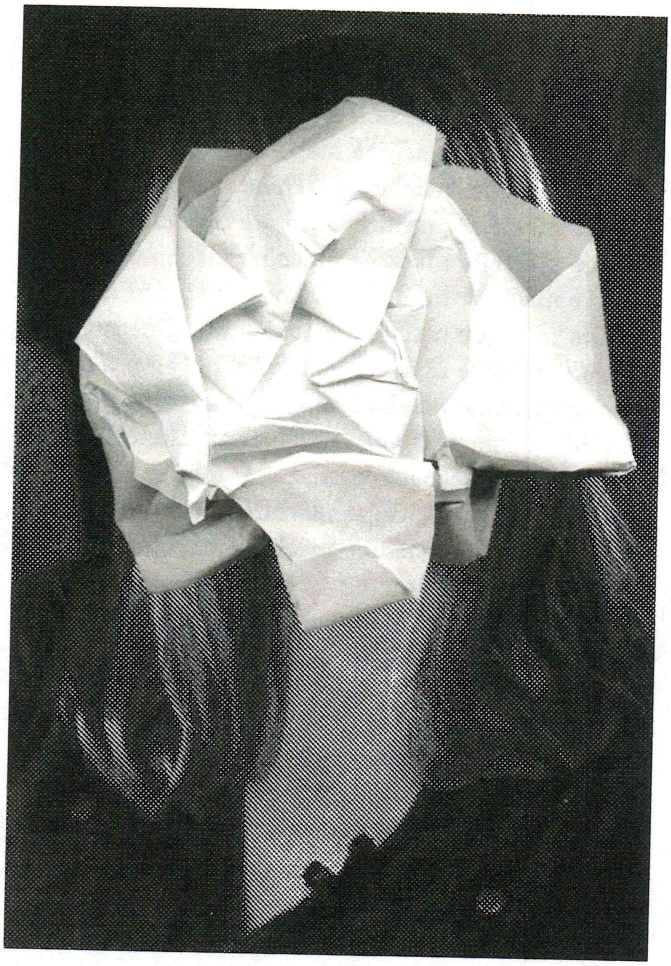
Publisher, Promoter, and Genius: The Rise of Curatorial Ethos in Contemporary Literature



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The rise of curators has been a central theme in the context of visual culture since the mid-twentieth century. The 2007 Lyon Biennale saw perhaps the climax of this development: instead of inviting artists to the biennale, the curators Hans Ulrich Obrist and Stéphanie Moisdon invited roughly fifty other curators to construct the biennale. Lyon is but one example: at the 2013 Venice Biennale, the Finnish delegation included three curators in contrast to two artists. Gradually but steadily, curators have occupied a central role in the contemporary art scene, a role that sometimes simply outweighs that of the artists.

This rise of curators is usually discussed in the context of visual art, performance art, and art that is exhibited in public. Something similar has, however, also taken place in literature and publishing. This article describes and analyzes the emergence of curatorial practices in the field of literature and publishing, or the rise of what could be called the literary curator.

By literary curator, this article refers to actors who practice or fulfill curatorial functions in the literary field. In short, *literary curators are actors who mainly mediate, distribute, (re)present, publish, or exhibit in new contexts texts that have been produced by people other than themselves and who thereby create literary phenomena in the public.* A literary curator takes over and fulfills many of the functions and tasks of the traditional publisher or editor in selecting, distributing, and promoting texts. In so doing, s/he puts weight on the act and moment of publishing, of making a text public, and highlights its constitutive role in the production of meanings. In this sense, literary curators are both producers and mediators of meanings. Different mediators have always existed in the field of literature, as M. Thomas Inge reminds us,[1] but what is new is the visibility of these mediators. What differentiates literary curators from traditional publishers and other institutionalized gatekeepers, such as editors and agents, is that through their mediations literary curators not only create new phenomena, but also construct their own artistic and public identities, and they may even *substitute the figure of the author with the figure represented by themselves.* Unlike traditional publishers and editors, these figures not only make public others' texts but also seek publicity for their *own* practices, and thus accumulate and create cultural capital for themselves. Through her/his practice, the literary curator challenges the traditional figure of the author as the originating subject of the text, but is, nevertheless, capable of promoting her/his own creative individuality. Consequently, the literary curator is a postmodern, or poststructuralist figure that manages to combine the promotional or marketing needs of today's literary field with the theoretical critique of the author. As such, literary curators can be interpreted in the context of promotional culture[2] and attention economy,[3] or as their symptom.

Although the literary curator is introduced here, for the sake of clarity, as an emerging cultural figure, the term should not necessarily be understood as referring to a fixed and essentialized identity. As aesthetic identities are constantly in the process of (re)formation, the term can also be perceived as referring to a dimension of action, a perspective, or a function that is occasionally fulfilled and practiced by an artist or a writer. It is difficult to name actors who would *only* be literary curators, but it is increasingly easy to find moments in which writers act as literary curators, practice literary curating or fulfill curatorial functions. From this perspective, the term can also be taken as describing an attitude or a set of techniques that an actor may put into practice in some projects and not in others.

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[1] M. Thomas Inge, "Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship," *PMLA* 116, no. 3 (2001): 623–630.

[2] See Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression* (London: SAGE, 1991) and Aeron Davis, *Promotional Cultures: The Rise and Spread of Advertising, Public Relations, Marketing and Branding* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

[3] See Michael H. Goldhaber, "The Attention Economy and the Net," *First Monday* 2, no. 4 (1997), accessed March 20, 2015, http://firstmonday.org/article/view/519/440 and Georg Franck, "The Economy of Attention," *Telepolis* 7 (1999), accessed March 20, 2015, http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/5/5567/1.html.

The Emergence of Curators and the Erosion of Authorship in Arts and Literature

Originally curators were people who took care of museum collections and the organization of exhibitions, and the profession developed simultaneously with the institutionalization of museums. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the profession began to gain new visibility and new responsibilities. This redefinition of the curator's role was partly motivated by an urge to bring more transparency to exhibition practices,[4] but behind this rise of the curators was a larger discourse that questioned the autonomy of the artist and the artwork. This discursive change had its background in the redefinitions of the aesthetic that had characterized the work of the historical avant-garde, Conceptual art, and finally postmodern theories.[5]

These large shifts in the artistic field have been explained by the shift from modernism to postmodernism and beyond, characterized by the (feeling of) loss of originality and invention. Helmut Draxler has described the growing sensation that "since the 1960s it has become almost impossible to maintain the high standards of originality and innovation typical of the modern period."[6] This feeling was both articulated and strengthened in the postmodern theories that celebrated pastiches, artistic recycling, and simulations instead of original production and originality.[7] Consequently, the critical and analytical focus started to shift from the artist and the artwork to different mediators and institutions as producers of art and artistic meaning.[8]

The rise of the new curator took place in this conjuncture in which the autonomy of the artist and the artwork had experienced theoretical and practical erosion. Curators began to fill the void. This meant that curators established themselves as mediators whose job was to structure the experiences of the audiences. As Paul O'Neill writes, "curatorship emerged as a creative, semiautonomous, and individually

[4] Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 237.

[5] See Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 9 and Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[6] Helmut Draxler, "Crisis as Form. Curating and the Logic of Mediation," *Oncurating.org* 13 (2012), 5–7, 5.

[7] See Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 21 and Sanna Nyqvist, *Double-Edged Imitation: Theories and Practices of Pastiche in Literature* (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2010).

[8] See also Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008).

authored form of mediation (and production), which structured the experience of the work of art and affected the ways in which art was made and communicated to an audience."[9]

Gradually, the importance and the visibility of curators grew, and by the end of the 1980s, "the verb 'to curate' began to articulate 'curating' as a mode of proactive participation in the processes of artistic production."[10] According to O'Neill, this "trend continued into the 1990s, during what Michael Brenson has called the 'curator's moment' when certain individual curators achieved an unprecedented hypervisibility."[11] Finally, some commentators have gone as far as suggesting that curating is about to substitute the artistic practice entirely. Draxler has noted that curatorial "modes of production have become so interesting for many artists that curating [...] seems to have become the actual mode of artistic expression."[12]

The theoretical development in literary criticism has in many ways followed a similar path. The sense of loss of the high standards of originality after modernism also characterized the major theoretical debates of twentieth century literature. Theories of textuality and intertextuality can be interpreted as responses to the growing sense that "all this has been seen/read before." The deconstruction of the author figure has been a commonplace framework in literary studies ever since the writings of Michel Foucault and later Roland Barthes. Together with Walter Benjamin's earlier writings,[13] Barthes and Foucault challenged the autonomous and bourgeois author constructed by literary history.[14] Barthes suggested that the author should be abolished in the name of the text as a productivity, and as a recycling place of signs;[15] whereas, Foucault concentrated on describing the "space left empty by the author's disappearance."[16]

However, this theoretical deconstruction of the autonomous author does not mean that the author as an organizing principle or a function would have disappeared. On the contrary, as Foucault's writings on the author's function already suggest, the theoretical relativization of the author as an originating subject has been accompanied by a growing interest in the public appearances and the public role of authors. Authors as promotional figures are at the center of literary marketing, perhaps more than ever,[17] even to the extent that one can refer to the ubiquity of writers.[18] Author figures are so central to the literary market that authors appear on the front covers of their books, and their names are written in specific fonts as if they were brands or logos. These practices that used to characterize only serial writing have also become commonplace in so-called high and middlebrow literature.

These two trends, the theoretical erosion of the author and the ubiquity of the author as a marketing tool, might at

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9 O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating*, 4.

10 Ibid., 5.

11 Ibid.

12 Draxler, "Crisis as Form," 5.

13 See Walter Benjamin, "The Author as a Producer," *New Left Review* 62 (1970), 83–96.

14 See Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–148, Michel Foucault, "Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books 1991), 101–120.

15 Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Poststructuralist Criticism*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Stephen Heath (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 73–81.

16 Foucault, "What is an Author?" 105.

17 See Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) and Claire Squires, *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

18 See Moran, *Star Authors*.

first appear contradictory or mutually exclusive. However, as will be argued in the following, the figure of the literary curator seems to be at ease with both these trends. This emerging figure obviously witnesses the disappearance, or the erosion of, the autonomous author as the originating subject of the literary text. But simultaneously, this figure of the literary curator is deeply rooted in contemporary promotional needs and the pressure to promote literature through individuals. The literary curator can be interpreted as a response to this ambiguous situation in which the author has been theoretically demystified at the same time that (as a brand) s/he is perhaps needed more than ever.

Curatorial Practices in Contemporary Literature

The emergence of curatorial ethos in literature can be seen most clearly in two contemporary practices. First, in many literary appropriations in which the curator-like actor works on material produced by others, and second, in different projects of literary crowdsourcing, in which the curatorial figure invites others to join a literary or publishing project initiated by her/him.

Just as in the visual arts, the roots of literary curators are in many ways in the aforementioned debates around Conceptual and avant-garde art that relativized the role of the individual artist. One nodal point in this process of relativization was the work of Appropriation artists. In the past decades, such appropriative practices have also become increasingly influential in literature. In line with the tradition of Appropriation art (in visual culture), literary appropriationists re-publish, collect, and assemble texts or fragments written by others.[19]

This article suggests that different appropriative forms of collage writing, the genres of found poetry and search engine poetry, flarf and erasure poetry, as well as reprints,[20] can all be thought of as including a curatorial dimension. The users of such practices collect, select, and re-publish material produced by others, giving it a new context, and in most cases, also a new form and new meanings, thus, fulfilling curatorial functions. This does not mean that all textual appropriators would essentially *be* literary curators, but rather that their praxis often includes curatorial dimensions or carries a curatorial ethos. Examples of such writing are numerous, but include, for instance, such well-known works as Joseph Kosuth's *Purloined* (2000), Cory Arcangel's *Working on my Novel* (2014), Sally Alatalo's *A Rearranged Affair* (1996), Kajsa Dahlberg's *A Room of One's Own/A Thousand Libraries* (2006) and *Newspaper Blackout* by Austin Kleon (2010).[21]

Different theoretical concepts have attempted to capture the essence of this kind of writing and publishing, or describe the figure emerging from such creative modes of

[19] See Annette Gilbert, *Wiederaufgelegt: Zur Appropriation von Texten und Büchern in Büchern* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012) and Annette Gilbert, *Reprint: Appropriation (&) Literature* (Wiesbaden: Luxbooks 2014).

[20] Gilbert, *Wiederaufgelegt*, 15 and Gilbert, *Reprint*, 49.

[21] Joseph Kosuth, *Purloined: A Novel* (Cologne: Salon Verlag, 2000); Cory Arcangel, *Working On My Novel* (London: Penguin, 2014); Anita M-28 [Sally Alatalo], *A Rearranged Affair* (Chicago: Sara Ranchouse Publishing, 1996); Kajsa Dahlberg, *A Room of One's Own/A Thousand Libraries* (self-published, 2006); Austin Kleon, *Newspaper Blackout* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010).

reproduction. Nick Thurston writes about reproduction-as-production,[22] and Kenneth Goldsmith has used the widely proliferated term "uncreative writing."[23] Antoine Lefebvre has discussed readymade activities among writers and written on the artist publisher or artiste entrepreneur.[24] Marjorie Perloff has named the figure that produces such texts the "unoriginal genius,"[25] a term that will be discussed further at the end of this article. The different methods for such appropriative writing and publishing practice include recycling, managing, citing, distributing, explaining, and copying previously existing texts under the name of a new artist-like figure. The words come close to those used by O'Neill, according to whom key concepts that describe the process of curating are electing, organizing, mediating, promoting, and arranging.[26] The figure arising from such practices could also be called the editor, as appropriationists edit and modify other people's texts. The word curator, however, emphasizes how the emerging figure is not only someone who selects and distributes texts, but also explains their meanings and in so doing constructs of, or for, himself a new artist-like identity or a public persona, which exceeds the relative invisibility or even humbleness of the editor.

Along with the appropriative writing strategies summarized above, another type of literary curating is comprised of projects in which people are asked to participate, often in the form of sending fragments of texts to the literary curator. Different wikinovels, crowdsourced novels, hypertext novels, and networked novels invite writers to contribute to a story initiated by an individual. Equally, many textual works that include performative elements rest on participation. Recent examples are again numerous, but include, for example, Barbara Campbell's performance *1001 Nights Cast* (2005–2008), Goldsmith's *Printing out the Internet* (2013–2014), *Google Poetics* (2012–) initiated by Sampsa Nuotio and Raisa Omaheimo, *Flight Paths* (2007–) launched by Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph, *Letter to an Unknown Soldier* (2014) by Neil Bartlett and Kate Pullinger, Rachel Zolf's *The Tolerance Project* (2009–2011) and *Collabowriters* (2012) by Willy Chyr.[27] All these projects have invited others to join, but been initiated by (an) individual figure(s) who fulfill(s) curatorial functions. In the case of *Google Poetics,* a project that presents Google's autocomplete suggestions as poems, the initiators even call themselves curators.[28]

These contemporary, often digitally realized, examples follow in the footsteps of some early works of Conceptual art, such as Mel Bochner's *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art* (1966) and Seth Siegelaub's *XEROX book* (1968).[29] In both projects, the artist or curator invited others to contribute to a publication that was then published or exhibited under the name of the inviter and (at least later) understood as belonging to his career or artistic oeuvre. In these projects, Bochner and Siegelaub exercised both the functions of curators and publishers, similar to many contemporary actors discussed here. Both works have been exhibited or archived in galleries and museums, which has blurred the boundaries between visual art institutions and publishing or printing.

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[22] Nick Thurston, "Publishing as a Praxis of Conceptualist Reading Performances," *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 6, no. 3 (2013): 421–429, 423.

[23] See Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[24] Antoine Lefebvre, *Portrait de l'artiste en éditeur, L'édition comme pratique artistique alternative* (PhD diss., Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, 2014), online available at http://labibliothequefantas.free.fr/index.php?/thesis.

[25] Marjorie Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[26] O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating*, 4.

[27] Barbara Campbell, *1001 Nights Cast* (2005–2008), http://1001.net.au/; Kenneth Goldsmith, *Printing out the Internet* (2013–2014), http://printingtheinternet.tumblr.com/; Sampsa Nuotio and Raisa Omaheimo, *Google Poetics* (2012–), http://www.googlepoetics.com/; Kate Pullinger, Chris Joseph and Participants, *Flight Paths: A Networked Novel* (2007–), http://flightpaths.net/; Neil Bartlett and Kate Pullinger, *Letter to an Unknown Soldier* (2014), http://www.1418now.org.uk/letter/; Rachel Zolf, *The Tolerance Project: A MFA* (2009–2011), http://thetoleranceproject.blogspot.de/; Willy Chyr, *Collabowriters* (2012), http://www.thecollabowriters.com/.

[28] See Nuotio and Omaheimo, *Google Poetics*.

Often such projects of literary "crowdsourcing" do not involve a traditional publisher, or when they do, the publisher does not take an active role in promotion. In most cases, the initiators of crowdsourced experiments not only distribute the calls to participate, but also give interviews, motivate the praxis, and offer meanings to the crowdsourced acts. Thus, by promoting the project in the public sphere, these literary curators act as substitutes not only for the (traditional figure of the) artist but also that of the publisher.

Both literary appropriations and literary crowdsourcing reflect in literature the emergence, or the institutionalization, of what Dorothea von Hantelmann has in visual arts called the curatorial paradigm,[30] the current situation in which the act of selection has replaced that of production. She writes about the transition from a production-oriented society to a selection-oriented society, originally marked by the "invention" of the readymade.[31] Accordingly, one of the central practices through which (both the visual and the literary) curator operates is the act of choosing. Ever since Marcel Duchamp's readymade aesthetics, the act of choosing has been considered as structuring, if not constituting, the aesthetic experience, not least because Duchamp himself stressed the importance of the choice in a text he wrote in the aftermath of trying to exhibit the urinal.[32] It can even be said that the readymade constituted the need for curatorial practice. Elena Filipovic has suggested that Duchamp's *Fountain,* so to say, first came into being through its "documentation, administration, and (delayed) representation in an exhibition (which is to say, its *curation*)." In short, the "'invention' of the readymade needed to be *curated.*"[33] Similarly, according to von Hantelmann, the changed status of the curator is tied to the idea that "the actual moment of the production of meaning lies in the exhibition (and not, or at least not primarily, in the artwork)," which then implies "that the actual *producer* of meaning is the curator."[34] When this ethos is applied to literature, it is the act of publishing, of making a text public that produces the meanings. Hence, the literary curator becomes the actual producer of meanings.

O'Neill has discussed this growing importance of the exhibition as the actual space in which meanings are made. According to O'Neill, the new type of curating that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century implied a rise of thematically arranged exhibitions in contrast to exhibitions organized chronologically.[35] At that point, curatorial production started to consist of "the grouping together of related artworks and artists perceived as having similar concerns, which led to the exhibition form being treated as a medium in and of itself."[36]

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[29] Mel Bochner, *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art*, four looseleaf notebooks (New York: Visual Arts Gallery, School of Visual Arts, 1966); Seth Siegelaub and John W. Wendler, eds., *Xerox Book* (New York: self-published, 1968).

[30] See Dorothea von Hantelmann, "The Curatorial Paradigm," *The Exhibitionist* 4 (2011): 6–12.

[31] Ibid., 11.

[32] See Anonymous, "The Richard Mutt Case," in *The Blind Man* 2 (1917) (Written by Beatrice Wood, H. P. Roché and/or Marcel Duchamp).

[33] Elena Filipovic, "When Exhibitions Become Form: On the History of the Artist as Curator," *Mousse* 41, no. 0 (2013): 3–20, 9, emphasis in original.

[34] von Hantelmann, "Curatorial Paradigm," 8.

In literature, this new curatorial attitude toward the act of exhibiting can be seen in the archiving boom. The increasing popularity of the creative archiving of literary practices can be interpreted as a form of literary curating. Goldsmith with his Ubuweb, Paul Soulellis's Library of the Printed Web, and Lefebvre's La Bibliothèque Fantastique all nurture an attitude reminiscent of that of curating. By bringing together texts that share a certain family resemblance with each other, these literary curators as publishers or archivists create new artistic or literary phenomena in the same way as curators who group together artists perceived as having similar concerns.

Such thematically arranged exhibitions, publications or archives, as well as appropriative and crowdsourced practices more generally, are often accompanied by explanatory discourses that help to contextualize and understand the literary curators' acts. If Filipovic suggests that the emergence, or the invention, of readymade art necessitated curating,[37] the same can be said of many contemporary literary phenomena, such as found poetry or erasure poetry. Their birth (as literature) necessitated and still necessitates literary curators, in order for them to be understood as poetry. Hence, curating not only means the act of choosing the material but also its explanation and representation so that it becomes understood as literature. For example, re-typed works, such as Simon Morris's *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head* (2010), or Goldsmith's *Day* (2003), as well as the appropriations of entire texts, such as Richard Prince's *Catcher in the Rye* (2011),[38] necessitate curating in order to be understood as new works, or as literature, in the first place. Equally, explanatory discourse is often used in crowdsourced writing projects. Most of these crowdsourced projects include some metatexts that explain the background, the relevance and the methods of the project because the coming together of the writing community necessitates this.

The production of these explanatory discourses has traditionally been the task of the critic or the curator. In this sense, curatorial practice has been, among other things, a discursive act through which meanings are attached to works of art, and through which new artistic phenomena are not only discovered, but also invented. According to von Hantelmann, curators are professionals not only in the field of choosing, but also experts in making these choices meaningful.[39] Hence, curating not only refers to reliance on already existing material and its selective reuse or exhibition or publishing, but also includes explaining the emerging result to its audiences. Now, it can be said that this attitude has spread across artistic practices. When artists have become curators, and curators artists (both in visual art and literature), the boundaries between those who explain and those who produce the works that are being explained has become increasingly blurred, and the curatorial ethos has started to characterize a broad spectrum of artistic practices. Such explanatory paratexts, which are widely used in Conceptual art and Conceptual writing, are sometimes even presented as ethical obligations for writers. For example, Jan Baetens writes, referring to constraint writing, but the same idea can be applied to appropriative writing, that: "by *concealing* the constraints, the author of the text prevents the reader from becoming able to take his place; by *revealing* them, he agrees to share his knowledge of the text and makes it possible for the reader to become a writer, too."[40] Juri Joensuu attaches such explanatory discourses to the demystification of the romantic author, and suggests that by revealing one's writing methods, the writer breaks the boundaries between the artist and the audience, between art and life, and challenges the ideals of authenticity and immediacy as the founding values of literature.[41] For Annette Gilbert, such explanatory acts are also what differentiate Appropriation literature from plagiarism. According to her, a "strategic appropriation must be accompanied by a clear, indeed, demonstrative identification and public staging of the act itself. This self-referential declaration distinguishes appropriation from plagiarism and counterfeiting."[42]

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[35] O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating*, 13.
[36] Ibid., 16.
[37] See Filipovic, "When Exhibitions Become Form."
[38] Simon Morris, *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head* (York: Information as Material, 2010); Kenneth Goldsmith, *Day* (Great Barrington, MA: The Figures, 2003); Richard Prince, *Catcher in the Rye* (New York: AP. American Place, 2011).
[39] von Hantelmann, "Curatorial Paradigm," 10.

From Geniuses to Promoters

What characterizes all the practices discussed above is a dependence on other people's texts and a simultaneous construction of a new authorial figure reminiscent of the artist. In this context, the literary curator emerges as a figure that constitutes her/himself through aesthetic choices.[43] Thus, it is perhaps no surprise that when this article was being drafted in November 2014, Goldsmith suggested on his Twitter account that "Writers are becoming curators of language, a move similar to the emergence of the curator as artist in the visual arts."[44]

As noted above, Marjorie Perloff has discussed such a figure in her influential book *Unoriginal Genius*. According to Perloff, an "unoriginal genius" is interested in the question of "What can be done with other people's work?" Perloff writes that "*Inventio* is giving way to appropriation [...] and reliance on intertextuality. Thus we are witnessing a new poetry, more conceptual than directly expressive."[45]

The figure discussed by Perloff under the term unoriginal genius captures several interesting features discussed in this article. The reason for introducing a new term, that of the literary curator, however, lies in the attempt to interpret this figure inside a larger socio-political and economic conjuncture. The unoriginal genius is above all a figure of the literary

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[40] Jan Baetens, "Free Writing, Constrained Writing: The Ideology of Form," *Poetics Today* 18, no. 1 (1997): 1–14, 8, emphasis in original.

[41] Juri Joensuu, *Menetelmät, kokeet, koneet. Proseduraalisuus poetiikassa, kirjallisuushistoriassa ja suomalaisessa kokeellisessa kirjallisuudessa* (Helsinki: Poesia, 2012), 252–253.

[42] Gilbert, *Reprint*, 51.

[43] von Hantelmann, "Curatorial Paradigm," 10.

[44] Kenneth Goldsmith, Twitter account @*kg_ubu*, November 4, 2014. Republished in Goldsmith, *Theory* (Paris: Jean Boîte, 2015).

[45] Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius*, 11.

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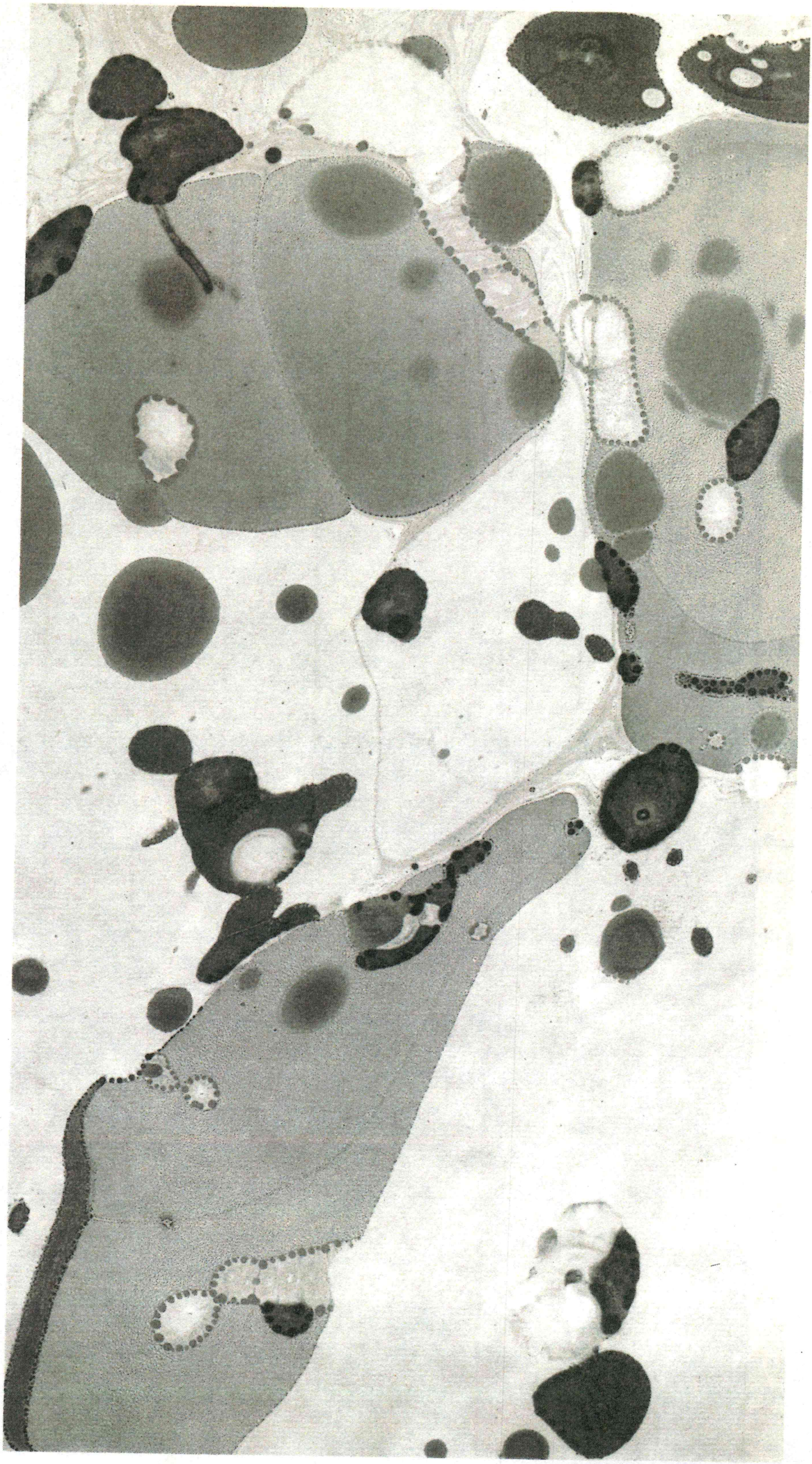

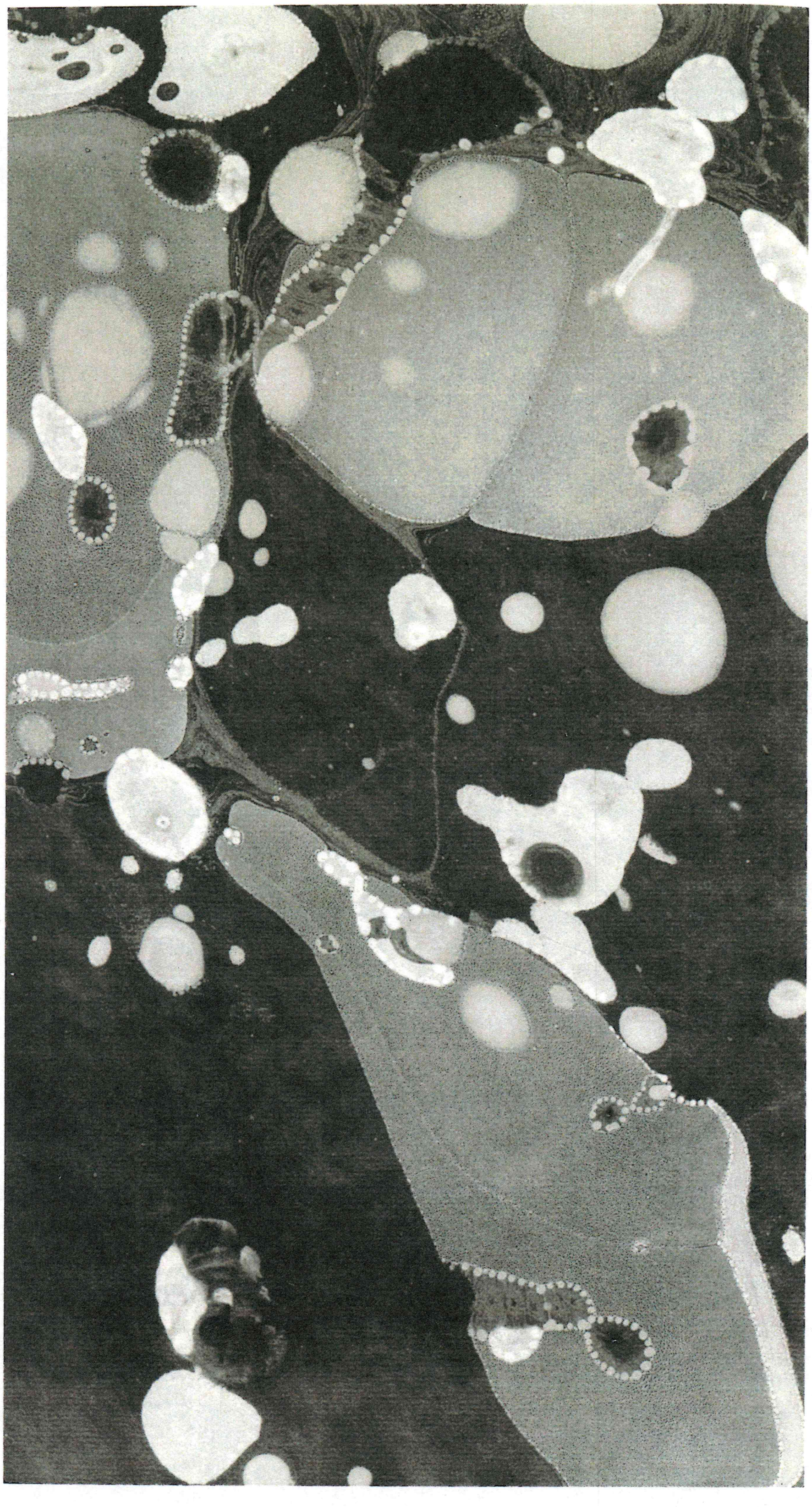

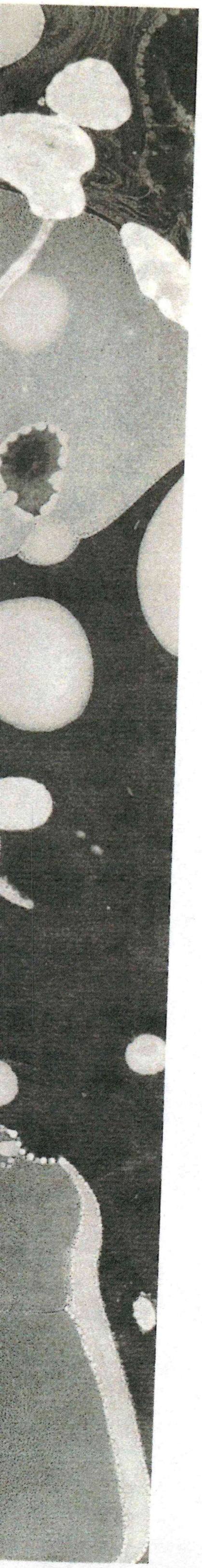

field, emerging from literary history; whereas, the term literary curator attempts to interpret this literary figure as part of a larger social development. Similarly to von Hantelmann, this article perceives art and literature as fields in which basic characteristics of a socioeconomic order are reflected, manifested and challenged. By introducing the term literary curator, the current article emphasizes how this figure is often—or increasingly so—perhaps closer to a promoter than a genius. Andrew Wernick has used the term "promotional culture" to describe the current state of Western societies in which "the range of cultural phenomena which, at least as one of their functions, serve to communicate a promotional message has become, today, virtually co-extensive with our produced symbolic world."[46] Accordingly, promotion has emerged as the lingua franca of social, economic and cultural life.[47] Under promotional culture, "capitalist forms of exchange [come] to dominate all other forms of exchange," and "a widening range of cultural phenomena" have the primary function of communicating a promotional message.[48] This increased need for promotion can be traced back to the current situation often referred to as the attention economy. According to the theorists of the attention economy, the post-digital economy revolves primarily around paying, receiving and seeking attention, which is a limited and scarce resource.[49] Promotion is an essential practice in this economy and a survival strategy in a culture that suffers from an "ongoing crisis of attentiveness,"[50] caused by the abundance of information, sources of stimulation and new products that continually push our attention to new limits. This article has attempted to describe this development, or its possible symptoms and future risks, in the context of literature, which is one central category of our "produced symbolic world."[51]

The term literary curator encourages us to ask to what extent writers, or actors, that fulfill curatorial functions in literature reflect and exemplify certain hegemonic cultural forms, characterized by promotion and attention seeking. According to von Hantelmann, the rise and expansion of curatorial practices is deeply rooted in the "present socio-economic order of Western societies," which is characterized by a "new culture of choosing."[52] For von Hantelmann, the new importance of selection in art, and more generally in our culture, "is essentially connected to profound transformations of Western societies in the second half of the 20th century,"[53] when we have witnessed a transition from societies of scarcity to those of affluence. It is only in this context that we can understand the figure of the curator in all its complexity and social, political and economic relevance, von Hantelmann argues. Accordingly, the focus on the curator across artistic fields does not "appear to be a coincidental phenomenon."[54]

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[46] Wernick, *Promotional Culture*, 182.

[47] See ibid. and Devon Powers, "Notes on Hype," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012): 857–873.

[48] Melissa Aronczyk and Devon Powers, "Blowing up the brand," in *Blowing up the brand: Critical perspectives on promotional culture*, ed. Melissa Aronczyk and Devon Powers (New York: Peter Lang Press, 2010), 1–26, 4.

[49] See Tizian Terranova, "Attention, Economy and the Brain," *Culture Machine* 13, no. 0 (2012), http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/465, Michael Goldhaber, "The Attention Economy and the Net," and Georg Franck, "The Economy of Attention."

[50] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

[51] Ibid.

[52] von Hantelmann, "Curatorial Paradigm," 3, 8.

[53] Ibid., 8–9.

[54] Ibid., 11.

Von Hantelmann refers to sociologist Gerhard Schulze, who has described the transition from a society of scarcity to one of affluence.[55] With increased income and leisure time, people can (and need to) shape their lives according to their own preferences, through their own choices. Our living situation constantly forces us to make distinctions, and more than ever before, people perceive their existence as something that can and must be created and shaped. In every aspect of our lives, we experience increased possibilities that force us to make decisions.

In such a selection-oriented society, the producers are replaceable and they can easily be outsourced, because it is the chooser who is important, not the producer. Nick Thurston has brilliantly elaborated on this replaceability of the producer in the field of literature, and tested the socio-economic boundaries of literary curating in *Of the Subcontract,*[56] in which he outsourced the writing of the poems to the workers of Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Literary outsourcing has also been used in other conceptual works and publishing projects, but Thurston has made the socio-economic dimensions of such outsourcing a central theme of the book. By attaching to each poem the price he paid for the writers, he made visible the cost of the book's textual production. This act demonstrates how the relationship between the (multiple) producers of the text and the (individual) literary curator can be structured when taken to the extreme. The book shows how in the attention economy, the relationship between those who produce and those who extract (cultural and/or economic) value out of the production is constantly on the verge of becoming exploitative in the most traditional sense. The book makes the dynamics of this relationship painfully transparent, but in so doing, it remains more of a symptom than a solution of the larger social changes, as Darren Wershler writes in his afterword to the book.[57] According to Wershler, we use data to represent these social changes to ourselves, but the meanings we extract from the data "enforce and accelerate those changes."[58] He continues, "[p]oets and professors can point to this change, but so far, have not been able to move beyond it. As we are beginning to realize, our tasks, too, can be outsourced."[59] This observation applies to most examples of literary curating: rather than solving the question of meaning and of authorial hierarchies in the world of textual abundance, they appear as discerning and sensitive symptoms of the existing situation. Moreover, by abandoning the belief in the autonomy of the creative subjects, in this case the Author with a capital A, they run the risk of offering themselves and their own (or ourselves and our own) tasks for outsourcing. As von Hantelmann has noted, the old type "artist/productive individual, generates subjectivity through production," whereas "the curator/selecting individual, generates subjectivity through consumption" and reproduction.[60] This leaves the latter more vulnerable to being used for purely promotional ends.

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[55] See Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft* (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag, 1992).

[56] Nick Thurston, *Of the Subcontract. Or, Principles of Poetic Right* (York: Information as Material, 2013).

[57] Darren Wershler, "Afterword: Title of Essay in Plain Type," in Nick Thurston, *Of the Subcontract. Or, Principles of Poetic Right* (York: Information as Material, 2013), 133–141, 139.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] von Hantelmann, "Curatorial Paradigm," 11.

Authors are working increasingly under pressure to promote their own work, even if at the same time a certain theological trust in the artist as the source of original discourse has been lost. What emerges from this conjuncture is a new figure, that of the literary curator, who manages to preserve her/his artistic individuality—which is so important for the media industry—at the same time as the practice itself deconstructs, in principle, this very idea of artistic selfhood. For instance, Goldsmith writes about postidentity literature,[61] but simultaneously has managed to construct a fixed public identity for himself, one that overshadows the multiple identities of the producers. This can be seen, for example, in *Printing out the Internet,* in which over 20,000 people around the world participated, but which was described in the press as Goldsmith's project, with such titles as: "Why is Kenneth Goldsmith Printing the Whole Internet?,"[62] "Artist Kenneth Goldsmith Attempting to 'Print the Internet,'"[63] and "Artist Kenneth Goldsmith Wants To Print The Entire Internet."[64] Thus, perhaps the word "postidentity" used by Goldsmith refers to those producers who carry out the outsourced work rather than to himself.

Consequently, the deconstructed, demystified and outsourced author or artist seems to make a return in the form of a new artistic figure or identity. The resulting figure is an expert in assembling and organizing material produced by others while still managing to promote the end result as something associated almost entirely with the individual (person or company) who does the organizing. Moreover, the practice, characterized by this ambiguous double bind, is often accompanied by explanatory discourse that prepares the audiences and critics for the experience in such a way that the meanings lie more in the surrounding discourses than in the artworks. As experts in several promotional practices, these figures can be named curators, who, according to Brenson, "must be at once aestheticians, diplomats, economists, critics, historians, politicians, audience developers, and promoters."[65] The same list characterizes the literary curators who not only create and publish texts but also develop or educate their audiences and readers, and promote, present or explain the works in the historical context of literature and art, thus also replacing literary and art critics.

Interpreting the Consequences

How should we interpret the works that arise from such practices, or how should we perceive the possible consequences and effects of literary curating? It appears that such curated texts can be, and have been, approached at least from two different perspectives. The first perspective stresses the unstabilizing effects of the practice, and the anti-essential openness of the results. For example, Thurston suggests that forms of writing that rest on the reproduction-as-production model, and especially on self-publishing, create writing that has an unstable object status, mainly because this kind of writing lacks a stable signator, the Author, and is often published in digital form, characterized by fluidity.[66] Similarly, Scott Lash has noted that the turn of the millennium has witnessed an outsourcing of the *author* function onto teams of co-workers. As a result, "art becomes no longer a question of deep meaning and extended duration, but instead of operationality and brief duration. In this sense, now art becomes communication."[67] Communicativity and instability also characterize the discourse of Goldsmith, according to whom one's writing should adopt voices, positions and opinions that are not "mine," because with "digital fragmentation, any sense of unified authenticity and coherence has long been shelved."[68] Finally, the resulting figure can be described with the vocabulary of instability as a writer of postidentity literature.[69]

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[61] Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*, 11, 85.

[62] Marina Galperina, "Why is Kenneth Goldsmith Printing the Whole Internet?," *Animal*, May 30, 2013, accessed November 20, 2014, http://animalnewyork.com/2013/why-is-kenneth-goldsmith-printing-the-whole-internet/.

[63] Heather Manes, "Artist Kenneth Goldsmith Attempting to 'Print the Internet,'" *Opposing Views*, May 31, 2013, accessed November 20, 2014, http://www.opposingviews.com/i/celebrities/artist-kenneth-goldsmith-attempting-print-internet/.

[64] "Artist Kenneth Goldsmith Wants To Print The Entire Internet," *The Huffington Post*, June 3, 2013, accessed August 15, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/03/print-the-internet_n_3367206.html.

[65] Michael Brenson, "The Curator's Moment," *Art Journal* 57, no. 4 (1998), 16–27.

The other perspective, perhaps more critical than that outlined above, suggests that the praxis of curating is also, or above all, an act of reterritorialization, i.e., an act of designing a new power. Many moments of literary curating are not only acts of deterritorialization, in the sense of unstabilizing the source texts, but also acts of reterritorialization, to use Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concepts.[70] The act of making a text public through reproduction and publishing, and attaching it to the name of the appropriating or crowdsourcing actor, in other words to the literary curator, not only detaches the text from its original context and thus, multiplies the number of possible meanings, but also constitutes a new order and a new context through which meanings are again stabilized. This is done particularly strongly through explanatory paratexts. To take, once again, the example of Goldsmith, who states, "far be it for conceptual writers to dictate the moral or political meanings of [appropriated] words that aren't theirs."[71] But still, in his own practice, he attaches the appropriated sheets used in *Printing out the Internet* to Aaron Swartz's suicide, by presenting the project as being carried out in memory of Aaron Swartz.[72]

Equally, the still relatively common practice of copyrighting appropriated material suggests that there is a new re-territorializing logic in effect in literary curating. What the term literary curator suggests is that new curatorial and promotional identities are constantly produced to substitute for the debunked author. One should not forget, for example, Ron Silliman's comment, according to which "Kenny Goldsmith's actual art project is the projection of Kenny Goldsmith,"[73] a comment with which Goldsmith himself agrees by writing that "I'm not that radical [...] my name is still on those objects, and all those decisions are so much in the service of upholding notions of my own genius."[74] The balances of power, of course, differ between projects: some literary curators credit the producers, while others keep them anonymous. For example, Campbell indexes all the contributors on the webpage of *1001 Nights Cast,* whereas *Google Poetics* does not include the names of the contributors. What is common to all such curated projects, however, is that the curator has the power in her/his hands. It is the decision of the reproducer whether visibility and power are granted to the others.

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[66] Thurston, *Publishing as Reading*, 425.

[67] Scott Lash, *Critique of Information* (London: SAGE, 2006), 208.

[68] Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*, 84–85.

[69] Ibid., 11, 85.

[70] See e.g. Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge, Mass.: Swerve Editions, 1992), 51, Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003), xxii–xxiii and Paul Patton, "Deterritorialization + Politics," in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 70–71.

[71] Goldsmith, *Uncrative Writing*, 101.

[72] Kenneth Goldsmith, "Papers from Philosophical Transactions of the Royal," *Printing out the Internet*, April 2, 2014, accessed November 20, 2014, http://printingtheinternet.tumblr.com/post/81475510510/papers-from-philosophical-transactions-of-the.

[73] Ron Silliman, "Kenneth Goldsmith," February 27, 2006, accessed November 20, 2014, http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/goldsmith/silliman_goldsmith.html.

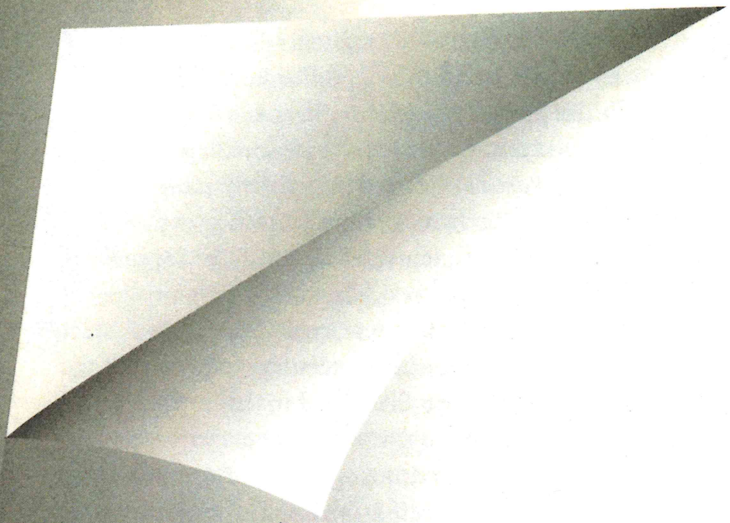
Finally, the socio-political effects of literary curating remain a contested and ambiguous territory. Many commentators seem to suggest that the varying practices of curating and publishing discussed in this article hold a progressive potential. Goldsmith reads uncreative writing next to the work of politically radical situationists,[75] and Thurston suggests that reproductive writing (especially when accompanied by self publishing) "countermands the capitalist logic of massification."[76] However, one can see such projects equally well as being fully compatible with, if not subsumed by, the logic of the market. Literary curating can be seen as a practice that creates distinctions, organizes texts, limits the proliferation of meanings, and offers them in commodity-like-packages for the cultural market. Thus, the literary curator would be just an extension of the author function, the main purpose of which, according to Foucault is to allow the "limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one's resources and riches, but also with one's discourses and their significations."[77] According to this line of thinking, the abundance of information and texts would only constitute the surface, below which a scarcity remains, that of attention and meaningful discourses.

[74] Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*, 120.

[75] See Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*.

[76] Thurston, *Publishing as Reading*, 425.

[77] Foucault, "What is an Author?" 118.



Inter Folia, Aves: Reading Bird Books as Curatorial-Editorial Constellations

Anna-Sophie Springer

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> Oddly, I cannot remember any single book in the library, but the idea of a library containing books filled with birds caught my attention. The idea stays with me yet.
>
> **John G. T. Anderson, *Deep Things Out of Darkness: A History of Natural History*, 2013**

> The art that I am interested in can be communicated with books and catalogues. [...] It becomes primary information, while the reproduction of conventional art in books and catalogues is necessarily secondary information. [...] When information is primary, the catalogue can become the exhibition and the catalogue auxiliary to it.
>
> **Seth Siegelaub, in interview with Ursula Meyer, 1968**

Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the modern printing press in 1450 caused the first media revolution. While up until then one specific Book dominated the production and interpretation of medieval scholarship, the introduction of movable type opened infinitely more possibilities for selecting, ordering, and disseminating written texts—as well as images. Quickly spreading beyond the realm of the clergy, book production multiplied in fifteenth-century Europe, gradually turning publishing into a mass medium with an expanding public. With religion thus losing its traditional monopoly on the written word, new types of knowledge infrastructures superseded scholarly religious institutions such as scriptoria and their attendant monastic book collections. But in addition to the modern secular library, to a degree the modern natural history museum also developed as an institutional corollary of newly accessible printed matter.[1] In the realm of natural science, the discipline of biology in particular arose from this legacy, as it aggregated from the translation and interplay between zoological expeditions, museological specimen collections, and bookish taxonomical arrays.[2]

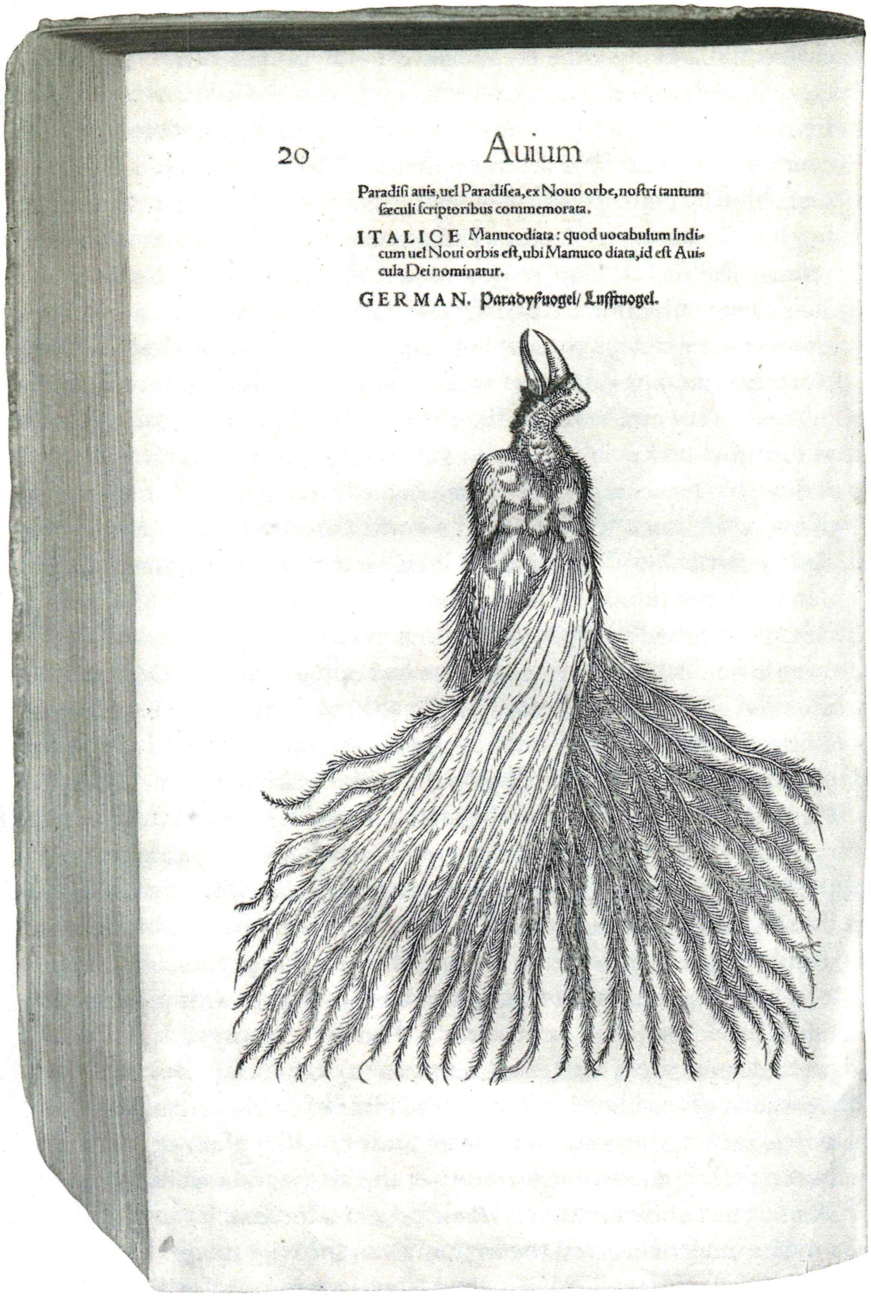
When considering the printed book as an art form, the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (originally entitled *Schedel'sche Weltchronik*, 1493) and Peter Apian's *Astronomicum Caesarium* (1540) are popular early examples that emphasize the relevant interrelationships between image, text, design, and the general structure possible in books. In both of these cases, besides the research and production of the content, the process of assembling the books *as books* was also part of the general work of their authors. Apian, for instance, wrote the texts while also producing and preparing the prints of the first editions of his atlas. Similar to many independent publishing projects in the contemporary art world, in this early era of book culture the editorial stages of consolidating material for publication and the various activities of producing objects for public circulation were still part and parcel. However, due to our conventional understanding that art and science are "heavens apart," the mesmerizing genealogy of the illustrated natural history book still finds too little attention paid to the history of publishing as an artistic practice.[3] By expanding this field of enquiry and stepping into the realm of the curatorial, however, such foundational disciplinary concerns can be more easily navigated. It turns out that for those asking how publishing and the curatorial relate and intersect, natural history books open up unique pathways beyond art history.

In this context, the European bird book stands out as a particularly multivalent publication subspecies to explore. Often created as collaborations between field explorers, bird collection curators, and illustrators, early ornithological monographs uniquely interweave the medium of the book into the humanities. Furthermore, over several centuries the bird book was a space where zoological taxonomies were proposed, arranged, negotiated, and frequently dismissed, thus constituting a central device through which nature became constructed, ordered, and displayed. As historian of science Emma C. Spary has emphasized with regards to the gradual codification of ornithology, "a species can be made manifest in three ways, as specimen or technological object in a collection, as description (text) or verbal object, and finally as illustration or visual object."[4] Rather than "real" nature, bird books embody the entanglements of birds, things, and words; by operating across various semiotic levels at once, they are curatorial-editorial by nature. In order to gain insight into the role of publishing in relation to the curatorial, this essay will therefore spend some time looking at the history of bookmaking through the peculiar lens of ornithology.

One initial remark on terminology, however: While in the context of bookmaking practices the German term "verlegen" unambiguously refers to the work of an official publishing house (a "Verlag"), the English "publishing" is more polysemic; it also includes the concepts of public exposure and authorship that resonate with the German "publizieren." Besides the trade, "publishing" can thus also refer more generally to preparing content in order to make something (research) known and available to public circulation, display, or dissemination, but the word has a stronger authorial ring to it than "editing" while also including more diverse practices than "writing." Since we will examine the knowledge production of a series of well-known authors from the history of natural history, it seems appropriate to speak of "publishing" and "editorial" work because both of these terms comprise a number of activities and levels of researching, preparing, organizing, and issuing material in the context of content and book production. But as we shall see, the dimension of the curatorial as an intellectual-aesthetic methodology can also exert itself in the space of publications. And it is the particular frictions produced in this inherently dynamic field of connections and constellations that set certain books apart from the incredibly vast general publishing landscape. By focusing on a selection of bird books we will begin to perceive publications not only as editorial but also curatorial spaces.

For centuries, Southeast Asian birds of paradise were known in Europe merely as dead objects. Bird skins—imperfectly preserved, and often with amputated legs—were delivered as exotic finds by colonial explorers. When Juan Sebastián Elcano came back from circumnavigating the globe, arriving on Magellan's vessel *Victoria* in 1522 with what historians consider the first five of these feetless bird-of-paradise skins, they stirred quite a sensation the Spanish court.[5] Without any field experience of the animals in their habitat, for a long time Europeans assumed a hybrid mythology, bequeathed in part by the native hunters of New Guinea: that these novel birds were pure paradisiacal creatures, living in the sky and never landing on Earth, except to die. While their legendary early skins have now long withered and disappeared, the curious imagination surrounding them still remains recognizable in sixteenth-century depictions.[6] These representations show strange, feathered creatures that undulate among the clouds, a little more fish-like perhaps than bird-like—for they lack any spread wings, and as mentioned above, usually have no feet.

The earliest known such woodcut image was published in 1555 by the Swiss polymath Conrad Gessner (1516–1565) in the bird volume of his popular *Historia Animalium.* Whereas the majority of pictures on Gessner's pages depict birds standing sideways (usually perched on a branch or rock and appearing quite alive and healthy), the entry on "De Paradisea" conveys a severed and stuffed bird skin's typically deformed version of true animal anatomy. Although Gessner is esteemed among the first Renaissance men to ever compile a collection of objects for the immediate study of natural history, the Latin entry below this particular image states that it is based on correspondence with a humanist from Nuremberg.[7] Indeed, it is unclear whether Gessner ever had a chance to actually see a bird-of-paradise skin with his own eyes. It would not be surprising if he had not, for much of Gessner's content relies on older sources, including the writings of Pliny the Elder.[8] In the specific case of the birds of paradise, Gessner's account includes references to one of the very first written descriptions made in a report from 1521 by Antonio Pigafetta, the chronicler of Magellan's voyage.[9] Copying from other manuscripts had been routine practice in the hand-scribed publishing culture of the Middle Ages; as a way to compensate for the lack of personal experience, it easily survived the introduction of the printing press. According to German ornithologist Erwin Stresemann, Gessner was a voracious reader who "combed through classical and medieval literature with unparalleled thoroughness for apposite references [...] and [...] managed to fill 806 closely printed folio pages with the discussion of only 180 species of birds."[10] But Gessner's consolidated tale about the birds of paradise imagines fantastical things such as the male and female birds breeding their eggs in a cavity between their bodies while hovering in the air, bound together by the male's skinny tale feathers. Given it would take 300 more years until European naturalists finally observed these animals in the wild thanks to Alfred Russel Wallace's tireless collecting in the Malay Archipelago,[11] this early ornithological entry makes wonderfully clear the complicated negotiation between facts and fabrications inherent in the process of gaining a "complete knowledge" of nature—a representation progressively shaped through the work and projections of artists, scientists, and intellectuals.[12] In this respect, the scientific history of understanding the birds of paradise is unique because their first physical evidence of nearly "bodiless" specimens indeed corresponded with



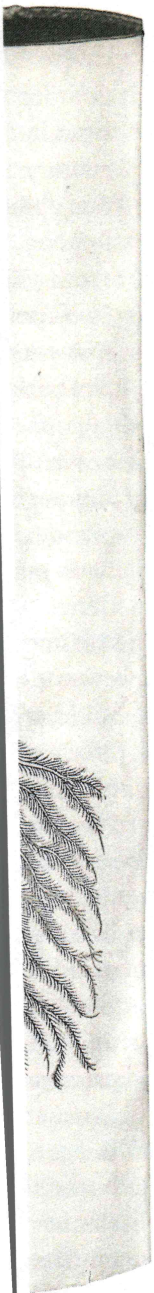
20 Auium

Paradiſi auis,uel Paradiſea,ex Nouo orbe,noſtri tantum ſæculi ſcriptoribus commemorata.

ITALICE Manucodiata: quod uocabulum Indicum uel Noui orbis eſt,ubi Mamuco diata,id eſt Auicula Dei nominatur.

GERMAN. Paradyſuogel/ Lufftuogel.

Fig. 1. Bird of paradise illustration from Conrad Gessner, *Icones Avium Omnium, Quae in Historia Avium Conradi Gesneri Describuntur Cum Nomenclaturis Singulorum* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1555). Universitäts und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle; VD16 G 1732.

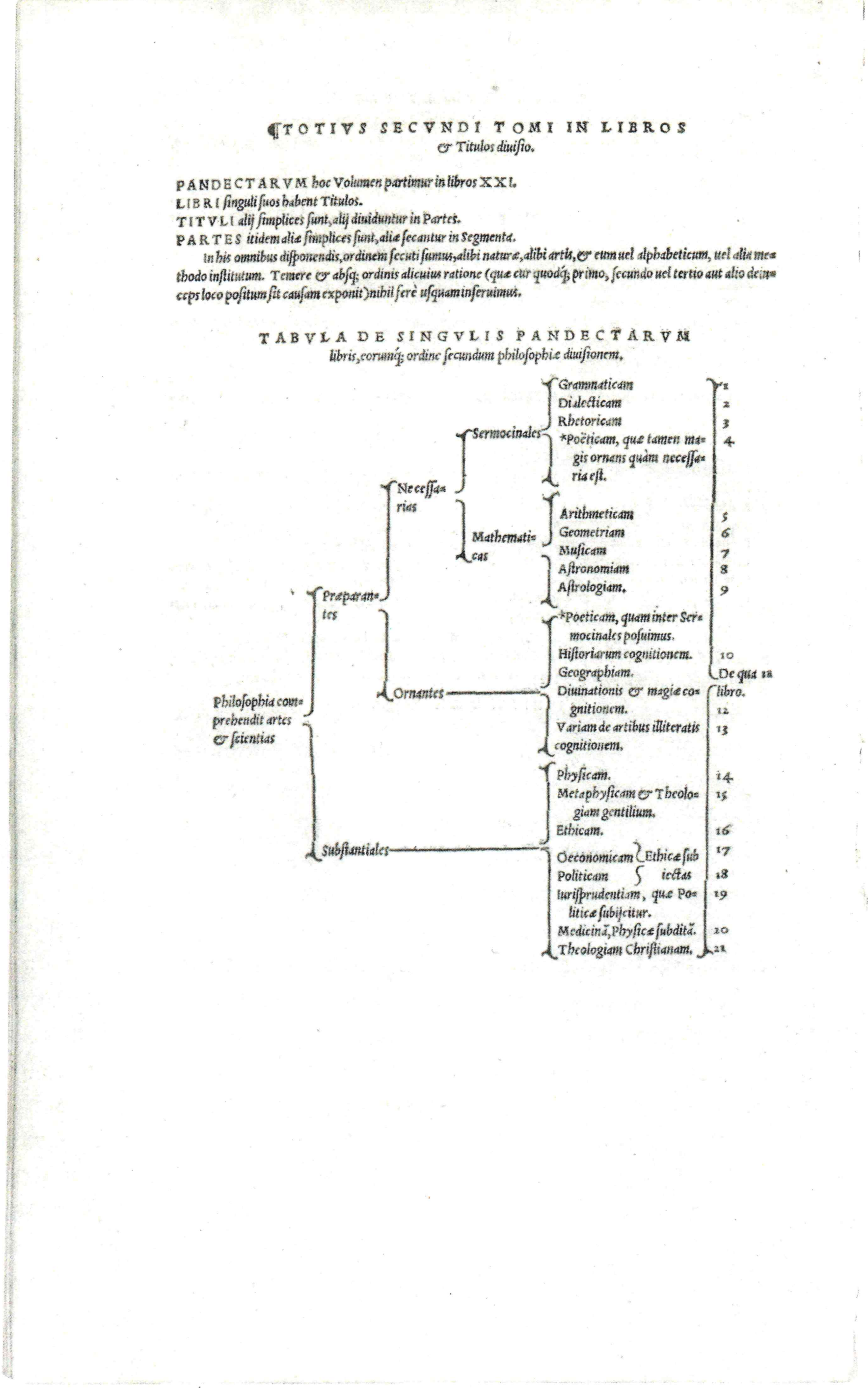


in Historia
r, 1555).

their ethereal and supernatural mythology [fig. 1]. Feathers and beaks made them classifiable as birds, but in contrast to more "normal" birds, their immensely colorful though disfigured physique nevertheless also directly suggested elements of the fantastic. The puzzling sphere of the distant imaginary and the objective reality of scientific specimens thus coincided in those specimens even more immediately than in many other exotic finds.[13]

Gessner's work compiling some of the most respected illustrated encyclopedias of flora and fauna of his time seems to have grown out of another project driven by a desire for a "complete knowledge," which he had been pursuing since long before publishing the first edition of his bird book, *De Avium Natura* (1555). With texts becoming more available and the repositories of libraries expanding, Gessner aimed to provide librarians and readers with a detailed overview of the hitherto published eruditions. Already in the 1540s, he thus produced the initial two tomes of what would eventually become a library of altogether twenty-one books on books. Entitled *Biblioteca Universalis,* this publication series is a lengthy index of scientific intellections from antiquity to his present. It was also one of those Borgesian dreams of universal knowledge, for it transcended the already existing device of a library catalog organized merely by authors' names. Instead, Gessner's annotated version offered meticulous evaluations, summaries, and para-textual descriptions of more than 10,000 written works arranged by subject and thematic keyword, promising extensive insight and understanding. Stresemann writes that Gessner was deeply "motivated by an urge to assemble and organize facts."[14] With respect to his *Biblioteca Universalis,* this is further reflected in Gessner's introduction of a visual system for ordering and classifying the relayed scholarship. Published in 1549, he devised a tree structure [fig. 2] similar to those later designs known from zoologists such as Linnaeus, Darwin, and Haeckel, who all used tree diagrams to visualize living beings in hierarchical sequences. Unsatisfied with a mere list of available library material, Gessner aimed at drawing connections by actualizing the possible relationships between the accumulated information. Indeed, the tree diagram visualizes a constellation; by proposing a specific, spatialized order it partakes in the production of page-based meaning in a way we would today call curatorial.

From a contemporary point of view, the curatorial manifests itself among the many possible epistemic practices by creating proposals that operate through and across the fields of thing, word, image, and text, as well as through elements of performance, design, collaboration, and public exposure. As one of its many aspects, the curatorial can involve an invitation into an open-ended experience based on a practice of selecting, arranging, placing, and relating elements borrowed from an infinite archive of old and less old. In such a structure, it is less the isolated individual elements that conjure significance or knowledge, but their arrangement in mutual proximity as an *ensemble*—however multistable. Curatorial engagements partake in creating spaces, stories, experiences, and objects by activating (excavating, challenging, recalling, assembling) spaces, stories, experiences, and objects. When



¶TOTIVS SECVNDI TOMI IN LIBROS & Titulos diuiſio.

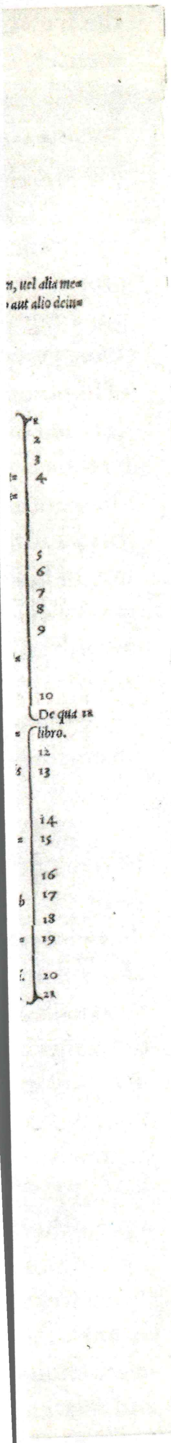
PANDECTARVM hoc Volumen partimur in libros XXI.
LIBRI ſinguli ſuos habent Titulos.
TITVLI alij ſimplices ſunt, alij diuiduntur in Partes.
PARTES itidem aliæ ſimplices ſunt, aliæ ſecantur in Segmenta.

In his omnibus diſponendis, ordinem ſecuti ſumus, alibi naturæ, alibi artis, & eum uel alphabeticum, uel alia methodo inſtitutum. Temere & abſq; ordinis alicuius ratione (quæ cur quodq́; primo, ſecundo uel tertio aut alio deinceps loco poſitum ſit cauſam exponit) nihil ferè uſquam inſeruimus.

TABVLA DE SINGVLIS PANDECTARVM libris, eorumq́; ordine ſecundum philoſophiæ diuiſionem.

- Philoſophia comprehendit artes & ſcientias
  - Præparantes
    - Neceſſarias
      - Sermocinales
        - Grammaticam 1
        - Dialecticam 2
        - Rhetoricam 3
        - *Poëticam, quæ tamen magis ornans quàm neceſſaria eſt. 4
      - Mathematicas
        - Arithmeticam 5
        - Geometriam 6
        - Muſicam 7
        - Aſtronomiam 8
        - Aſtrologiam. 9
    - Ornantes
      - *Poëticam, quam inter Sermocinales poſuimus.
      - Hiſtoriarum cognitionem. 10
      - Geographiam. De qua 11 libro.
      - Diuinationis & magiæ cognitionem. 12
      - Variam de artibus illiteratis cognitionem. 13
  - Subſtantiales
    - Phyſicam. 14
    - Metaphyſicam & Theologiam gentilium. 15
    - Ethicam. 16
    - Oeconomicam } Ethicæ ſubiectas 17
    - Politicam } Ethicæ ſubiectas 18
    - Iuriſprudentiam, quæ Politicæ ſubijcitur. 19
    - Medicinã, Phyſicæ ſubditã. 20
    - Theologiam Chriſtianam. 21

Fig. 2. The diagram in Conrad Gessner's *Biblioteca Universalis*, the so-called "Pandectae." In addition to serving as a table of contents, it displays a taxonomical division of philosophy suggesting interconnections among the content levels. Conrad Gessner, *Partitiones theologicae: pandectarum universalium Conradi Gesneri liber ultimus* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1549). Zentralbibliothek Zürich; VD16 G 1700.



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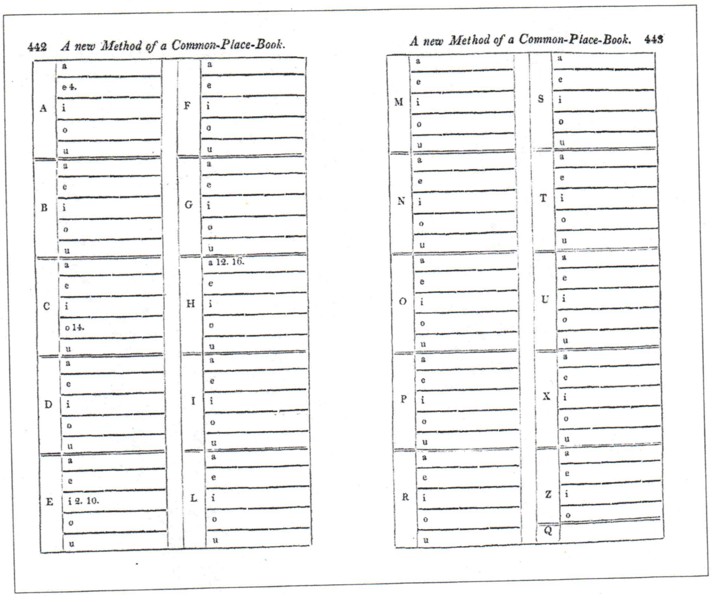
442 A new Method of a Common-Place-Book.
A new Method of a Common-Place-Book. 443

Fig. 3. Excerpting template from John Locke's "A New Method of Making Commonplace Books," in *Posthumous works of Mr. John Locke* (London: Printed by W.B. for A. and J. Churchill, 1706).

understanding such engagements as a particular way of processing material, producing conversations across disciplines and media, the size, materiality, and location—as well as the potential duration of those "spaces"—are limited merely by the imagination (and, realistically, by financial means). While the museum exhibition is the most traditional setting for curatorial agency to exert itself publically, a potential alternative in which it can act is the "paginated" realm of reproductions—the world of books and libraries.[15]

Learning about Gessner's older work is productive here because it encourages early forms of creation from within a "constellational condition." Similar to the notebooks of explorers holding data to be excerpted and reorganized later, the *Biblioteca Universalis* also represented less a conclusion than a tool for further use and the continuous diversification of scholarship. It was precisely in this sense that Gessner conceived a kind of manual for how reader-writers should approach and appropriate the mediated material practically. More than 150 years before John Locke's *A New Method of Making Commonplace Books* (1706) [fig. 3], Gessner recommended one use a special booklet that would hold one's compiled, essentially loose and thus mobile excerpts, whose arrangement could be employed for developing one's own texts and lectures.

> "Whether they need to write or to give lectures, they may arrange the accumulated raw material for their paper in this way: Either they have recently collected material or they arrange material accumulated on slips of paper according to thematic aspects for reuse, so they can take out paper slips for the treatment of the respective object, selecting from the many cards

> those that are best suited for the present subject. Using small needles, they fixate the slips in the desired order for the respective lecture and write down what seems appropriate, or use it according to desire; finally, they restore the slips of paper to their place for reuse."[16]

Together, these editorial-curatorial efforts of sourcing and selecting material, cutting and interpreting, connecting and further developing archived notes into intelligible patterns awarded Gessner the reputation of inventing the modern bibliography.[17] Projecting forward into the early twentieth century, this quoted paragraph curiously rings like an early forerunner of Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne* panels, in which the iconologist explored a multiplicity of art historical and cultural topics by pinning changing arrangements of cut-out picture reproductions onto black boards.[18] Although separated historically by five centuries, conceptually both Gessner's and Warburg's practices highlight the role of articulating new theses by developing temporary relationships among the contents of a collected archive. In both cases it is the author's focus on the originality of the constellation versus the originality of the applied material alone that resonates with our contemporary notion of curatorial agency as described above, whereas the emphasis on reproduction evokes the editorial quality of working on and with the page.

Returning to the legacy of Gessner's own editorial productions, the aforementioned book on avifauna was a particularly great success—regardless of the amount of verbose pseudo-knowledge it contained. Its original Latin version was quickly translated into other languages, most notably German (*Vogelbuch*, 1557/1582/1600). But, as though they had been instilled with Gessner's bibliomanic spirit of cross-pollination, even the birds themselves continued to flutter "between the leaves"[19] of numerous other authors' books. Ulisse Aldrovandi was the first to heavily recycle from Gessner; he published three volumes entitled *Ornithologia* in 1599, 1600, and 1603 **[fig. 4]**. In the mid-seventeenth century, John Johnstone compiled yet another bird book containing almost entirely borrowed material, including many aesthetically pleasing illustrations copied directly from both Gessner and Aldrovandi's images.

Regarding the circulation, borrowing, and transformation of already existing knowledge and material on birds, two details should be noted. First, the majority of the 217 woodcuts in the first edition of Gessner's bird book were not literally made by Gessner, but were illustrated for him as he orchestrated a whole network of aesthetically gifted international correspondents, many of whom had more field experience with birds than Gessner himself.[20] While other publications such as the Frenchman Pierre Belon's folio *L'histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (also published in 1555) presented visual material meticulously created by its author, Gessner's *De Avium Natura* is a space to showcase artistic productions (and frequent errors) of a number of colleagues in the manner of a curatorial-editorial arrangement. Second, in the context of many bird books similar to Gessner's, the images of the birds themselves often constituted a pastiche of visual assemblages or pictorial collages.

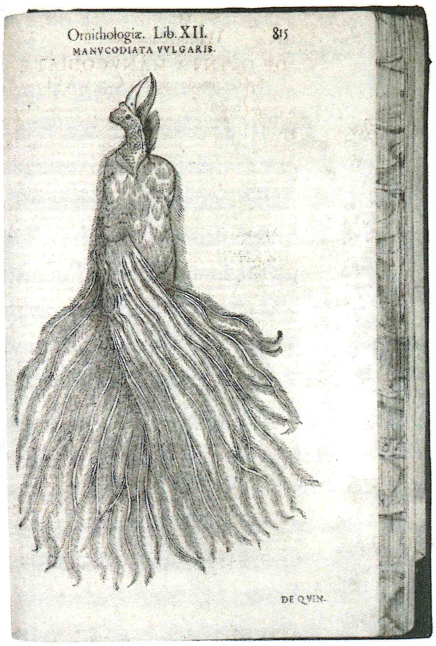
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Fig. 4. The bird of paradise illustration in Aldrovandi's *Ornithologia* (1599) bears a striking resemblance to Gessner's illustration (see fig. 1). Image from *Ornithologiae hoc est de avibus historiae libri 12. Bononiae: Apud Franciscum de Franciscis Senensem*, 1599. Biblioteca Università di Bologna.

For some centuries, illustrations were a necessary means for distributing knowledge about exotic species and made them accessible in mediated form. Before bird taxidermy was perfected with the aid of arsenical soap by the end of the eighteenth century, specimens tended to be fragile and without much longevity, so that the visual renderings on the page were for a long time the only means of presentation in lieu of their three-dimensional models.[21] However, these images were often generated by combining impressions from several different specimens; sometimes they even represented painterly amalgamations of both living and dead animals.[22] Thus, even the micro-editorial level of the pictures' origins includes the internal logic of a heterogeneous collection of material arranged into a legible structure. Furthermore, the different mediums used to recognize birds—the specimen object and the visual and textual languages that describe it, as well as the taxonomic system and collection within which it is placed—all exert their influence on each other, thus giving shape to a representation of species. As a special case of collection, the book thus permits the visibility of birds within the framework of a produced ornithological discourse. As early ornithologists collected and distributed bird knowledge in the space between specimens, pictures, and language, the book becomes a kind of second-nature aviary—*inter folia, aves*.

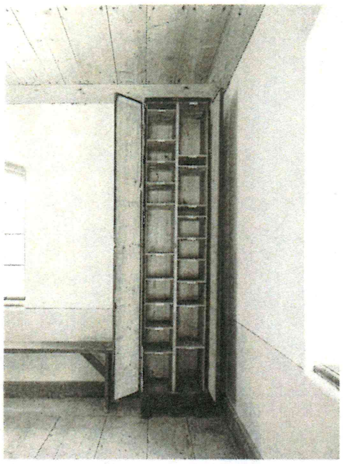

Fig. 5. One of Carl Linnaeus's herbarium cabinets with movable shelves that allowed for the rearrangement of material in response to new knowledge. Photo: Åke E:son Lindman, Museum in Altis, Hammerby, Sweden.

In her essay, "The Sciences of the Archives," historian Lorraine Daston has critiqued the assumption that the modern natural sciences were posited against the humanities through an institutional division of the laboratory and observatory on one hand, and the library and museum on the other.[23] A number of architectural floor plans of nineteenth-century natural history institutions underscore that libraries indeed remained at the heart of most of these buildings even at a time when empiricism had fully developed. Previously, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, dissection and reading activities were sometimes juxtaposed even closer together, literally taking place in the same halls. Thus, when Hinrich Lichtenstein—a medical doctor, professor, and director of the Berlin Zoological Museum in the early-to-mid-1800s—was looking for suitable new strategies for organizing the Berlin university collections, he lauded the Parisian Jardin des Plantes, which had integrated the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in 1793, as an exemplary model precisely because its curators (including the early evolutionary pioneers Georges Cuvier, Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck, and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire) no longer perpetuated the "accumulation of randomly gathered curiosities" that Lichtenstein associated with most collection rooms of the time. Thanks to the Muséum's orderly presentation of "all steps and links" in the animal kingdom, the German saw in it the *Idealmuseum* promising to solve the enigma of the world.[24]

For millennia, it had been the library that embodied the ideal of providing a storehouse for gathering all of the world's knowledge—an ancient institution compared to the establishment of the modern natural history museum. As Daston points out, some have argued that the more hands-on natural sciences, due to their inclination toward the newness of data, virtually manifested a dis-engagement with historical scholarship stored in books and libraries. But, in fact there is no such break. Rather, the library quite literally served as a direct model for the organization and classification of natural history collections, creating strong resonances between the roles of librarian and museum curator.[25] As we will see, it is in the idea of the book that these resonances find their strongest expression. For, when Lichtenstein suggested furthermore that "[a] zoological collection is completely similar to a library,"[26] he articulated a tradition of grappling with the natural history objects in a museum as if specimens were readable like the books on a shelf—and hence should also function as usable and accessible epistemic tools, that is, like books. Indeed, this relationship is most explicitly articulated in the

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xylotheque, the type of encyclopedic wood collection in which the objects that literally appear like stacks of books are actually wooden boxes holding replicas of the leaves and fruits of trees; and what seems like thick leather bindings reveal the textures of a tree's own bark.[27]

In the long history of attempting to decipher nature, the naturalists of the eighteenth century—the epoch Michel Foucault named the "age of the catalogue"—were even more concerned than Gessner or Aldrovandi with resolving the relationships between living creatures in strict hierarchical systems.[28] Thus, around 100 years before the theory of evolution by natural selection would finally establish a sense of order based on transformation, Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) experimented with the so-called "Book of Nature" by drawing a direct relationship between specimen drawers and his taxonomical tables on the page.[29] Although Linnaeus did not work with a major bird collection and is not considered an authority in ornithology, the methods advanced in the twelve editions of his *Systema Naturae* (divisions in genera and species, introduction of binomial nomenclature, as well as short diagnoses) set important standards for subsequent natural history publishing, including books about birds.[30] Indeed, Linnaeus's idiosyncratic herbarium cabinet is one of the most fascinating devices for thinking about the feedback loops between curatorial and editorial treatments in natural history. Whereas he edited and published his taxonomic classification tables with the aim of visualizing a rank-based—if not outright static—biological system, the cabinet technology he devised to develop these orders was based on the opposite construction: movable and adjustable shelves. Not unlike those in Aby Warburg's idiosyncratic Hamburg library, where the stacks would be reorganized with the evolution of ideas, Linnaeus's herbarium cabinet thus exhibits "the order of things" through shifts, adaptations, and changing neighbors.[31] As we will see, multidimensional translation processes were indeed necessary in order for him to shift between the three dimensions of the cabinet and the two dimensions of the charts. As historian of science Staffan Müller-Wille writes, "[t]he apparently rigid surface of the taxonomic 'tableau' was an outcome of the gradually expanding circulation of things rather than the result of a sudden registering of an entirely different order of thinking."[32] Müller-Wille also points out that a common organization method among naturalists up until Linnaeus included binding the sheets that held their pressed botanical specimens into quasi-books, in which the specimens would necessarily acquire a finite order. Linnaeus's cabinet on the other hand provided shelves and pigeonholes for serially organizing the herbarium sheets [fig. 5]. When new material was added to the collection that necessitated adjustments to the status quo, the shelves could be moved up and down allowing for smooth insertions at any given place; likewise, sheets could also be removed without having to tear apart the entire collection.[33]

Looking at publishing from a curatorial point of view can enable us to perceive the medium of the book as more than merely a surface of information. Instead, publishing crystallizes as a form of curatorial practice when a book, its contents, and component parts tease out a tension between object and representation, but a tension where these categories themselves become unstable variables. Publishing as a curatorial practice thus emphasizes the spatio-temporal and performative role of relationships, connectivities, and juxtapositions—ultimately influencing the idea of what a book is or can be.[34] Linnaeus's cabinet evinces this curatorial quality precisely by breaking with the tradition of the botanical quasi-book as an inflexible codex and replacing it with a multistable reading machine. Conceived as a unique shelving system for the book of nature gathered from the world outside, the collations and constellations achieved in the interior of the device begin to act back upon Linnaeus's own books in the process of his publishing them:[35] "What thus counts for the collector is no longer the individual objects in the collection, but their place in an endless, serial system whose links mutually represent themselves as well as their respective species."[36] With the goal of organizing divine nature taxonomically, Linnaeus accumulated around 16,000 botanical specimens, naming and systematizing thousands of plant species into twenty-four classes—each of which had a separate slot in the cabinet. In addition to these, his books—notably the *Species Plantarum* (1751) and especially the tenth edition of his aforementioned *Systema Naturae* (1758)—unfolded the corresponding schematic visualizations.

Meanwhile in Paris, in 1758 one of the largest European bird collections of its time had just changed ownership upon the death of the influential René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur (1683–1757), who had been sustaining a private *cabinet d'histoire naturelle*, which for its period was enormous. With a huge international network to receive birds from all corners of the world, Réaumur was an esteemed pioneer in modern bird taxidermy and also one of the first naturalists to stuff and mount bird skins using wire to imitate more life-like poses than hitherto was common. In addition to the unparalleled extent of the bird collection itself, it was this advancement in display practices that led to two more illustrated bird books worth knowing about in our context because of the curiously curatorial ways in which they intertwine the relations between birds, things, and words.

Created in the 1760–70s, both of these books have been lauded as the "vanguards of a new type of study of birds."[37] Their respective authors were Mathurin Jacques Brisson (1723–1806) and Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707–1788), two eighteenth-century rivals who both used Réaumur's bird collection—albeit at different times. Though they departed from the same objects, their outcomes were quite different, both in scientific information and aesthetic style. Whereas Brisson aimed for more neutral or objectively descriptive passages in the tradition of the Renaissance encyclopedia, Buffon preferred to enrich his descriptions with narrative interpretations and metaphorical embellishments. While Brisson's six-part *Ornithologie* (1760) was the last publication he ever produced, Buffon's *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* (1772) would be one early element in a monumental natural history writing project that, by the time he died in 1788, had ballooned to thirty-six volumes.

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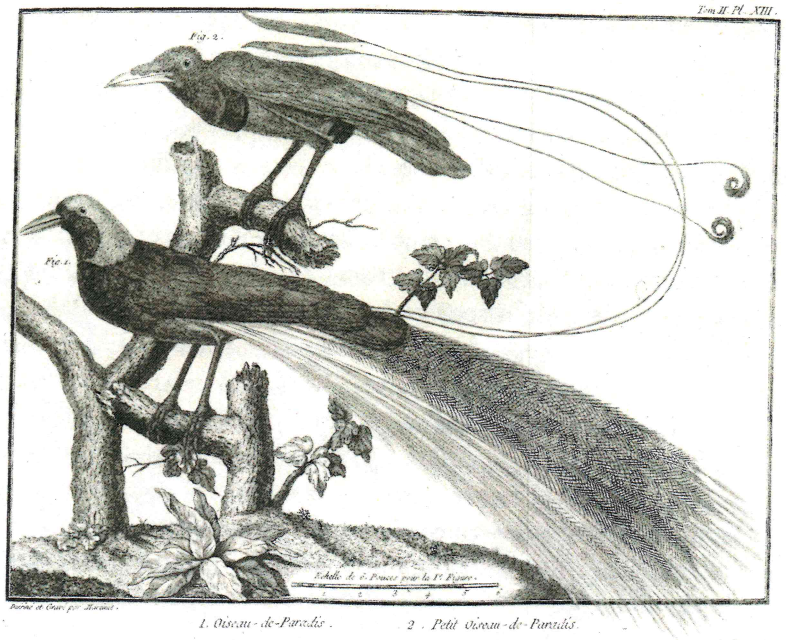
Employed as collection curator by Réaumur until the latter's death in 1757, Brisson's research position was not unlike that of Conrad Gessner's—lacking experience with living birds in the wild but nevertheless inspired by the promise of the "complete survey." By carefully studying Réaumur's birds, as well as the skins in other Paris collections (most notably, Pierre-Jean Etienne Mauduyt's), Brisson indeed succeeded in tripling the list of hitherto known species—compared to, for example, the bird species listed in Linneaus's book from 1758.[38] In contrast to this vast expansion of the perspective on the avifaunal world, the essential function of Brisson's ornithology, however, turns out to be an introspective interest in the collection catalog:

> "I have been led to think of arranging the animal kingdom into an order different from those used up to the present time. My intention in this labor was solely to instruct myself and to place myself in the position of being able to judge the most convenient place to put a specimen of a new animal which would arrive to be placed in a cabinet."[39]

Similar to the case described above for Linnaeus, Brisson's work with the bird collection and his publishing activities thus created another curatorial-editorial feedback loop. He wrote a complex ornithological history that was both based on the bird objects in his and other collections, and which he also employed to arrange the specimens under his care based on the artificial system he had devised for them. Working with bird skins and mounted specimens, Brisson's ornithological system thus has to be understood as emerging from the space between his own six books and the collection. In other words, constructed from a museum curator's perspective, "[n]aturalist treatises such as Brisson's not only constituted a discourse *about* the collection, but also a level of the collection itself."[40] Limited to the birds' external appearance, unanimated by field experience of their behavior or natural environments, Brisson's writing conventions have been described by the historian of science Paul Lawrence Farber as reflecting a "stiff museum posture." In his estimation, "Brisson's *Ornithologie* is a good example of the collection-catalogue approach to natural history. The selection of material, the style, the scope, and its audience are all linked to a particular famous collection."[41] The result is a sense of artificiality that not even the over 200 fine bird engravings ordered from the gifted illustrator François-Nicolas Martinet (1731–1800) easily counterbalance [fig. 6]. In her own comparison of Brisson and Buffon, E.C. Spary on the other hand points out that the internal organization of Brisson's volumes and individual descriptions are structured in independent segments where the combined descriptions and visual renderings of the birds "function as distinguishable units like the material objects."[42] As an author and ornithologist, Brisson was indeed looking for ways to produce shifts and transfers between the material, scientific bird objects and the knowledge represented in his taxonomy, the printed bird images, and ornithological texts.

This career, however, ended abruptly with the death of Réaumur, following which the collection was transferred to the Cabinet du Roi of the Jardin du Roi, whose director since 1739 had been the ambitious and hugely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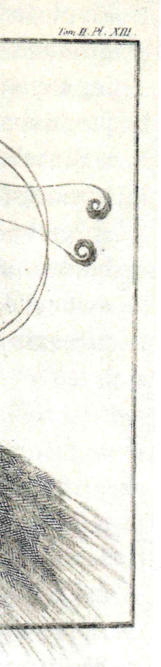
Dessiné et Gravé par Martinet.
1. Oiseau-de-Paradis.
2. Petit Oiseau-de-Paradis.

Fig. 6. Bird of paradise engraving by François-Nicolas Martinet for Mathurin Jacques Brisson, *Ornithologie, ou méthode contenant la division des oiseaux en ordres, sections, genres espèces & leurs varieties*, vol. 2 (Paris: Quay des Augustins, 1760), plate XIII. SCD de l'Université de Strasbourg.

successful Comte de Buffon. Due to professional enmity between Buffon and Réaumur, Brisson no longer had access to the birds, while Buffon was keen on increasing the import of the Jardin. Obtaining Réaumur's collection was an immense stroke of luck for Buffon, considering the fact that Réaumur had been one of Buffon's harshest critics and outspokenly questioned his scientific objectivity. Indeed, Buffon's *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* turned out add odds with Brisson's—even though both had recourse to the same specimens and Buffon even hired the same engraver, Martinet, to produce bird images in collaboration with nearly eighty other artists. Where Brisson had tried to soberly describe species and fit them into a classificatory order, Buffon was more interested in producing an encyclopedia of living beings that would explain the life of the natural world. "While Brisson's text was supposed to appear scientific thanks to its minimal aesthetics, Buffon enveloped his species groupings and efforts for exactitude regarding body sizes and physical features in a narrative context which tended to focus on luxury, rarity, and a preciousness that was the result of the limitless creative power of nature."[43] Buffon often described birds by lending literary affect and comparing them to fancy gemstones or, in other cases, monstrosities and absurd errors. He did not, however, believe that extensive textual descriptions were the right means to depict a sufficient portrait of a species: "There are not even the proper terms in any language to express the nuances, the hues, the reflections and the blendings."[44] And this is why the pictures in Brisson and Buffon are so



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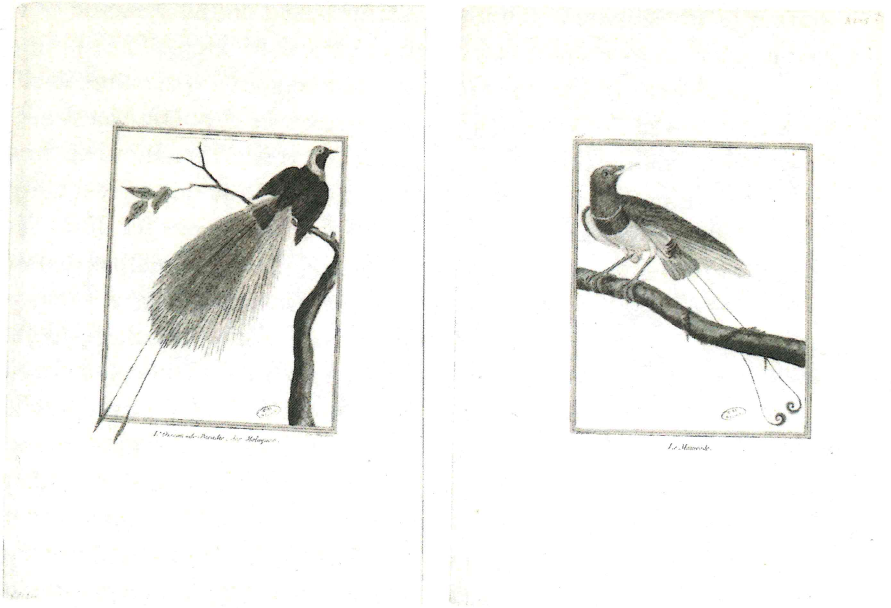

Fig. 7, 8. Colored bird of paradise engravings by François-Nicolas Martinet for Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* (Paris: de l'Imprimerie royale, 1771–86). BPU Neuchâtel.

different. Brisson had tried to pinpoint visual representation down to the factual. While made with great attention to detail, Martinet's birds for Brisson evoke an unanimated Renaissance style discussed above with respect to Conrad Gessner: The birds are mostly perched on branches, stiff-legged and upright, wings held tightly against their bodies, and heads erect with a lifeless gaze. Buffon, on the other hand, ordered elaborate and artful color plates from Martinet. Known as the so-called *Planches enluminées* and altogether depicting 1,239 birds, some have lauded this set of images as having initiated a new era of ornithological iconography because they are considered to mark the transition from ornithological draftsmanship presenting species for identification and classification to ornithological affect and painterly artfulness. From then on, more and more illustrators—even though still working in the realm of science and not bourgeois painting—would express a stronger sense of artistic composition and aesthetic consideration. Indeed, Martinet's images for Buffon are luminous, colorful, and animated. Most birds are set against complex landscapes with active skies while striking a variety of poses: some swim in ponds, some sit in front of high steeples, and others look straight at the viewer—even though this happens not to be the case in the bird of paradise pictures [fig. 7, 8].

From a curatorial point of view, what is perhaps most interesting about Buffon's history of birds is his estimation of Nature as a "grand tableau filled with interesting and complex relationships," which he tried to render experiential through his editorial decisions.[45] While the previous examples given here seemingly tried to render the focus onto nature sharper and sharper by developing taxonomic systems based on the dynamic working conditions each naturalist respectively dealt with for himself and his materials, it appears that in Buffon's case it was his dynamic view of nature itself that led to a lavish and exuberant outcome, where a style of poetic excess became a strategic means for configuring his particular version of natural history.

In a wider trajectory of development, the vivacious representational style of nature, which Martinet created in two dimensions for Buffon's bird books, can be seen as a precursor to the so-called habitat dioramas that would come into being in the new public natural history museums over subsequent decades and centuries, producing yet another instance where the page shaped the curatorial dimension of museum collections. By the 1780s, the novelty of arsenical soap as a reliable treatment in bird taxidermy was finally circulating, making it easier to produce lasting specimens. It was also around the same period that the first public museums opened, drawing their audiences with the attraction of large bird collections such as the Museum Leverianum in London (opened in 1775) and Charles Willson Peale's natural history museum in Philadelphia (opened in 1786). As Peale was both a painter and a naturalist, his display is worth mentioning here for two reasons. On the one hand he contributed to the advancement of more realistic museum displays through a particular sense of theatricality where he would first create the illusion of inner anatomy by mounting his specimens on carefully modeled wooden forms and then installing his birds in glass cases that included real elements of vegetation, as well as rocks—all situated in front of painted landscape backgrounds. Indeed, this technique was so revolutionary that it "would not be used again until the early twentieth century, when the American artists Carl Akeley and James Lippitt Clark developed a similar sculptural approach to taxidermy."[46] The 140 glass-fronted display cases Peale created for his museum are clearly recognizable in his famous self-portrait, *The Artist in His Museum* (1822), where Peale is seen lifting a curtain to his exhibition gallery called the Long Hall. Stacked along the left wall of this gallery, Peale's "bird wall" embodied a second idiosyncratic display strategy. It was one of the first ever examples of presenting a collection organized according to the hierarchies of the Linnean taxonomic system featured in the aforementioned *Systema Naturae*. Again, while naturalists developed taxonomies by transferring and organizing theories gathered from a mixture of fieldwork, correspondence, and research on collections (as well as religious and other worldviews) into publishable charts and tree diagrams, ever since Peale, natural history curators have come up with new ways of re-presenting these ideas spatially, one contemporary example being the so-called "Biodiversity Wall" in the Berlin Natural History Museum.

But not all avifaunal collections are as well organized as Peale's once was. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, for instance, invites ornithologists and bird enthusiasts into their library as a special place for "birdwatching." The aim is to collaborate with the collection curators in determining the names of unidentified birds depicted in rare historic books, rendered in exotic porcelain cups and statues, and woven into luxurious tapestries for the museum's open-access digital collection on Wikipedia's Wikimedia Commons and Wikidata.[47] Against the background of the historical examples discussed, contemporary projects like this show that birds continue to fascinate and challenge the human mind—yet also that they are still sometimes hard to catch. The fact that birds, while alive, are constantly in motion, able to fly off into inaccessible spheres at any moment, confronted early ornithologists with a special situation. Before reliable taxidermy, photography, film, and even DNA analysis, books turned out a useful medium for their capture. But as we have seen through our case study of bird books, the fluttering quality of birds can find its way back into the very practices that inform publishing. Exploring these dynamics as curatorial-editorial constellations demonstrates the variegated and multistable trajectories that animate the connections between the world, the page, and the book space.

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1 On the relationships of natural history and the library, see Lorraine Daston, "The Sciences of the Archive," *Osiris* 27, no. 1 (2012): 156–187.

2 See Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

3 Claus Nissen, *Die illustrierten Vogelbücher* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann Verlag, 1953), 11. Unless otherwise noted all translations from the German are the author's own.

4 Emma C. Spary, "Codes der Leidenschaft: Französische Vogelsammlungen als eine Sprache der vornehmen Gesellschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Sammeln als Wissen. Das Sammeln und seine wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Bedeutung*, ed. Anke te Heesen and Emma C. Spary (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2001), 41.

5 See Erwin Stresemann, *Ornithology: From Aristotle to the Present*, trans. Hans and Cathleen Epstein (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 26.

6 See Fritz Koreny, *Albrecht Dürer und die Tier- und Pflanzenstudien der Renaissance* (Munich: Prestel, 1985), Plates no. 30–34.

7 Conrad Gessner, *Historia Animalium*, vol. III (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1555), 611.

8 S. Kusukawa, "The Sources of Gessner's Pictures for the *Historia animalium*," *Annals of Science* 67, no. 3 (July 2010): 311; Jasmina Mužinić et al., "Julije Klović: The First Colour Drawing of Greater Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea apoda* in Europe and Its Model," *Journal of Ornithology* 150, no. 3 (July 2009): 647.

9 Amanda K. Herrin, "Pioneers of the Printed Paradise: Maarten de Vos, Jan Sadeler I and Emblematic Natural History in the Late Sixteenth Century," in *Zoology in Early Modern Culture: Intersections of Science, Theology, Philology, and Political and Religious Education*, ed. Karl A. E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 360.

10 Stresemann, *Ornithology*, 18.

11 Before Wallace shipped his enormous specimens collection, which included two live birds of paradise for the Kew Gardens aviaries, to Europe, the naval apothecary and ornithologist René Primevère Lesson (1794–1849) was the first European to ever encounter the bird of paradise species in the early 1820s.

12 For a book that is more specifically concerned with the construction of "tropical nature," see Nancy Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

13 Christian Freigang, "Margaretes Paradiesvogel: Vereinnahmungen des Fremden und Wunderbaren aus der Neuen Welt im frühzeitlichen Kunstdiskurs," in *Wechselseitige Wahrnehmung der Religionen im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Ludger Grenzmann et al., vol. 1 (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2009), 78–79.

14 Stresemann, *Ornithology*, 19.

15 On the page as a curatorial space inviting imaginative connections between existing materials and knowledge, see Anna-Sophie Springer, "Melancholies of the Paginated Mind: The Library as Curatorial Space," in *Fantasies of the Library*, ed. Anna-Sophie Springer and Etienne Turpin (Berlin: K. Verlag & Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2015), 1–141.

16 Conrad Gessner, *De Indicibus Librorum* (1548), quoted in Markus Krajewski, *Paper*

Machines: About Cards & Catalogs, 1548–1929, trans. Peter Krapp (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 13.

17 See Krajewski, *Paper Machines*, esp. "Chapter 2: Temporary Indexing."

18 For a discussion of Warburg's methodology as a legacy for curatorial-editorial practices, see Springer, "Melancholies of the Paginated Mind."

19 Here I refer to a passage by John Anderson, which directly precedes the passage quoted in the epigraph above, and moreover illuminates the title of this essay: "Best of all was the Grinnell-Miller library, a small room at one side of the collections, filled with light and housing the very books that Grinnell had worked with, each bearing his personal bookplate with his motto, *Inter folia, Aves*: 'There are birds between the leaves.'" John G.T. Anderson, *Deep Things Out Of Darkness: A History of Natural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), xiii.

20 Stresemann, *Ornithology*, 19; Kusukawa, "The Sources of Gessner's Pictures for the *Historia animalium*," 20–22.

21 In 1771, T.S. Kuckahn addressed the difficulty of satisfactory bird taxidermy in a set of four letters to the London Royal Society. This is one of the first examples where an explicit concern is expressed regarding curatorial methods of bird display: "They [bird specimens] never fail to become humid in moist air and long continued wet weather, suffer the flesh to rot and even corrode the wires made use of to confine the birds to their natural attitudes, till the whole drops to pieces on the least touch or motion." See *Philosophical Transactions LX* (London: The Royal Society, 1771), 304.

22 See, for example, Heinrich Geissler, "*Ad Vivum Pinxit*: Überlegungen zu Tierdarstellungen der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 82 (1986/7): 101–114; Karl Schulze-Hagen et al., "Avian taxidermy in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance," *Journal für Ornithologie* 144 (2003): 463.

23 Daston, "The Sciences of the Archive."

24 Carsten Kretschmann, *Räume öffnen sich – Naturhistorische Museen im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 33.

25 However, while both are the traditional custodians of their respective collections, the museum curator works primarily in the service of the collection, its research, conservation, and display, while the librarian's function extends to a public responsibility for providing library users direct access to the publications held, which in their majority are mass-media objects rather than precious museological originals.

26 Kretschmann, *Räume* öffnen *sich*, 34.

27 See also, Anna-Sophie Springer, "Reading Rooms Reading Machines," in *Fantasies of the Library*, 69–71.

28 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 143.

29 See Karen Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1993), 81.

30 Paul Lawrence Farber, *Discovering Birds: The Emergence of Ornithology as a Scientific Discipline, 1760–1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 72.

31 On the curatorial qualities of Warburg's library, see again Springer, "Melancholies of the Paginated Mind."

32 Staffan Müller-Wille, "Carl von Linnes Herbarschrank: Zur epistemischen Funktion eines Sammlungsmöbels," in *Sammeln als Wissen*, 23.

33 Ibid., 26.

34 For an in-depth reading on the relationship between the book and the art exhibition, see the essay Anna-Sophie Springer, "Volumes: The Book as Exhibition," *C Magazine* 116 (2012): 36–45.

35 Again, I am using the term "publishing" here in the wider sense of authoring, preparing, and publicizing content through print media rather than limiting the term to the work of a "publishing house."

36 Müller-Wille, "Carl von Linnes Herbarschrank," 36; for a drawing of the cabinet's design see Carl Linnaeus, *Philosophia botanica* (Stockholm, 1751), 291 and fig. XI.

37 Farber, *Discovering Birds*, 7.

38 See Stresemann, *Ornithology*, 53.

39 Brisson, quoted in Farber, *Discovering Birds*, 10, with further references.

40 Spary, "Codes der Leidenschaft," 47.

41 Farber, *Discovering Birds*, 14.

42 Spary, "Codes der Leidenschaft," 47.

43 Ibid., 46.

44 Buffon, quoted in Farber, *Discovering Birds*, 22.

45 Farber, *Discovering Birds*, 24.

46 Robert McCracken Peck, "Preserving Nature for Study and Display," in *Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America 1730–1860*, vol. 93, part 4, ed. Sue Anne Price (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2003), 17.

47 See the description of the event taking place on October 4, 2015: www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/vogelen.

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