

PERFOR MATIVE PUBLI CATIONS

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

This article for the disrupted *Journal of Media Practice* reflects upon, as well as interweaves itself with, a practice-based project which I initiated back in 2015.¹ I will first outline this project—which set out to create a 'performative publication'—and the thought processes and design-choices behind it. After that I will present how, both as an extension of and a reflection on this project, I contributed a series of theoretical reflections on the concept of performative publishing, which were published 'in the margins' of the original performative publication. The article you are currently reading forms a print or PDF rendition of that inherently web-based intervention, yet in many ways it can also be seen as further iterative version of this ongoing processual publishing project.

¹ This project is available at <http://disruptivemedia.org.uk/the-political-nature-of-the-book/index1.html>

As part of the original project, or, more precisely, the project in its first instantiation, a website and several posters were created, which together offer a different take on the article 'The political nature of the book. On artists' books and radical open access', written by myself and Gary Hall and originally published in the journal *New Formations*. This article explored issues of access and experimentation in publishing, by comparing and contrasting developments undergone by artists' books in the 1960s and 1970s with the changes academic book publishing is facing as part of its current uptake of digital and open access publishing. We argue that access and experimentation are crucial to any future of the scholarly book, if the critical potentiality of the book is to remain open to new political, economic and intellectual contingencies. As such we professed a need for the material, conceptual, and cultural constitution of the book to be reviewed, re-evaluated and reconceived in an ongoing manner.

What we subsequently created was a *practical adaptation* and in many ways a continuation of the argument made in the *New Formations* article in the form of a performative publication which reflects on the praxis, ethics and politics of academic publishing. A performative publication thus wants to explore how we can bring together and align more closely the material form of a publication with its content. The term performative publication was coined by Christopher P. Long, who defines it as a publication in which 'the mode of publication performs one of the central ideas the text itself seeks to articulate and explore' (Long 2013). Performative publications focus on how the mode in which we produce, disseminate and consume text, influences the content and meaning of the text, or the way we interpret it. Here the accent lies more on the material agency of publications, not merely investigating their own materiality, but actively performing it. In this respect this project wanted to emphasise that we



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should have more in depth discussions about the way we *do* research. How can we ensure that, throughout the research process, we focus on the medial forms, formats and graphic spaces in and through which we communicate and perform scholarship, as well as on the discourses, agencies and institutions that shape and determine our scholarly practices? This 'contextual' discussion, focusing on the materiality of our (textual) scholarship and its material modes of production, is and should not in any way be separate from a discussion on the content of our work.

The practice-based project this article reflects upon—and is an integral part of—came about out of a collaboration between academics and designers. We created the performative publication in retrospect—after the 'publication' was already formally published. The main objective of the project was to turn the original article in *New Formations*, which focused on the correlations between artists' books and open access publishing, into a version that would itself be accessible in various forms and which, similar to an artist book, would experimentally reflect on its own nature. As such we wanted to explore both the idea and the materiality of a 'book' or a 'publication', as well as its ways of dissemination. Focusing on alternative reading paths or contexts, which offer the reader more choice in how s/he can access the text, both on and offline, was key here. In addition, by having different versions of the text available to interact with, we also wanted to focus on the different kinds of engagements these provoke, through their specific (material and technological) affordances. The different versions that we created also questioned the fixity of the text, and its bound/unbound nature. For example, the choice for posters was a clear expression of this, as posters—single sheets of paper—can be seen to embody the ultimate unbound book.

The website that we subsequently created—which as a whole comprises the performative publication—consists of 3 sections, each offering an alternative way to engage with the article, or to access, and/or to distribute it. The first section of the website consists of the text of the original article, which offers a familiar linear reading experience. The second section of the website consists of 28 keywords, which relate to some of the main themes and topics that characterise and structure the article's content (i.e. access, process, medium, object etc.). These keywords are connected to snippets of text extracted from the original article that relate to that specific keyword. When you click on one of the keywords (either on the main page or highlighted in the article) you will be offered an alternative non-linear thematic route through the article, hopping from snippet to snippet of text. The third section of the website provides an offline engagement with the article. It consists of 7 posters that can be printed off at home, each containing 4 keywords and 4 connected QR codes. The QR code next to each keyword will direct the reader to the corresponding keyword on the website, offering them the availability to access the previously described text snippets via their mobile devices. On the backside of each poster you can find all 7 posters in a reduced size with their accompanying keywords and QR codes. The poster can be folded in such a way (following the provided folding instructions) that it forms a little hybrid booklet consisting of all the miniature posters.

A GENEALOGY OF PERFORMATIVE PUBLISHING

This article for *The disrupted Journal of Media Practice* focuses on performative publications and is itself at the same time a performative publication. Written *in Hypothes.is* this article will hinge upon specific aspects, fragments, and concepts of the original performative project that it engages, entangling the community's engagements along the way.

Janneke Adema I would like to further extend this practice-based project both theoretically and practically, by discussing the genealogy and correlations of 'performative publishing' with ideas such as 'technotext' (Hayles), 'performative

materiality' (Drucker) and 'liberature' (Fajfer), alongside other projects and practices. As part of this I would like to explore the ethical and political challenges towards academic publishing these kinds of concepts and practices pose. By using *hypothes.is*—an open source software/browser extension that enables an annotation layer on top of websites and online files and objects— which for this special disrupted issue of the *Journal of Media Practice* functions as a way to enable conversations around its processual papers, I would like to draw in these conversations around performative publications by directly setting up a dialogue with various theorists and the works, concepts, practices and values that connect to both this project and to performative publications as I envision them more in general.

Janneke_Adema By doing this I want to critically reflect on this project and extend it not in a 'traditional' way, i.e. by writing about a practical project in a linear manner in a separate print on paper venue in order for it to count as 'academic'. Instead I want this reflection to be connected more closely to the project itself and, indeed, to become a part of it. My reflection, interweaved with the above mentioned dialogue, will be written completely 'in' *hypothes.is* and will scaffold in a sense on specific aspects, fragments, outputs and pages of the original performative project. It will engage both with the practical project as an example of a performative publication, but at the same time it will further extend and reflect upon the *New Formations* article which the performative publication responds to and emerged from; in this sense my contribution to the disrupted *Journal of Media Practice* wants to establish closer connections to and wants to further explore the values and the thinking around (radical) open access and experimental performative publishing, both in theory and in practice.

Janneke_Adema By using *hypothes.is* my contribution not only invites people to comment on the publication and project, their comments become part of this paper and with that of this performative project. At the same time, the participants in the conversations on the disrupted *Journal of Media Practice* platform, as well as the potential peer reviewers, through their comments and suggestions, will all become active participants in this evolving publication, which is both open-ended in time and collaborative in authorship.

Yet from the outset this project has always been inherently collaborative not in the least since the *New Formations* article was co-written with Gary Hall (and even earlier in a draft version it was supported by an online conference, with various participant voices also seeping into the content) and the performative project was conceived together with designers Nabaa Baqir, Mila Spasova and Serhan Curti.

Hypothes.is allows for further extensions of these collaborative tendencies, and aids in putting into question the single authorial voice that we tend to attach originality, meaning and responsibility to within academic publishing. By writing this article 'in the margins' and focusing on connections and dialogue in the first instance, it aims to further break down the distinctions that are still kept up in many experiments with collaborative authorship in which the comments and the texts upon which they reflect continue to exist in a hierarchical and often passive setting (i.e. one comments upon a text in the margins—with commentpress and *hypothes.is* software for example, or at the bottom of a text—with blogposts—where the comments often remain passive and are set up in a subordinate relation to the main text). Here marginal writing takes the main focus and interweaves itself with the other voices that make up this project.

Janneke_Adema Yet at the same time, as Derrida has argued, writing in the margins—where the margin more in general takes in a liminal inside/outside position—forms a means of resistance, a disruption or blurring of the line between the central main text and the writing in the margins. At the same time writing in itself is no more than a writing in the margins of preceding texts. 'Can this text become the margin of a margin? Where has the body of the text gone when the margin is no longer a secondary virginity but an inexhaustible reserve, the stereographic activity of an entirely other ear?' (Derrida 1985, xxiii)

Cplong This approach, which I admire and support, challenges the traditional way in which the authority of the author is established and maintained in traditional scholarship. The logic of a main text with marginalia reinforces the aura of authorial authority in ways that limit dynamic and potentially creative play between writer and reader.

My enhanced digital book on Plato and Socrates tried and failed to undermine the hegemony of authorial authority, despite the attempts I outlined in this post on the [Evolving Digital Book](#).

To do this well requires effective design (which my book project decidedly didn't have) and cultivated habits (which we have not yet learned, but which projects like these are helping us to develop.)

Janneke Adema In many ways though this is also a question of perspective and sensibility towards the plural agencies involved in scholarship. In this sense your authorial authority is always already, maybe not undermined, but entangled with the material medium in which it is expressed and the tools that enable it, with the discourses that surround your scholarship and with the political economic systems that structure it. It is our specific discursive vision that limits a material practice that is already polyvocal and distributed where it concerns agency and meaning-making. In this sense it is about us as scholars being aware of these cleavages, the ethics and politics behind them, and exploring how we can intervene in them, both theoretically and practically. Experimenting with the form of the book/our scholarship is one way I feel we can do this in a meaningful way, and yes, thinking about design and our own cultivated habits is essential in this respect.

PERFORMATIVE INTRA-ACTION AND CYBER-DEMOCRACY

Janneke Adema For Long performative publications are directly connected to the idea of practice, where following the concept of performativity, he argues that ideas should be put to practice, where practice can further inform and enrich one's ideas again. Long applies these values directly to several of his own performative projects. In his book *The Socratic and Platonic Politics: Practicing a Politics of Reading*, he shows how Socratic philosophy and Platonic writing was designed to cultivate dialogue and community. By digitally enhancing his publication, Long explores how writing and reading can promote community in a digital context, in specific a community of collaborative readers. As Long argues: 'If, however, the book is not to be a mere abstract academic exercise, it will need to be published in a way that performs and enables the politics of collaborative reading for which it argues' (Long 2012). A further extension of this project is a podcast series titled *Digital Dialogue* which aims to cultivate dialogue in a digital age by engaging other scholars in open conversation online. Long is also involved in the *Public Philosophy Journal* project, which is specifically set up to crawl the web to find diverse positions on various philosophical subjects and to bring these together in a collaborative writing setting. As Long explains: 'The PPJ is designed to crawl the web, listening for conversations in which philosophical ideas and approaches are brought to bear on a wide variety of issues of public concern. Once these conversations are curated and a select number chosen for further development, we will invite participants into a space of collaborative writing so they can work their ideas up into a more fully formulated scholarly article or digital artifact' (Long 2013).

Janneke Adema Long's publications are exemplary for bringing into practice a specific ethics and politics making use of the affordances of the digital medium to help embody more fully what publics, practice, dialogue, community, writing, reading and collaboration can and could mean in an online environment. In this sense his work explores what the possibilities of such a politics could be in a digital context. At the same time of course, the digital influences and affects what these concepts are and could be and therefore can be seen as an active agent in their unfolding.

Yet in what sense can a performance of Socratic and Platonic ethics and politics, and related ideas of the good life in a digital context, leave space open for a rethinking of what politics is based on our performance of scholarship online? As a system of thought how does it delimit political development? As Gary Hall has argued: 'Instead of developing new, singular, or at least specific theories of the politics of new media, critics have for the most part tended to understand digital politics in terms of already decided and legitimated theories and ideas' (Hall 2008, 149). For Hall then, following Mark Poster, cyberdemocracy emerges as a potential space for new, 'unthought' forms of democracy, where 'in order to understand the politics of the Internet we need to remain open to the possibility of a form of politics that is "something other than democracy" as we can currently conceive it' (Hall 2008, 179-180).

LIBERATURE, MATERIALITY AND AGENCY

Janneke Adema *Liberature* is a term, concept and genre coined in 1999 by the Polish avant-garde poet Zenon Fajfer, and further developed by his collaborator: literary scholar and theorist Katarzyna Bazarnik. Liberature is literature in the form of the book. Bazarnik and Fajfer define liberature as 'a literary genre that integrates text and its material foundation into a meaningful whole' (Bazarnik and Fajfer 2010, 1). In the introduction to Fajfer's collected essays, Bazarnik describes liberature as literary works in which the artistic message is transmitted not only through the verbal medium, but also through the author 'speaking' via the book as a whole (Bazarnik 2010, 7). Liberature is therefore a total approach that reaches beyond the linguistic medium, where the material form of the work is essential to its understanding and forms an organic element of the (inseparable) whole. Both Fajfer and Bazarnik emphasise that in liberature, the material book is no longer a neutral container for a text, but becomes an integral component of the literary work.

Janneke Adema Fajfer and Bazarnik make some interesting observations on how in liberature the book does not contain the work, it is the work. In this sense they don't see the material book as a representation of the work but as something that actively shapes and determines the work. Their focus on liberatic works is both a reaction to a previous literary context and a plea to authors to take responsibility for the future becoming of literature. First of all, as a specific response in a Polish context (but more wider too), it rallies against literary traditions that see the materiality of the book as non-significant, that classify literature as 'disembodied'. As Bazarnik and Fajfer state: 'If I emphasise this bodily, material aspect so much, it is because Polish literary studies seem still dominated by scholars indebted to Roman Ingarden, a Polish philosopher who ventured into literary studies to produce a highly influential theory of the literary work of art in which he denied its "material foundation" (as he called it) any significance. It was to be passed over and not interfere with reading' (Fajfer and Bazarnik 2010). Secondly, they present liberature as a way out of the 'crisis of contemporary literature', which they say has its roots in the continued focus on the text and its meaning, while neglecting the physical shape and structure of the book. This is delimiting the creative possibilities for the author, they claim. As Fajfer writes: 'I believe that it is his responsibility to consider the physical shape of the book and all the matters entailed, just as he considers the text (if not to the same extent, he should at least bear them in mind). The shape of the book should not be determined by generally accepted conventions but result from the author's autonomous decision just as actions of his characters and the choice of words originate from him' (Fajfer 2010, 25).

Janneke Adema Although they want to foreground the materiality of the book, this doesn't automatically mean Fajfer and Bazarnik—in their conceptualisation of liberature—also grant more space to the agency of or the agentic role played by the book's materiality. This is one important aspect where liberature differs from my conceptualisation of performative publications. Fajfer and Bazarnik emphasise that a book falls within the genre of liberature when it is not a neutral container for a book. Does this then imply that in non-liberatic genres the book remains a neutral container in their vision? As I have argued in depth elsewhere, the book's materiality always shapes its content and vice versa, as do the context and discursive practices surrounding the book (Adema 2016).

In this sense one could argue all publications are performative, they shape their own development through interactions between the different human and non-human agencies that make up the apparatus of the book (Barad 2007). However what I want to put forward here is that we can use the concept of performative publications to explore and become more aware as scholars and writers of how we do scholarship, of how we materially produce or perform it and of how the materiality of the media we use to communicate our scholarship is co-constitutive of it. As a concept it aims to encourage scholars to take responsibility for the becoming of the scholarly book, in interaction with the other material-discursive agencies involved in and affecting this development. How can we support more ethical involvements with the book as it unfolds?

Janneke Adema A second aspect in which I feel liberature as a genre remains rather conservative, is in its strong adherence to the intentionality of the author. Instead of giving more attention to

the agency of the material book, which Fajfer and Bazarnik emphasise as integral to the totality of the work, they emphasise that it is the author that determines both the content and the format of the liberatic work. They highlight the author's 'artistic liberty' or freedom (liberature relates here to *libertas*) when they state: 'It is the writer who intentionally shapes the form of the book to suit the text' (Bazarnik and Fajfer 2010). What kind of agency does this leave for the book and its specific materiality itself? What I want to explore is how in performative publications this intentionality is distributed, how it is part of various human and non-human agencies, which include the discursive practices that shape both the book and its author. Fajfer and Bazarnik instead emphasise that the material format is subjected to the text as part of authorial intention. Here they don't leave much room to explore how both text and context, discourse and material, are similarly involved in shaping authorial intention. Do liberatic works not remain disembodied in this vision, when their material agency is simply replaced by total authorial intention?

There is a tendency towards purity and control in liberature, where the author's intentions remain more important than the influence of other agencies in the creation of (literary) works. For example, as Fajfer and Bazarnik (in line with romantic and intentionalist traditions of textual criticism (Bowers 1949, Tanselle 1990)) state: 'In preparing each publication we pay special attention to the author's intentions, trying to establish or restore the original layout usually ruined by editors who, strange as it may seem, usually disregard the author's design' (Bazarnik and Fajfer 2010). Although I support Fajfer and Bazarnik's vision that writers should take more responsibility for the material production and becoming of their publication, and for the various aspects of the publishing process, for me this does not imply that these aspects should be (or ever can be) in control of a total intentional author. Although I agree with Fajfer that 'the shape of the book should not be determined by generally accepted conventions', I would like to emphasise forms of distributed intentionality or agency as part of our writing and publishing processes; processes which, albeit not under our control, we should nonetheless take responsibility for. This is clearly a route Fajfer does not want to take: 'Otherwise, one would have to agree with Raymond Federman and admit that one shares the authorship of one's masterpieces with the editor, typesetter, and manuscript reviser; and what writer would like to do that?' (Fajfer 2010, 25)

Janneke_Adema A further distinction between performative publications and liberature lies in the fact that liberature very clearly distinguishes itself as a literary genre or phenomenon. Fajfer argues that it is necessary to create this separate genre because he too often sees non-traditional literary works being judged as works of art, not as literature. In this sense liberature should be seen as differing from artists' books and concrete poetry, Bazarnik and Fajfer state: 'So the concept of "liberature" grew out of *Oka-leczenie*, the book we labelled as such, partly in order to avoid the term "the artists' book". We had to come up with an appropriate term to describe it, or to give critics an appropriate tool to handle it if we wanted them to take it seriously. Otherwise, it would have been labelled "the artists' book" or a typographic happening, as someone called it, and relegated to the margins of literature. Instead of getting to libraries and bookshops, it would have ended up in galleries and exhibitions. But we wanted it to be read. Our priority in writing and designing it was not to make it visually appealing, but to find an appropriate form that would suit its subject (...)' (Bazarnik and Fajfer 2010). Perhaps this literary context also explains why it is harder for Bazarnik and Fajfer to complicate authorial intention, something that has perhaps been worked through more extensively in an artistic context than it has been in a literary one.

Janneke_Adema A final distinction seems to lie in the fact that liberature remains very much focused on text-based and non-digital works of literature. Can a video-work be liberature for example? In liberature the totality of the work remains key, which includes the semantics of the text in combination with its materiality, together forming a semiotic unity or symbiosis. Does this focus on a total work also mean that liberature sees (literary) works as objects, as fixed and static (as opposed to fluid and processual, for example?).

Fajfer emphasises that for him, liberature does not mean adherence to the codex form: 'There is no reason for constraining oneself to the traditional form of the codex. These work can assume any shape at all and be made of any material' (Fajfer 2010, 44). However, this definition does not seem to include digital works. In their analysis of liberature Bazarnik and Fajfer focus mainly on modernist and avant-garde print-based works. With respect to current developments, liberature can be seen as a response to digital media (*Tree of Codes*, Jonathan Safran Foer's work that is often seen as extremely hard to adapt to a digital environment is often mentioned as a work of liberature). Here there seems to be some overlap with post-digital works, which show a renewed interest in experimentation with print, craft, artist and even 'hipster' publishing. Print in this sense is seen as evading the restrictions and control that the digital environment and its distribution models impose. (Ludovico 2012, Cramer 2012).

Fajfer even goes so far as to oppose liberature to digital hypertexts, predominantly because, due to their specific materiality, liberatic works can not easily be translated into hypertext: 'The book (from Latin "liber") is a part of the work; its physical shape and structure constitute its integral part. So it is not easy to take out the text and place it in the virtual space since in the liberatic work the space in which words are contained is not neutral' (Fajfer 2010, 10). There is a tendency here to both experiment with the book's format whilst also maintaining the printed book, or the codex or book object. In this sense liberature seems to have limited

interest in experimentation with digital or hybrid print/digital content, where Fajfer even professes a fear for digital media: 'We can only hope that a future masterpiece will change the present situation and the attitude of writers to the material aspect of the book, which they have ignored so far. This is, I believe, the only way of saving hardcopy books from obliteration by electronic media' (Fajfer 2010, 27-28).

*To best use print on 100% scale on your printer settings.

These posters and the accompanying website have been designed by Nabaz Nabeq, Milo Spasovic and Stefan Cerni as part of a project on performative publications run by Janneke Adema.

They offer an alternative take on the article 'The political nature of the book: On artists' books and radical open access', written by Janneke Adema and Guy Hill.

<http://digitalmedia.org.uk/the-political-nature-of-the-book>

FROM TECHNOTEXTS TO PERFORMATIVE MATERIALITY

Janneke Adema As a term, performative publications have a lot in common with Katherine Hayles's concept 'technotexts'. In her book *Writing Machines* (itself a technotext, beautifully designed by Anne Burdick in a hybrid print and 'webtake' version) Hayles introduces the term technotext as a relative and alternative to concepts such as hypertext and cybertext. She defines a technotext as something that comes about 'when a literary work interrogates the inscription technology that produces it' (Hayles 2002, 25) and elsewhere as 'a book that embodies its own critical concepts' (Hayles 2002, 140). In *Writing Machines* Hayles then goes on to analyse 3 technotexts, Talan Memmott's work of electronic literature *Lexia to Perplexia* (2000), Tom Phillips artist's book *A Humument* (1970), and Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves* (2000).

Janneke Adema Yet there exists a difference in focus and emphasis between what Hayles defines as technotexts and what I here would like to put forward as performative publications. In the latter the accent lies more on the material agency of publications, not merely *investigating* or *interrogating* their own mediality or materiality, but *actively enacting* or *performing* it. How does the term 'technotext' in this sense relate to the emphasis in a lot of current theory on what texts do and not just what they mean or signify, or even embody? In this respect it is useful to go back to Johanna Drucker's conceptualisation of *performative materiality*, where she states that 'performative materiality is based on the conviction that a system should be understood by what it does, not only how it is structured' (Drucker 2013). Hayles does however also focus on this aspect of 'doing' when she states that what technotexts do, is 'bring into view the machinery that gives their verbal constructions physical reality' (Hayles 2002, 26). However, here again one could argue that performative publications move beyond a 'bringing into view' or a 'reflecting on' their own mediality, where they are actively involved in performing (or performatively disrupting or intervening in) it.

In this respect one could argue that technotexts are focused more on the ontological dimension of literature than on its actual performance. Again, as Drucker also argues, as a concept performative materiality should be seen as an extended dimension of materiality, not as an alternative or a replacement, and in this sense performative publications can be seen as a further extension of what Hayles explores with her concept of technotexts. As Drucker states, 'performative materiality suggests that what something is has to be understood in terms of what it does, how it works within machinic, systemic, and cultural domains' (Drucker 2013). In this sense it goes beyond reflection and 'shifts the emphasis from acknowledgement of and attention to material conditions and structures towards analysis of the production of a text, program, or other interpretative event' (Drucker 2013).

Technotexts as a term also seem constricted to 'texts' to some extent and to their technologies of inscription, where, as I would argue, performative publications encompass a broader ecology of materiality, taking into consideration not only the technologies that make up a text or a work but also the discourses, authorial intentions, systems and forms of material production that a publication is entangled with and performs. In this respect performative publications 'interrogate' and intra-act with what produces them in a broader sense, going beyond technology to include ideas of the book, originality, copyright, publishing models, the poethics of scholarship etc.

Janneke_Adema Two examples of what I would claim are not only technotexts but also (or in addition to that) performative publications are Mark Amerika's *remixthebook* (2013) and Whitney Trettien's *Computers, Cut-ups, and Combinatory Volvelles: An Archaeology of Text-generating Mechanisms* (2009). Trettien's thesis presents an archeology of text-generating mechanisms, exploring writing as *ars combinatoria*—as a material, combinatory practice—examining a wide array of forms from volvelles to cut-ups and digital poetry. Yet Trettien presents not a simple linear and narrative history; her archaeology is itself designed as an online combinatory text-generating mechanism. Even more, Trettien's work not only reflects or interrogates its subject or contents by performing its ideas materially: in addition to this it also, simultaneously, intervenes into this debate in a performative way (both conceptually and practically), defamiliarising the, as Trettien states, presumed natural 'institutional conventions of scholarly reading, writing and publication' (2009). Her digital mechanism demands that the reader participate in the construction and performance of her work, for example. As Trettien argues: 'by both presenting and enacting the very mechanisms I theorise, I hope to put a neglected past in conversation with our present while still waving "goodbye to much that is familiar"' (2009).

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

KamilaKuc Here the notion of a design as a political tool is also crucial. From the Constructivist practices onwards, the question of how design comments on and engages with contemporary life is definitely manifested in this project as well as in corresponding practices such as *Photomediations: An Open Book*. How does the content one wants to present/communicate to the audiences fit the format in which this information is presented/accessed seem to be the key questions.

Janneke_Adema The concept of performative publications is closely aligned with current discussions within the digital humanities and media theory around design and scholarship. Here the focus is on the acknowledgement of the role played by and the influence of, design, design choices and material forms of scholarship, when it comes to the creation, dissemination and consumption of scholarship. One of the ongoing issues in this respect is how the design of online scholarship continues to mirror and reproduce print-based forms of communication instead of experimenting with the possibilities that the digital medium offers us. As Johanna Drucker argues: 'In spite of the networked condition of textual production, the design of digital platforms for daily use has hardly begun to accommodate the imaginative possibilities of constellatory composition, graphic interpretation, and diagrammatic writing... Very few acts of composition are diagrammatic, constellatory, or associative. Fewer still are visual

or spatial. The predominant modes of composition in digital displays have remained quite linear, even when they have combinatoric or modular underpinnings' (2014, 183). Print based habits and designs also come with ingrained power structures, value systems and discourses, and with specific stakeholders that have heavily invested in these specific medial forms, which they have further essentialised and commodified. The changing materiality of scholarship offers us the opportunity to critique the iterative print-based habits in academic publishing and communication. Experimenting with new forms of communication therefore entails a critical redesign of scholarship.

Janneke Adema When it comes to issues of design, Craig Saper argues for a 'visceral scholarship', which pays closer attention to the 'visceral, visual, and sonic qualities' of scholarship, as well as to the specific sensibilities of the subjects that we research. He perceives visceral scholarship to be an experimental model for alternative forms of online research. Saper has experimented with the creation of this form of scholarship through the online ethnographic project Folkvine.org. Folkvine.org is both a website centered around a community arts collective in Florida, and an experiment in creating online ethnographic scholarship, paying specific attention to the relationship between scholarship and website design. Saper and his collaborators use Folkvine.org to experiment with bringing into practice how design is a crucial aspect of the message or the content being communicated. Specific design decisions produce specific kinds of meaning, Saper argues, which are again specific to the medium used. Design for Saper therefore functions as an integral aspect of scholarship, not, as he explains it, as an invisible lens or ornament for scholarship. In this respect, Folkvine portrays the sensibilities and the aesthetics of the artists involved both in content and in form (Saper 2008).

Janneke Adema Tara McPherson has grappled with the politics and ethics inherent in questions of design as part of both her research practice and her various publishing endeavours. As such she asks the question as to 'what it might mean to design—from their very conception—digital tools and applications that emerge from the concerns of cultural theory and, in particular, from a feminist concern for difference' (McPherson 2014, 178). Influenced by Anne Balsamo's work around design and Karen Barad's concepts of intra-action and entanglement, design, McPherson states—be it of technologies, software, or code—, is an outcome of our entanglements with matter, with each other, and with discursive structures. From the perspective of critical theory, issues around identity politics are therefore not simply 'add-ons' to our analyses or metadata, but are operating principles integrally connected to (the design of) our archives and databases. Praxis and theory cannot be 'bracketed' or singled out McPherson states when it comes to issues of design and knowledge production. McPherson argues that feminist scholarship is important to start to think through how we can design our tools, our archives and databases differently, engaging power and difference and taking into account the inherent intra-action of context and code (McPherson 2014).

Janneke Adema McPherson brings into practice her ideas around feminist design and knowledge production as part of several publishing experiments, including the journal **Vectors** and the publishing platform **Scalar**. Here her focus is on enabling scholarship to be multimodal, performative and immersive. Where Vectors, as McPherson explains, aimed to engage feminist work by integrating form and content and making this transparent and manifest as part of the journal's aesthetics and its information design, with Scalar they wanted to push this further to also integrate these principles on the level of software design. As McPherson states: 'Scalar takes seriously feminist methodologies ranging from the cut to theories of alliance, intersectionality, and articulation not only in support of scholars undertaking individual projects but also in our very design principles' (McPherson 2014, 185).

McPherson's aim has been to create speculative projects, which are better able to support humanities thinking. In this respect she reiterates that design, for her, is not a mere representation, but it is performative. As she states with respect to visualisations: 'The visualizations are not merely illustrative; they are also powerful interpretations that present a project's structure, evidence, and arguments in new ways. They bring together narrative (and analysis) with the database, enriching each' (McPherson 2014, 184).

TOWARDS A SCHOLARLY POETHICS

Janneke Adema Scholarly poethics is what connects the 'doing' of scholarship with the ethical components of research. Here, ethics and poethics are entangled and an ethical engagement is already from the start involved in the production of scholarship, it informs our scholarship. Whilst formulating a narrative around the idea of a scholarly poethics—what it would look like, what it could mean, imply and

do and, perhaps most importantly, what it could potentially achieve—in relation to our publishing practices, I want to argue that we should pay more attention to how we craft our own poetics as scholars.

Just as we have internal discussions about the contents of our scholarship, about the methodologies, theories and politics we use to give meaning and structure to our research, we should similarly have these kinds of discussions about the way we *do* research. Thus we should also be focusing on the medial forms, the formats and the graphic space in and through which we communicate and perform scholarship (and the discourses that surround these), as well as the structures and institutions that shape and determine our scholarly practices. This 'contextual' discussion, focusing on the materiality of our (textual) scholarship and its material modes of production, is and should not in any way be separate from a discussion on the contents of our work. The way we do scholarship informs its 'outcomes', what scholarship looks like. It informs the kinds of methodologies, theories and politics we can choose from, and of course, vice versa, these again shape the way we perform our scholarship. A focus on scholarly poethics might therefore be useful in bridging the context/content divide.

So what then is the altered status of a (digital) scholarly poethics today? Which theoretical streams, disciplinary fields, and schools of thought (inside and outside of academia, connecting the arts and the humanities) have specifically incorporated attention to the practices and performances of scholarship and this internal/external divide? Here it would be useful to look to fields such as design, poetry, science and technology studies (STS), feminist theory, the (radical) open access movement, and—in some instances the digital humanities and in cultural and literary studies—where the way we conduct scholarship can be seen to have been at the forefront of academic inquiries. What can we learn from these discussions and how can we add to and expand them to enrich our understanding of what a scholarly poethics could be(come)? As I envision it a scholarly poethics is not one thing, not a specific prescriptive methodology or way of doing scholarship, it is a plural and evolving process in which content and context co-develop. Scholarly poethics thus focuses on the abundant, and continuously changing material-discursive attitudes towards scholarly practices, research, communication media (text/film/audio) and institutions.

Janneke Adema Poethics, although hard to define in all its plurality and in the variety of uses of the term, most commonly can be seen perhaps as a theory of literary forms (Genette 1988) or more subjectively, as an author's specific theory of literature. In this respect poethics seems to refer more to structure and stability, where poiesis—a verb—which lies at the root of the word poetry, refers to the act of making in language. If we want to explore how the difference between poethics and poiesis works out specifically in the realm of textual matter and writing practices, it is important to look at some of the important writing done by feminist literary theorists on (feminist) poethics. Terry Threadgold has explored in depth how in feminism or feminist writing attention shifted from exploring poethics as the study of ready-made textual forms, towards the exploration of poiesis, the study of the 'making' or 'performing' of textual forms. Here the focus is more on the responsibility that we have towards how text is created and how we create texts.

In this respect Threadgold is mostly interested in feminist rewritings, where she states—echoing the concept of iterability in Derrida and Butler—that 'one cannot in fact write at all without rewriting' (Threadgold 1997, 56). Directly connecting the content of our work with its context, Threadgold argues that every analysis, and thus every critique and theory in this sense is performative, stating that: 'one does not analyse texts, one rewrites them, one does not have an objective metalanguage, one does not use a theory, one performs one's critique. Critique is itself a poiesis, a making' (Threadgold 1997, 1).

Similar to Threadgold I am interested in 'rereading and rewriting the theories and practices of poethics and poiesis against one another' (Threadgold 1997, 1). Poiesis can be seen as a dynamic force, where poethics is its necessary static counter-point; in this sense the terms

already denote each other. Threadgold talks about poetics as meaning 'to work on and with texts'. With our changing conception of and understanding that texts are processual, the dynamic term 'poesis' became perhaps more suitable, Threadgold argues.

Janneke Adema Literary theorist Joan Retallack has written extensively about the responsibility that comes with formulating and performing a poetics, which she has captured in her concept of *poethics* (with an added h). Retallack is interested in a poetics of/as change, or as she calls it, a poetics of the swerve (*clinamen*), which continuously unsettles our familiar notions (Retallack 2004, 1).

Threadgold opposes poetics and poesis, where she sees the 'theoretical poetics' as a heritage of structuralism and modernism, versus the what she calls 'performative poesis', which she identifies in post-structuralism and postmodernism. Retallack however complicates this opposition in her poetics of change. She is interested in how change can take place within already determined situations. How do experimental situations come about?

What Retallack wants to explore and argue for is what she calls 'a certain poetics of responsibility', which she conceptualises as a 'wager'; it means taking a risk for something that matters (Retallack 2004, 3). Her poethics complicates agency (as an interacting between self and world), nevertheless urges upon our responsibility to guide change the best way we can, and to keep it in motion. It is in a poethics therefore, that ethics and aesthetics come together.

Janneke Adema If performative publications are the material expressions or incarnations of specific research projects and processes, entangled with them are various other agencies of production and constraint (i.e. technological, authorial, cultural and discursive agencies, to name just a few). What I want to argue is that performative publications as a specific subset of publications actively interrogate how to align more closely the material form of a publication with its content (in other words, where all publications are performative—i.e. they are knowledge shaping, active agents involved in knowledge production—not all publications are 'performative publications', in the sense that they actively interrogate or experiment with this relation between content and materiality—similar to artist books). Yet in addition to this there is also an openness towards the ongoing interaction between materiality and content which includes entanglements with other agencies, and material forms of constraint and possibility.

This concern for *the materiality and form of our publications* (and directly related to that the material production and political economy that surrounds a publication) is not a response to what elsewhere as part of a critique of certain tendencies within the field of new materialism is seen as a reaction to 'the linguistic turn' (Bruining 2013). On the contrary, I see this as a more direct reaction against perspectives on the digital which perceive digital text as disembodied and as a freeing of data from its material constraints as part of a conversion to a digital environment. However, content cannot be separated that easily from its material manifestations, as many theorist within the digital humanities have already argued (i.e. Hayles, Drucker). Alan Liu classifies this 'database' rhetoric of dematerialization as a religion that is characterised by 'an ideology of strict division between content and presentation' where content is separated from material instantiation or formal presentation as part of an aesthetics of network production and consumption (Liu 2004, 62).

Janneke Adema This binary distinction between reality and representation, which Liu critiques above, is one that is being addressed within feminist new materialism in specific. Karen Barad's theory of posthumanist performativity in specific emphasises the material dimensions of our discourses and the complex relationship between the material and the discursive, between content and materiality (Barad 2007). Similarly Katherine Hayles warns against theories which state that 'print literature was widely regarded as not having a body, only a speaking mind', arguing that materiality instead should be seen as an emergent property (Hayles 2004, 70). In this respect, performative publications as a practical application of these theories similarly try to stage an intervention into simplistic understandings of publications as representations of scholarship, disconnected from their publication media, their authors/producers and their contexts of material production.

ABOUT

This website and the accompanying posters have been designed by [Nabaa Baqir](#), [Mila Spasova](#) and [Serhan Curti](#), 2nd year design students at Coventry University, as part of a project on performative publications run by [Janneke Adema](#). They offer a different take on the article 'The political nature of the book. On artists' books and radical open access', written by [Janneke Adema](#) and [Gary Hall](#) and originally published in the journal [New Formations](#).

The Posters and Website

This website consists of 3 sections that all offer an alternative way to engage with the article, as well as to access or distribute it. The first section consists of the original postprint article text, which offers a familiar linear reading experience. The second section consists of 28 keywords, which relate to some of the main themes and topics that characterise and structure the article's content. By clicking on them these offer an alternative non-linear route through the text, as they are connected to snippets of text extracted from the original text that refer to the various keywords. The third section offers an offline engagement, consisting of 7 posters, each with 4 keywords and 4 QR codes that can be printed off at home. The QR code for each keyword will direct the reader to the corresponding keyword on the website, offering them the availability to access the various text snippets through their mobile devices. The posters can be printed on A3 or A4 format, which makes them easy to access with the aid of a home printer and simple to disseminate. On the backside of each poster you can find all the 7 separate posters in a reduced size with the accompanying keywords and QR codes. The poster can then be folded in such a way (see the folding instructions) that it forms a little booklet consisting of all the posters via which the entire article can be accessed.

Performative Publications

Together the website and posters try to envision what a 'performative publication' might be. A performative publication wants to explore how we can bring together and align more closely the material form of a publication with its content. The term performative publication was coined by [Christopher P. Long](#). He defines it as a publication in which 'the mode of publication performs one of the central ideas the text itself seeks to articulate and explore'. In this respect this concept relates to Katherine Hayes' term [technotext](#), which she defines as something that comes about 'when a literary work interrogates the inscription technology that produces it'. Where Hayes' term is in this sense broader and explores the relationship between text and technology, performative publications focus more on how the mode in which we produce, disseminate and consume text, influences the content and meaning of the text, or the way we interpret it. Here the accent lies more on the material agency of publications, not merely investigating its own materiality, but actively performing it. In this respect it relates to Johanna Drucker's concept of [performative materiality](#), where she states that 'performative materiality is based on the conviction that a system should be

Home About Full Article Posters

The screenshot displays a digital annotation tool. At the top, there are options to 'Sign up / Log in' and 'To annotate this document create a free account or log in'. Below this, a search bar shows 'Show all annotations (10)'. The main content area features an annotation by 'Janneke_Adema' dated 'Dec 31, 2016'. The annotation text reads: 'A performative publication wants to explore how we can bring together and align more closely the material form of a publication with its content.' Below the text, there is a section titled 'Liberature is a term, concept and genre coined in 1999 by the Polish avant-garde poet Zenon Fajfer, and further developed by his collaborator: literary scholar and theorist Katarzyna Bazarnik. Liberature is literature in the form of the book. Bazarnik and Fajfer define liberature as 'a literary genre that integrates text and its material foundation into a meaningful whole' (Bazarnik and Fajfer 2010, 1). In the introduction to Fajfer's collected essays, Bazarnik describes liberature as literary works in which the artistic message is transmitted not only through the verbal medium, but also through the author 'speaking' via the book as a whole (Bazarnik 2010, 7). Liberature is therefore a total approach that reaches beyond the linguistic medium, where the material form of the work is essential to its understanding and forms an organic element of the (inseparable) whole. Both Fajfer and Bazarnik emphasise that in liberature, the material book is no longer a neutral container for a text, but becomes an integral component of the literary work.' Below the text is an image of several open books. At the bottom, there are tags: 'disruptedjournal', 'liberature', 'Fajfer', 'Bazarnik', and 'performativepublishing'. There are also navigation arrows and a 'More' link.

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