

FOREWORD

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One of the main reasons we finally decided to move from the series of printed cybertext yearbooks to the cybertext database was the themes around which the future volumes began to take shape: ludology and game studies, actual, potential and virtual textual instruments, and the unexplored histories of ergodic literature, which is the focus of the current issue. As all these areas are still emerging and haven't reached their peak yet, we decided it is better to create a base for accumulating knowledge that will remain open to be supplemented by cutting-edge essays for years to come than to once again publish a self-contained issue of brilliant articles. In that respect what you see and read here is just a beginning.

The papers in the new issue show different approaches to ergodic histories of our supposedly shared literary heritage. Jörgen Schäfer leads us masterfully through ergodic German literature from the Baroque era to the 21st Century while providing a wealth of examples and perspectives that are likely to inform and inspire future scholarship and help it to break free from the already overused textbook examples of ergodicity. Laura Borràs Castanyer and her group of literary scholars take us into the finer points of ergodic Catalan literature boasting an even longer tradition of literary innovation and discovery from the medieval master Ramon Llull onwards. Already these two approaches (or should we say research projects) are able to present an overwhelming variety of ergodic practices in two literary languages; the one generally considered to held or occupy a more central position in European literature and the other rather carelessly thought to be more marginal. However, it is far too early to make such comparisons in the widely varied and barely researched histories of ergodic literature although there certainly are huge differences in the depth, length and range of national and regional traditions. But as always, such traditions provide

only one and as such a highly susceptible way of organising literary history, not the least because ergodic practices and principles migrate between contexts, cultures, languages and media with an ease comparable to games and stories, and perhaps only to them.

A considerably different approach to ergodic history is provided by Professor Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila who discusses, among other things, editorial practices in Arabic literature. Even the most prominent classic poems by well-known authors exist in more than one rendering that are all considered to be equal, as the identity of a poem is seen to lay in its individual verses that can be combined to new poems bearing the same title by following the traditional rules of the genre. In this way Arabic poetry oscillates somewhere between and in the mixture of practices common to oral and written literature. Or to use another vague analogy: its double identity allows it to exist simultaneously as finalized poems and as self-sufficient verses to be sampled and mixed.

Another line of research cuts across regional, national and transnational languages and focuses instead on specific techniques, structures and formal arrangements of ergodic literature. Teemu Ikonen tracks down the encyclopaedic history of the idea of the encyclopaedia in order to see more clearly what lies behind this model of organising knowledge and text and its various applications to fictional literature. Although there are many lexicon novels, some of them even famous like *The Dictionary of Khazars* by Milorad Pavic, the same can't be said of encyclopaedic novels (in the strict sense of the concept). Both lexicon and encyclopaedic novels borrow their principles of organisation and structuring from non-fiction and scientific writing; as these ways are familiar to most readers the gap between contexts is almost always already naturalized and doesn't complicate the reading process to the degree more artificial and abstract principles and procedures would.

Professor Antonella Sbrilli, on her turn, opens up a new perspective on the art historian Aby Warburg. His work, including the creation of the highly ambitious Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg and the project *Mnemosyne Atlas*, is well known to art historians, but Sbrilli is discussing Warburg from the ergodic perspective, explicating why Warburg's work can be seen as an early step in the development of scholarly hypertext editions. As in Ikonen's article, here too it is a question of how to organise knowledge, in this case, employing ergodic approach in scientific discourse.

Needless to say, we'll be back.