on these authors. These changes are related to the different reception of the authors in the two countries, and the different titles that have been translated into the two languages. As for Italian literature, the opening note says that the editor ended up rewriting everything starting from scratch, 'except for the Italian authors who were already present in the original: Baricco, Marani and Tomasi di Lampedusa', even though actually in the original English text there are many more Italian authors – and not only the ones he mentions here.

This discrepancy prompts me to consider how Italian literature is treated. In the English version, there are only 8 Italian authors, as compared to the 88 cited in the Italian version. Among these 8 we can find the most canonical and most translated Italian authors, such as Italo Calvino, Umberto Eco, Andrea Camilleri, Tomasi di Lampedusa and Antonio Tabucchi. The presence of the lesser-known and less distinguished Alessandro Baricco and Niccolò Ammaniti is perhaps surprising. All are contemporary authors whose literary staying power has not yet been tested. Their inclusion is justified, however, as many of their works have enjoyed great international success. What is most surprising here is the presence of Diego Marani, certainly little known either in Italy or abroad.

Starting with the best-known author, Antonio Tabucchi, we can claim that *Pereira Maintains* is a good example of how differently the two countries view Italian literature. In the English version, Tabucchi's book is suggested as a cure for 'obesity', while in the Italian version it is given as a remedy for 'identity crisis'. The Italian translation of the novel's description, under the heading of the ailment for 'identity crisis', follows the original thoroughly until the plot comes to the turning-point,

in which Pereira starts gaining the new self-consciousness that will lead to his new political and personal awareness. The English version builds a cause-and-effect relationship between the new self-awareness and the character's new diet, and ends the description in this way, with no other specifications. The Italian version, however, glosses over the food issue and underlines the philosophical and psychological part of the book in which Dr Cardoso explains his theories about inner balance based on the French philosophical theory of soul called *la conféderation des âmes*; this version has one page more than the original. The Italian version is, thus, more concerned about showing the deeper and more controversial part of Tabucchi's book. The editor probably felt the need to add this extra information to justify the choice of identity crisis as an ailment and to explain it in detail. This is an interesting and sensible operation that does justice to the novel, which is profound and questioning, in spite of its apparently simple plot. On the other hand, one wonders why an unexpected historical mistake is made in the original: when Elderkin and Berthoud write about the protagonist fighting against dictatorship, they refer to Francisco Franco, while it is obvious that the novel takes place in Portugal, not in Spain, so the dictator mentioned should have been Salazar and not Franco. Surprisingly, this mistake is repeated in the Italian translation/adaptation.

Continuing with distinguished Italian authors, we run into Italo Calvino. He appears in the English version only once and with only one book, placed in the middle of a list of the 'ten best novels to read on the loo'. In the Italian version, the presence of Calvino is much larger, with seven titles, and certainly not one of them is intended to be read on the loo. The only novels in this category that the two versions share are Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, J. M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* and Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. The reasons for these choices are not explained, but they can surely be put down to criteria such as readability, the immediate involvement of the reader (Chandler's crime novel) and stylistic concision (Calvino's *Invisible Cities* – not included in the Italian version – looks like a collection of tales). The choice does not seem to include a value judgement, but it is curious, though, to notice that in Italian it would probably have seemed too irreverent towards a frequently quoted and admired author such as Calvino to include him on this particular list.

Umberto Eco's treatment is also significant. In both versions, we can find only one of his books, the celebrated *Il nome della rosa*. In English, it is included in the list of the 'ten best novels to turn your partner (male) on to fiction', while in Italian it joins the list of the 'ten best big fat tomes'.

Again, keeping in mind that we are not facing a value judgement, we can consider that, for the English reader, we are talking about an engaging, adventurous novel loved mostly by men, while in Italian the book is so successful and so widely known that it has become a milestone that does not need any commentary – in fact a big fat tome to read when craving a long novel.

Both versions suggest Camilleri's *The Shape of Water* under the heading of 'ten best novels for when you're locked out'. There are no other books by Camilleri in English, while in Italian we find three more novels prescribed for different ailments, and one in particular, *La concessione del telefono*, is the Italian cure for a typical Italian ailment: bureaucracy. I will return to this topic later.

Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* is, in both English and in Italian, given as a cure for 'the loss of appetite'. Appetite is to be understood in a broad sense: for food, for love, for the countryside, for Sicily with all its history, and more broadly for life itself. In the Italian version, though, we can find one more cure for 'the loss of appetite', the little known *Il sempione strizza l'occhio al Frejus* by Elio Vittorini, which draws on the history of hunger and poverty in Italy during the Second World War, when the act of eating was assigned an enormous importance.

Diego Marani's *New Finnish Grammar* is given in both versions as a cure for 'identity crisis', together with *I'm Not Stiller* by Max Frisch and *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka (and in the Italian version, as already stated, *Pereira Maintains*). No other books by Marani are suggested either in Italian or English.

In short, when we consider the conception English readers have of Italian literature in *The Novel Cure*, it seems to be mainly concerned with the following issues: food, identity crisis, general yearning, novels to read on the plane or on the loo, and novels to turn one's partner on to reading. On the whole, the selected books provide quite a representative sample of Italian literature ranging over quite a wide but still very limited variety of periods and subjects. It is nevertheless interesting to notice a form of Italian pride in *Curarsi con i libri* concerning the treatment of Italian writers, as shown through extending the description of some books, giving a more insightful perspective on the themes of a particular book and adding more slots to the lists for Italian writers.

If we consider the nationalities of the writers cited in both versions, we can observe that, for example, Italian readers read much more French literature than English readers, with 27 French authors cited in English versus 42 cited in Italian. German-language literature is also much more popular in Italy than in the UK, with 12 Austrian authors and 16 from

Germany, versus 11 German authors and 6 Austrians in the English version. On the other hand, for understandable historical reasons, the English read more Canadian writers (16, versus 7 in Italian) and Indian writers (7 versus 2). As for English literature from the UK, we have 202 authors in the original version and 128 in the Italian one; therefore, one can state that English literature in Italian is much more represented than Italian literature in the UK.

Furthermore, we have approximately the same numbers for Russian and Japanese literature, and surprisingly also for Spanish literature (which hypothetically could have been read much more in Italy, Spain being geoculturally nearer and more familiar to Italians). As for American literature, the difference is clear, with 141 American authors in the Italian version and 192 in the original one, but it remains the main source of literature for Italians and the second one (after their own English literature) for British readers.

All these differences arise from reading habits in each country. When asked about the reasons for the option to adapt the book, the Italian editor, Fabio Stassi, said it was not so much due to the low availability in Italian of many of the Anglo-Saxon works cited, as it was to the authors' awareness of the impossibility of encompassing comprehensively every single nation's literary panorama. Fabio Stassi does not think that literary tastes and reading conceptions are very different, although there may be unimportant single exceptions. But he thinks that what is different is the perception of illness and healing. Considering that Italians are not a nation of strong readers, when Stassi was told that the Italian edition had the biggest success among all the translations, he could only conclude that Italy is a nation of strong hypochondriacs.

We are thus led to wonder that maybe the concept of world literature, as a universal mode of circulation and reading established classics and new discoveries that all countries should have in common, is not still absolute. Certainly, this book demonstrates that there are books universally – or almost universally – read and appreciated. And they are not necessarily the most universal ones in their content (they can in fact be very specific about a particular country or a particular culture), but if we still need to adjust our reading guidance to the different audiences of various countries, it probably means that our reading habits are not yet thoroughly globalized and universal. However, for all cultures internationalization is necessary, while isolation is needless self-mutilation. And it is desirable that books and ideas can freely circulate despite – or indeed because of – individual and collective reading habits.

Given that translation is one of the most important means of transfer of literature from one polysystem to another, the question of translating or adapting is an important issue. *The Novel Cure*, with its different versions in different languages, can be considered a physical example of what David Damrosch asserts when talking about translation and world literature:

> Translators have two fundamental decisions to make: first, they must decide for themselves what they believe to be the original work's nature: its tone, level and mode of address, and its relation to the world around it. Having come to an understanding – really, an interpretation – of the work's meaning and force in its original setting, they must then develop strategies to convey the work's qualities to a new audience, adjusting for the differences of language, time, place, and audience expectations. (Damrosch 75)

In this case, translator and editors actually seem to have decided that the tone, level and mode of address of the original book would have clashed with the Italian target culture, and they have developed strategies to adjust the work to the supposed target expectations.

Another peculiarity of *The Novel Cure* is that altogether new ailments have been added especially for the Italian audience. Stassi considered drawing a map of the 'sick heart of the country' through typically Italian ailments such as 'bureaucracy', 'slyness', 'euthanasia', 'superstition', 'fraud', 'fear of motorways' and so on. Italian books generally cure these allegedly typical Italian diseases, but with one exception. 'Bureaucracy', as I have previously stated, is cured by Andrea Camilleri, 'slyness' by Pasolini's *Petrolio*, 'fraud' by Sciascia and 'superstition' by a cocktail of Alessandro Manzoni and Pirandello, but the case of 'collective hypnosis' is exceptionally cured by Thomas Mann's short story 'Mario and the Magician'. It takes place in Italy, in Versilia, where the narrator and his family spend their summer holidays and attend an illusionist's show. The famous Cavalier Cipolla is a magician who is able to do whatever he wants to his audience and bewitches everybody until Mario, the young waiter, humiliated on stage, kills him during the show. When it was published, the story was read as an allegory of Mussolini's enchanting power over the Italian people and, some years later, as a prophecy about the tyrant's violent fate. The main theme is, in fact, the great fascination that Italians always exhibit for flawed adventurers.

Conclusion

The Novel Cure demonstrates that the reception of a book is not only dependent on its internal elements, but also and mainly on external ones, such as the historical context, the system of references that the reader brings to any text or the familiar norms of a genre. As Hans Jauss's aesthetics of reception highlights, what is important in literary criticism is the function of literature in life. A work's possible ontology therefore thins out in view of all its various cultural and social effects resulting from success or failure, genre norms, and the relationship between canonical authors and the works of its contemporary writers. Ultimately, the truth of a work depends not only on the text itself but also, and mostly, on the contingencies of its circulation and reception.

This is why *The Novel Cure* could not be simply translated from one language to another, but had to be adapted to each country's reading expectations, taking into consideration its historical and literary surroundings. The Italian editor – just like the other language editors – had to engage in a constant negotiation of the unfamiliar through the familiar, considering the socio-cultural elements that have an impact on the text. We are forced to assume that ideological and cultural factors that differentiate our readings nationally lead to an irreducible localism instead of a universal conception of literature that could ideally work for everyone. With *The Novel Cure*, its two authors created readerly expectations for various novels in a culturally tailored way. It is, in short, a way to set up a community of readers based on common factors.

Finally, *The Novel Cure* certainly provides a suitable case study for bringing up for discussion important issues about translation and adaptation, reading modalities in different countries, and the relationship between literary studies and the use of bibliotherapy as a healing tool.

Part IV
Reading in context

11
Context in film adaptations

Marjo Vallittu

Context offers a worthwhile perspective for analysing film adaptations because, according to my hypothesis, it reveals both their outside and inside influences. Linda Hutcheon states that the context of adaptation has a lot to do with both the process of adapting and its outcome. In this process change is inevitable and its main causes are the adapter, the demands of the form, the audiences, and the contexts of creation and reception. Time and space in society are important factors but so are the elements of presentation and reception, such as reviews. The way the story is received can change rapidly even without changes in cultural settings or temporal updates in the adaptation (Hutcheon 142–5).

I concentrate in this chapter on the cultural context – that is the time and space surrounding texts: the contexts inside the textual world, what I call the intertextual context, the roots of which are in the idea and concept of contextuality (Heikkinen 88), and can be here referred to also as co-texts; and the context inside the textual world.

Context affects both the narration and the interpretation of a story. If a work is interpreted differently through different media, either the process of adaptation has changed something or its context must have changed. A movie and a novel that share a context will also share a frame of reference for their reception. In such cases, the works are also connected to each other through their narration, enabling them, for example, to belong to the same genre. I examine how context affects film adaptations. More precisely, I analyse what kind of a context is specific to film adaptations. I focus on the contextuality inside the film adaptation process and use the term film adaptation to refer to both a piece of work and the process that produces it, echoing the theory of adaptation

put forward by Hutcheon. I also use Brian McFarlane's theory, as it provides a cultural frame of reference. As it seems impossible to provide a universal definition of what happens in the process – that is, what factually is adapted – I limit my analysis of contextuality to the perspective of reception. The differences in reception reveal a lot about the differences in and between both the media and the context.

In what follows, I use the Finnish movie *Vodkaa, komisario Palmu* (*Vodka, Mr. Palmu*; 1969) as a case study to test my hypothesis regarding the context and reception of film adaptations. This movie is the last in a series of four movies, directed by Matti Kassila (1960, 1961, 1962, 1969), based on the characters and fictional world created by Mika Waltari. *Vodka, Mr. Palmu* is a suitable example for this study, since its reception has changed throughout the decades. Most of all, it has also been received quite differently than all the other works in the series, of which it is nonetheless considered to be an essential part. It is also an exceptional film adaptation because, unlike the first three Palmu movies, it is based not on a single novel but on all the earlier works in the series.

Interpreting film adaptations

In order to analyse how context influences film adaptation, one has first to accept a definition of adaptation. The contemporary definition seeks to crystallize the way the story is transformed when it is adapted from one sign system into another. In this process, Hutcheon points out, change is inevitable. For example, in creating a work based on a historical event or a person's life, the authentic events cannot be reproduced. Instead, the audience always receives them in a mediated form. For the audience, film is adaptable material, like a text, and the events are re-enacted both in their memories and in a new medium (Hutcheon 16–18).

A work is usually shown or told, but audiences can also be parts of it. Observing these three perspectives of narration, we notice phenomena that cannot be recognized just by observing the medium itself. We move from the formal definition centred on the medium to observe the whole process of adaptation; for the receivers, the readings are conducted not in a void but within their own personal context (see Hutcheon 13–4, 22–9). This personal context, the director's context and the temporal context form a significant part of the context that exists outside the textual world.

According to Hutcheon, adaptation can be considered in three distinct stages: as a formal entity or product, as the process of creation and as the process of reception. Transcoded works are part of the first category.

In these works, adaptation is executed by changing the medium, genre, frame and thereby the context. These changes may also be about drawing a line between fiction and fact, the inside and outside influences of the textual world. The process of creation always requires reinterpretation and recreation, whereas the process of reception has to do with intertextuality. Interpreting a work, we compare it to all the works we know and to our own knowledge of the real world (Hutcheon 7–9).

This idea of the story being connected to the medium is related to the idea of context. The medium forms an intertextual context for the story and this association is often related to a genre. In other words, changing the frame can be understood as changing the medium, changing the genre and, therefore, changing the context. For example, in traditional literature and film, genre influences the representation of the story. When the author or the director changes the genre, something is bound to change in the context of reception. The audience expects the narration and the story to be different in, for example, romantic and horror movies. The change can also be seen in the expectations regarding the reception of the work. For example, the Palmu movie is interpreted as a detective story but also as a Palmu work. Each part of a series participates in the creation of interpretational expectations, which the author and director of new instalments can seek to subvert.

Hutcheon proposes that the director of an adaptation is primarily an interpreter who filters the text and creates a new piece of work. In this way, the director is part of the audience. If the audience knows the source text, they can consider the adaptation in terms of its intertextual connections to other texts. The audience is able to 'overwrite' a work intertextually because the recognition of connections with other works is part of its formal and hermeneutic identity (Hutcheon 18–21). This controls the background noise (Hinds 19) – that is, all the intertextual parallels the receivers can connect to the work. The audience is also, unintentionally, under the influence of the intertextual context, which forms a significant part of the textual world. The dialogical process between the texts is ongoing (Stam 64). Adaptation is full of these visible and invisible quotations (Hutcheon 21). There are usually more than two texts related to a single adaptation.

The context within which the piece of work is interpreted – that is, the correspondence through which it can be understood – is versatile, allowing the audience and the director to make different interpretations. For the audience to be able to understand the director's interpretation, they need to understand his context and the temporal context of the movie's execution. In other words, multiple concurrent contexts can be,

and usually are, present in reception. Contextual research focuses on text relation, co-texts and, in a broader sense, the cultural context: on figuring out the relationship between form and meaning (Heikkinen 88–9). The co-texts that surround a piece of work form an intertextual context, which relates to the larger cultural context through its temporal and spatial aspects. I argue that contexts are combined in this way and are as such dualistic, since a text is always shaped by the context it simultaneously reforms (Valtonen 106–7; Heikkinen 89).

Segmentation between the textual world and the world around it is not trouble-free either. A dualistic relationship between the context and the text is often interpreted in Bakhtinian terms as dialogic, emphasizing the number of ways the worlds are linked to and interact with each other (Stam 64–5). The analysis of film adaptations brings this aspect of adaptation to the fore in a fruitful way. Adaptations, after all, consist of at least two works that are linked both to each other and to the outside world.

Cultural code and contexts: outside the texts

The spatiality of a movie and the linearity of a novel are divergent, and adaptation has to take this into account. McFarlane has sought to understand this phenomenon by introducing 'codes' to the theory of adaptation. The first code is called linguistic and it includes accents and tones. It can be used to create an image of a character, his social status and temperament. The second code is called the visual code and it is as important an element in adaptation as the non-linguistic sound effects such as music. And finally, there is the cultural code – that is, the awareness of how life is lived and how it has been lived. The basic assumption is that the receiver will recognize the cultural code included in the adaptation (McFarlane 27–30). It can be linked to Hutcheon's (145–9) 'transcultural adaptation' and broadened from covering the temporal context into encompassing the textual world – that is, to including communication. A literary work has often been considered as one-way communication and thereby as missing the precise frame of reference for its reception, which explains the variety of interpretations it allows (Brax 126). Alastair Fowler has stated that redundancy is one of the main elements of reducing distraction in communication produced by ambiguity (20–2).

I interpret McFarlane's codes, especially the cultural code, as showing us how the outside world influences the interpretation of the textual world. The audience compares the story to their own cultural code and the cultural

codes they are familiar with. The cultural code connects the story to the contexts outside the textual world, showing how context influences interpretation. Adding Fowler's idea of genre as a reducer of redundancy to this type of understanding of the cultural code creates a framework of reception that takes into account both the historical and textual frameworks (20–2).

This can be seen in the reception of the Palmu movies. The last movie, *Vodka, Mr. Palmu* (1969) initially received largely negative reviews, but this has changed and it has since been interpreted as an essential part of the series and a fitting image of its time. For example, the temporal distance renders the political satire in the narration quite easy for us to understand, while in 1960s Finland the situation was clearly much more difficult to interpret neutrally.

To put it simply, in a series of film adaptations the cultural code is related to context in multiple ways. Texts are exposed to many influences, observes Keskinen, and those influences can be called contexts. Meanings are always formed in relation to something and meaning is always fastened to a context. A completely unreferential text would be unintelligible, because it could not utilize a natural language, which always has a reference to the world. Nevertheless, a text is autonomous and, for example, a detective story is partly formed as such by being read as one. Texts always contain references to the outside world but they come across as independent because of the sentiments of the readers and the properties of the language they utilize (Keskinen 97–100).

In a global and modern, shattered world, the cultural code of a text is not always easy to recognize. Emphasis could therefore be laid on the meaning of the cultural space formed inside the text (Pietiläinen 127–8). 'A work of fiction is produced within a specific cultural nexus. Yet once it exists, the novel becomes a discrete context within which subsequent productions in that cultural nexus can be understood. In other words, a literary text projects its culture as forcefully as it reflects its sources' (Urgo xi). In the case of the Palmu works, this can be seen within the textual context: as the series are formed, they also form their own textual context. The last Palmu movie can be received both independently and as a part of the series. The formation of the series may also change the reception of the earlier works by changing the textual context.

Cultural code and contexts: inside the texts

The context or contexts inside the textual world are particularly important for film adaptations, since adaptations are closely related to

intertextuality, and intertextuality is by definition a part of the textual world. In this section, I focus on the contexts inside the textual world.

Hutcheon thinks that the essence of adaptation boils down to two different sign systems that can be observed in all the elements of a story, such as themes, consequences, context, world, perspective, motivations (10). These elements are mainly part of the inside context of texts, but as objects of influence they point outside it. Hutcheon emphasizes that a story does not only conform to the presentation and the rules of structure, but it always includes narrative expectations and a communicative narrative. Time, place, society and culture are important signifiers in interpreting fictional texts, because the contexts of reception and creation are cultural, personal, aesthetic, public, economic and material (26–8). Simply put, it is important to pay attention to contextuality and intertextuality in adaptation theories. McFarlane has also criticized the theories of adaptation that remain oblivious to these issues, since while watching a movie, one has to pay attention to both the cinematic conventions and the text on which the adaptation is based. He prefers the term 'extra-novelistic influences' to refer to the connection between a movie and a novel (200–2).

I call this connection the textual context the film adaptation has created around itself. The textual context is a combination of the texts, often a novel and a movie, and the context created by the adaptation process that surrounds the works. This shows why the two texts are connected while remaining independent. The intertextual context, the director's context and the temporal context all have an outside influence on the film adaptation. The textual context is the primary context created from the inside. This means that all the other contexts are secondary, merely touching upon the textual context and the works involved in the adaptations. The textual context shows that in a film adaptation there is a connection between the two works. It could be conceived of as an association understood by the audience and is related to the idea of movie series, as was mentioned earlier regarding the Palmu movies. The two works are understood as having a strong connection, although for example the genre, style, plot, medium and narration may have changed. The connection is stronger than a series of intertextual references and it concerns both form and meaning, yet it is impossible to define what precisely is adapted. In this respect, transfers, in which the essential elements remain the same, are less complicated than proper adaptations (McFarlane 23–7).

The textual context is, however, not equivalent to fidelity. It is merely a connection, a consensus, that the film adaptation process

creates around itself. A movie can be at the same time 'faithful' and 'free', and it deserves the interpretative frameworks that suit its medium (Carroll 34–5). It is not always easy to tell adaptation apart from intertextuality, since adaptations can involve intertextuality and even meta-adaptation, while intertextuality can involve adaptive elements. Researchers may ask how far from the source text the adaptation can be removed before it is better considered in terms of intertextuality. How does the audience understand that they are witnessing an adaptation? Do they need to be conscious of interpreting an adaptation? Since the two pieces of work involved in adaptation are independent, it should be possible to understand them separately. For example, the last Palmu movie (1969) contains several cameo roles, and another was planned for an earlier instalment but never executed. Cameos are therefore part of the Palmu narration for the director but not for the audience. Some members of the audience might recognize the cameos in *Vodka, Mr. Palmu* and some of them might not. Nevertheless, they can all interpret the movie and enjoy it. To understand the adaptation process as I have described it, however, requires an understanding of the textual context of the movie.

In film adaptation research, the main focus is often on form and meaning. Adaptation theory holds that in fictional texts, literature and movies, a story is formed inside the medium, which changes in adaptations. A story is represented by a text, and meaning is understood through the context by decoding the cultural code embedded in the text (see McFarlane 19–29, Hutcheon 33–7). The form, the text, itself is actually creating a context for the story, whether it is a novel or a movie. Therefore, the medium of the story, the focus of film adaptations, can create new meanings by itself and also through its new context.

Adaptation forms its own textual context as the work is created and it reflects the existing intertextual context. Particularly in a movie series, the earlier works in the series form the textual context together with the work in question. The textual context of a movie also reflects the temporal and cultural context of its time of production (Hutcheon 28). Meaning is thus generally understood by understanding the context, which enables the understanding of what McFarlane calls cultural codes. Interpreting a movie does not require that one understands the cultural code of the author, the director or the time of its production. An interpretation that reproduces the intentions of the author or the director is in no way superior to one that does not. In fact, the text does not produce the subject but the subject produces the text, and the reader can also choose to ignore

any possible interpretative clues included in the work of art. Also, the object of reception is often obscure (Kovala 186–7). In other words, there are no wrong interpretations. In researching the understanding of a context, interpretation is combined with the cultural context around and inside the textual world. Therefore, the textual context cannot be separated from the cultural context outside it. This can be illustrated with a diagram (Figure 11.1).

Dudley Andrew has linked the context of movies and film theory to eras, styles, cultures and subjects (16). McFarlane takes this idea further as he writes about the intertextual contextuality of adaptations (McFarlane 200–2; see also Cardwell 66). According to McFarlane, all narrative movies are part of certain cinematic traditions, and because adaptations rely on the principles of intertextuality, both cultural autonomy and the adaptation process have to be recognized when researching them.

Umberto Eco states that the concept of story (*fabula*) is complex because the audience can, according to its ability of abstraction, recognize and form the story on different levels. This allows us simultaneously to observe several isotopic stories – that is, stories that equal each other structurally (Eco 28). This brings to the fore the reader and the viewer as well as their contexts. Martin Wallace (29–30) has proposed a communicative model of narration, according to which the narrator and the narration are situated between, on the one hand, the social context and the cultural conventions, and, on the other, formal, analytical frames for disciplines, such as linguistics and literary studies. These can affect the author and the director as well as the receiver,
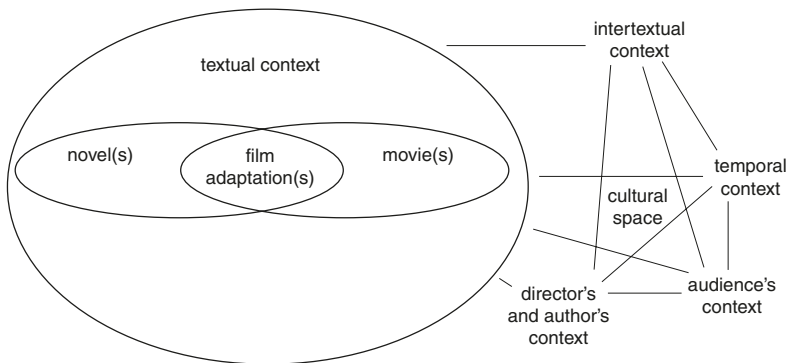
Figure 11.1   The circle of reception and interpretation. Illustration by the author.

and thereby the narrator and the narration (Wallace 29–30; Hutcheon 142, 148–150). For example, social context obviously indicates gender, age, education and basically all the surroundings that may affect the interpretation.

These cultural conventions are related to Roland Barthes's (19–20) five well-known codes. (1) The hermeneutic code refers to an element of the story that is not completely explained. Containing gaps, it appears as a mystery to the reader. (2) The proairetic code forms a tension: it refers to actions or events indicating that something else will happen. This tension makes the reader guess what this something might be. (3) The semantic code refers to the kind of connotations in the story that produce meanings, which complement the basic denotative meanings of words. (4) The symbolic code resembles the semantic code but expands the semantic meanings into broader and deeper sets of meanings, thereby acting on a wider level. The last one, (5), the cultural code, refers to anything founded on unchangeable canonical works, which are assumed to be the foundation for truth. Barthes's cultural code therefore equals McFarlane's intertextual contextuality – 'extra-novelistic influences' (McFarlane 200–2).

As was stated earlier, according to McFarlane's cultural code the basic assumption is that the receiver and the sender share an understanding of the world. This is related to what Roman Jakobson (66–71) has called the referential function of language, as it refers to the connections between the audience and all its surroundings. It also alludes to Barthes's cultural code, as it indicates the parsing of the text through other texts in a form of intertextuality. This could broaden McFarlane's cultural code to cover not only the understanding of how life is and was lived but also the idea of intertextuality and the literary canon. The basic idea of adaptation is that the works are distinctive and independent, but they are always exposed to the influence of other works.

Jakobson's idea of poetic function (66–71) confirms the connection between the cultural code and the intertextual context. The poetic function refers to text itself and therefore the elements of fiction – elements that senders, the author or the director, know from other texts. They are familiar with the literature and movie canon and expect this from the receiver too. For example, Mika Waltari's Palmu novels have a first-person narrator who is also the fictional writer of the novels. This narrator often refers to himself as the author and it is expected that the reader understands this element of narration through other novels and

is familiar with the idea of a narrator being present in multiple roles and different timeframes. This kind of a narrator is rarely found in movies and therefore a movie audience will not expect a movie to utilize one.

In what follows, I try out the ideas of multiple contexts and textual context as they have been defined above. I use Matti Kassila's last Palmu movie, *Vodka, Mr. Palmu*, as a case study because it is the last part of the Palmu series and its reception differs from that of the other instalments. I claim that the difference is mainly an outgrowth of the changes in the textual context. The audience sees the changes in the textual context as it seeks to understand the movie, but their context for interpretation is the one formed in the adaptations of the earlier works in the series.

Case study: *Vodka, Mr. Palmu*'s contexts

The understanding of certain references in the Palmu works requires knowledge of the cultural context of Finland in the 1930s, 1940s and 1960s. All works in the Palmu series are detective stories and they share many elements, such as the main characters, the milieu and the director. Nevertheless, in the last movie the narration has changed, as the rhythm is more intensive than earlier, and new types of characters are included.

Vodka, Mr. Palmu has many features typical of spy movies of the cold war era, and the makers themselves considered it to be a spy movie. The movie begins with the discovery of the body of a left-wing news reporter in the grounds of a mansion where discussions between Soviet and Finnish business negotiators are taking place. The dead reporter is clutching the wristband of the kind worn by National Socialist stalwarts. This wristband belongs to his murderer, a character who had a real-life counterpart. Palmu, a retired police inspector, is recruited to solve the crime unofficially. The public broadcasting company of Finland, Yleisradio, acting under the Finnish government, provides the milieu for the movie, and the social democrat minister and future president of Finland, Mauno Koivisto, has a small cameo role. In the end, a Soviet agent helps to catch the culprits.

The contemporary reception of *Vodka, Mr. Palmu* considered the movie to have too much to do with television, particularly Yleisradio (see e.g. Eteläpää). It was considered too political and too positive about the Soviet Union. Already in the 1960s, but especially from the 1970s onwards, critics have compared it with the other movies in the series (Kejonen; Malmi; Römpötti; Uusitalo). This shows that the understanding of the textual context has changed over the course of time. It should

also be noted that the context of the audience had changed by the time the movie was broadcast on television, and therefore it was embedded in the everyday differently than it had been in the 1960s, when the first generation of critics saw it in the cinema. The Palmu works and the connection between them were interpreted differently after a while, and they were more consistently seen as a series: the Palmu series formed a consensus that could be interpreted as an ensemble.

The last Palmu movie did not have the same timeless feel to it as the earlier ones: the first movie, *Komisario Palmun erehdys* (*Inspector Palmu's Error*; 1960), was an epoch story, like the novel of the same name in Finnish (*Inspector Palmu's Mistake* in English; 1940). The cultural code therefore includes understanding the cultural heritage (Childs 89–100) in a broader way than it needs to be understood in relation to other Palmu movies. In the second movie, *Kaasua, komisario Palmu!* (*Gas, Inspector Palmu!*; 1961), based on the novel *Kuka murhasi rouva Skrofin?* (*Who Murdered Mrs. Skrof?*; 1939), the time of the events is not specified, but the novel *Tähdet kertovat, komisario Palmu* (*It Is Written in the Stars, Inspector Palmu!*; 1962), and the movie based on it, of the same name in Finnish (*The Stars Will Tell, Inspector Palmu* in English; 1962), contain recognizable societal elements, such as youth gangs. Their activity still appeared as innocent and marginal but it reflected the rise of youth culture in the 1950s and 1960s. This shows that the textual context had started to change, and not least because of the changes in the cultural code and the temporal context, but the later audiences tried nonetheless to utilize the same textual context in interpreting all the Palmu works. One film critic even stated that the second and third movies of the series share the same problem, which is the abrupt change of genre about halfway through the movie (Uusitalo).

Vodka, Mr. Palmu was the first distinctly political instalment in the Palmu series. The evident politics in the movie are related to the genre, the changes of which are caused by the intertextual, temporal, textual and director's contexts. The political atmosphere is shown in the plot, as in the last three Palmu works the identity of the murderer remains secret for a long time. This enables the motive for the murder to be interpreted as political or societal. The first four Palmu works – that is, the first two novels and their movies – are relatively typical locked-room mysteries in which the murderer is familiar to the victim and the motive is personal. At the end of *Vodka, Mr. Palmu*, the motive of the murder is revealed to have been personal, a love triangle, but the narrative tension is built on prominent political symbols that lead the audience to assume that the murder was political.

The director's context, the cultural space, and the temporal and textual contexts should be linked in the interpretation of the last Palmu movie. The series of Palmu works has a variable textual context. The series is obviously a textual context in itself and the movies and novels made at the same time – that is, the intertextual context – affect both the textual context and the cultural space. In 1940s Finland, the cinema audiences started to shrink, a development that peaked in the 1960s (Toiviainen 11–2). The advent of the new Finnish movie in the 1960s and the 1970s was a turning-point that saw big changes in the financing system and the emergence of a new generation of directors (12–23). Matti Kassila had directed since 1949, and his experience can be seen in the Palmu movies, which were quite traditional Finnish movies. Despite the undervaluation of detective stories, the movies were diligently made and combined different techniques, humour and crime (Toiviainen 11–23, 122–3). Young directors wanted the movies to represent society and the people instead of just entertaining their audiences. The acknowledgement of this demand can be seen in the satirization of politics in the last Palmu movie.

The director, Matti Kassila, has said that he tried to express this demand through satire but failed to do so (Kassila, Interview), and part of the audience ended up interpreting the movie as distinctively political. The cultural code was therefore somewhat unclear to the audience – the expression of the satire was too subtle and in contradiction of the director's context. The last Palmu movie can thereby be interpreted as taking an ironic stance towards both the era and the director himself, involved as he was in the political discussions of the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Also, the context of the author, Mika Waltari, changed during the series of Palmu novels. Publishing the last Palmu novel in 1962, Waltari possessed the honorary title of an academician, and a number of coeval critics considered it to be of inferior quality to that expected of someone of his stature (e.g. Korjus). Detective stories were not valued in the 1930s or 1940s either, when the two first Palmu novels were published, but they met with less negative reception as the prolific author's eminence was not yet officially acknowledged and his early works had been considered courageous; he therefore wrote the first Palmu manuscript under a pseudonym.

These aspects are only nominally linked to the change of genre and cultural and temporal context in *Vodka, Mr. Palmu*. Although the last Palmu movie differs from the others, it is considered to be a part of the series. Joel Rinne recreated the role of Inspector Palmu and his nephew had a small part in the movie. This nephew, Teemu Rinne, later wrote a Palmu novel called *Kuvat kertovat: Palmu, murharyhmä* (2003), but

this novel is not usually considered to be a part of the Palmu series. The protagonist of the novel is Palmu's nephew and the events take place in a well-known Palmu milieu, Helsinki. Although the novel has an intertextual connection to the Palmu series, it is considered to be neither an adaptation nor a part of the series. The connection among the different instalments of the Palmu series is formed by the textual context the works themselves create. For example, the aforementioned references to the political situation can be understood just by knowing the textual context of the works and the cultural code of their respective eras.

Conclusion

Finally, the contexts that mainly affect film adaptations fall into two different categories: those that affect the processes outside the textual world and those that affect the processes inside it.

McFarlane's ideas of cultural code have to do with understanding the context of worlds. The context outside the textual world includes the temporal context of the works, the cultural space, or 'cultural nexus' (Urgo xi), and the author's or director's context. The audience ultimately creates the cultural space through the interpretation of the cultural space of the work, the author or the director. To interpret intentions successfully, the audience needs to understand both the cultural code of the work and the context of either the author or the director. Nevertheless, texts can be understood within the cultural space. I extended the cultural code by supplementing it with the idea of intertextual context.

The intertextual context is formed both by other works published at the same time and the series of works the story belongs to. In my view, this context is inside the textual world, which it simultaneously creates through its dualistic nature. The textual context is the core context formed inside the adaption process, which connects the works involved in adaptation. It includes, for example, McFarlane's extra-novelistic influences, which connect the novel and the movie despite the changes in the medium, the story and the temporal context.

In my view, all the contexts are connected to the story and the reception, but other contexts only touch upon the textual context. The reader of the novel and the audience of the movie create their own contexts and have a multifarious understanding of other contexts, but the textual context remains the core factual context of film adaptations. The audience does not need to be conscious of the adaptation process to come up with an interpretation, but then again, they are

not aware of the textual context either. The case study of the movie *Vodka, Mr. Palmu* reveals that the textual context may change over the course of time as the initially varied perceptions of the series develop and eventually converge. The changes in narration and the temporal context affect the opinions of contemporary critics, and when the last Palmu movie was shown in television, the emphasis was already on the series instead of the individual movie. The movie was interpreted through the same textual context as the earlier Palmu works, although the textual context had changed every time a new novel or movie was produced. The dualistic nature of the textual world is also seen in this disposition of film adaptations: other works influence the textual context, which affects the reception of other works.

Notes

Chapter 1 Reading experimental literature: unreadability, discomfort and reading strategies

1   Having selected the texts for this chapter I discovered that either Futurists or Stein or both are the go-to examples in articles on experimental fiction, interpretation of literature and naturalisation, and in most other contexts that refer to 'difficult literature'. I take my choice as good proof that these texts have the kind of formal features that define unreadability.

2   Curiously, an earlier *OED* edition privileged a more abstract meaning of 'too dull or distasteful to read' over the material illegibility that, in the formulation 'Illegible through careless or indistinct writing', was placed as the second meaning of the word.

3   As Raymond Federman asks: 'Is a novel labeled "unreadable" because it is experimental (*a priori* or *a posteriori*)? Or is it labeled "experimental" because it is left unread?' (24).

4   I do not offer a full-blown analysis and interpretation of the examples in what follows but rely on them in so far as they exemplify my point about the sources of unreadability.

5   The transliteration is, again, mine.

6   With the exception of frame-blending, 'do it yourself' (Alber 454) and 'Zen' modes of reading (451–2).

7   Cf. Sianne Ngai's *Ugly Feelings* for a reading of *The Making of Americans* in terms of negative affect.

8   Incidentally, Jane Gallop speaks of close reading as a similar reading stance that, because of its meticulous attention to 'things *in the writing*' (7), to what is actually on the page, helps avoid reading into the text 'what *ought to be there*' (9) because of one's preconceptions of genre, (extra-literary) prejudices and expectations (emphasis in original).

9   In this sense, Zen reading may link to other strategies of surface reading overviewed in Best and Marcus.

Chapter 3 The brain in our hands: the materiality of reading *Neuromaani*

1   Finnish original: 'Olet tarttunut melkoiseen urakkaan ryhtyessäsi lukemaan tätä kirjaa. Monelta muulta into on epäilemättä ehtinyt lopahtaa jo ensimmäisten sivujen jälkeen. Alkumetreillä karsiutuvat armotta ne, joilta puuttuu jompikumpi tai kumpikin oppimisen välttämättömistä edellytyksistä, nim. sinnikkyys tai ennakkoluulottomuus. Onneksi sinä olet toista maata etkä anna periksi helposti, ethän muutoin lukisi tätäkään alaviitettä.' (Yli-Juonikas 14; all translations are by Laura Piippo).

2   Finnish original: 'Vaihtoehtoja ei esitetä eikä anneta, ihmisparka ei pääse eroon pakkomielteestään, kohtalon korkeampi käsi likistelee, lääppii, runnoo, murjoo ja orjuuttaa armotta, ja täten sinultakin riistetään oikeus tehdä itsenäisiä valintoja. Voidaksesi jatkaa seikkailua tästedes joudut noudattamaan annettuja käskyjä. Siirry lukuun 132' (Yli-Juonikas 296).

3   Repetition is an important concept for both experimental literature and the material approach to it. The history of the concept, however, extends beyond the history of these traditions. It

derives from the Latin word *repetere*, 'to try again', which derives from *petere*, 'to seek' (Scott 245). It has been widely discussed in the fields of philosophy and narratology by, for example, Søren Kierkegaard (1843), Jacques Derrida (2003) and Gérard Genette (1980).

4   Finnish original: 'Suurten toiveiden ja pelkojen milleniumia minä juhlistin kaverieni kanssa Rio de Janeiron räkäisimmässä merimieskapakassa, koolla oli koko vanha hampuusijengi Small S. A., Perera G. M., DeLaPaz R., Mayeux R. ja Stern Y. 1999 ja kaikilla pyöri mielessä vain 'Differential regional dysfunction of the hippocampal formation among elderly with memory decline and Alzheimer's disease.' *Annals of Neurology* 45. S. 466–472' (Yli-Juonikas 101).

5   Finnish original: 'Olen voimaton ja tahdoton vätys, tarvitsen personal trainerin eli sinun apuasi. Huomio, herätys. On aamu, interaktiivinen osuus alkaa. Sinun täytyy nyt päättää, nousenko ylös ja aloitan voimistelun vai jäänkö makaamaan sängylle. Jos haluat Geregin aloittavan aamujumpan, siirry lukuun 146. Jos pidät enemmän passiivisuudesta, siirry lukuun 122. Jos taas olet aivotutkija Paavo Riekkinen Señorin kaltainen muistinero ja hallitset laajoja kokonaisuuksia, voit jatkaa eteenpäin perinteiseen tyyliin tai pomppia luvut läpi satunnaisessa järjestyksessä, ohjeista piittaamatta. Se kuormittaa liikaa huonomuistisen perusjurpon aivoja, juoni ei pysy koossa, mutta ainahan voit yrittää …' (Yli-Juonikas 17).

6   Finnish original: 'Orjallinen takertuminen ulkop. neuvoihin ei tunnu viisaalta, jos vaihtoe-htona on navigointi vailla teennäisiä sääntöjä. Rohkaisen siis sinuakin suunnittelemaan kiertoajelusi ohjelmiston tästedes itse. Tee mitä tahdot, siirry minne mielit – se on minun uusi, tieteenfilosofista realismia henkivä ja uteliaaseen ennakkoluulottomaan innovointiin kannustava periaatteeni' (Yli-Juonikas 30).

7   Finnish original: 'Sulje toinen silmäsi, aseta kirja 15 cm etäisyydelle kasvoistasi ja kiinnitä katseesi tiukasti yo. faktalaatikon vasemman ylänurkan numeroon 150 kolmen minuutin ajaksi. Avaa sitten toinen silmä ja siirrä katseesi hitaasti alaviistoon oikealle yo. kaavakuvaan, keitinlasin muotoisen möykyn keskikohtaan, jossa lukee 'dada'. Jos teit kaiken oikein, saat nähdä millaisiin 'juokseviin menoihin' Neuropositronin v. 2010 Tekesiltä saamat miljoona-avustukset kulutettiin' (Yli-Juonikas 429).

8   Finnish original: 'Nyt vaaditaan nopeaa päätöksentekoa. Ottaako Silvo lapion ja vapauttaa isänsä sähköpurkauksen seitistä lyömällä tätä lapiolla selkään? – Siirry lukuun 215. Vai seisotko vain aloillasi ja katsot vierestä, kun isä kärventyy sähköiskuun – Siirry lukuun 18' (Yli-Juonikas 238).

Chapter 5 New reading strategies in the twenty-first century: transmedia storytelling via app in Marisha Pessl's *Night Film*

1   The concept of 'intermediality' was first coined in 1983 by Aage A. Hansen-Löve and can be defined as 'any transgression of boundaries between media' (Wolf 252). In the case of intermedial references 'only *one* conventionally distinct … medium is present in its own specific materiality and mediality' (Rajewsky 59; emphasis in original).

2   Please note that all references to *Night Film* are quoted from the printed book version.

3   With the term 'interactive elements' I mean documents, pictures, films, music and other data that can only be accessed by the reader through active participation via scan. According to Henry Jenkins, the notion is related to the 'hunting and gathering practices of finding the dispersed pieces of information and figuring out how they all fit together to form a meaningful whole' ('Transmedia Storytelling 202').

4   Amazon prices, August 2014.

Chapter 6 New reading strategies in print and on digital platforms: Stephanie Strickland's *V*

1   I call them emanations since they share the same textual information; they emanate from the same source. They are not versions or updates of an original or a 'master' work, but instead they are all equal in relation to each other.

2 *V: Vniverse* is created with Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo, and *Vniverse* with Ian Hatcher. There is an additional digital application called *Errand upon which We Came* (2001), created with M. D. Coverley, but since it deals with a different part of the work than the others, I will not discuss it here.

3 As to texts with unconventional reading strategies related to digital literature, it is worth mentioning Espen Aarseth's classic term *ergodic*, which designates texts that require 'nontrivial effort' on the reader's part (Aarseth 1). Ergodic can thus be any text, print or digital. The term 'digital', of course, is also complex as well as contested, and can be seen from various angles. For the purposes of this chapter, the term 'digital poetry' is used to designate poetry that essentially employs the affordances of the digital platform in its operations.

4 Relatedly, Wardrip-Fruin calls this the surface (47): that which 'the audience experiences'. In intermediality theory, it is called the technical medium (Elleström). Although I think that Elleström's terminology on the media is the most precise, in this context I prefer the term 'interface', since conceptually it also includes the (inter)action the reader can perform, such as clicking, mousing, scrolling, tapping, drawing and so on.

5 I use 'codex' here to designate a conventional print book form of actual paper pages that are bound together.

6 The word 'full' is, of course, ideologically loaded. I do not wish to develop hierarchies between fuller and shallower readings; what is meant here is that not grasping the significance of *V* would leave a layer of the poem uncovered, a layer that reaches beyond the literal level of meaning.

7 One of the allusions of 'red' is Simone Weil, on whom Strickland has written an earlier book, called *The Red Virgin* (1993).

8 Visit vniverse.com to find both the Shockwave and iPad applications.

9 This shift is significant, but falls outside the scope of this chapter. By 'shift', I refer to the change from clicking a mouse that pushes the virtual screen, to touching the screen with one's own hands without a mediating device. Thanks to the newness of touch screens, the examination of this shift remains underdeveloped.

10 Aarseth distinguishes seven traversal functions in *Cybertext*. One of them determines whether a text is static or dynamic. Static texts do not allow for input from the reader/user; dynamic ones do. This function is true for the database as well.

11 Richard Wilhelm's introduction to his translation (1967) of the *I Ching* provides a good description of its operations.

12 The qualification being that the meaning of the words is constructed by both the reader and the work; the meaning does not reside in the words themselves.

Chapter 7 Rethinking reading through the novelistic discourses of *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary*

1 In their introduction to *Representations*, a volume focusing on critical notions of reading, Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus comment on their contributors' response to the notion of symptomatic reading and describe their practices under the term 'surface reading' as they investigate 'what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts' (9).

2 'Letter to Louise Colet', 12 June 1852. As quoted in Fox 104.

3 In *Flaubert and 'Don Quijote'* Fox argues that the fact that the Romantic novels Emma enjoys have many similarities to chivalric romances is not coincidental. Indeed, in *Madame Bovary* Flaubert refers several times to the founding father of the Romantic novel, Sir Walter Scott, who was a fervent Hispanophile and whose novels were a tribute both to the Spanish chivalric romances that Don Quixote read and to *Don Quixote* itself. Spanish chivalric 'romances are at the very heart of the interconnections between Cervantes and Flaubert via Walter Scott' (Fox 136–7).

4 For an insight into the relation between *Don Quixote* and the picaresque, see Carlos Fuentes's *Cervantes, o la crítica de la lectura*, Claudio Guillén's *Literature as a System* and Walter Reed's *An Exemplary History of the Novel*.

5 My translation from Emile Zola's *Du roman: Sur Stendhal, Flaubert et les Goncourt*. The French original is: 'le premier caractère du roman naturaliste, dont *Madame Bovary* est le type, est la reproduction exacte de la vie, l'absence de tout élément romanesque' (Zola 132).

6   Jonathan Culler notices that 'Flaubert's revolutionary use of *style indirect libre* in many places in the novel has provoked a strong inclination on the part of critics to motivate description, make it realistic' (690).

7   Miller, like many other critics, is right in recognizing an archetypical dimension in *Don Quixote*, even if a previous example of the 'corruptive' power of literature can be identified in the story of Paolo and Francesca mentioned in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. In the fifth canticle of *Inferno* Dante and Virgil meet Francesca and her lover Paolo in the second circle of hell, reserved for the lustful. The young woman tells Dante that she defied the holy sacrament of marriage, inspired by reading the love story of Lancelot and Guinevere. Just as Guinevere loves the knight Lancelot despite being married to King Arthur, Francesca seduced her husband's brother Paolo. Even if thematically it may be seen as an anticipation of the idea of the corruptive power of reading, their story is a minor element in Dante's work that does not address the figure of the reader with the power of *Don Quixote*.

8   For a discussion of the importance of reading in *Don Quixote* and Cervantes's creative response to Avellaneda's version, see Fuentes.

Chapter 9 'The miraculous secret of a good book': representations of the reading experience in Dutch middlebrow criticism

1   Gerard van Eckeren was a pseudonym of Maurits Esser, which he used as an author and critic. His real name was not very well known, but no secret either.

2   All of Van Eckeren's quotes have been translated from Dutch into English by the author.

3   I am using Wolff's intended reader here instead of Iser's implied reader, because it is the author's projection of his contemporary readers that is central to my argument. The reader's actual response to the text Iser wants to pinpoint in his critique on Wolff is not in question here (Iser 33).

4   Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation describes how individuals are being called through reading a text to identify themselves with the value systems in its discourse and subject themselves to the ideology or ideologies underlying it. We could say that individual readers of these reviews were addressed as readers of literature, recognized themselves as such and at that same moment were transformed into subjects of an ideology of a specific reading practice.

Chapter 10 The healing power of books: *The Novel Cure* as a culturally tailored literary experiment

1   I use the term in the not universally accepted sense of adequacy based on the definition of Even-Zohar, for whom 'an adequate translation is a translation which realizes in the target language the textual relationships of a source text with no breach of its own [basic] linguistic system' (Toury 79).

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8 'Emily equals childhood and youth and first love': Finnish readers and L. M. Montgomery's *Anne* and *Emily* books

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9 'The miraculous secret of a good book': representations of the reading experience in Dutch middlebrow criticism

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10 The healing power of books: *The Novel Cure* as a culturally tailored literary experiment

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New technologies are changing our reading habits. Laptops, e-readers, tablets and other handheld devices supply new platforms for reading, which we must navigate by scrolling, clicking or tapping. *Reading Today* places reading in current literary and cultural contexts in order to analyse how these contexts challenge our conceptions of who reads, what reading is, how we read, where we read, and for what purposes – and then responds to the questions this analysis raises. Is our reading experience becoming a 'flat' one? And does reading in a media environment favour quick reading?

Alongside these questions, the contributors unpack emerging strategies of reading. They consider, for example, how paying attention to readers' emotional reactions as an indispensable component of reading affects our conception of the reading process. Other chapters consider how reading can be explored through such topics as experimental literature, the contemporary encyclopedic novel and the healing power of books.

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