

Special Guest:

## Marcel Cornis-Pope



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Marcel Cornis-Pope is Professor of English and Media Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, USA. A magna cum laude graduate of the West University of Timisoara and a British Council Fellow at the universities of Birmingham and Oxford in his formative years, Dr. Cornis-Pope's illustrious teaching career includes lecturing in universities such as Timisoara, Northern Iowa, Harvard and Virginia Commonwealth.

In recognition for his contributions to his profession he has received the Romanian Writer's Award for Criticism (1975, 1982), the Fulbright Teaching and Research Award (1983), the Humanities and Sciences Distinguished Scholar Award (1991) and Lecturer Award (1994), the Virginia Commonwealth University Distinguished Scholarship Award (1995, 1996), the Phoenix Award for Significant Editorial Achievement (1996), the Virginia Commonwealth University Award of Excellent (2000), just to name some of them.

In 2012 he was elected member of the Academia Europaea.

Dr. Cornis-Pope has participated in and organized over one hundred fifty conferences, talks, lectures, workshops and seminars; wrote over fifty scholarly reviews; translated twelve books; published over sixty articles, prefaces, blogs and interviews in literary magazines and sixty five articles in refereed journals; wrote three textbooks and over forty book chapters; and (co)published and (co)edited seven scholarly books.

His individual book publications include:

-*Anatomy of the White Whale: A Poetics of the American Symbolic Romance* (1982)

-*Hermeneutic Desire and Critical Rewriting: Narrative Interpretation in the Wake of Poststructuralism* (1992)

-*The Unfinished Battles: Romanian Postmodernism before and after 1989* (1996)

-*Narrative Innovation and Cultural Rewriting in the Cold War Era and After* (2001)

In 1995, he co-edited with Ronald Bogue *Violence and Mediation in Contemporary Culture* (SUNY Press).

Between 2004 - 2010 he completed with John Neubauer the editing of a four-volume *History of the Literary Cultures of East Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Century.*"

At the end of 2014, he published an edited an international collection of essays on *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression* and a Chinese translation of the *Narrative Innovation and Cultural Rewriting in Cold War Era and After* is forthcoming in 2016-7.

Dr. Cornis-Pope's research and publications have been widely discussed and cited by scholars in the field.

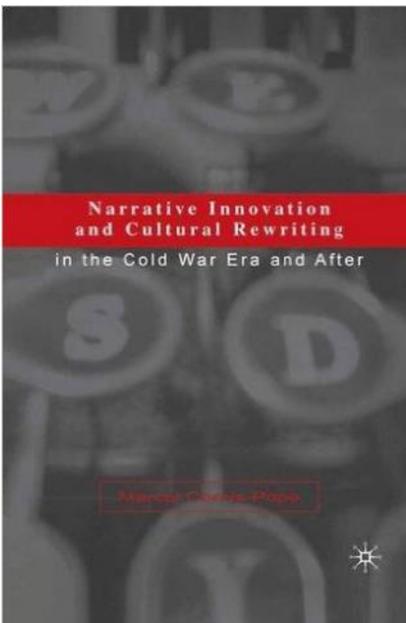
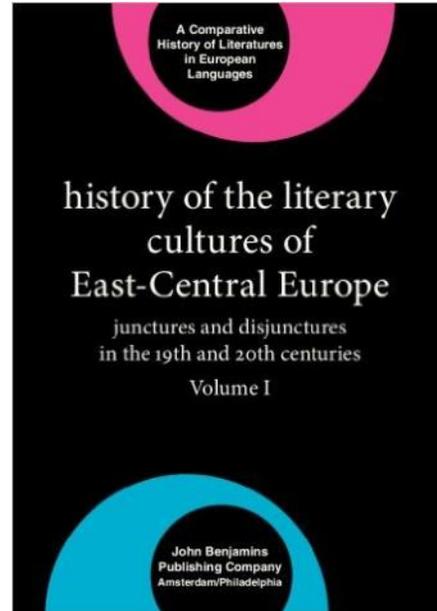
In addition to teaching and research, Dr. Cornis-Pope has served as external evaluator for numerous institutions and universities. => p. 2

## Biography (2)

A selective list of service shows he served in the James Russel Lowell Prize Selection Committee (MLA, 2005-6); is a member (since 2001) and the president of the Publication Committee of the International Comparative Literature Association since 2013; was Vice President of the Southern Comparative Literature Association; served as Member of the Advisory Board for the Southern Comparative Literary Association (1990- 1998) and as President of the Romanian Studies Association of America (affiliated to the MLA), 1992-1994. From 1996 to 1997 he was a Member of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Studies Group (MLA).

Dr. Cornis-Pope was, and in some cases continues to be, a member on the editorial board for fourteen publications and journals, seven international journals from Romania, Poland, and Slovakia; and repeatedly served as manuscript reviewer, as well as reviewer for funding agencies. He has given his time as advisor on many projects, lectured and organized workshops in county schools for teachers of English, and contributed to establishing transatlantic exchange studies for his institution.

Dr. Cornis-Pope continues to remain engaged in a number of projects among which the volume *Realism*



Narrative Innovation and Cultural Rewriting undertakes a systematic study of postmodernism's responses to the polarized ideologies of the postwar period that have held cultures hostage to a confrontation between rival ideologies abroad and a clash between champions of uniformity and disruptive others at home. Considering a broad range of narrative projects and approaches (from

polysystemic fiction to surfiction, postmodern feminism, and multicultural/postcolonial fiction), this book highlights their solutions to ontological division (real vs. imaginary, wordly and other-worldly), sociocultural oppositions (of race, class, gender) and narratological dualities (imitation vs. invention, realism vs. formalism). A thorough rereading of the best experimental work published in the US since the mid-1960s reveals the fact that innovative fiction has been from the beginning concerned with redefining the

relationship between history and fiction, narrative and cultural articulation. Stepping back from traditional polarizations, innovative novelists have tried to envision an alternative history of irreducible particularities, excluded middles, and creative intercrossings.

### Reviews:

"... a unique book...one that will prompt a new direction in American literary studies." - Jerome Klinkowitz, South Atlantic Review

"Cornis-Pope's strengths as a critic are many and formidable...his command of theory wide-ranging and masterful..." - Brian McHale, The Comparatist

"...show[s] that postmodern versatility can be culturally significant in the post-Cold War reconstruction and restructuring." - Maria Ionita, Literary Research

"...he usefully breaks out of some of the dichotomies and reductions that have characterized some criticisms of postmodernity." - Marc Singer, Symploke

"...both extraordinarily thorough and comprehensive, and attentive to the nuances and specificities of the writers he discusses." - Adam Katz, American Book Review

Source: <https://www.amazon.com/Narrative-Innovation-Cultural-Rewriting-After/dp/1349631825>

**Marcel Cornis-Pope**

## **New Literary Hybrids in the Digital Age:**

### **Reflections on Two Recent Publication Projects that Explore Literature in Multimedia Contexts.**

#### **I. Argument for a Prismatic and Multicultural Model of Literary History**

[L]iterature itself provides a mode of cultural contact and has done so for centuries.... In addition to offering direct figurations of otherness and cultural contact, literary texts actually deploy complex discursive strategies and aesthetic devices in order to mediate these fictional cultural encounters for their readers. Thus they form part of the cultural politics toward otherness, including the cultural imaginary which they help continually to reshape.

Gabriele Schwab, *The Mirror and the Killer-Queen*  
(39)

Under the altered post-1989 conditions, which have phased out the traditional polarizations between Eastern and Western Europe, but have at times replaced them with national-istic and ethno-centric ideologies that promote no less violent divisions between countries and regions, most of us working in the field of literary and cultural studies have become increasingly mindful of the need to provide new ways to conceptualize and relate cultures—comparing, translating, and interfacing traditionally separate entities. Focusing on “cultural contacts” is even more important today than during the Cold War period: literary history must venture into new areas, acting as a corrective both to narrow ethnocentric treatments of culture, but also to the counter-theories of globalism that erase distinctions between individual cultures.

Literary history—Priscilla Wald reassures us in her review of the *New Literary History of America*, edited by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors (2009)—is not at all a dead activity. Genres, like disciplines, are dynamic, as is the concept of the literary” (1). As she explains further, the guiding principle of the *New Literary History of America* is prismatic, assembling various disciplinary perspectives and offering a “carnival of style, voice, and topic.” The various chapters in it “function as individual vignettes, moments in time that readily form connections to other vignettes and help the reader see constellations among eras” (1).

The prismatic, multicultural and to some extent multimedia model of literary history that Wald attributes to the *New Literary History of America* has been anticipated and developed more boldly in a few recent histories, including the *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (2004-2010). This four-volume History edited by John Neubauer and myself responded to the momentous events that had unfolded since the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, offering the first transnational study of the cultural and literary region that stretches from the Baltic countries to Bulgaria and Albania and from the Ukraine and Moldova in the East to the Czech Republic in the West. Inspired initially by the comparative-intercultural approach to literary history outlined in Mario J. Valdés and Linda Hutcheon’s 1995 position paper and applied to the sister project on Latin American Literatures by Linda Hutcheon, Djelal Kadir, and Mario J. Valdés (1996), our theoretical thinking and practical work went through several versions over a period of fifteen years. Both John and I had been aware from the start not only of the enormity of this undertaking, but also of the polemical nature of its conception, challenging traditional literary histories based on national and even text-oriented premises (we focus on other media as well, such as theater, opera, and occasionally visual art, and discuss literature in a broad sociopolitical context). Moving beyond the boundaries of national literatures, historical trends, and generic divisions, we sought instead those “junctures” or “nodes” that bring together various traditions, allowing for a cross-cultural interpretation.

Building on the theoretical suggestions offered by Valdés and Hutcheon (1995), we decided to organize our history around five kinds of “nodes” – temporal, generic, topographic, institutional, and figural – conceived by us and our contributors as points of contact or interfaces at which various literatures, genres, and historical moments come together, transcending national definitions. The nodal approach has offered us a more flexible model for the discussion of literature in a continually shifting geo-cultural environment such as that of Central Europe.

## New Literary Hybrids in the Digital Age (2)

### 2. Case Study One: Intercultural Themes in the History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe (2004-2010)

The *ECE History* seeks to replace organic conceptions of literary history with an understanding of cultural evolution as open to potentially limitless "mappings," to borrow J. Hillis Miller's terms from his essay on Wallace Stevens's topographies. As Miller puts it, a given mapping is always provisional, "infinitely variable, always open to revision." The different mappings can be thought of as "superimposed on one another and on the landscape, like different navigations through a hypertext" (*Topographies* 281). While we do not understand "limitless" in an absolute way, we do share Miller's "not so totalizing or totalitarian" view, which replaces organic narratives of national cultures with open-ended "hypertexts" that interplay different interpretive perspectives. Such an approach is particularly important in today's political climate, in which resurrected nationalist and ethnocentric concepts of culture vie with globalist ones. Though seemingly opposed, both the globalist and the ethnocentric models encourage "organic" narratives, unified either by some Romantic notion of ethno-linguistic purity or by a Western trust in late-capitalist global markets. What we proposed was to rearticulate East-Central European literary history around a transnational approach that foregrounds disjunctures as much as junctures, emphasizing the interplay of specific regional features without dissolving them in a universal melting pot.

In the process, we brought national histories into a dialogue with one another, foregrounding minority literatures, the transnational German and Yiddish traditions, as well as multilingual texts, translations, and other modes of cultural mediation. In practice, our history consists of many *microhistories*, i.e., of localized, perspectival, and situated stories that cannot be read as simple illustrations of an overarching organic system. More specifically, we "scan" the last two centuries of literary production five times, considering the region's literary cultures each time from a different angle or through a different "node." Vol. I (2004) contains two of the five parts. In Part I, the nodes are crucial dates or date clusters in political history. Deployed in reverse order to avoid the impression that the region's history unfolded in a

necessary and predictable way, the temporal nodes (1989, 1968, 1956, 1948, 1945, 1918, 1867/1878/1881, 1848, and 1776/1789) emerge as "nonhomogeneous" entities that connect cultures across national boundaries while at the same time allowing them to experience similar events with different rhythms and directions of development. In Part II, traditional concepts of literary history -- genre, movement, and period -- serve as nodes, though we treat them with a degree of distrust: we regard them as temporary and impure crystallizations of literary life and focus on their transformations instead of their imagined essences. Instead of seeking the "core" of a national or regional genre (e.g., the "essence" of Polish lyric poetry or the Romanian realist novel), we focus on "boundary transgressions," highlighting the emergence of new cross-genres like the reportage, the lyrical novel, the fictionalized autobiography, parody, and literary theory, or examining literature's interplay with other media in the subsection on opera and film.

In Part III (volume 2, 2006) the nodes are topographical: we focus on the literary culture of multinational cities, border areas, (sub-)regions, and the Danube corridor, emphasizing the fact that shifting ethnic compositions yield hybrid literary phenomena. By remapping the literary production across traditional ethnic and national borders (as we do in our discussion of Ashkenaz culture) we emphasize the role that these hybrid sites have played in diversifying and pluralizing national literatures. Part IV (volume 3, 2007), subtitled *The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions*, considers the impact of theater, folklore, universities, multicultural magazines and journals, translation, and literary history as a genre on the development of East-Central European literatures. Finally, Part V (vol. 4, 2010), entitled *Types and Stereotypes*, focuses on the representation of real and imaginary figures such as the national poet, figures of female identity, figures of others, figures of outlaws, figures of trauma, and figures of mediators. Many of these figures have been historically challenged by hegemonic groups (the case of national minorities), or have been excluded through an arbitrary process of othering (the Romany).

Volume 4 ends with an Epilogue that pursues the region's history beyond 1989, the final nodal point of our project. The Epilogue is interested in the movement of writers across borders, as new forms of

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exile and cultural mobility are emerging after 1989. For some writers, this meant straddling languages and geographic boundaries, in order to promote what Franca Sinopoli has called a “poetics of intercultural translation” (“Migrazione/letteratura”). To a large extent, the history of literature in East-Central Europe has alternated between exile and problematic returns: from the exodus of the great Polish romantics of the nineteenth century, to the writers who left Hungary in fear of the white terror in 1919, the refugees fleeing Hitler, and the exiles fleeing Communism. After 1989, renewed anti-Semitism and violence against minorities, especially the Roma, forced a number of writers, among them Imre Kertész, to move to the West. As John Neubauer and Zsuzsanna Borbála Török’s 2009 book on *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe* makes clear, the saga of exile is not over yet.

In the current context of lingering interethnic conflicts and divisions around the world, our *History of ECE Literary Cultures* challenges the isolation of national literatures, relativizes national myths, and recovers works, writers, and minority literatures that have been marginalized or ignored. The good news is that our effort to retrieve the idea of a multicultural “Third Europe” as a buffer between countries with hegemonic ambitions and as a response to local ethnocentrism are being undertaken in East-Central Europe by several groups of scholars, some (e.g., those associated with the University of Sofia, the Slovenian Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis, the Bucharest “New Europe Institute,” the Timișoara “Third Europe” group, or the Central European University in Budapest), discussed also in our *History*. For these scholars, East-Central Europe is not a fault line (as some Western thinkers continue to believe), but a “region of convergences” (Victor Neumann, *Tenta-ția* 223), a “Third Europe” of negotiation between east and west, central and peripheral, global and local. As Fausto Bedoya has argued in a recent review of vol. 4 of our *History*, the work we have proposed has larger implications for a “rethinking European literary history” in the post-Cold War transition:

generating an alternate and collaborative form of critical discourse on literary developments, while conceptualizing regional histories within a transnational context,” the *H.L.C.E.C.E.*

“moves beyond conventional, linear literary histories thereby establishing this volume as a hallmark not only for studies in East Central European Literature, but as a model for global literary study. (79)

### 3. Transculturality and Multimedia

In the past, literacy has chiefly meant alphabetic literacy. That meaning has dominated because the chief technologies of literacy, especially the early printing press, have privileged the written language over all other forms of semiosis. [. . . Today’s definition of literacy] includes visual, electronic and (for want of better terminology) non-verbal or gestural or social literacies.

Nancy Kaplan, “E-literacies” (3, 13, 15, 28)

[D]iscussions of cultural conceptual transfers necessarily involve differences among natural languages, forms of writing and argument, rhetorics, and structures of authority, as well as the media through which texts are transmitted in the source and target societies respectively.

Richter, “Conceptual History” (193)

My newest project, titled *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression: Crossing Borders, Crossing Genres* (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014), is informed by a similar desire to cross not only geocultural borders but also genres and in this case even media. Part of the *History of Literatures in European Languages* sponsored by the ICLA, this project recognizes the global shift towards the visual and the virtual in all areas of textuality. Historically, textual study meant writing and reading verbal texts in the medium of print. The final decades of the twentieth century, however, witnessed an explosion of new media forms as well as a worldwide shift towards the visual, the mass-produced, and the virtual text.

We are clearly, as David B. Downing and James J. Sosnoski argued in 1994, “in a period of transition, a moment when the modes and the technology for cultural reproduction are shifting, this time from print to electronic environments which opens new possibilities for freedom as well as oppression” (10).

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Theorists are divided over the effects of the new technologies. Cyberutopianists like Ted Nelson, George P. Landow, and a few others, believe that the new electronic technologies will liberate us, sharpening our cognitive and expressive horizons on borderless multisequential texts. By contrast, “cyberdistopians” warn that “technology has created not only a new division of society between onliners and offliners but also a new form of ‘capital.’ Social status may soon be marked by access to information” (Downing and Sosnoski 14). A few other theorists have articulated a more balanced position between the claims of “liberation” from “all arbitrary fixity and stability of the print culture” and the awareness of the “constraints of the computer system and ... of the writing system the computer embodies” (Jay Bolter 59-60).

The digital divide was more pronounced in the 1990s, at the beginning of the transition from “a predominantly print environment toward a predominantly electronic one” (Downing and Sosnoski 18). Today, a literate public is more accustomed to write and read in multi-defined textual media. According to Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, “the future of writing and reading looks much better with these newly blended media, as opposed to the once dominant dichotomy of text versus images” (30). At the same time, as Thomsen points out, a few decades earlier, writers were already involved in other media:

Where Beckett took part in the productions of his plays, Nabokov himself wrote the screenplay for Stanley Kubrick’s adaptation of *Lolita*, and both can be seen as transitional figures from Modernism to Post-Modernism, both in their use of media and in their attitude towards the world. (83)

More recently, writers have taken advantage of the computer-saturated environment producing hypertexts, hypermedia installations, and animated works that stretch the definition of textuality, moving beyond the verbal to the visual, aural, and kinetic.

Critical and theoretical discourse have tried to keep up with these developments, moving away from the concept of the self-contained work, secure in its boundaries, to the idea of the open-ended text

whose boundaries are continually expanded through the collaborative work of writers and readers. These shifts have been aided by the new hypertext and networked communication technologies emerging over the past three decades. The new electronic technologies have allowed us to interact closer with the text, highlighting its associative/ dissociative impulses and enriching its structures with layers of annotations, linked intertexts, and “winding paths” of signifiers. They have also given a concrete shape to Roland Barthes’s prophetic announcement of the “plural text.” As he argued in *S/Z* (1970), the plural text is

a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are interminable. (5-6)

This type of plural text was already illustrated by the work of B.S. Johnson (*The Unfortunates*, 1969) or Italo Calvino (*If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*, 1979), who wrote novels in sections that can be shuffled, producing different versions of the narrative. Electronically-assisted textual production has taken this process further, replacing the linear logic of reading and writing with the creative “logic of patterning”: “The writer and the reader do not discover or recognize a preexisting pattern; rather, they make patterns possible” (Travis 9).

The new communication technologies have not only enhanced the interplay of literature and other media, they have also challenged the very definition of verbal literature. A major emphasis in our 2014 volume on *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression* is on literary production and expression in multimedia environments. Literature remains an important focus, even as its modes of manifestation expand to include new hybrids that stretch the definition of what is “literary.” The four-volume *History of East-Central European Cultures* also foregrounded a range of multimedial literary forms, from emblem literature to new genres such as concrete poetry, graphic novels, hypertexts, performances, installations, and other “combined and

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simultaneously displayed artforms in which literary texts function as one component” (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 1: 513). As John Neubauer explains further in his Introduction to the section on “Histories of Multimedia Constructions,” the

critterion of simultaneity excludes artforms in which literature merely served as a point of departure or inspiration but does not appear in the final form; similarly, it does not include the various forms of *ekphrasis*, i.e., literary descriptions of visual art objects, and *verbal music*, i.e., verbal representations of real or imaginary music. (513)

*New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression* does include forms of *ekphrasis* at least to the extent they break down the boundary between arts, allowing the interpenetration of discourses as in the contamination of literary descriptions with elements of other artistic discourses. We are also interested in the parallel and often uneven evolution of the various arts, calling into question their undifferentiated treatment in the name of globalization.

Clearly, globalization is not something to be taken lightly. As Gayatri Spivak reminds us, while cyberliteracy may be “an excellent, enticing, and seductive wonderful thing,” the “invasion of the unmediated, so-called, cyberliteracy in the subaltern sphere is deeply frightening” (Hedge and Radha 285). Though Spivak may be overstating the case, we do need to submit the call for globalization to a careful critique. We should also emphasize—as a number of articles submitted to our volume do—the fact that global messages are often filtered through regional or local interests that create hybrids, both thematically and formally. As D. C. McMillin also argues, global channels have resorted, especially of late, to “strategies of hybridization, dubbing, cloning, and collaging” (103) in an effort to win over Third World markets. Conversely, Third World countries have employed new media with a postcolonial, regional edge to “build community and create spaces for subaltern empowerment” (197). Eurocentrism itself has been complicated of late through the infusion of multicultural and multimedia messages. This was evident already to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam who

in their 1994 book, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, called attention to the hybridity of the European media themselves, their “cultural mixing: religious (syncretism); biological (hybridity); human-genetic (*mestizaje*); and linguistic (creolization)” (41).

*New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression* foregrounds various examples of creative “entanglements of the global, regional, national, and local” (Chopra and Gajjala 11), emphasizing the hybridity of the European media and their messages, especially evident in sub-regions such as Scandinavia, East-Central Europe and Southern Europe. In discussing East-Central European cybertextuality (see my own article, “New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression: The Case of ‘Post-Colonial’ East-Central Europe”), we challenge the lingering construction of a unidirectional world system that relays advanced Western multimedia technologies to non-Western and postcolonial peripheries. An example of this is the “Hollywoodcentrism” that Shohat and Stam (29) attribute to much global film. For example, they underscore the Orientalizing tendencies in films like *Red Dawn* (1984), in which the “Cubans, the Soviets, and the (presumably Sandinista) Nicaraguans” take “over the functional slot of the Indians” in the Western tradition (123). Likewise *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971) extends the orientalizing treatment to the Eastern European Jews in their old shetl culture.

We need to challenge the “Hollywoodcentrism” and any other paradigm that emphasizes the uneven distribution of messages from the West to the European peripheries. But we should also acknowledge that the “peripheries” have reacted in contradictory ways to the new media, both resisting and embracing them, turning them into political tools to propagate “the authoritative voice of the nation” (Shohat and Stam 30), but also into tools of transnational resistance and innovation. Related to this is also a need for a more flexible understanding of the interplay between global and local, national and transnational. The end of the Cold War challenged the grids used by writers to make sense of an ideologically polarized world. New emerging identities (most of them hybrid) and narratives have filled the vacuum created by the collapse of the bi-polar world. A post-

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national space has been created as nation-states have been weakened by transnationalism, identities have been hybridized, and language has been deterritorialized in cyberspace. Some of the arts, especially film, have benefited from this transnational reach, allowing a series of traditions (not only Polish, Czech, Romanian or Yugoslav film, but also the new Roma film) to reach transnational audiences.

Genres themselves have been hybridized in areas of Europe, replacing the traditional grand narratives that promoted nationalist visions with transitional and cross-genre forms that emphasize tensions between the global and local. Intermediality is a useful concept to describe the newly emerging literature, emphasizing its complexity of form, medium, and technology. As several essays in *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression* suggest, not only literature, but also some of the other arts have moved towards intermediality. Inspired by the reconceptualization of objects in Cubism, Expressionism, and Futurism, both theater and film have experimented with several media (dance, music, improvisation, metadiscourse) providing models for modern intermediality. Culture has also been expanded to include other genres that escape hegemonic control, such as “street theatre, puppetry, local rallies, shadow plays, even karaoke bars, video parlors, and cassette tapes” (McMillin 192). If we add the new possibilities of “mobile phones, streaming technologies, wireless networks, and the high-quality publishing and information-sharing capacities of the World Wide Web” (Bennett 19), we have a much broader picture of the generic range and cultural richness of the new media.

### 4. Case Study Two: *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression*

The contributors to the new volume on Literature and Multimedia pursue a broad range of issues under five sets of questions that allow a larger conversation to emerge, both inside the volume’s sections and between them. The five sections cover, 1) Theoretical and Methodological Questions; 2) Multimedia Productions in Historical Perspective; 3) Regional and Intercultural Projects; 4) Forms and Genres; 5) Readers and Rewriters in Multimedia Environments.

More specifically, **Part One** puts forth a number of questions and arguments concerning the definition, hybrid genre, and intercrossed forms of a range of multimedia products, from digital literature to more complex transmedial work. The section begins with Roberto Simanowski’s (University of Basel) discussion of some of the complexities of digital literature, particularly in its interplay of a combinatory system of digital units such as letters, phonemes, and words, with other more complex components (visual, audio, kinetic). Rodica Ieta (SUNY Oswego) theorizes a specific form of digital literature, hypertext. Monica Spiridon (University of Bucharest) opens another line of investigation, focusing on the shift from the classical forms of intertextuality to new, hyper-coded forms of intermediality. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth (Utrecht University) calls into question the theory of media convergence (already articulated by Kittler in the 1980s), exploring the ways in which media interact but also preserve their materially distinct approaches, resisting the pressures of the newest medium to take over and marginalize previous media. Teresa Vilariño Picos (University of Santiago de Compostela) takes this argument further, discussing the challenges that transmediation poses for literature.

**Part Two** offers a brief overview of the advent of multimedia productions, seeking the antecedents of the current multimedia synergies while also pointing out tensions among the various media. Karl Jirgens (University of Windsor, Canada) retraces the historical sources of neo-baroque features of electronic and multi-media writing back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century attempts to create immersive environments using mirrors and optics, and to the work of early 20<sup>th</sup> Futurists, Constructivists and Dadaists. Bernardo Piciché (Virginia Commonwealth University) focuses more directly on the Italian Futurists, emphasizing their anticipations of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century multimedia revolution through their fascination with technological devices and multimedia hybrids. Michael Wutz (Weber State University, USA) discusses the paradoxical case of D.H. Lawrence who both used and resisted the emerging post-print modern technologies. Applying the methodology of genetic criticism, Verónica Galíndez-Jorge (University of São Paulo, Brazil) foregrounds the changing concepts of literary creativity as literature entered the age of multimedia. Rui Torres (Fernando Pessoa University, Portugal)

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discusses a number of methodological and practical questions concerning the digital preservation of recent experimental literature. My introduction to this section also mentions the emergence of formalized theories of poetic composition developed by Solomon Marcus ("Mathematical Poetics," 1970) in Romania and Pedro Barbosa (his "quantum cyberopera," *Alletsator*; 2001, 2008) in Portugal.

**Part Three** proposes a regional mapping of the recent multimedia cultures of Europe, one that—while recognizing the global trends in the visual and performative media—foregrounds also the distinctive features of cultural subregions. Central Europe and Russia receive a particularly strong focus because of their alternative mapping and rewriting of paradigms from Western Europe. Other regions highlighted are Scandinavia and Southern Europe. The section begins with Yra van Dijk's (University of Amsterdam) article on the role of history in printed and digital literature. Pedro Andrade (Technical University of Lisbon) emphasizes the role that hybrid literacies play in a postcolonial redefinition of Europe. Eva Midden (Utrecht University) brings together transnational digital networks, migration, and gender issues in relation to the performance of religious identities. Her immediate example is that of Muslim women in the Netherlands who use digital media to negotiate their religious affiliations and multiple belongings. Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu (University of Western Ontario, Canada) proposes an "intercolonial" approach to the digital literatures of Europe, arguing that intercoloniality is an intermedial, generative approach that undermines old habits of thinking and forms of writing. My own article picks up the inter/postcolonial paradigm and applies it to East-Central Europe, suggesting that the recent hypertexts, hypermedia installations, and animated works produced in this region stretch the definition of textuality, moving beyond the verbal to the visual, aural, and kinetic. Bogumila Suwara (Institute of World Literature, Bratislava) focuses on the hypertext work of Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian authors who have risen to the challenge of multimedia culture by incorporating "visuality" into literary works while also submitting the new technologies to a critical reexamination (Suwara's example is Markéta Baňková's multimedia reflections on female experiences with urban life). Reneta Vankova

Bozhankova (Sofia University) focuses on today's paradoxical conception of space, caught between a postmodern emphasis on extraterritoriality and hyperreality, enhanced by the use of global positioning technologies, and a new nostalgia for real space. Ellen Rutten (University of Bergen) examines literary practices in a variety of digital genres, from (micro) blogs to Facebook, Flickr, and online creative-writing communities, emphasizing their recourse to linguistic, visual, and multimedial "imperfection." Finally, Nevena Daković (University of Belgrade) and Ivana Uspenski (University of Arts, Belgrade) discuss the representation of the Holocaust in the new forms of cybertextuality. Several of the projects discussed in this section echo Salman Rushdie's celebration in *Satanic Verses* of

hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, ideas, politics, movies, songs [and which] rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. (52)

**Part Four** focuses on a broad range of intermediate forms and genres that literature has created or has become part of as it moved into the realm of digital expression, multimedia performance, the blogosphere, and the virtual. In his introductory essay on "Cybrids," which can be read as a manifesto of intermedia art, Peter Anders (Plymouth University) defines "cybrids" as hybrid compositions that mix physical and virtual elements, drawing on the increasingly complex interactions between technology and simulation. The other essays in this section present different kinds of cybrids or intermedial works. Laura Borràs Castanyer (University of Barcelona) analyzes the role of liquid metaphors in digital poetry. Web writer and artist Andy Campbell, focuses on the possibilities of digital fiction as illustrated in the online journal *Dreaming Methods* (De Montfort University, UK), which he has been editing for over 10 years. Bo Kampmann Walther (Syddansk Universitet, Denmark) focuses more generally on the wealth of new fiction genres that have emerged in the age of multimedia, often difficult to define because they blend traditional codex storytelling, cinematic linearity, "gamification," hypermedia, world building, and fan literature. Monica Spiridon (University of

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Bucharest) discusses the impact of the “narrative turn” in media culture on literary narratology. Anxo Abuín Gonzáles (University of Santiago de Compostela) broadens the discussion of narrative, exploring the interplay between narration and more abstract models of logical ordering such as lists, enumerations, numbers, and data bases. Nick Kaye (University of Exeter, England) considers the performative and kinetic aspects of multimedia work, exemplifying them with Gary Hill’s Projective Installations.” Joanna Spassova-Dikova (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) discusses the transformation of bodies in contemporary performance arts, as they are pushed across the border between virtual and real worlds. Victoria Pérez Royo (Europa Universität Vadrina, Frankfurt) describes the significant changes in the relationship between the text of the dance, the dancer, and the new interactive ballet space. Astrid Ensslin (Bangor University, UK) focuses on the paradoxical conjunction of two apparently different receptive, productive, aesthetic, pheno-meno--logical, social, and discursive phenomena: literature and games. Finally, Reneta Vankova Bozhankova (Sofia University) picks up another popular genre of the multimedia age, the blog. Her article focuses on writer’s blogs, taking into account the authors’ awareness of the diary tradition and allowing for parallels with the “personal writing” in the 18th-20th centuries.

**Part Five**, the last in the volume, argues for an enhanced interactive connection between authors, texts, and readers in the multimediated forms of literature. The section begins with a series of reasons for why we should engage with multimedia literature, proposed by theorist and practitioner of digital literature, Alan Bigelow (Medaille College, New York/De Montfort University, UK). My own article on the author-reader interactions in the age of hypertextual and networked communication emphasizes the cognitive and pedagogical advantages involved in the transition from linear modes of reading and writing, to multilevel and interactive modes of rereading/rewriting. The article contributed by Maria Engberg (Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden) explores the changing conditions of reading in the age of digital media, arguing that electronic and multimedia literature have added a new dimension of “digital literacy” that entails knowing how to perform a

multidimensional form of reading. Engberg uses the term “polyaestheticism” to refer to the experiencing of multi-sensory media objects that require several faculties: reading, looking, listening, seeing, and moving. Janez Strehovec (University of Ljubljana) builds further on the idea of the “e-literary text as play,” but adds to it the structural concept and metaphor of the “ride”: a rich event-based and corporeal experience that presupposes ascents and descents, suspense and dissolves, and even the daring feeling of uncertainty when the rider realizes that s/he is not in charge. Francesca Pasquali (University of Bergamo) discusses the changes brought about by digitalization in the production, distribution, and marketing of electronic literature, including a redefinition of the role and relationship of authors and readers within the new paradigm of convergence and cooperation. The article contributed by Susana Tosca (member of the Digital Culture / Mobile Communication Group, IT University, Copenhagen), returns to more practical questions, focusing on the new materiality of reading literature in tablets (*ipad*, *kindle*, etc.) in order to explore how it differs from the practice of reading books. Drawing on his own recent experiments with alternative forms of electronic writing, Artur Matuck (University of São Paulo, Brazil) theorizes and demonstrates practically the uses of—what he calls—the “de-scripting process” that relies on the use of “virtual faulty typewriter” which tricks the typist into generating unintended sequences of letters and words, rewriting the original text. Inspired by the avant-garde experiments from the early Dada movement to the combinatorial literature of the OuLiPo group, Matuck’s project uses the computer “against itself,” building a new linguistic performance on chance.

These are just some examples of the fascinating projects and inquiries that have become possible at the interface between literature and other media, new and old. One of the most important shifts in recent textual production has been the emphasis on “non- or multilinearity, its multivocality, and its inevitable blending of media and modes, particularly its tendency to marry the visual and the verbal” (Landow, *Hypertext 3.0* 220). In principle, the new technologies such as hypertext reading/writing, networked communication and multimedia performances have served well the goal of introducing an interactive component in the writing and interpretation of literature.

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Hypertextual, multimedia, and virtual reality technologies have also enhanced the sociality of reading and writing, enabling more people to interact than ever before. This is especially significant within traditionally self-contained national and local cultures that are encouraged to enter a larger circuit that leads to new exchanges but also self-examination. As Jola Skulj argues, based on her knowledge of electronic Slovenian literature,

[E]lectronic textuality, with its inherent principles and potential choices, involves—and above all radically re-examines—our understanding of ourselves in a new perspective, including what we comprehend as “body” or physical being; issues regarding our identity and differences and our changed views on ... the continually extended boundaries of reality, and so on. With the flourishing of computer technology, the World Wide Web, multimedia communication, the digitalization of texts and virtual reality, not only are the humanities challenged, but also the human condition ... (187)

However, as long as these technologies are used to reinforce old habits of reading/ writing or to ask “fairly traditional questions of traditional texts” (Olsen 312), they will deliver modest results. One of our urgent tasks is to integrate literature in the global informational environment where it can function as an imaginative partner teaching its interpretive competencies to other components of the cultural landscape. The global informational environment is inconceivable without the exigencies of creative authorship, critical rereading/rewriting, and cultural reformulation. In turn, the cross-fertilization between literature and the new media has produced innovative literary practices that challenge monologic concepts of culture, emphasizing “interference” and cross-cultural “translation.”

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