Cutting scholarship together/apart. Rethinking the political-economy of scholarly book publishing

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Cutting scholarship together/apart.

Rethinking the political-economy of scholarly book publishing

'So as we flow across the page in the here and now,

and as you process the words as you read them,

remember this: they process you as well.'

(Paul Miller, *Rhythm Science*, 009)[1]

The act of cutting media and the concept of "the cut" form an essential aspect of remix theory and remix practice. Remix can be seen as being "supported by the practice of

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[1] Paul D. Miller, *Rhythm Science*, 1st ed. (The MIT Press, 2004), 009.

cut/copy and paste."[2] Yet, on a larger scale, cutting can also be understood as an essential aspect of the way reality is structured and defined. The first part of this chapter will provide an analysis of the way the cut and the practice of cutting have been theorized in remix studies, mostly from within a *representationalist* framework. This analysis will then be juxtaposed and entangled with a diffractive[3] reading of a selection of critical theory, feminist new materialist and media studies texts. These specifically focus on the act of cutting from a *performative* perspective, from which I will explore what a posthumanist vision of remix and the cut might look like. In the second part of this essay, I will examine how the potential of the cut and related to that, how the politics inherent in the act of cutting, can affirmitively be applied to scholarly book publishing.[4] How can we account for our own ethical entanglements as scholars in the becoming of the book? After analyzing how the book functions as an apparatus, a material-discursive formation or assemblage which enacts cuts, I will explore two publishing projects—*Living Books about Life* and *remixthebook*—that have tried to re-think and re-perform the apparatus. Both projects specifically take responsibility for the cuts they make in an effort to "cut well."[5] How have these projects established an alternative politics and ethics of the cut that is open to change, and what are their potential shortcomings?

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[2] Eduardo Navas, *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling*, 2012th ed. (Springer, 2012), 65.

[3] Donna Haraway first introduced the practice and concept of reading diffractively. Her approach was extended by Karen Barad, who argues that as a methodology, diffraction 'provides a way of attending to entanglements in reading important insights and approaches through one another.' Iris van der Tuin defines it as a reading that 'breaks through the academic habit of criticism and works along affirmative lines'. In this sense it is not based on a comparison between philosophies as closed, isolated entities, but on 'affirming links between… schools of thoughts.' Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007), 30. Iris Van Der Tuin, "'A Different Starting Point, a Different Metaphysics': Reading Bergson and Barad Diffractively," *Hypatia* 26, no. 1 (February 2011), 22, 27.

[4] With affirmative politics I want to focus on the potential of power as a form of empowerment (potentia), where negative, reactionary politics can be operationalized into *affirmative* alternative practices. As Rosi Braidotti has argued, this does not mean a distancing from critical theory. Rosi Braidotti, "On Putting the Active Back into Activism," *New Formations* 68, no. 1 (2010), 42–57.

[5] Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, *Life After New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process* (MIT Press, 2012).

This chapter thus explores how remix and the cut can be used as part of a posthumanist performative framework to question issues of quality, fixity and authorship/authority – essentialist and inherently humanist notions on which a great deal of the print-based academic institution continues to be based. As I will argue, remix, as a form of "differential cutting," can be a means to intervene in and rethink humanities knowledge production—with respect to the political economy of book publishing and the commodification of scholarship into knowledge objects—opening up and enabling a potential alternative politics of the book. Based on Foucault's concept of 'the apparatus', as well as on Barad's posthumanist expansion of this concept,[6] it will be argued that the scholarly book functions as an apparatus that cuts the processes of scholarly creation and becoming into authors, scholarly objects and a separate observed world. Drawing attention to the processual and unstable nature of the book instead, this contribution will focus on the book's critical and political potential to question these cuts and to disturb existing scholarly practices and institutions.

By engaging in a diffractive reading, this chapter should be read as a "performative text." It is not only a piece of writing on the topic of remix and on "cutting things together and apart," but through its methodology it also remixes a variety of theories from seemingly disparate fields, locations, times and contexts.[7]

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[6] In which apparatuses are conceptualized as specific material configurations that effect an agential cut between, and hence produce, subject and object. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 148.

[7] This is akin to what netartist Mark Amerika calls 'performing theory'. As a 'remixologist', Amerika sees data as a renewable energy source, where ideas, theories and samples become his source material. By creating and performing remixes of this source material, which is again based on a mash up of other source material, a collaborative interweaving of different texts, thinkers and artists emerges, one that celebrates and highlights the communal aspect of creativity in art and academia. Mark Amerika, *Remixthebook* (U of Minnesota Press, 2011).

The Material-discursive Cut within a Performative Framework

Remix theorist Eduardo Navas has written extensively about cut/copy paste as a practice and concept within (remixed) music and art. For Navas, remix is deeply embedded in a cultural and linguistic framework, where it is a form of discourse at play across culture.[8] This focus on remix as a *cultural variable* or as a form of cultural *representation* seems to be the dominant mode of analysis within remix studies as a field.[9] Based on his discursive framework of remix as representation and repetition (following Jacques Attali) Navas, for instance, makes a distinction between copying and cutting. He sees cutting (into something physical) as materially altering the world, whereas copying (a specific form of cutting), keeps the integrity of the original intact. Navas explores how the concept of sampling was altered under the influence of changes in mechanical reproduction, where sampling as a term started to take on the meaning of copying as the act of taking not from the world, but from an archive of representations of the world. Sampling thus came to be understood culturally as a meta-activity.[10] In this sense Navas distinguishes between material sampling from the world (which is disturbing) and sampling from representations (which is a form of meta-representation that keeps the original intact). The latter is a form of cultural citation—where one cites in terms of discourse—and this citation is strictly conceptual.[11]

To go beyond such a distinction between a materialist and a representationalist vision of remix, the insights of new materialist theorists will be beneficial. They will aid to explore

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[8] Navas, *Remix Theory*, 3.

[9] Lawrence Lessig and Henry Jenkins for instance talk about, respectively, remix as a Read/Write *culture* and as part of convergence *cultures*, although both see remix as embedded in technology and encapsulated by powers of material-economic production. Elisabeth Nesheim on the other hand—although still starting from a position of *human agency*—goes beyond remix as a cultural concept and explores principles of remix in nature, analyzing bioengineering as a form of genetic remixing and investigating bioartists who remix nature/culture as a form of critique and reflection. Lawrence Lessig, *Remix : Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008); Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York, N.Y., [etc.]; New York Universtiy Press, 2008); Elisabeth Nesheim, 'Remixed Culture/Nature. Is Our Current Remix Culture Giving Way to a Remixed Nature?', November 2009.

[10] Navas, *Remix Theory*, 12.

[11] Ibid., 11–16.

what a 'material-discursive' and performative vision of cutting and the cut will be able to contribute to the idea of remix as a critical affirmative *doing*. Here remix is extended beyond a *cultural* logic operating on the level of *representations,* seeing it as always already a *material* practice disturbing and intervening in the world. Karen Barad for instance moves beyond the binary distinction between reality and representation by replacing representationalism with a theory of posthumanist performativity, when she states: "the move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/doings/actions."[12] Here remixes as representations are not just mirrors or allegories *of* the world but direct interventions *in* the world. In this respect, *both* copying and cutting are performative, in the sense that they change the world, they alter and disturb it. Following this reasoning, copying is not ontologically distinct from cutting, as there is no distinction between discourse and the real world: language and matter are entangled (they are ongoing material (re)configurings of the world), where matter is already discursive and vice versa.[13]

Barad's form of realism is not about representing an independent reality outside of us, but about performatively intervening, intra-acting with and as part of the world.[14] For her intentions are attributable to complex networks of agencies, both human and non-human, functioning within a certain context of material conditions.[15] Where in reality agencies and "differences" are entangled phenomena, what Barad calls "agential cuts" cleave things together and apart, creating subjects and objects by enacting determinate boundaries,

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[12] Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs* 28, no. 3 (1 March 2003): 802.

[13] I am talking here about the fact that there is no onto-epistemological distinction between cutting and copying. From an ethical perspective, however, one might argue, as Navas has done extensively, that making a distinction between referencing ideas in conceptual and material form, might help us in our aid towards copyright reform. Eduardo Navas, 'Notes on Everything Is a Remix, Part 1, 2, and 3', *Remix Theory*, 3 September 2011, http://remixtheory.net/?p=480.

[14] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 37.

[15] Ibid., 23.

properties, and meanings. The separations that people make signify that they create inclusions and exclusions through their specific focus. We need to take responsibility for these cuts, Barad argues, as we are accountable for the entanglements of self and other that we weave, as well as for the cuts and separations, and the exclusions that we create.[16] Although not enacted directly by us, but by the larger material arrangement of which we are a part (cuts are made from the inside), we are still accountable to the cuts that we help enact: there are new possibilities and ethical obligations to act (cut) at every moment.[17] In this sense "(…) cuts do violence but also open up and rework the agential conditions of possibility."[18] It matters which cuts are enacted, where different cuts enact different materialized becomings. As Barad states: "It's all a matter of where we place the cut. (…) what is at stake is accountability to marks on bodies in their specificity by attending to how different cuts produce differences that matter."[19]

Cutting Well

Media theorists Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska explore the notion of the cut as an inevitable conceptual and material interruption in the process of mediation, focusing specifically on *where* to cut in as far as it relates to *how to cut well*. They argue that the cut is both a technique and an ethical imperative, where cutting is a necessary act to create meaning, to be able to say something about things.[20] On a more ontological level they argue that "cutting is fundamental to our emergence in the world, as well as our differentiation from it."[21] Here they see a similarity with Derrida's notion of "différance," a term that functions as

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[16] Ibid., 393.
[17] Ibid., 178–179.
[18] Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, 2012, 52, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.11515701.0001.001.
[19] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 348.
[20] Kember and Zylinska, *Life After New Media*, 27.
[21] Ibid., 168.

a cut, where it stabilizes the flow of mediation into things, objects, and subjects.[22] Through

the act of cutting we shape our temporally stabilized selves (we become individuated) as well

as actively forming the world we are part of and the matter surrounding us.[23] Kember and

Zylinska are specifically interested in the ethics of the cut. If we have to inevitably cut in the

process of becoming (to shape it and give it meaning) how is it that we can cut well? How

can we engage with a process of, as they call it, "differential cutting," enabling space for the

vitality of becoming?[24] To enable a "productive engagement with the cut," Kember and

Zylinska are interested in performative and affirmative acts of cutting. They use the example

of photography to explore the necessity to make cuts whilst still enabling the duration of

things.[25] Cutting becomes a technique not of rendering or representing the world, but of

managing, ordering and creating it, of giving it meaning. The act of cutting is crucial,

Kember and Zylinska argue, to our "becoming-with and becoming-different from the world,"

by shaping the universe and shaping ourselves in it.[26] Through cutting, they state, we enact

both separation and relationality where an "incision" becomes an ethical imperative, a

"decision," one which is not made by a humanist, liberal subject but by agentic processes.

For Kember and Zylinska a vitalist and affirmative way of cutting well thus leaves space for

duration, it does not close down life's creative impulse.[27]

The Affirmative Cut in Remix

To further investigate the imperative to cut well, I want to return to remix theory and

practice, where the potential of the cut and of remix as a subversive and affirmative logic,

and of appropriation as a political tool and a form of critical production, has been extensively

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[22] Ibid., xvi.
[23] Ibid., 168.
[24] Ibid., 81.
[25] Ibid., 81.
[26] Ibid., 75.
[27] Ibid., 82.

explored. Here I want to examine what a performative vision on and of remix might look like. In what sense do remix theory and practice function, in the words of Barad, as "specific agential practices/intra-actions/performances through which specific exclusionary boundaries are enacted?"[28] Navas, for instance, conceptualizes remix as a vitalism: a formless force, capable of taking on any form and medium. In this vitalism lies the power of remix to create something new out of something already existing, by reconfiguring it. In this sense as Navas states, "to remix is to compose." But remix, through these reconfiguring and juxtaposing gestures, also has the potential to question and critique, becoming an act that interrogates "(…) authorship, creativity, originality, and the economics that supported the discourse behind these terms as stable cultural forms."[29] However, Navas warns for the potential of remix to be both what he calls "regressive and reflexive," where the openness of its politics entails that it can also be easily co-opted, where "sampling and principles of Remix (…) have been turned into the preferred tools for consumer culture."[30] A regressive remix then is a form of regression: a re-combination of something that is already familiar and has proved to be successful for the commercial market. A reflexive remix on the other hand is re-generative, as it allows for constant change.[31] Here we can find the potential seeds of resistance in remix, where, as a type of intervention, Navas states it has the potential to question conventions, "to rupture the norm in order to open spaces of expression for marginalized communities," and, if implemented well, it can become a tool of autonomy.[32]

One of the realms of remix practice in which an affirmative position of critique and politics has been explored in depth, while taking clear responsibility for the material-discursive entanglements it enacts, is in feminist remix culture, most specifically in vidding

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[28] Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity. Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', in *Material Feminisms*, ed. Stacy Alaimo (Indiana University Press, 2008), 816.
[29] Navas, *Remix Theory*, 61.
[30] Ibid., 160.
[31] Ibid., 92–93.
[32] Ibid., 109.

and political remix video. Francesca Coppa defines vidding as "a grassroots art form in which fans reedit television or film into music videos called 'vids' or 'fanvids.'"[33] By cutting and selecting certain bits and juxtaposing them with others the practice of vidding, beyond or as part of a celebratory fan work, has the potential to become a critical textual engagement as well as a re-cutting and recomposing (cutting-together) of the world differently. As Kristina Busse and Alexis Lothian state, vidding practically deconstructs "(…) the ideological frameworks of film and TV by unmaking those frameworks technologically."[34] Coppa sees vidding as an act of both bringing together and taking apart, to receive the desired image. Here Coppa argues we need to pay attention to what get's cut out too.[35] The act of cutting is empowering and gives agency to vidders in Coppa's vision, where "she who cuts," is better than "she who is cut into pieces."[36]

Video artist Elisa Kreisinger, who makes queer video remixes of TV series such as *Sex and the City* and *Mad Men*, states that political remix videos harbor more of an element of critique, to correct certain elements (such as gender norms) in media works, without necessarily having to be fan works. As Kreisinger states, "I see remixing as the rebuilding and reclaiming of once-oppressive images into a positive vision of just society."[37] As Renee Slajda argues with respect to Kreisinger's remix videos, critique is not about deconstructing images "without constructing something new in its place." Slajda sees this as a feminist move beyond criticism, where she is interested in how remix artists turn critical consciousness into a creative practice to "reshape the media – and the world – as they would like to see it."[38] For

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[33] Francesca Coppa, "An Editing Room of One's Own: Vidding as Women's Work," *Camera Obscura* 26, no. 2 77 (January 1, 2011): 123.
[34] Kristina Busse and Alexis Lothian, "Scholarly Critiques and Critiques of Scholarship: The Uses of Remix Video," *Camera Obscura* 26, no. 2 77 (January 1, 2011): 141.
[35] Coppa, 'An Editing Room of One's Own', 124.
[36] Ibid., 128.
[37] Francesca Coppa, "Interview with Elisa Kreisinger," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 5, no. 0 (July 15, 2010).
[38] Renee Slajda, "'Don't Blame the Media, Become the Media': Feminist Remix as Utopian Practice," *Barnard Centre for Research on Women Blog*, May 30, 2013.

Kreisinger too, political remix video is not only about deconstructing and creating "more diverse and affirming narratives of representation."[39] It has the potential to effect actual change (although as Navas, she is aware that remix is also co-opted by corporations to reinforce stereotypes). Remix challenges dominant notions of ownership and copyright as well as the author/reader and owner/user binaries supporting these notions. By challenging these, remix videos also challenge the production and political economy of media.[40] As video artist Martin Leduc argues, "we may find that remix can offer a means not only of responding to the commercial media industry, but of replacing it."[41]

The Agentic Cut in Remix

Next to providing important affirmative contributions to the imperative to cut well, and to reconfigure boundaries, remix has also been implemental in rethinking and re-performing agency and authorship in art and academia, critiquing the liberal humanist subject that is the author, while exploring more posthumanist, entangled forms of agency in the form of agentic processes, in which agency is more distributed. Paul Miller, a.k.a DJ Spooky, writes about flows and cuts in his artist's book *Rhythm Science.* For Miller sampling is a doing, a creating with found objects, but this also means that we need to take responsibility for its genealogy, for those "who speak[s] through you."[42] Miller's practical and critical engagement with remix and the cut is especially interesting when it comes to his conceptualizing of identity, where—as in the new materialist thinking of Barad—he does not presuppose an identity or a self, but states that our identity comes about *through* our cuts, where the act of cutting shapes and creates our selves. "The collage becomes my identity," he

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[39] Elisa Kreisinger, "Queer Video Remix and LGBTQ Online Communities," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 9, no. 0 (September 30, 2011).

[40] Ibid.

[41] Martin Leduc, "The Two-source Illusion: How Vidding Practices Changed Jonathan McIntosh's Political Remix Videos," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 9, no. 0 (September 30, 2011).

[42] Miller, *Rhythm Science*, 037.

states.[43] For Miller, agency is thus not related to our identity as creators or artists, but to the flow or becoming, which always comes first. We are so immersed in and defined by the data that surrounds us on a daily basis, that, Miller argues, "we are entering an era of multiplex consciousness."[44]

Miller writes about creating different persona as shareware, while Mark Amerika is interested in the concept of performing theory and critiquing individuality and the self through concepts such as "flux personae," establishing the self as an "artist-medium" and a "post-production medium."[45] Amerika sees performing theory as a creative process in which pluralities of conceptual personae are created that explore their becoming. Through these various personae, Amerika critiques the unity of the self.[46] In this vision the artist becomes a medium through which language, in the form of prior inhabited data, flows. When the artist writes his words they don't feel like his own words but like an assemblage of sampled material from his co-creators and collaborators. By becoming an artist-medium, Amerika argues, "the self per se disappears in a sea of source material."[47] By exploring this idea of the networked author concept or of the writer as an artist-medium, Amerika contemplates what could be a new (posthuman) author function for the digital age, with the artist as a postproduction medium "becoming instrument" and "becoming electronics."[48]

Re-cutting the Scholarly Apparatus

What can we take away from this transversal reading of feminist new materialism, critical and media theory, and remix studies, with respect to cutting as an affirmative material-discursive practice? Through this reading I will analyze alternatives to the political-

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[43] Ibid., 024.
[44] Ibid., 061.
[45] Amerika, *Remixthebook*, 26.
[46] Ibid., 28.
[47] Ibid., 47.
[48] Ibid., 58.

economy of book publishing with its focus on ownership and copyright and the book as a consumer object. How can remix and the cut performatively critique established (humanist) notions such as authorship, authority, quality and fixity underlying scholarly book publishing? This (re-)reading might pose potential problems for our idea of critique and ethics when notions of stability, objectivity and distance tend to disappear. So, how can we make ethical, critical cuts in our scholarship while simultaneously promoting a politics of the book that is open and responsible to change, difference and exclusions?

To explore this, we need to analyse the way the book functions as an apparatus. The concept of "dispositif" or "apparatus," originates from Foucault's later work.[49] As a concept, it went beyond "discursive formation" connecting discourse more closely with material practices.[50] The apparatus is the system of relations that can be established between these disparate elements. However, an apparatus for Foucault is not a stable and solid thing but a shifting set of relations inscribed in a play of power, that is strategic and responds to an urgent need, a need to control.[51] Deleuze's fluid outlook sees it as an assemblage capable of escaping attempts of subversion and control. He is interested in the new, the variable creativity which arises out of dispositifs (in their actuality), or in the ability of the apparatus to transform itself, where we as human beings belong to dispositifs and act within them.[52] Barad connects the notion of the cut to her posthuman Bohrian concept of the apparatus. As part of our intra-actions, apparatuses, in the form of certain material arrangements or practices, effect an agential cut between subject and object, which are not separate but come

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[49] It first appeared as a concept in Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976). Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (Penguin Books, Limited, 2008).

[50] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, First American Edition, Stained (Vintage, 1980), 194–195.

[51] Ibid., 196. In Agamben's vision the apparatus is an all-oppressive formation, one from which human beings stand outside. Here he creates new binaries between inside/outside and material/discursive that might not be helpful for the posthuman vision of the apparatus. See, Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?: And Other Essays* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 14.

[52] Gilles Deleuze, 'What Is a Dispositif?', in *Michel Foucault, Philosopher: Essays*, ed. Timothy J. Armstrong (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

into being through intra-actions.[53] Apparatuses for Barad are open-ended and dynamic material-discursive practices, articulating concepts and things.[54]

In what way has the apparatus of the book—consisting of an entanglement of relationships between amongst others authors, books, the outside world, readers, the material production and political economy of book publishing and the discursive formation of scholarship—executed its power relations through cutting in a certain way? As I will argue, it has mostly operated via a logic of the cut that favours neat separations between books and authors (as human creators) and readers; that cuts out fixed scholarly book objects of an established quality and originality; and that pastes this system together via a system of strict ownership and copyright rules. How and where the apparatus of the book cuts at the present moment, does not take into full consideration the inherent fluid nature of the book and authorship,[55] nor the increased possibilities for collaboration, updates, versionings and multimedia enhancements in the digital environment. It enforces a political economy that keeps books and scholarship closed-off from the majority of the world's potential readers, functioning in an increasingly commercial environment (fueled by public money), which makes it very difficult to publish specialized scholarship lacking commercial promise. It also does not take into consideration how the humanist discourse on authorship, quality and originality that continues to underlie the humanities, perpetuates this publishing system in a material sense, nor how likewise the specific print-based materiality of the book and the publishing institutions that have grown around it have been incremental in shaping the discursive formation of the humanities and scholarship as a whole.

Following this essay's diffractively collected insights on remix and the cut I want to underscore the need to see and understand the book as a process of becoming, as an

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[53] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 141–142.
[54] Ibid., 334.
[55] John Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen / John Bryant* (University of Michigan Press, 2002).

entanglement of plural (human and non-human) agencies. The separations or cuts that have been forced out of these entanglements by specific material-discursive practices have created inclusions and exclusions, book objects and author subjects, controlling subject and object positions.[56] Books as apparatuses are thus performative, they are reality shaping. As I will argue, not enough responsibility is taken for the cuts that are enacted with and through the book as an apparatus. There is a lack of acknowledgement of our own roles as scholars in shaping the way we publish research. Next to that our approved, dominant scholarly practices—which include the (printed) book—are simultaneously affecting us as scholars and the way we act in and describe the world and/or our object of study. It is important to acknowledge our entangled nature in all this, where scholars need to take more responsibility for the practices they enact and enforce, and the cuts that they make—especially in their own book publishing practices.

Open-ended Scholarly Re-cutting

Living Books about Life and *remixthebook* are two book-publishing projects that have explored the potential of the cut and remix for an affirmative politics of publishing. In what sense have they, through their specific cuts, promoted an open-ended politics of the book, which enables duration and difference?

Mark Amerika, author/curator of the *remixthebook* project, states it is not a traditional form of (book) scholarship, but a hybrid performance platform.[57] *Remixthebook* is a collection of multimedia writings that explore remix as a cultural phenomenon by themselves referencing and mashing up curated selections of earlier theory, avant-garde and art writings

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[56] Look for example at the way the PhD student as a discoursing subject is being (re) produced by the dissertation and by the dominant discourses and practices that accompany it. Janneke Adema, "Practise What You Preach: Engaging in Humanities Research through Critical Praxis," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 5 (September 1, 2013): 491–505.

[57] Amerika, *remixthebook,* xi.

on remix. It consists of a printed book and an accompanying website which functions as a platform for a collaboration between artists and theorists exploring practice-based research.[58] Amerika tries to evade the bound nature of the printed book and its fixity and authority, by bringing together this community of people to remix, perform and discuss the theories and texts presented in the book via video, audio and text-based remixes published on the website—opening the book and its source material up for continuous multimedia re-cutting. Amerika also challenges dominant ideas of authorship by playing with personas and by drawing on a variety of remixed source material in his book, as well as by directly involving his remix community as collaborators on the project.

However a discrepancy remains visible between Amerika's aim to create a commons of renewable source material along with a platform for everyone to use, and the specific choices/cuts he has made with respect to the outlets he chose to fulfill this aim. *Remixthebook* is still published as a traditional printed book which hasn't been made available on an open access basis to more fully enable remix and reuse. The website is also not openly available for everyone to contribute to as the contributors have been selected or curated by Amerika and co-curator Rick Silva. The remixes on the website are also not available for remixing, as they are licensed under an all-rights-reserved copyright. Furthermore, Amerika is still acting as the "traditional," humanist author of both his book, and of the (curated) collection of material on the website, by using his name on the cover of the book and as part of the copyright license, which in the scholarly and artistic realm still function as signs of attribution and crediting. It is this issue of humanist authorship that the *Living Books About Life* project actively tried to challenge.

Living Books about Life is a series of open access books about life published by Open Humanities Press, providing a bridge between the humanities and the sciences. All the books

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[58] Ibid., xiv-xv.

repackage existing open access science-related research, supplementing this with an original editorial essay to unify the collection. They also provide additional multimedia material, from videos to podcasts to whole books. The books have been published online in an open source wiki platform, meaning the books are "open on a read/write basis for users to help compose, edit, annotate, translate and remix."[59] As Gary Hall, one of the initiators of the project has argued, this project challenges the physical and conceptual limitations of the traditional codex by including multimedia and whole books, but also by emphasizing its duration by publishing in a wiki. Thus it "rethink[s] 'the book' itself as a living, collaborative endeavor."[60] Hall argues that wikis offer a potential to question and critically engage issues of authorship, work and stability. They can offer increased accessibility and induce participation from contributors from the periphery. As he states, "wiki-communication can enable us to produce a multiplicitous academic and publishing network, one with a far more complex, fluid, antagonistic, distributed, and decentred structure, with a variety of singular and plural, human and non-human actants and agents."[61] One of the drawbacks of wikis, however, is that they are envisaged and structured in such a way that authorship and clear attribution/responsibility as well as version control remain an essential part of their functioning. The structure behind a wiki is still based on an identifiable author and a version history, giving access to changes and modifications. In reality, the authority of the author is not challenged. Furthermore, the books in the series also include a "frozen version." and are published not as common wikis, but as books with covers and clearly defined authors and editors. Mirroring the physical materiality of the book in such a way also reproduces the aura of the book, including the discourse of scholarship this brings with it. This might explain why the user interaction with

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[59] Gary Hall, "Better Living through Sharing: Living Books About Life and Other Open Media Projects," *Media Gifts*, June 17, 2012.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Gary Hall, 'Fluid Notes on Liquid Books', in *Putting Knowledge to Work and Letting Information Play: The Center for Digital Discourse and Culture*, Timothy W. Luke and Jeremy Hunsinger (Blacksburg, 2009), 43.

the books in the series has been limited in comparison to other wikis. Here the choice to re-cut the collected information as a book, as part of re-thinking and re-performing the book as concept and form, might paradoxically have been both the success and the failure of the project.

Conclusion

This text too, in all its conceptual performativity, falls pray to many of the above criticisms: it is published in a closed-access paperbound book by a reputable press with a clearly distinguishable set of editors and authors. Nevertheless, just as the projects mentioned above, it has attempted to rethink (through its diffractive methodology) how we might start to cut differently where it comes to our research and publication practices. Cutting and stabilizing still needs to be accomplished. The politics of the book itself can be helpful in this respect, where, as Gary Hall and I have argued elsewhere, "if it is to continue to be able to serve 'new ends' as a medium through which politics itself can be rethought (…) then the material and cultural constitution of the book needs to be continually reviewed, re-evaluated and reconceived."[62] The book itself can thus be a medium with the critical and political potential to question specific cuts and to disturb existing scholarly practices and institutions. Books are always a process of becoming (albeit one that is continuously interrupted and disturbed). Books are entanglements of different agencies that cannot be discerned beforehand. In the cuts that we make to untangle them we create specific material book objects, but in these specific cuts, the book has always already redeveloped; it has been remixed. It has mutated and moved on. The book is thus a processual, contextualized entity, which we can use as a means to critique our established practices and institutions, both

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[62] Janneke Adema and Gary Hall, "The Political Nature of the Book: On Artists' Books and Radical Open Access," *New Formations* 78, no. 1 (2013) 138.

through its forms (and the cuts we make to create these forms) and its metaphors, and through the practices that accompany it.

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