



## Paratexts in Travel Blogs, Travel Books' Hypertextuality, and Medial Format Usage

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### Recommended Citation

Calzati, Stefano. "Paratexts in Travel Blogs, Travel Books' Hypertextuality, and Medial Format Usage." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 18.2 (2016): <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3137>

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**Volume 18 Issue 2 (June 2016) Article 11**

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**"Paratexts in Travel Blogs, Travel Books' Hypertextuality, and Medial Format Usage"**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss2/11>>

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Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 18.2 (2016)**  
Thematic Issue **New Work in the Empirical Study of Literature**. Ed. Aldo Nemesio  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss2/>>

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**Abstract:** In his article "Paratexts in Travel Blogs, Travel Books' Hypertextuality, and Medial Format Usage" Stefano Calzati compares a number of contemporary travel books and travel blogs. Calzati's objective is to promote a bridging approach between the digital and the analogue that goes beyond their differences. He posits a critique socio-linguistics where online multimodal texts are analyzed by identifying layers of analysis. Against these compositional models, Calzati suggests a double move: on the one hand, he applies Gérard Genette's notion of "paratext" to travel blogs and on the other he extends the concept of "hypertextuality" to travel books. From his analysis it emerges that in travel blogs hosted on platforms paratextual elements tend to invade the space of the text and challenge the blogger's authority. At the same time, travel books turn out to be more hypertextual than travel blogs hosted on platforms. Calzati's study is complemented by interviews with a selection of travel writers which show that bloggers whose blogs are on platforms have a weak awareness of the potentialities of the medium and that their media-related choices are often arbitrary. Individual bloggers, by contrast, have a deeper understanding of the medium's potential.

## Stefano CALZATI

### Paratexts in Travel Blogs, Travel Books' Hypertextuality, and Medial Format Usage

My study is a transmedial comparison between six Western-authored travel blogs and six travel books about China. The objective is to study narrative texts in the digital and analogue realms by promoting a bridging approach that, rather than reasserting the almost self-evident differences between these realms, looks for common features. In this respect, travel books and travel blogs represent privileged case studies, insofar as they can be considered as two "intermedial transpositions" (see Wolf <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1789>>) which realize the same genre, namely travel writing (see, e.g., Calzati, "Power" <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2154>>, "Travel"; for a bibliography for work in travel studies see Salzani and Tötösy de Zepetnek <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/travelstudiesbibliography>>). There are two reasons for the choice of China as the country of destination. First, in order to establish a corpus of texts as homogeneous as possible, it was deemed necessary to find a common thematic ground. Second, China is particularly relevant because it has always represented a fascinating "otherness" for Western travellers (see, e.g., Hayot, Saussy, Yao) and, as such, it triggers a symmetry between what is perceived as the physical country, on the one hand, and the imagined land, on the other hand.

Contrary to a well-established conception in socio-linguistics (see, e.g., Yates, Orlikowski, Okamura), my argument is that the medium not only contributes to the shaping of textual genres, but is also consubstantial to them and it is from this hypothesis that I propose a preliminary critique of those socio-linguistic methodologies which in order to investigate how online texts are built rely on compositional models (see Knox; Bateman). I discuss John Knox's 2007 "Visual-Verbal Communication on Online Newspaper Home Pages" in which he draws on Günther Kress's and Theo van Leeuwen's work on a visual grammar for the investigation of multimodal texts. As my analysis shows, the difficulty of using Knox's model for analysing travel blogs can be attributed to a number of reasons (e.g., evolution of the layout, changes in reading practices, generic differences, etc.), but on a more general level it is symptomatic of the fact that understanding how online texts "make sense" is not so much a matter of dissecting them into layers or axes, but of investigating how the various rhetorical and multimodal elements work relationally.

From this premise, a double gesture is proposed. On the one hand, travel blogs are analysed through the lens of Gérard Genette's notion of "paratext." This choice rests on two main motives. First, Genette's work on paratextuality investigates how written books define their own threshold of signification by considering them as (medial) artefacts: "the genre contract is constituted by the whole of the paratext and, more broadly, by the relation between text and paratext" (41). Genette suggests that any genre is, in fact, the result of a negotiation between the text per se and a variety of heterogeneous messages – the paratext – that "surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it" (1). More precisely, all those elements that are included within the book, such as prefaces, introductions, dedications, etc., are called "peritext," while those elements that accompany the book "at a more respectful (or prudent) distance" (4), such as interviews with the author or commercials that promote the work, are defined as "epitext." Second, it is important to remember that although Genette pays attention to the paratext solely in relation to the book format and as a mere verbal realization, he acknowledges the possibility of "other types of manifestation" (14) of the paratext. In this respect, the comparison between travel books and travel blogs represents a crucial opportunity to extend Genette's discussion both to multimodality (insofar as these texts usually present pictures, maps or drawings) and transmediality. The reversal theoretical gesture consists of applying the concept of "hypertextuality" -- largely considered as a prerogative of online documents (see Landow) -- to travel books. The goal is to assess the extent to which these texts can also be considered as hypertexts. "Hypertext," writes Marie-Laure Ryan, "is a genre if we view it as a type of text, but it is a (sub)medium if we regard it as an electronic tool for the organization of text" (290). Hence, if we adopt a rhetorical point of view to hypertextuality, by remarking that a given text is always "caught up in a system of references to other books, to other texts, to other sentences: it is a node within a network" (Foucault 23), then it becomes interesting to understand the extent to which printed books can also be hypertextual. And third, in order to go beyond the text, my study is complemented by interviews with bloggers and authors. My objective is to elucidate on whether writers are aware of the potentialities of the chosen media and how they implement and exploit them. In this sense, my analysis departs from Joachim Höflich's distinction between "adequacy rules" and "procedural rules": the former describes the appropriateness of a given medium to satisfy a certain communicative goal and the latter refers to the actual use made of that medium.

The books I discuss are *Behind the Wall* (1987) by Colin Thubron, *Invisible China* (2009) by Colin Legerton and Jacob Rawson, *La birra di Shaoshan* (2003) by Sergio Ramazzotti, *Carnet di viaggio: Cina* (2005) by Stefano Faravelli, *La Chine à fleur de peau* (2011) by Aurélie Croiziers, and *Ivre de Chine* (2010) by Constantin de Slizewicz. The blogs are *Cina, nel regno di mezzo* (2012) by supermary58 (hosted on turistipercaso.it), *Un peu partout en Chine* (2007) by Mathieu (on top-depart.com), *All o'er China during Spring Festival Holiday* (2006) by Ataritouchme (on travepod.com), and three individually built blogs *Backpacker Becki* (backpackerbecki.com), *Gattosandro Viaggiatore* (gattosandro-viaggiatore.blogspot.co.uk), and *Curieuse Voyageuse* (curieusevoyageuse.com). The selection of the case studies follows two criteria. Concerning travel books, it distinguishes between monomodal texts (composed only of words) and multimodal texts (composed of words and illustrations). As for travel blogs, the distinction concerns those blogs that are hosted on platforms and those that have been set up independently by the bloggers. Lastly, texts have been chosen in three different languages, in order to destabilize the English-centeredness that affects many studies on multimodality

and on travel writing. However, such a choice does not bear any a priori assumption on the possible cultural differences or similarities among these texts as shown in Table 1:

		English	Italian	French
travel books	monomodal	<i>Behind the Wall</i>	<i>La Birra di Shaoshan</i>	<i>Ivre de Chine</i>
	multimodal	<i>Invisible China</i>	<i>Carnet di Viaggio. Cina</i>	<i>La Chine à Fleur de Peau</i>
travel blogs	platform	travelpod.com (Robjstaples)	turistipercaso.it (supermary58)	top-depart.com (Mathieu)
	individual	<i>Backpacker Becki</i>	<i>Gattosandro Viaggiatore</i>	<i>Curieuse Voyageuse</i>

Table 1. Texts analyzed

Deciding whether a book is monomodal or multimodal appears to be simple. However, it is so only to the extent we look at the text from a certain distance. Once we get closer, we are confronted with the necessity to characterize more clearly where the border between one mode and the other is to be traced. John Bateman argues that "just as accounts of language, its graphological form, and punctuation can consider visual elements to function paralinguistically, we can also consider certain textual elements and formatting options to be paravisual" (104). Pushing this reasoning further, it is possible to affirm that any written text is always, at the same time, verbal and visual, since writing is in itself a visual-based act (Mitchell). It is also arguable that, having opened up the possibility of multimodal types of manifestation of the paratext, Genette stops at the threshold of this awareness because he probably knows that to extend the discussion beyond verbliness requires exploring the visual and material aspects of writing. Faravelli's *Carnet di viaggio: Cina* (2005) is a case in point where images reproduce two plates in Faravelli's carnet. In it, the writing -- which bears the subjective mark of the author's calligraphy -- is, at the same time, an intelligibly discernable written language and a pictorial gesture. Nonetheless, it is true that Faravelli's is a rather unique case. In fact, the process of production of books and online documents has been highly standardized and the salience of paravisual elements has been brought to the margins of signification. In consequence, letters and words in printed and digital texts bear an eminently indexical denotation that here can be overlooked.

Similarly, the distinction between travel blogs on platforms and individual travel blogs seems rather easily discernable at first sight, but it turns out to be problematic when we look at how websites are built. Here, of course, travel blogs represent a specific subset of a broader discussion which includes, de facto, all online documents. In other words: what is an online text? What are its boundaries? In the present context, an online text is a document that works through a "page metaphor" (Bateman 9). The page represents the lowest common principle of organization of any online text. Michalis Vafopoulos technically speaks of online pages as "web beings": "each web being," he notes, "occupies a specific locus on the Web. The identification in Web space is given by the URI namespace" (413). Problems arise when it comes to identifying the inclusive principle of a blog. Indeed, each page is potentially linked to a galaxy of other pages. So, what are the outer boundaries of a travel blog? From the point of view of the medium, they coincide with the web as a whole, but once we adopt a rhetorical perspective, these boundaries can be narrowed down. Eventually, a travel blog can be considered as a website whose pages are denoted by a "rhetorically homogeneous" text and are imputable to a "single authoriality."

"Rhetorical homogeneity" is a concept inspired by Karen Schriver's "rhetorical cluster" defined as "a group of text elements designed to work together. They are comprised of visual and/or verbal elements that need to be grouped (or put in proximal relation) because, together, they help the reader interpret the content" (343). In this spirit, the notion of rhetorical homogeneity aims at identifying a travel narrative about a precise experience to China. It can happen, indeed, either that a travel account is only one of many others written by the same blogger or that within each page a variety of visual and written elements, which do not directly relate to the journey, can be found (e.g., pictures of friends/readers, off-topic comments, etc.). At the same time, it often happens that a blogger is only indirectly responsible for some content on his/her blog, insofar as a variety of other elements (e.g., commercial advertisements) fall out of his/her control. It is in this respect that the notion of "single authoriality" is introduced elaborating on that of "authorization" proposed by Genette. Dorothee Birke and Birte Christ are right when they note that in itself the notion of authorization is problematic in Genette because he uses it ambiguously sometimes in order to refer to the choices of the (real) author and sometimes to indicate a more general and abstract legitimation of the text. Within the present discussion, authoriality stands for the writer's projected agency into the text and refers to all those features of the text that are at his/her discretion. No doubt, the notion of single authoriality is not

easily discernable, since blogs (and books) are the result of collective (and sometimes conflictive) cooperation among various actors; however, the stress here is placed more on the use that authors and bloggers make of the affordances of each medium, rather than on detecting particular responsibilities (as Genette [40] warns). It is in this respect that interviews with writers and bloggers can help to elucidate their writing practices and their awareness of the medium's potentialities.

Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen elaborate a model for the analysis of multimodal texts drawing on Michael Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. They define a grammar of visual choices that can be made when conceiving a multimodal text and the consequent meanings that these choices carry. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that the organization of language and visual elements follows three main oppositions: top-bottom, left-right, or centre-margin. By studying three online newspapers' homepages, Knox develops his model in order to apply it to the online realm. They identify the dichotomy head-tail along the vertical axis where content in the top part of a webpage is deemed more relevant than that in the bottom part. As for the horizontal axis, Knox argues that content in the central column of the page is of primary importance, while that at the sides is secondary. On supermary58's blog both the horizontal axis and the vertical axis identified by Knox are of problematic applicability. Indeed, the top part of the screenshot is heavily occupied by the platform's agency. Then, below the platform's logo we find the heading of the blog, a sub-heading, and a small link to the blogger's personal page. In fact, it is only by scrolling down on the page that we find the proper blog's posts: the travel account per se seems then to occupy a secondary position. Similarly, in Mathieu's blog the top part of the screen is occupied by the platform's logo. Then, it is on the left that we find the most interesting information about the blog. No doubt, this information is more important to the travel account than the banner found at the very top of the page. As for Ataritouchme's blog, this is, indeed, the most coherent with Knox's model. The central part of the screen is filled with the blog's heading, with a blog summary, and with a map of the trip. At the same time, however, what is found on the right – namely, the blogger's profile – is very much constitutive of the travel blog as a first-person account, so it would be hazardous to characterize it as a secondary piece of information.

When it comes to individual blogs, it is possible to attest the widespread compliance with the prototypical blogs' structure, defined as: "frequently updated websites consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first (see temporal ordering)" (Walker-Rettberg 19). All three blogs present the heading in the top part of the screen, and just below is a navigational bar with links to the blogs' sections. Further below, it is possible to access at least the most recent updates without the need to scroll down on the page. Yet, we are required to do so as soon as we want to read the bloggers' profiles on *Curieuse Voyageuse* and Gattosandro Viaggiatore's blogs. Surely, the recourse to independent Content Management Systems (CMSs) permits bloggers to have a wider spectrum of choices and usually the layout results easier to browse and more polished; however, these blogs also resist an easy application of Knox's axes, because in order to read them we have to look for relevant information beyond the top central section of the page.

Having realized the difficulty of using Knox's model, a possible alternative is proposed by recurring to the notion of "paratext." Before proceeding, it must be acknowledged that Birke and Christ are rather sceptical about the possibility of applying such concept to online documents. They note that "as long as a text is available in the form of a distinct physical object and is, as such, limited in its expanse, the concept of paratext can be applied productively" (80); however, once a text loses its physicality, this "leaves scholars at the impasse that Genette himself warned of, namely that of "rashly proclaiming that all is paratext" (407). At that point, the concept loses its force of distinction" (80). Differently from Birke and Christ, it is contended here that the absence of physicality does not preclude looking at online texts through the lens of paratextuality, at least once we adopt the notions of "rhetorical homogeneity" and "single authoriality" introduced above. For the sake of simplicity, the analysis focuses on the two travel blogs that represent the extreme examples: Supermary58's blog (on platform) and Gattosandro Viaggiatore's blog (individual).

Looking at the homepages as a whole, we see a radical difference in the way in which the content of these two blogs is organized. supermary58's page hosts a variety of elements: banners, advertisements, and links to social networks. This variety can be considered as peritextual to the text in two respects: it does not depend upon the blogger (but upon the platform) and it enriches the page with elements that are rhetorically heterogeneous to the blogger's travel account. Interestingly, these elements do not simply surround the text, as Genette suggests for peritexts in books, but tend to invade its space. On Gattosandro Viaggiatore's page, we still find some of these peritextual elements, namely the links to social networks, but there are no banners nor commercial advertisements. At the same time, it is evident that links to social networks, which are purposefully inserted by the blogger, tend to be arranged around the text more in the spirit of books' peritexts. It is then possible to argue that the

peritextual elements on blogs on platforms are more invasive than on individual blogs. In the former case, the peritexts bring into the space of the text a multiplicity of messages that trigger a hybridization of generic forms: from the travel account, to the travel guide, passing through the multi-functional social portal. Hence, while "classic" publishers' intervention on the books' peritext is mainly denotative, the agencies behind the construction of web platforms tend to make their intervention evident and this questions, in turn, both the text's generic recognizability and the blogger's authoriality.

As William Versterman notes, "the multiplying demand for credit is producing inflation in the medium of exchange -- authorship -- which is thereby diluted as a measure and store of value" (444): the sole amendment to this quote is that credit is not "demanded" online, but simply taken. Precisely, we are not confronted with the "death of the author" (Barthes), but with a different textual conception of authoriality; one which is, of course, multi-faced, but most importantly which entails an emancipation of the text from both the sphere of production and reception. Against any temptation to provide a historiographical interpretation of this phenomenon, it is useful to remember that it represents a novelty only when comparing travel blogs to contemporary travelogues; indeed, as soon as we enlarge the diachronic spectrum, we see, as Connors acutely notes, that often the scribes' glossing commentaries in early printed texts "by their sheer bulk, came to overwhelm the original text" (9). Hence, we could argue that it has been the standardization of publishing practices that has constructed the notion of single authoriality, by marginalizing in the text the peritextual intervention by others. To the daunting question: who is the author of travel blogs (on platforms)? It could be responded that there is no single author, but a manifest proliferation of authorial simulacra which then requires the readers/users to create their own online text. Put differently, the reading becomes a "hyper reading" (see Hayles), whose constitutive feature is not only the goal of being faster and more serendipitous, but performing certain tasks -- for example browsing -- that anticipate any reading per se. Therefore, online reading becomes increasingly a target-oriented practice or, following Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, a form of "enaction" in which the competence over the medium precedes any linear reading as promoted by books.

What about analogue hypertextuality? As mentioned, I approach hypertextuality from a rhetorical perspective to identify a system of references on which each document depends: a system that, although being always present (following Barthes's understanding of intertextuality) and remains implicit most of the time. Thus I analyze travel books and travel blogs with regard to references in the forms of 1) quotations, 2) images (as a trans-reference to words), 3) links, and 4) notes (footnotes or endnotes). Curieuse Voyageuse's blog represents a good case to study because it also underwent a "remediation process" (see Bolter and Grusin) that allowed it to be released as a book *La Chine à fleur de peau* (2011). According to David Bolter's and Richard Grusin's terminology, the remediation process to which Curieuse Voyageuse's blog was subjected was one of "immediacy," that is, one that strives to remain as adherent as possible to the source-text, thus trying to reduce the effects of the new medium on the text. In Curieuse Voyageuse's book the written text is unaltered and keeps the subdivision of the posts, although these are published in the book in chronological order. While the book contains a variety of pictures taken from the blog, these are not interpolated into the text, but inserted in the middle of the book. In this sense, the relation text-image is affected in favor of a stronger division between the two modes and a greater hegemony of words over pictures. As for quotations, they remain the same as in the blog while any form of notes is absent. Further, it is interesting to focus on links because it is not possible to maintain in the book the interactivity of links. However, the writer finds a way to compensate for such deficiency: whenever in the blog she inserted links to other sites, the corresponding text in the book is expanded, retrieving at least some of the information reachable online via the link.

A second book of interest is Legerton's and Rawson's *Invisible China*: it is a multimodal travelogue that presents different kinds of illustrations (drawings, maps, pictures) which contribute to build an overtly "readable" system of cross-references with the text. As for quotes, the travelogue is enriched with a variety of references to other sources, such as Chinese aphorisms and poems. We do not find notes; nonetheless, in the last section of the introduction the two authors take a step back from the *diegesis* and explain the motives and goals of their journey: "Even after traveling extensively throughout the country, we realized that we knew little to nothing about these fifty-five ethnic groups and started to wonder how they really live" (13). The whole section, although interpolated into the text, takes on a meta-function that works as a sort of explicative note. Even a transmodal book such as Faravelli's *Carnet di viaggio: Cina* manifests a good degree of hypertextuality. It suffices to note that it is possible to retrieve footnotes and amendments in the form of a red asterisk at the bottom of the

first plate, direct quotations from other texts (from Tiziano Terzani's *La porta proibita* in the bottom corner of the second plate), and, of course, pictorial representations.

Concerning monomodal travelogues, the three examples provide varying degrees of hypertextuality. The absence of pictures is most striking in Ramazzotti's *La birra di Shaoshan* insofar as the author's first occupation is that of photo reporter: "I tell you this to my detriment, as I am also a photographer ... in *La birra di Shaoshan* I believe that pictures would have been superfluous, since words already managed to convey all I wanted to say" (3). Concerning quotations and notes, de Slizewicz's *Ivre de Chine* is the most hypertextual of the three travelogues as the author fills the text with extracts from other texts (including his own) and footnotes as if his travelogue were a sort of documentary text. Here are two examples (all translations are mine): Despite the departure of missionaries and the persecutions during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution there still is a community of several thousands of Tibetans, who pray every week in their stone-made churches. 1. I have recounted this first trip to Catholic Tibetan communities, as well as the epic journeys of French and Swiss missionaries to Tibet in my book *Les peuples oubliés du Tibet*, Perrin, 2007 ... The legs of women will dance in the air, run into the desert, rest beside the rivulets left by streams. And the world will be peaceful."<sup>1</sup> 1. Some of these notes are taken from the introduction to Luo Xu's work, edited by the Xin Ding Cheng Space for Contemporary Art gallery: [www.chengxindong.com](http://www.chengxindong.com)" (13). Note that in the last quotation the author inserted a link. Again, what is at stake is not so much its obvious lack of interactivity, but the fact that de Slizewicz decided to add such a piece of information, despite the impossibility of directly pointing to the content of the link.

Last, Colin Thubron's text is the least hypertextual: he does not provide any quotations or notes (i.e., links did not exist in 1987). Despite the fact that he does a lot of research before the departure, as claimed in the interview: "Usually one and a half years before I travel at all" (Personal Interview). In this sense, while it is evident in his book that Thubron fills the narrative with historical and cultural information taken from other texts, he never mentions the source. In this way, the narrative is dependent on the author's unique *simulacrum* and its hypertextual threshold remains secured within the boundary of the book's physicality:

	quotations	images	notes	links
<i>La Chine à fleur de peau</i>	yes	yes	no	narrative extension
<i>Invisible China</i>	yes	yes	yes	no
<i>Ivre de Chine</i>	yes	no	yes	yes
<i>La birra di Shaoshan</i>	yes	no	yes	no
<i>Behind the Wall</i>	no	no	no	non-existent
<i>Carnet di viaggio: Cina</i>	yes	yes	yes	no

Table 2. Travel books' hypertextuality

With regard to travel blogs, we can estimate the effective degree of travel books' hypertextuality. Even from a cursory overview, it is clear that the proper text of all three of the travel blogs on platforms manifest a very low degree of hypertextuality. In none of supermary58's ten posts do we find links or quotations from other texts, despite the fact that the blogger mentions in the interview that she relies on travel guides and travelogues to plan her journey. Moreover, there are no pictures included in the posts. This is because the platform requires the blogger to publish the pictures on another section of the website. Therefore, posts are exclusively verbal. According to supermary58, "it's not a problem if the pictures are not in the blog, as long as they are posted somewhere" (Personal Interview). This suggests two reflections: first, supermary58 conceives of her own space on [turistipercaso.it](http://turistipercaso.it) as primarily a writing space. Second, she does not seem concerned about the peculiar publishing procedures imposed by the platform. In this regard, guiding her online writing is, overall, the willingness to share tourist information irrespective of the modes adopted: "I came up with the idea to keep a diary a few years ago ... because I wanted to help other travellers to arrange their trips to places I had already visited" (Personal Interview).

On Mathieu's blog, we find ten posts over a one-month period. Again, there are no quotations or links. Moreover, there are no pictures on the blog: this is odd when considering that Mathieu thinks of pictures as "a support for better projecting oneself onto the text and they also help me to remember the context, the unwritten anecdotes, and the emotions of the moment" ("Personal Interview). Mathieu, then, seems to subscribe to an incoherent conception of his blogging activity and the use he makes of the platform is minimal. A possible explanation is that the blogger approaches the writing with a good dose of naiveté: when asked why he chose the platform [top-depart.com](http://top-depart.com), he answered that "I cannot really remember; when I started to write it was the one that had the best ratio of simplicity to functionality" ("Personal Interview). Therefore, the platform's functionality is privileged over all other aspects be they literary or aesthetic. And Ataritouchme's blog has 16 posts over a period of one and a half months. There is just one quote (post 3) taken from Lonely Planet, but no links or

notes can be found. There are various pictures; however, most of the time, these are added as an appendix at the end of each post, in a sort of cumulative addendum to the writing that does not really seek to build an interrelation between verbal and visual modes. Overall, Ataritouchme's blog is the one, among those on platforms, that makes a more organic use of the affordances of the platform; nonetheless, the blog's hypertextuality remains in a stage of embryonic development. This suggests a superficial approach to the choice and use of the platform, an approach that triggers and is owing to an amateur conception of blogging. Travel blogs on platforms manifest a low degree of hypertextuality:

	quotations	links	notes	images
supermary58	no	no	no	no
Mathieu	no	no	no	no
Ataritouchme	yes	no	no	yes

Table 3. Hypertextuality of travel blogs on platforms

Taking it from the information in Table 3., does this happen on individual blogs too? Becki wrote 11 posts over a period of roughly two months. From the interview, she seems to be well aware of the fact that having the possibility to manage an individual space grants her greater control over the content and its layout: "your website is your open book, so you have full editorial control" (Personal Interview). Interestingly, the comparison she makes is not between her website and travel blogs hosted on platforms, but between her website and social networks: "Currently, Twitter and Instagram are not that limited, but Facebook is enforcing a lot of control with regards to who sees your updates, in the hope that people pay more to promote posts" (Personal Interview). From this statement, it is possible to argue that Becki aims not only to be in control of all she writes, but also to get the most out of her blogging activity in terms of social exposure. As for her posts, in each one we usually find a couple of links (for example, the travel companies she relied upon). There are plenty of pictures included alongside the text (there is, in fact, the effort to balance pictures and words) and at the end of each post there is usually a note in bold that tries to sum up the whole post in the form of an off-record commentary.

Curieuse Voyageuse published countless posts about China owing to the fact that she has travelled there four times and after these experiences she moved there permanently. In her posts, words are often mixed with pictures. In addition, it is common to find links to other sources either internal or external to the blog. Then, at the end of each post, as a form of endnotes, we always find a couple of links to other similar posts on her blog. When interviewed about the technical features of her blog, Curieuse Voyageuse affirmed that she takes a lot of time to rewrite her notes: "as for the content, the blog has changed a lot. Nowadays, the text is longer, more personal and, I hope, better written" (Personal Interview). Curieuse Voyageuse demonstrates a growing sense of dedication to her blog, to the point that her blogging "has become a central part in my life" (Personal Interview). Beyond that, the blogger reveals her effort to keep a constant dialogue with readers: "The social, interactive, and communitarian aspects are very important to my blog. These aspects are almost inexistent when it comes to a book: once the author has finished it, it does not interact with the readers, apart from some meetings, but only very few readers meet all the authors they have read, while my blog's readers can directly interact with me" (Personal Interview). In other words, Curieuse Voyageuse shows a high degree of awareness and expertise in the managing of the virtual relations that online social networks enhance, as well as a good knowledge of how to exploit the features of the chosen CMS.

Gattosandro Viaggiatore wrote 24 posts about a journey to China, which lasted about a month. Each post contains a variety of pictures interspersed with the text and the blogger admits to paying particular attention to the visual mode: "For me, pictures are very important, and the choice of which ones are to be included in the blog takes quite a while" (Personal Interview). There are also various links within each post (for instance to accommodations) and it is not rare for the posts to be concluded by a note – usually in italics – that provides a comment on the experience narrated. The blogger describes as follows how the blog was born and how it has evolved: "In 2010, while I was looking for information about Japan, I realized the importance that a well-kept blog can have for other travellers. I then started to write my own travel blog and, because I was not used to it, I chose blogspot simply because it looked to me like the easiest CMS to use" (Personal Interview). On the one hand, Gattosandro Viaggiatore shows an amateurish approach to blogging, one that chiefly comes out of passion. On the other hand, however, this blogger demonstrates growing confidence with the publishing practices implied by the web (after all, using a CMS requires greater expertise than a platform does). Moreover, Gattosandro Viaggiatore is conscious of the social potentialities of blogs: "Over time, I learnt the pleasure of interacting with other bloggers and I created a web of friends who share with me the same passion (it is in this way that I created my network)" (Personal Interview). Overall, indi-



vidual travel bloggers manifest greater dedication to their accounts and greater knowledge of the medium they use than their peers on platforms do. These two factors, as Table 4. summarizes, contribute to a higher degree of hypertextuality:

	quotations	links	notes	images
Backpacker Becki	no	yes	yes	yes
Curieuse Voyageuse	yes	yes	yes	yes
Gattosandro Viaggiatore	no	yes	yes	yes

Table 4. Hypertextuality of individual travel blogs

In conclusion, by comparing the findings of the three tables, I posit that travel books bear a higher degree of hypertextuality than travel blogs on platforms do. Clearly, the kinds of hypertextual webs which offline and online texts weave are different. In books, references to sources are not physically there apart from references internal to the text itself. This leads to the hypothesis that hypertextuality in books is mainly epitextual in the sense that references and although inscribed in the text, open the book to an exteriority that transcends its own physicality. In the case of blogs, instead, links allow the reader to retrieve sources while remaining within the same realm. Hence, hypertextuality on the web is coalescent: when readers want to know more about, say, Ataritouchme's journeys, they simply have to browse the author's other blogs. What happens, then, is that on the web the peritext tends to occupy simultaneously the space of the text and to extend it to the epitext's realm eventually merging into it. It is in this sense that Genette's warning about the risk of "rashly proclaiming that all is paratext" (407) must be understood. Online -- mainly on platforms -- we witness the blurring of any neat authorial boundary: bloggers insert their presence into the text leading to a hybridization of the text's form and content owing to the rhetorical heterogeneity of messages being offered. As for readers, to be promoted is a practice based on the preliminary competence over how to use the medium which in turn anticipates any "classic" act of reading. At the same time, it would be hazardous to deny any applicability of Genette's study to online texts. On the web, indeed, not all is paratext: there still remains a valid epitextual distinction to be made, namely between online and offline content, whenever online texts mention sources that can be accessed in their printed form only. In this case, the guiding principle of such paratextual difference is no longer that of distance, as Genette suggests when discerning between peritext and epitext. Rather, it is a medial principle that is at stake, insofar as the analogue and the digital realms remain (partially) incommensurable. Bloggers demonstrate a certain superficiality in the choice of platforms or CMSs. However, while individual bloggers know how to improve their spaces, bloggers who post on platforms do not seem preoccupied by the potentialities of the medium as long as it is functional.

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