



## CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374

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Volume 16 | (2014) Issue 5

Article 17

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### Intermedial Strategies of Memory in Contemporary Novels

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### Recommended Citation

Tanderup, Sara. "Intermedial Strategies of Memory in Contemporary Novels." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 16.5 (2014): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2498>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

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**Volume 16 Issue 5 (December 2014) Article 16**  
**Sara Tanderup,**  
**"Intermedial Strategies and Memory in Contemporary Novels"**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss5/16>>

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Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 16.5 (2014)**  
Special Issue **New Work on Electronic Literature and Cyberculture**  
**Ed. Maya Zalbidea, Mark C. Marino, and Asunción López-Varela**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss5/>>

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**Abstract:** In her article "Intermedial Strategies and Memory in Contemporary Novels" Sara Tanderup discusses a tendency in contemporary literature towards combining intermedial experiments with a thematic preoccupation with memory and trauma. Analyzing selected works by Steven Hall, Jonathan Safran Foer, and Judd Morrissey and drawing on the theoretical perspectives of N. Katherine Hayles (media studies) and Andreas Huyssen (cultural memory studies), Tanderup argues that recent intermedial novels reflect a certain nostalgia celebrating and remembering the book as a visual and material object in the age of digital media while also highlighting the influence of new media on our cultural understanding and representation of memory and the past.

**Sara Tanderup**

### **Intermedial Strategies and Memory in Contemporary Novels**

Since the arrival of the digital, there has been a discourse about the "end of the book": for example, in 1992 Raymond Kurzweil wrote that "the book will enter obsolescence, although because of its long story and enormous installed base, it will linger for a couple of decades before reaching antiquity" (80) and Sven Birkets wrote in 1995 that "a change is upon us—nothing could be clearer ... the printed word is part of a vestigial order that we are moving away from" (118). Here, I do not intend to engage in the debate about whether the book is becoming obsolete or not. Rather, I focus on the discourse itself which associates the book with the idea of death, loss, and the past. I examine how this discourse is expressed aesthetically and thematically in selected contemporary novels. How does literature respond to the death of the book?

Recently there has been a tendency in literature towards reflecting on the changing status and function of the book by confronting the literary text with other, primarily visual, media. Authors such as Jonathan Safran Foer, Jennifer Egan, Salvador Plascencia, Jess Stoner, Reif Larsen, W.G. Sebald, Umberto Eco, Mark Danielewski, and Steven Hall include photographs, film stills, and drawings in their works or experiment with the book itself as a visual object. Experiments with images and other media in literature are of course not a new phenomenon, but whereas earlier image-text experiments, for instance those of the historical avant-garde, often celebrated the idea of the new, and of progress and change, recent experimental novels are characterized by an attention towards memory and the representation of traumatic pasts. I examine this tendency by focusing on the fact that these works use intermediality as a strategy to represent issues of memory while also remembering the book itself as a medium. In this context, for example Jessica Pressman relates intermedial novels to the concept of the "aesthetics of bookishness" arguing that "these novels exploit the power of the print page in ways that draw attention to the book as a multimedia format, one informed by and connected to digital technologies. They define the book as an aesthetic form whose power has been purposefully employed by literature for centuries and will continue to be far into the digital age" ("The Aesthetics" 465).

Analyzing three experimental texts—Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes*, and Judd Morrissey's *The Jew's Daughter* <<http://www.thejewsdaughter.com>>—I consider Pressman's concept of the "aesthetics of bookishness" from the perspective of memory. How does their thematic preoccupation with memory relate to the way in which these works formally remember the book? I argue that the intermedial strategies of Hall, Foer, and Morrissey reflect the influence of new media on contemporary literature and culture at two different levels. First, the novels express a certain media nostalgia, celebrating the book as an agent of stability, materiality and memory, and second, they reflect what happens to the very idea of memory when traditional literary representation is replaced or supplemented by other media. I thus combine the approaches of two disciplines, media studies and memory studies, both of which have experienced increased relevance owing to recent developments in scholarship. From the perspective of media studies, N. Katherine Hayles reads contemporary experiments as symptoms of a literary culture traumatized by the arrival of new media and contends that "the novel itself as a form is undergoing the traumatic experience of having its traditional territory taken over by the colonizing incursions of other media. These books respond to this trauma by bursts of anxious creativity, thereby changing what it means to be a novel in print" ("Future" 85). This fear of losing the book is also described by Hayles as a "corporeal anxiety": a "fear that [the books'] bodies are in jeopardy from a multitude of threats, especially the dematerialization that comes from being translated into digital code" ("Intermediation" 800). Hayles writes about technology and media, but her language points beyond that perspective: the book has a body and a mind, it is traumatized and anxious. Hence the book is associated with a human aspect, a physical "presence" as opposed to the virtuality and fluidity associated with electronic writing. Indeed, "corporeal anxiety" in literature may be related to the idea of a "posthuman" situation which Hayles also describes implying the fear of losing human identity, memory, and the body in the age of new digital media. Hayles seems to suggest that recent experimental novels not only reflect what is happening to the book as a technical medium, but also consider the human and cultural consequences of this development.

Following Hayles, I argue that the discourse of loss surrounding the book can be related to a broader cultural tendency of focusing on memory, history, and the past—what Andreas Huyssen, from the perspective of cultural memory studies, describes as a "memory boom" in Western culture. Like Hayles, Huyssen points to a traumatized culture which reacts with anxiety to the changes brought about by the new media: "My hypothesis is that...memory and musealization together are called upon to provide a bulwark against obsolescence and disappearance, to counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the ever-shrinking horizons of time and space" (*Present Pasts* 23). According to Huyssen, media development results in a fundamental destabilization of our relation to the past: "A sense of historical continuity ... gives way to the simultaneity of all times as spaces readily accessible in the present" (*Twilight* 253). Simultaneity replaces a sense of time and narrative. The result is a culture suffering at once from amnesia and nostalgia. There is a fundamental sense of loss, which can be related to the tendency in literature to thematize memory, trauma, and the past and to mourn the apparent loss of the book.

Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* is an obvious point of departure for examining this tendency as it combines a story about traumatic loss of memory with an intense occupation with media. The protagonist Eric Sanderson has lost his memory after his girlfriend Clío died: "I used to know so many things ... now, all I have are splinters. Remains of things I was quick enough to write down and preserve" (63). All that he has left is text: books and letters. Throughout the novel, the book, here represented by Eric's diary, is associated with memory: "I closed the book and took a breath. I thought about how a moment in history could be pressed flat and preserved like a flower is pressed flat and preserved between the pages of an encyclopaedia. Memory pressed flat into text" (32). However, the diary's representation of the past is complicated by the fact that it is written in code. After a long process of decoding, the last part of the diary is presented in which Eric reflects on the idea of authentic representation: "I'm already losing [Clío] to generalizations, the needless Chinese-whispering of memory" (412). Mediation of the past—whether it is performed in literature or by memory itself—is thus considered to imply a loss. Eric wants to remember "a real Clío Aames ... her actual skin, voice, ideas, eyes, past, hates, loves, hopes, priorities, blood, fingernails and shoes and periods and tears and nightmares, teeth and spit and laugh" (31). He wants a physical presence—but all that is left is text. Hall thus relates to a tradition of associating literary representation with absence and loss. The novel instead presents the idea that the book can preserve the past through its materiality—as suggested by the image of pressing, and hence preserving, flowers by means of the book's weight (see Panko 294).

*The Raw Shark Texts* emphasizes the materiality of books and writing: Eric seeks refuge in a world of books in order to preserve his memory, and formally, the novel displays its own materiality through experiments with the visual surface of the book. For instance, it presents a visual shark-attack: on a series of blank pages, a typographical image of a shark appears. When you flip through the pages, it looks as if it is coming closer, growing from page to page and finally "attacking" the reader. A movement is thus established which goes out of the book, indicating an aspect of movement and interactivity associated with the new media (see Panko 291). The shark is a "conceptual fish" inhabiting "the flows of human interaction and ... the streams, currents and rivers of human knowledge, experience and communication" (Hall 64). Apparently, it has attacked and consumed Eric's memory. Described as a contamination in the flows of communication, the memory-consuming shark suggests that Eric's loss of memory is a symptom of a cultural, communicative and media-related problem. The metaphor of "streams, currents and rivers" indicates the fluidity associated with digital media. Hence the shark might be read as a metaphor of the attack on memory which these media are assumed to bring along. Although digital media carry new possibilities of archiving and accessing information about the past, they also imply the risk of forgetting. According to Pressman, "the byproduct of a culture of information overload is a fear of memory loss that conjoins human and machine" ("The Aesthetics" 472).

*The Raw Shark Texts* thus relates to a discourse of associating the book with memory, stability, and continuity in opposition to digital media associated with a loss of memory, identity, materiality, and the body. This dichotomy is emphasized as Eric descends into an underworld consisting of tunnels of books: "The air inside the tunnel smelled like the pages of a second-hand Charles Dickens novel, yellowy paper, old print and finger grease, that pressed, preserved some kind of smell" (224). The books are described as having a physical, almost bodily, relation to the past. They make up a literary world that is stable against all odds: "a whole haphazard Braillescape of paper, print and biroed words

somehow not collapsing into this tiny black space" (225). The world of books is described as a refuge place from a dangerous virtual reality. However, the novel also draws attention to the way books function in a context of other media and texts (Pressman, "The Aesthetics 279). Actually, only because of this context are they able to protect Eric against the shark: "Library books are best because they also link the book itself to every previous reader and any application of the text. Fiction books also generate illusionary flows of people and events and things that have never been, or maybe have only half-been from a certain point of view. The result is a labyrinth of glass and mirrors which can trap an unwary fish for a great deal of time" (68). What protects the memory is not the book itself as an isolated object, but the literary network it is part of. *The Raw Shark Texts* makes up such a network, referring to such other texts as the movies *Casablanca*, *Jaws*, *Memento*, and *The Matrix*, and to works by Dickens, Borges, Auster, Calvino, and Pynchon (see Pressman, *The Aesthetics* 479). Further, the novel is part of an even larger network: Hall participates in discussions about it on the internet, and, in the event of new editions or translations of the novel, he publishes extra, supposedly lost, chapters, so-called negatives or un-chapters. Also online, readers discuss these chapters, which often appear to be fragments of Eric's diary which reveal gradually his forgotten past. The process of remembering is taken beyond the book, demanding active reader participation.

*The Raw Shark Texts* describes a tension between the idea of the book as an isolated object and the book as a part of a network, in dynamic interplay with other media, texts and people. The book functions as a medium of memory in this field of tension: it may preserve the past because it has been in touch with the world. This perspective is emphasized when Eric finds Clio's guidebook: "My fingers touching the indentations, the pen marks, the folded page corners ... Clio Aames' real and true and actual writing right there in front of me ... Then I noticed my face, my cheeks were wet" (266). Clio's "real and true and actual writing" recalls Eric's wish for a "real Clio Aames." Her pen marks and folded page corners make him cry because they testify to the presence of the past: the book has been read and touched. According to Julia Panko, the book's ability to provide this sense of presence is what makes it a privileged medium of memory: "The materiality of the book is important not in the vein of glib arguments about the readers being unable to take their Kindles into the bath, but because it can be the means of another kind of record-making, created from the physical traces a reader's body leaves in the process of handling a book, rather than from the reduction of a human being to a data set or literary description" (295). Contrary to digital media, the book may bring us in touch with the past because it can be marked by time and touch.

In order to examine this idea about the book as a material object of memory, I turn to Foer. Whereas *The Raw Shark Texts* looks like a traditional book, a solid and stable object of 448 pages, Foer's *Tree of Codes* appears physically unstable. It is entirely cut out of Bruno Schulz's 1934 *The Street of Crocodiles* and owing to the die-cut technique, it is filled with holes. As a result, the text seems coded, as is indicated in the title, and appears almost illegible. As was the case with Eric's diary, reading becomes a process of decoding. In *The Raw Shark Texts*, the book is imagined as a memory-protecting shield. *Tree of Codes*, on the contrary, draws attention to the book as a vulnerable and broken object. Its fragmented expression may be related to a modernist aesthetics of trauma representation, emphasizing absence and loss. Foer's holes thus seem to highlight an aspect of trauma in Schulz's text. *The Street of Crocodiles* is a collection of short stories about childhood memories centered around the author-protagonist's eccentric father. Foer reduces *The Street of Crocodiles* to a story about the father's death: "my father was wilting before our eyes" (30). After the father's death, the book ends with apocalyptic prophecies and the dead father haunts the last lines: "my father alone was awake wandering silently through the rooms" (134). The motif of the father's ghost suggests that *Tree of Codes* itself is haunted by Schulz. *The Street of Crocodiles* is connected to a discourse of trauma because of Schulz's life story: the author was shot dead by the Gestapo in 1942 and most of his work was lost during the war.

*Tree of Codes* has been read in this context by Michel Faber: "As an artefact, the most remarkable thing about *Tree of Codes* is how very fragile it is ... Yet, knowing Bruno Schulz's life story, there is poignancy in this. His oeuvre ... was hacked down to modest size by tragic misfortune: his murder by the Nazis, followed by the loss of hundreds of his paintings, drawings and manuscripts. The idea of *The Street of Crocodiles* surviving in disguise ... strikes me as a bittersweet irony, an oddly fitting homage" (<<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/dec/18/tree-codes-safran-foer-review>>). *Tree*

of *Codes* is considered here as an object rather than a narrative. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth agrees, interpreting the book as a "ruin": "Foer has created a ruin in which the past, *The Street of Crocodiles*, remains palpably present" ("Old and New" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1800>>). While this idea of the book as a ruin suggests absence, it also brings the past, the old text, into the present. I suggest that the book is celebrated as an object of memory as it can be touched and marked by time. *Tree of Codes* may be read accordingly as a practise of touching the old text. My hypothesis is that *Tree of Codes* remembers not only Schulz's text, but the book itself. Foer himself compares his book to the work of the artist Joseph Cornell: "Cornell's art creates museum spaces, where ordinary objects are given great value. I think there's something about the format of *Tree of Codes* that does that for words" (Heller

<<http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/jonathan-safran-foers-book-as-art-object/>>). The work is described as a museum and adds value or aura to writing and the book. Walter Benjamin's notion of aura describes the sense of authenticity associated with the traditional work of art as opposed to works in the new media of reproducibility. Benjamin does not mention the book, which has been reproducible since Gutenberg; however, Foer seems to suggest that "words," writing, and the book gains aura as, in the age of new digital media, they become something to remember. Hence Foer's book may seem as an example of what Benjamin referred to as the modern relics of nostalgia which despite their media-determined reproducibility gain value through the physical imprint of time and use on them. Like the books in *The Raw Shark Texts*, these objects become auratic because they have been "touched." Such objects are also described by José van Dijck as "mediated memories ... the activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present and future of ourselves in relation to others" (21). With the concept of mediated memories, van Dijck suggests that it is the material instability of objects that establishes a sense of continuity: "in fact it is exactly this material transformation—its decay or decomposing—that becomes part of a mutating memory: the growing imperfect state of these items connotes continuity between past and present" (37). *Tree of Codes* expresses this idea of mutating memory. The more fragmented the book is, the less it functions as a narrative and the more it signifies as an object. Hence, its fragmented appearance draws attention the book as a present, tangible object.

A similar ambiguity is suggested by Stephen Greenblatt in what he calls "wounded artefacts": these "may be compelling not only as witnesses to the violence of history but as signs of use, marks of the human touch, and hence links with the openness to touch that was the condition of their creation" (22). Like van Dijck, Greenblatt highlights the physical instability of material objects. The wounded artefact displays an "openness to touch" to being created, touched, or broken down. Greenblatt describes the wounded artefact as part of his attempt to apply new historicism as an approach to the study of visual objects: "Insofar as this approach ... is at all applicable to visual traces, it would call for an attempt to reduce the isolation of individual 'masterpieces,' to illuminate the conditions of their making, to disclose the history of their appropriation and the circumstances in which they have come to be displayed, to restore the tangibility, the permeability of boundaries that enabled the objects to come into being in the first place" (20). *Tree of Codes*, as a visual object, reflects this way of approaching the masterpiece. Schulz's text is deconstructed and opened. Thus is established a movement away from the idea of the autonomous work of art—or the finished, closed book. Instead, Foer's book appears an expression of a dynamic process: "mutating memory."

Celebrating the book as an object of memory, *Tree of Codes* seems to participate in a discourse of media nostalgia, highlighting the qualities of print in opposition to new media. In his blurb on the back cover of *Tree of Codes*, Olafur Eliasson suggests that "in our world of screens, [Foer] welds narrative, materiality, and our reading experience into a book that remembers it actually has a body" (back cover). Boris Kachka describes Foer's book as "a remarkable piece of inert, unclickable technology: the anti-Kindle" (<<http://nymag.com/arts/books/features/69635/>>) and Brillenburg Wurth writes that "Foer makes us sensitive as to what it means to read a book, a page—not just a text in an age where Kindle and other tablets are undoing the crucial dimension of page design" ("Old and New" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1800>>). Foer points out that his book is "a way of remembering something about books. I think there's going to be something that happens now where books move in two directions, one toward digitized formats and one toward remembering what's nice about the physicality of them" (Foer qtd. in Kachka <<http://nymag.com/arts/books/features/69635/>>). The-

se descriptions suggest *Tree of Codes* as an object of nostalgia, a monument to the dead book which has lost its previous function as the body of literature. However, Foer's broken book not only reflects a dysfunctional and traumatized literature, but also signals an openness to touch, transformation, and mutation. Brillenburg Wurth suggests that experimental books reflect the future of literature exactly because they draw attention to their own mediality. Hence she argues that the experimental book "tells us something about 'the book': about texts as images in their own right, and the book as an object, rather than a channel and storage of information alone. It may even tell us something about the book to come" ("Old and New" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1800>>). The intermedial book is hence not just a medium for the storage of knowledge about the past. It rather communicates a dynamic idea of memory, highlighting the way literature changes form, expression, and medium.

Thus, *Tree of Codes* may also reflect what happens when literature is converted into a coded digital form. That is, the continuity of the traditional book is here replaced by a sense of simultaneity, as one can literally look through the pages—recalling Huyssen's argument that in the age of new digital media "a sense of historical continuity ... gives way to the simultaneity of all times as spaces readily accessible in the present" (*Twilight* 253). Foer's work indeed appears as an open space in which readers are free to navigate on their own—Brillenburg Wurth even compares the book's logic to "the choose-it-yourself strategy" of hypertext ("Old and New" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1800>>). *Tree of Codes* is characterized by an ambiguity also present in *The Raw Shark Texts*: both texts represent difficult processes of remembering. Through their intermedial strategies, they highlight the book as an auratic object, able to preserve the past exactly because it is "open to touch." However, the same strategies are also used to break down conventions about literature and memory, pointing towards the logic of new digital media. Hall writes extra chapters so that his story will spread beyond the book, while Foer cuts holes in his pages, abandoning the idea of linear narrative. Both works reflect the changing conditions of literature in a world dominated by new media—a situation that also influences our idea of memory and our relation to the past.

Next, I examine the relation between memory and media in Morrissey's *The Jew's Daughter* <<http://www.thejewsondaughter.com>>. How is the book remembered in this electronic text? Reading *The Jew's Daughter* is a process of constant rereading. The text appears on screen in what looks like a printed page. It changes subtly when the reader moves the cursor over a word written in blue. In order to realize what has changed, the reader must remember what was on the first page and read the text again. In this way, the text activates the reader's memory, both in terms of recalling and rereading (Hayles, "Intermediation" 116). At the same time, the text recalls Joyce's *Ulysses*. Morrissey's text thus practices mutating memory on several levels, remembering Joyce's canonical text and the printed page in the new medium of electronic text. This attempt to reconstruct a relation between past and present, new and old media, might be associated with the work's preoccupation with memory and trauma: *The Jew's Daughter* describes the protagonist's attempt to work through the trauma of discovering his wife's infidelity. I argue that, as in the works of Hall and Foer, the trauma at stake is also the loss of the book. *The Jew's Daughter* recalls the aesthetic expression and terminology of the book: when you reach the website and click "begin reading," you may read a "colophon" and a "dedication." Otherwise you click "page." The text appears on screen as a printed page. Every time the text changes, the page number changes as well; the page number is indicated in a box in the right corner. Thus, the text may be read page by page as a linear narrative. However, you may also jump back and forth in it by writing any number in the box. In this way, Morrissey relates to the linearity of the book while also exploring the possibilities of electronic text by breaking open the text and letting the reader interact with it.

Thus, *The Jew's Daughter* highlights the remediation of the book in electronic literature. The concept of remediation, as introduced by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, describes the way media "refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media" (15). Bolter and Grusin base their idea on Marshall McLuhan's argument that the content of any medium is always another medium: "we call the representation of one medium in another remediation and we will argue, that remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media" (45). In this way, they point to an aspect of continuity in digital media, which are usually associated with the idea of the new, progress, and change: "new media are not external agents that come to disrupt an unsuspecting culture. They emerge from within

cultural contexts, and they refashion other media, which are embedded in the same or similar contexts" (McLuhan 51). Morrissey turns this theory into an aesthetic strategy. As Pressman argues, a "retro aesthetics" seems to be at stake in *The Jew's Daughter*. In her book *Digital Modernism: Making It New in New Media* Pressman reads Morrissey's work as an example of the tendency in electronic literature towards returning to a modernist celebration of the literary. Pressman argues that these works return to modernism in order to "support immanent critiques of a society that privileges images, navigation and interactivity over complex narratives and close reading. Instead of celebrating all that is new in new media, these works challenge contemporary culture and its reigning aesthetic values" (2). Digital modernism thus constitutes a critical dimension in electronic literature referring back to literary tradition in order to resist the culture of the digital.

As an example of this tendency, *The Jew's Daughter* plays with the reader's expectations about hypertext: the text marks several words as links that are not links. Rather than opening into new windows, leading to other places, these links just lead further on in the narrative. Whereas hypertext is based on virtual spatiality, Morrissey focuses on the text as a temporal structure. Lori Emerson describes Morrissey's links as "temporal linkages," arguing that "Morrissey [has] created a temporally based palimpsest in that chunks of texts are layered on top of each other in the reader's mind as the text is unfolded over time, some text stays the same and in a sense remains legible while other chunks of text are replaced, reworking both the meaning of the text that stays behind in the reader's memory and the text that is still visible" (68). According to Emerson, the work functions as a palimpsest, which results in an impression of temporal instability that is also reflected upon in the text itself: "words are always only words, but these waiting words pause, are cautious, self-aware; know what is said determines what is, has been and will be, what has already not yet happened" (Morrissey 7). The "self-aware" words mentioned might possibly refer to the text itself. They are waiting, pausing and like Foer's holes in the pages they stop time and the narrative. Finally, the words are associated with the idea of discontinuity: "what has already not yet happened." This impression of temporal instability is stressed when the text changes into this: "Words are always just real-time creation, realized under the pressure of days, just as this should have been realized under a pressure of days" (Morrissey 8). Words in an electronic text are a "real-time-creation," arising on screen when activated by the reader only soon to dissolve again. This statement contradicts the idea of written text as a lasting and preserving inscription.

Despite this fundamental association of text and words with simultaneity and instability, the words mentioned are "realized under the pressure of days," suggesting a process of careful and time-consuming interpretation. *The Jew's Daughter* indeed highlights the process of interpretation: the reader needs to constantly reread the text just as the protagonist needs to work—that is, write—through his trauma. Furthermore, the work understood as a palimpsest stresses the idea of working through text, of continuity and memory. In the manner of a palimpsest, *The Jew's Daughter* includes other texts under the present text. Thus, similar to the works by Hall and Foer, it remembers older texts, which are modified and translated into a new context. As I mention above, the primary reference in *The Jew's Daughter* is Joyce's *Ulysses*. Morrissey hereby stresses an aspect of continuity between a modernist tradition of literary experiment and the electronic text by paraphrasing the story of *Ulysses*. As in the case of *Ulysses*, *The Jew's Daughter* appears as one long monologue: a man working through the trauma of his wife's adultery by means of writing. "Will she disappear?" he asks in the first sentence (1). But she still lies in his bed with "affirming flesh," a reference to Joyce's Molly Bloom. Further, *The Jew's Daughter* recalls Joyce's stream of consciousness technique (see Pressman, *Digital Modernism* 116). That is, the text appears to be streaming as it changes subtly from page to page. The story is difficult to read because the pronouns "she," "I," and "you" also change subtly from page to page. Emerson sees this floating presentation as the text remarking on itself: "the text could be about a 'she,' 'I,' and 'you,' but these pronouns also could be read as stand-ins for a commentary on the text itself—for the reader must wonder, 'Will she [or it] disappear'" (71). According to this interpretation, the question expresses uncertainty about the stability of the text: will it disappear? Like the works by Hall and Foer, *The Jew's Daughter* reflects anxiety in relation to the new medium of electronic text: it expresses a fear of forgetting a material, even bodily, aspect of text—and life—and, as in *The Raw Shark Texts*, this fear is associated with the loss of a beloved woman: her real and actual body and "affirming flesh."



*The Jew's Daughter* thus departs from a discourse of loss, where new digital media, as described by Hayles, are associated with the fear of losing the book, the body of literature, and the human body. The protagonist associates his girlfriend's lover with a typewriter, which destructs his text: "And what if, every time I write, he writes, with his old machine, breaking the pages?" (21). The idea of destruction is also emphasized through the title's reference to the ballad "The Jew's Daughter" from Ithaca chapter in *Ulysses* about a boy being decapitated. The motif of decapitation haunts Morrissey's text (Pressman, *Digital Modernism* 114) perhaps indicating that new media result in the loss of the (textual) body: "(She had laid her head on the tracks and the train cut cleanly through her neck. Sh had laid her head on the tracks and the train cut cleanly through her neck. Sh she had laid her head on the tracks and the train cut cleanly through her neck. E had laid her head on the tracks and the train cut cleanly through her neck. In Java she had seen a woman decapitated)" (37-137). The broken sentences suggest a trauma. The traumatic experience of decapitation takes place in Java, which is a place, but also the language of programming which the program Flash is based on, and with which *The Jew's Daughter* is created. The work thus seems haunted by the very technologies that have created it. Furthermore, the passage quoted above is one of the only animated elements in the work. When you reach page 37, the letters begin to appear by themselves. For every new letter, the page number changes so that when the whole text is there, you have been transported from page 37 to page 137 (see Pressman, *Digital Modernism* 114). In this way, the trauma of decapitation seems to be associated with the prospect of the computer overtaking the reading.

Throughout *The Jew's Daughter*, the human is placed in opposition to the machine, represented by the typewriter, the train, and the computer. Electronic text is associated with trauma and loss; however, Morrissey also presents a situation wherein the reader depends on the computer in order to read. The work thus complicates the relationship between human and machine and between old and new media—a perspective that is especially highlighted in the ending. *The Jew's Daughter* ends with the three letters "WiP," which is the abbreviation for "work in progress." The three letters also function as a sign, recalling the famous ending of Joyce's Ithaca chapter. "Ithaca" ends with a big black spot or period, which appears differently in different editions, stressing *Ulysses* as a work that is open to change and mutation even after its publication. Hence, the WiP sign may be read as a nod to Joyce. *The Jew's Daughter* itself is a work in progress: it is just one version of an on-going project. Another version, *The Error Engine*, has since been developed. The WiP sign thus also seems to reflect the mutating nature of electronic text. In *Digital Modernism* Pressman argues that electronic literature operates as a processual series of computer-driven operations and that each work is always a work in progress (156; see also Pressman, "Electronic" <<http://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/electronic-literature-comparative-literature-0>>) and in this way Morrissey explores the specificity of electronic text while also emphasizing an aspect of continuity: *The Jew's Daughter* might be an open work in progress, but it is not necessarily more open than the experimental printed book as exemplified by *Ulysses*. The reader cannot comment or edit the text, but has to read and reread what is there, an aspect which is further stressed by the fact that the WiP sign also functions as an active hyperlink leading back to the beginning of the text and encouraging rereading.

*The Jew's Daughter* seems to return to a literary focus on reading and interpretation while Hall and Foer approach the logic of digital media from within the book and emphasize aspects of visibility, interactivity, and simultaneity. Thus all three works complicate the relationship between old and new media. Combining their intermedial experiments with the thematization of memory and trauma, they reflect how recent media development affect the way we remember and relate to the past. van Dijck argues that in the digital age, memory becomes "less a process of recalling than a topological skill, the ability to locate pieces of culture that identify the place of self in relation to others" (50). Remembering becomes the process of finding information about the past, navigating in electronic databases, and editing older texts; hence remembering with the computer. Works such as *The Jew's Daughter* and *Tree of Codes* demonstrate this process. They are temporal palimpsests working through older texts and expressing a sense of simultaneity and instability which is characteristic of "digital memory": "what digital memory brings to memory—and to thinking about and representing the past—is the possibility of simultaneity, indeterminacy and the 'the continual eruption of the new ... into a landscape of old ways of doing things' (Hoskins, Garde-Hansen, Reading 8). The suggestion is that digital media

change the conditions of remembering. Hence the relevance of Huyssen's description of the modern culture of memory: "historical memory today is not what it used to be. The boundary between past and present used to be stronger and more stable than it appears to be today" (*Present* 1). My argument is that this idea of a culturally determined instability in relation to the past may be connected to the discourse of loss, trauma, and death currently surrounding the book. Through their intermedial strategies, the works by Hall, Foer, and Morrissey reflect this instability. Celebrating the book, these novels seem to react to the fear of losing memory, materiality and the (human as well as textual) body in the digital age. However, they also explore the possibilities for interaction between the new media and the literary tradition. Indeed, they may be considered as examples of mutating memory, highlighting continuity as well as change.

In conclusion, the works by Foer, Hall, and Morrissey all seem to resist the idea of the radically new in new media and in the historical context that these media define. The scholars I refer to investigate the aspect of newness: Hayles considers a changed relation to identity, materiality, and the body in the digital age, while Huyssen focuses on the culture of memory as an essentially modern phenomenon. However, is it particularly new that we get anxious and fearful of forgetting when new media are introduced? Plato was already afraid of forgetting to remember when the new medium of writing was introduced. Benjamin wrote about the loss of aura in the age of the new media of reproducibility: photography and film. Morrissey and Foer both return to modernism—to the texts of Schulz and Joyce, both of which reflect the experience of a rapidly changing world—partly the result of the arrival of new media. The fact that contemporary novels return to older forms of text in order to reflect on recent media development indicates that the association of new media with the fear of forgetting is indeed historical. Huyssen is right when he describes the particularity of the current situation, but this situation is not particular because of the specificity of digital media. It is particular because the development happens so fast and because new media are surrounded by a culture that highlights the idea of the new, of progress, and of simultaneity. Indeed, as demonstrated by Morrissey, digital media may also be used as tools of memory, of carefully working through the past—but remembering takes time. This is why *The Jew's Daughter* resists digital culture as a culture that celebrates the speed of progress. The texts by Foer, Hall, and Morrissey all take time to read. They draw attention to time, especially the time needed for reading and interpretation, as an important element in remembering the past. Hall describes a difficult process of working through trauma in decoding Eric's diary. *Tree of Codes* practices what Hall describes: it is a broken book which needs to be read with care so that you will not rip up the pages. There is a wish, as reflected in the die-cut holes, to stop time. Finally, *The Jew's Daughter* too demands careful reading and decoding. Its waiting words return to the difficult style of modernism, resisting the conventions of hypertext. All three works thus react against the speed of change described by Huyssen as part of our contemporary culture. They seem to reflect a situation wherein literature becomes a privileged place for pausing, for rereading older texts and for remembering the past, no matter whether this process of careful reflection takes place within the printed book or in an electronic text.

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