Texts and Paratexts in Media

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Translated by Ellen Klein

To determine the significance and potential of the concept of the paratext for literature and cultural and media studies, it makes sense to start at a more basic level, namely, with the concept of the text, to which paratext acts as a supplement. Adorno thought it an “abominable expression” to refer to phenomena of “literature” as “texts.”” He detected it in an abandonment of the category of the work. Dolf Sternberger, his antipodean intellectual colleague in Frankfurt, offered a similar opinion that differed only in tone: “‘Texts’—this has become the universal generic term for the products of writers, or at any rate, the term now considered ‘progressive’. . . . They do not write poems, novels, essays or even stories—they ‘produce texts.’”

These arguments and idiosyncratic reactions are now history. In the meantime text has gained wide acceptance—and why shouldn’t this be the case? But in view of how the meaning of this term has developed over the years, the old objections would seem to warrant some thought. In the course of things, text has come to be used synonymously with the older term work (opus). In many respects the current definition with all its implications of aesthetics and values has simply been inherited. However, text originally had another meaning; it is not just a coincidence that it was introduced at a time when the concept of literature was being expanded to include trivial literature, essays, and general nonfiction and when there was a growing interest in the phenomena of popular culture. Since then, literary and cul-

cultural discourse has had a problem in tow, which is scarcely understood but which still causes terminological complications and uncertainty. The problem can be described as follows: a simultaneous distinction and nondistinction between literary work and text. That is, sometimes they are construed as designating different things and sometimes the same thing. (It is still necessary to specify which meaning is intended, and the ambiguity may be retained for rhetorical reasons.)

That this is still a problem is evidenced by recent cultural studies programs, which make a strong plea for the study of culture as text. A representative programmatic statement entitled “Literature as Cultural Studies” puts it as follows: “Cultural reality [can be] perceived as a text that constitutes a web in a space created by society and its members. The web is produced by this totality of social relations and can be deciphered through them, but at the same time it continues to rewrite itself and to change more or less autonomously. . . . In this cultural text, articulations, readings and their media . . . appear inseparably linked to each other and refer to each other in varying historical constellations.”

Apparently, the ambiguity of terms mentioned above is also present in this generalized concept of the text, which now includes an expanded notion of culture. It manifests itself in this culture-text combination especially when culture is interpreted both as a descriptive category and as a value concept. This means that here the simultaneous distinction and nondistinction between text and literary work takes the form of a simultaneous distinction and nondistinction between culture as text on the one hand and excellent or canonical or literary text as cultural moment on the other.

How to handle this problem and, in particular, what techniques should be employed for reading these texts seem to be open questions. At present, the minimum consensus of the relevant positions on the part of the humanities favors an exclusive approach—directed against a “reduction of complexity” or against the “theoretical dead ends of poststructuralist self-

4. See ibid., p. 12.
5. Ibid., p. 15—that is, against systems theory.

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This says little about methods for reading and analysis and thus about the tools required for starting to read at a specific place in the comprehensive apostrophized cultural-textual “web.” One possible instrument might be the paratextuality theorem, which was first developed in literary studies; it is thought to be particularly useful for determining what kind of text or, as it should now be expressed more precisely, what kind of textual unity one is dealing with. When Gérard Genette proposed the concept, his focus was on the problem of the production and observation of texts as such. He asked the question, What makes a text a text? and even the form of this question reflects the ambiguity that has been associated with the concept at least since the sixties. The general problems with the text concept will not be completely resolved by applying the theorem—indeed, they will be very much in evidence again below—but new insights will be gained.

That Genette, a structuralist literary theorist with both a talent and a predilection for classification, should extract in 1987 one concept—and specifically this one—from his original conceptual inventory and send it on a more or less isolated journey through the cultural disciplines and that later it should find such acceptance are indications of a problematic situation that needs to be diagnosed from a cultural perspective. The problem concerns the significance of the book as a key item of cultural and intellectual processes. The non–self-evidence underlying Adorno’s assertion that beyond the “idea of the book . . . no other representation of spirit in language . . . might exist without betraying truth” is at work here in the background. Adorno’s insistence on the book form is consistent with his criticism of the term text. A few years later, Derrida—though apparently reaching the opposite conclusion about their respective values—compared the “idea of the book” and the notions of “writing” and “text” from a similar perspective: “If I distinguish the text from the book, I shall say that the destruction of the book, as it is now under way in all domains, denudes the

7. See Gérard Genette, Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997); hereafter abbreviated P.
10. Adorno, “Bibliographical Musings” (1965), Notes to Literature, 2:23.
surface of the text. That necessary violence responds to a violence that was no less necessary.”¹¹ Genette’s 

Seuils is dedicated to describing these two 

violences, and they indirectly shape the structure of his description and are the reason for the problems that result.

According to Genette, a text is a “more or less long sequence of verbal statements that are more or less endowed with significance.” It is that which the surrounding paratextual elements enclose—acting as thresholds of a sort—in order to present it, to enable it to appear as a book. Paratexts, on the other hand, are the “verbal or other productions”—such as the author’s name, title (possibly including an indication of the genre), preface, dedication, epigraphs, illustrations, book design in the broadest sense, interviews, commentaries, and so on—that frame the text in the manner depicted above, give it its “external” contours (P, p. 1). Two observations have to be made about this basic definition of the paratext in relation to the text concept. First of all, to conceive of the paratext as an “external” form is a somewhat problematic metaphor. This is because phenomena such as typeface, paragraphing, the presence or absence of footnotes, and so on mean that no text ever has a truly paratext-free moment. Thus, it is not very easy to distinguish beyond a doubt between text and paratext, as might initially seem the case. And when Genette concedes that a text is “rarely presented in an unadorned state” (P, p. 1), it would be more accurate to say that the “unadorned” text, as opposed to the paratext, is not really a concrete, imaginable thing but serves only as an “ideal” for purposes of argument and analysis. Second, the term created by Genette—paratext—suggests that text is both something implied by paratext and simultaneously a superordinate concept. But at any rate paratexts—even author portraits or typographical appearance (see P, pp. 30–31, 33–34),¹² which one would first tend to classify under the category of graphics or typeface—are something like texts. Paratexts always imply at least a moment of readability and hence textuality—in the broader sense. This is not insignificant, as Genette maintains that “a text without a paratext does not exist” but that there are certainly “paratexts without texts” (P, p. 3), for instance, titles of lost works or of works never written. And this naturally applies to all other paratextual elements as well. His point is that there is text—and thus texts—beyond paratextually framed entities.


Genette reduces the phenomena of paratextuality to one short formula:
“paratext = peritext + epitext” (P, p. 5), which is also his line of argumentation. His study starts with the peritexts, the paratextual elements contained in one way or another in the corpus of a book, and he treats them at great length. It is important to note that a question about a spatial criterion is first in his catalog of questions to be asked about every paratext: “(the question where?),” “(how?),” “(from whom? to whom?),” “(to do what?)” (P, p. 4). Peritexts are paratexts of the “more typical” category (P, p. 5) as they are separated from the text by at least a minimum distance, thus attracting the reader’s/viewer’s attention to some extent, but at the same time they are characterized by a certain proximity to the text. (In this respect the peritextual incipit can be considered a paratext par excellence.13 It stems from and is part of the actual text, occurring in a position that is both liminal and prominent, and at the same time it detaches itself from the text to refer to it as a whole, to give it its title.) It is understood that this criterion of proximity/distance is also the reason Genette divided Seuils into two parts and the reason for the dominant structure of these two parts.14

Epitexts, namely, are defined as the paratexts that are not found within the covers of an individual work in book form (see P, pp. 344–47). Some examples are: autonomous publishing house strategies and PR decisions, interviews, debates, comments by the author appearing at a later date in letters, diaries, or other genres or media. The greater the distance of these elements from the actual bound volume—and of course distance here is not restricted to the spatial dimension in the narrower sense but also includes a temporal and social aspect—the more tenuous Genette’s conceptualization becomes. His description then takes on an increasingly cursory quality, sometimes containing brief statements of what he will not do. (A symptomatic example: “I will not dwell on the publisher’s epitext” [P, p. 347].)

This arrangement of concepts and definitions indicates that Genette has a clear preference for the book as a proper guarantee for the unity of a particular individual work, which places constraints on the functional analyses he is aiming for and steers them in a certain direction. These analyses inquire into the conditions that make the book possible, that is, they are concerned with those functions of the book to which the paratext plays a supplementary yet constitutive role as “a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous” (P, p. 12), but they do not explore the function of the book form as such. As far as it is perceived as the unity of the difference between

13. See Schestag, “Call Me Ishmael.”
text and paratext, a book is simply the concrete realization of a literary work. And for this reason the distinction between the work and its paratexts is absolutely parallel to the hermeneutic distinction between the whole and its parts. At least in the peritextual dimension it is a specific variant of this distinction. Despite their normally liminal position, these parts are not only of interest as marginal appendages. When Genette describes paratexts as “accompanying productions” (P, p. 1) as opposed to the actual text, he does not mean that they are exceptional elements separate from the text; to see them in such a role—often thought to be a typical poststructuralist interpretation—would be to misunderstand what Genette is saying. His paratexts are hermeneutically privileged and powerful elements. They guide the reader’s attention, influence how a text is read, and communicate such information as to give a text its first contours, its manageable identity so to speak. And paratexts are important not only for the process of textual reception but also for text production; they function as indicators to be aimed for, as structures of literary expectations.

Genette’s thus conditioned interest in the unity of an individual literary work is what makes his paratext theory so insightful and innovative, but this is an almost paradoxical result. His basic assumption of the work as a book—as something that is materially, especially spatially, evident and whose individual paratextual elements he does indeed work through schematically—takes him and subsequent scholars in the opposite direction, causing them to start a process of historical and systematic specification and differentiation. In other words, his concentration on the paratext—its research, its reading—leads to a negation of the unquestioned premise that was thought to be his starting point. A view of an “undefined zone” between the inside and the outside (P, p. 2) is opened up, and in it perspectives are divided, multiplied, and dispersed.

This can be illustrated best by a concrete case. Let us take a title, for instance, Wohin denn ich (But Where Shall I Go). Marie Luise Kaschnitz has finished her manuscript, it will soon be published, and she has already found a publisher. She suggests a quotation by Nikolaus Lenau for its title:

17. This, incidentally, is consistent with the fact that the organization of this aspect always leads to a plurality of sorts, which is precisely why Genette chose Paratexts for his title. Apart from the special case of “paratexts without texts,” paratexts normally do not occur in the singular but in the plural (P, p. 3). They differ in this way—namely, from text—when it is meant in the sense of the entire work.
“bis es mir schön wird, das Schreckliche” (until the dreadful becomes beauty to me). But if in modern times authorship is understood as “control over one's literary work,” then this is exactly where the author’s sovereignty ends. Kaschnitz’s publisher, Inge Claassen, reserves the right to select the title for the work, and she rejects the author’s proposal as “too long and complicated.” “Countless telephone calls” and “discussions” are necessary. Ingeborg Bachmann is consulted as well; her suggestion, “rückkehr aus dem Nebelland” (returning from the fog), is not successful either. Ultimately, Adorno solves the problem with Hölderlin’s “Wohin denn ich,” which he comes up with off the cuff. Later, Adorno dedicated his essay “Titles” to Kaschnitz in memory of this episode. In it he recounts some of his other experiences with titles, and in the third volume of Notes to Literature, published in 1965, he reveals how the title of that work came about. He had originally planned to call the book “Worte ohne Lieder” (words without songs), but Peter Suhrkamp saved it from this fate by suggesting Notes to Literature. In general, Adorno felt that most authors were unsuited for choosing titles for their own works as their intentions got in the way; it was “so much easier to find titles for the works of others than for one’s own.”

As a complement to this, Genette likewise asserts that “responsibility for the title is always shared by the author and the publisher” (P, p. 74). His reason, however, is not an internal one but what he sees as a correlating, external, and, if you will, more materialistic one: “For if the text is an object to be read, the title (like, moreover, the name of the author) is an object to be circulated” (P, p. 75).

Thus, if, like Genette, one starts to look more closely at this zone of moments constituting the unity of a book, one initiates a process of differentiation. Just about here it becomes clear that the title—often associated metonymically with the author, thought to be traceable to him or her—is an object of shared authorship, and this fact changes the category of authorship itself in a significant way. And thus the paratextual zone is observed

21. See Adorno, Peter Suhrkamp, and Siegfried Unseld, ”So müßte ich ein Engel und kein Autor sein”: Adorno und seine Frankfurter Verleger: Der Briefwechsel mit Peter Suhrkamp und Siegfried Unseld, ed. Wolfgang Schopf (Frankfurt am Main, 2003), pp. 245–82.
23. Genette emphasizes this argument paratextually by choosing the name of his publisher, Seuil, for the title of his book.
to be a sphere of mobile, fragile, unstable, improbable relationships, a place of contacts and contracts and communication, or, as Genette puts it, of “transaction” (P, p. 2). Numerous social, economic, technical, and material references are discovered; these are not irrelevant to the text but give indications of its internal working, showing it to be indeed a dispersedly organized and diverse structure. These references open up opportunities to raise social-historical, economic, media-historical/discourse-analytical, communication-theoretical, and gender-related questions and to read texts in these various manners, which makes the concept so attractive.

These findings can also be described from another perspective. For a text to function as a unity, or as book matter according to Genette, it seems to some extent necessary that the paratextual elements should delimit the field without questions being asked, without question, but that they should not enter the field of vision themselves. (Is not Notes to Literature without question Adorno’s main critical work?) Paratexts have the effect of promoting the unity of a text, but they can only accomplish this without hindrance when they are not read in the strict sense of the word as such, that is, when no questions are asked about details, when there are no inquiries into how they function, how they make references to circumstances of production or distribution or to other aspects. In this respect Derrida’s general statement about the form of the frame, or the parergon, that “its traditional determination [is] not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment it deploys its greatest energy,” is valid for the paratext as well. And thus with his positivist-micrologic approach Genette gives his project an ideological-critical or deconstructive direction that is at variance with his professed starting interest.

So, in general, the theorems and questions Genette attempted to exclude systematically from his conception of the paratext have completely caught up with it. This applies to the phenomenological tradition from which Derrida developed his notion of parergonality (in his discussion of Kant’s Critique of Judgement) and which prompted Erving Goffman—at almost the same time—to state as a basic characteristic of frame analysis that “discus-

sions about frame inevitably lead to questions concerning the status of the discussion itself, because here terms applying to what is analyzed ought to apply to the analysis also.” \(^{29}\) In his theory of paratextuality, Genette tries to avoid or circumvent precisely these kinds of reflections, but he pays the price of creating self-references beyond control, which despite the inherently intriguing quality of his undertaking make it problematic. One especially significant self-reference of this type that goes unnoticed and thus unchecked is based on his conception of the author. His interest in the paratextually ensured work (opus) as a whole requires a reference to the “authorial intention” as an additional criterion (\(P, p. 3\)). \(^{30}\) Genette questions the “function of author” as little as he questions the function of the book. Instead, he employs the former—in the manner described by Foucault\(^ {31}\)—to support his concept of the work. And this is not the only instance of circular logic here. Namely, on the one hand he uses the author and his will as a criterion for determining the presence of a paratextual element as such, and on the other hand he treats the authors themselves—their names and biographical facts about them—as paratextual elements. Thus, there is still considerable need for discussion and conceptualization of this question.

Another theoretical area Genette avoids—and because of his original programming perhaps must avoid—is media or, depending on where one wants to place the emphasis, communication theory. His main shortcoming is that he is not willing to risk the category of the text as book (or the work) itself. Instead, he tries to restrict texts to the domain of books by stopping the functional analysis at this point—by refusing to go further. This shortcoming can conceivably only be compensated for by comparisons between media and by a more abstract and thus more variable positioning of what is to be regarded as a textual item. Presumably, the communication concept, \(^ {32}\) that is, the interpretation of paratextual phenomena as organizers of


30. A significant other wording refers to the intention “of the author and his allies” (\(P, p. 2\); my emphasis). Extensive discussion is required not least because of this additional criterion; on the question of authorization by the “author or his legal representatives,” see Derrida, “Devant la loi,” trans. Avital Ronell, in \textit{Kafka and the Contemporary Critical Performance: Centenary Readings}, ed. Alan Udoeff (Bloomington, Ind., 1987), p. 145. See also footnote 40 below.


communication, would be helpful here. Of course, such an approach would not eliminate the need to determine what constitutes a (communicative) item as opposed to other items and to characterize each of these items individually, but this would be precisely the advantage. Genette’s question of what makes a text a text would not always be answered at the start (that is, in the sense of the dimension of the work discussed at the beginning, which has been incorporated into the concept of the text both implicitly and normatively and which is encountered again in the problematic concept of the author).

Still, critics are continuing with a functional analysis in conjunction with Genette’s theory, and modifications of his conception of the paratext have already taken place and are still taking place. Beginning from the points of view of different media and then comparing them has generated extremely productive routes of inquiry. The inadequacies of Genette’s book orientation are being successively brought to light through the research being done on other media in the neighboring cultural disciplines, and the functional analysis he is unwilling to carry out (or is unable to carry out because of his overriding assumption of the implied text concept) is gradually being completed. As a result, it can be foreseen that the research which has been inspired by Genette’s work will eventually return to its starting point in order to refine the theory and that this will have instructive consequences.

In film studies the potential of the paratext concept was recognized very quickly, namely, as both a practical and a necessary addition to the film semiotic notion of the text. Genette’s categories can be employed here profitably for purposes of description. On the one hand, it is possible to distinguish quite clearly between peritexts and epitexts in film texts—the peritextual qualities of titles, subtitles, and title sequences and the epitextual placement of film posters, trailers, and stills come to mind; on the other hand, important media-specific variants of paratexts can be observed. In this respect it becomes practically compelling—due to the change of the concept from consideration of different media—to look at issues in com-


34. On this, see also the argumentation of Joachim Paech, “Film, programmatisch,” in Paratexte in Literatur, Film, Fernsehen, pp. 213–23.

munication theory as well. With films the question of who is speaking cannot be answered by naming a person but only by constructing a source of enunciation or, according to Metz, impersonal enunciation, and thus at this point we have precisely the abstraction in communications theory that Genette’s theory lacks. Moreover, as filmmaking involves a comparatively large division of labor, a film cannot be attributed to one author, and it is difficult to stylize a film in this direction as an author’s film. As for the title, in the audiovisual context it is paratextually integrated into the opening credits, an essential element of film enunciation. Apparently, the opening credits (or générique) constitute a paratext that uses a number of the paratextual forms found in books—as a kind of imprint for films—but does so in a specifically filmic way. This is demonstrated, for instance, by the great variety of jobs documented in the credits. Therefore, observations of how the use of paratexts differs in films and book/work forms shed some light on the paratextual stylization of the latter. The work actually involved in the creation of a book title can only be reconstructed philologically at a later date with some effort and good luck. However, in films it is not unusual—at least since the fifties—for the production of the opening credits to be acknowledged as well, that is, credited in them. There is much to be learned from comparisons with films, particularly about the authorship question—asked by Foucault and ignored by Genette—because films enable one to see the authors of paratexts, in particular the authors of title sequences, the title makers.

37. In this respect it is a genuine mass medium as it fulfills the “message from many to many” criterion established by Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry (1951; New York, 1987), p. 42.
38. See the inquiries dedicated in particular to describing their forms and functions: Janin-Foucher, Du générique au mot FIN; de Mourgués, Le Générique de film; Adam Duncan Harris, Extra Credits: The History and Collection of Pacific Title and Art Studio (Minneapolis, 2000); Deborah Allison, “Promises in the Dark: Opening Title Sequences in American Feature Films of the Sound Period” (Ph.D. diss., University of East Anglia, 2001); and Alexander Bohnke, “Paratexte des Films: Verhandlungen des diegetischen Raums” (Ph.D. diss., University of Siegen, 2004).
39. See the Kaschnitz example cited above.
40. Here it is appropriate to mention that parasite theory should play a greater role in the paratextuality discussion; see Michel Serres, The Parasite, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (1980; Baltimore, 1982). The zone of paratextuality is an interesting milieu for parasites and their relations, which are reversible in many respects and thus often quite complex. Compare Stanitzek, “The Plastic People Will Hear Nothing but a Noise”: Paratexts in Hollywood, the Beatles, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, et al.,” trans. Alexander Bohnke, Soziale Systeme 9 (2003): 321–33. In this context some short remarks by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello outlining the générique as a desirable future model of representing work in a globalized economic production should at least be bookmarked; see Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, Le Nouvel Esprit du capitalisme (Paris, 1999), p. 475.
Yet in a certain respect the paratext concept has been transferred from literature to film studies with almost too little resistance. Namely, the limitations of the functional comparison between the two media have not always been recognized. This can be illustrated by the example of the book motif, which has played a significant role in title sequences since early film.\(^41\) The opening credits of many films from the twenties to the fifties were written on—seemingly—simple title cards that occasionally had an elaborate movable type dimension, and many of these opening credits used either the theater curtain or book motif, the latter having the title, credits, and characters on turning pages. It is tempting to consider this unfilmic, as if the film had not been able to free itself completely from the influence of its precursory media. That this is a somewhat prejudiced view, however, becomes clear when one sees the *ultimate* product of modern credits design: Kyle Cooper’s opening credits to David Fincher’s 1995 film *Seven*, a highly advanced digital montage of analog footage using the book motif again as a central element and doing so very convincingly.\(^42\) Books *are* filmic; it is possible for the organizers of film communication to make use of the older medium and vice versa.\(^43\) And this indicates that a comparison of film and literary paratexts does have limitations; namely, both kinds of paratexts refer to texts as structures of individual works with their own contoured boundaries. Just as a book has two covers, a title, an imprint, and so on, a film—at least this type of film—has opening and closing credits, and so on. And thus a book can function as a filmic organizer of communication, as a kind of natural delineation of the entire work.

The comparison can be expedited by considering phenomena and research of the next medium, television. The relevant televisial paratexts are extremely differentiated and are becoming more so at an accelerated pace, especially as a result of recent developments in private television. Television scholars emphatically point out their importance; apart from epitextual design and off-the-air promotion strategies, it has been found that logos, trailers, teasers, and appetizers play a pivotal role in making *flow* the ideal organizational principle of television programming processes.\(^44\) This poses


\(43\) See, for instance, *Oh Movie presents Rosa von Praunheim [and] Carla Aulaulu in Oh Movie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969).

an enormous challenge to the paratext concept, which can be illustrated by returning to our last example. When Fincher’s Seven is aired on television, the beginning of the film, including its opening credits, is for the most part left intact. This is not the case with the end of the film. When watching the film at the cinema or on video or a DVD, viewers see several minutes of carefully prepared closing credits presented in the same typography as that found in the opening credits, and music is provided to help viewers exit the film narrative. But when the German television station Pro Sieben broadcast the film in 2001, the entire closing credits were cut off. The last diegetic image was followed directly by a peculiar hybrid that cleared away the film in only a few seconds and synchronously served up something new. The screen was divided into two parts. On the left viewers saw the closing credits in rudimentary form against a backdrop of the flashy design of the television station and, on the right, a trailer announcing a coming film, and a voice was heard to say: “From the abyss of the soul to the fathomless depths of the sea. . . . The underwater weekend on Pro Sieben: Abyss, tomorrow at 8:15 PM on Pro Sieben” (followed by product commercials). In the presence of such phenomena of television flow it seems appropriate to speak of a veritable explosion of paratextual forms, but this cannot be done without addressing difficult questions: Which elements are actually being framed? To which elements do such paratexts refer? And the answers require deep reflection. Here we have one of those lesions in the structure of the individual work typical of network television, where “the law of interruption” prevails.\textsuperscript{45} This means, however, that the supplementary-supportive function of paratextuality—one of its most central theoretical criteria—is specifically weakened, at least with respect to the individual text. The paratext refers not so much (although also)\textsuperscript{46} to the individual television show as to the format, television station, programming, and program flow as such. Instead of being centered on the work and its integral communication, it has a multiplicity of references.

But it does not have to follow as a necessary consequence that the primary significance of this category is lost for the television medium. Rather, the point needs to be argued the other way around, namely, what can be observed about televisual paratexts can also be applied to the paratexts of the precursor media. This holds true for the role of authorial intention, which is weakened further in this medium. It is applicable likewise to the much emphasized dimension of advertising, in which normally the great-


\textsuperscript{46} For the parasite (in the sense mentioned in footnote 40) certainly remains dependent on this relationship.
est number of paratextual phenomena occur—in whatever camouflaged form—and which therefore rightly deserves the attention of book and film scholars.\textsuperscript{47} It applies also to the aspect of beginning, or beginnings, which is particularly important for television. This dimension, too, is typical of paratextuality when it is conceived of as a zone of contact, a place where communication channels are created and maintained under conditions where audience attention is a scarce resource.\textsuperscript{48}

However, there is another, more fundamental and thus more compelling argument that television studies provides for the general paratext discussion. It stems from the work of Raymond Williams and shows him to be a genuine disciple of Marshall McLuhan. Williams was the first to recognize the significance of flow for television communication (and to give it a name). When reporting his discovery, he pointed out various traditional genres and publishing forms he found useful for comparisons with the television experience. He concluded that television functioned analogously to literary forms such as almanacs and \textit{silvae} (little forests) and even to journals, magazines, newspapers, and other similar publications. \textit{Miscellany} can serve as a collective term for these literary phenomena.\textsuperscript{49} It is a well-known fact that throughout the history of literary studies they have not, as a rule, enjoyed a very good reputation. Nonetheless, they are \textit{book} forms, variants of book culture, and in view of this the assumptions about the book held by Genette and his followers can and should be reconsidered. For this comparison makes clear that “the pretentious, universal gesture of the book” is an idealistic and one-sided conception,\textsuperscript{50} and comparisons like these might possibly encourage paratext scholars to give up their unquestioned assumption of the book/work paradigm.\textsuperscript{51}

The study of paratexts as the boundaries and frames of texts has a basic interest and technique in common with the media and cultural sciences. This interest and technique can be most aptly summarized by a comment

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47} See, regarding books, Philippe Lane, \textit{La Périphérie du texte} (Paris, 1992); regarding film trailers, Vinzenz Hediger, \textit{Verführung zum Film: Der amerikanische Kinotrailer seit 1912} (Marburg, 2001); regarding TV on-air self-promotion, \textit{Trailer, Teaser, Appetizer}.
\item \textsuperscript{48} On the thesis that television in particular must adapt to this scarcity, see Klaus Kreimeier, \textit{Lob des Fernsehens} (Munich, 1995), p. 247.
\item \textsuperscript{49} See Raymond Williams, \textit{Television and Cultural Form} (New York, 1975), pp. 87–88.
\item \textsuperscript{51} What unexpected architectures a comparison of cultures can bring to light is described in Erhard Schützpelz’s analysis, which draws attention not only to the force of the book paradigm but also to its potential permeability for oral “para-paratexts” and “allo-oral footnotes”; see Erhard Schützpelz, “‘The Bushmen’s Letters Are in Their Bodies’: Paratexte zwischen: Kabbo und Wilhelm Bleek,” in \textit{Paratexte in Literatur, Film, Fernsehen}, pp. 135–64.
\end{itemize}
McLuhan made in a letter. Expressing himself in “gestalt” theoretical language, he wrote that a gestalt was usually perceived or studied as a figure against a background, and the analysis of any kind of figure/ground relationship started with the figure. McLuhan declared that his media theoretical innovation was to reverse this; media studies was trying to start with the ground.\(^{52}\) However, such an approach involves a systematic problem: in turning to the medium, attention usually focused on particular texts, media products, or individual works becomes “mediatized.” In traditional hermeneutic terms, this means that a switch from a psychological/technical interpretation to a grammatical interpretation takes place. This switch is legitimate, but it has to remain possible to switch in either direction.\(^{53}\) The investigation of paratexts offers good opportunities for this because it always has a clear view—to stay with the image—of the switches themselves, and in this respect it should also prove fruitful for research on the newest media since television—the computer-based hypertext and the internet.\(^{54}\) It is not a coincidence that a very instructive conceptualization of the hyperlink refers back to a traditional paratext—the footnote.\(^{55}\) And even if the relevant relationships in this medium are not so readily apprehensible (what is a text, paratext, peritext, or epitext in relation to an internet portal with numerous links?), their description can surely benefit from the application of such methods.

Of course, this is not an answer to the question posed at the beginning about the general, broad concept of text (and culture) currently under discussion in literature and cultural and media studies. But the question could now be put again pithily with a quotation from Alexander Kluge:

> One can’t help but notice how complex the act of reading is. Books make it easy for us because you don’t have to worry about distinguishing vowels and consonants or about recognizing where the word divi-


sions or paragraphs occur. Just imagine if books were printed without any punctuation or spaces between the words, and all the vowels were removed and had to be inferred from the context. There are overwritten texts, as if a single page were typed over differently four thousand times. This kind of overwriting reflects perfectly the work of historical processes, the work of generations and their rules of language. Moreover, each of these elements—this does not apply to the letters of the alphabet—is in a process of constant movement; it is not only written over others but is an overwritten element itself and thus undergoes constant change. Therefore, in the course of things all texts change. . . . But this only describes the activity on the surface, and the relationships between the layers, that is, their reactions to each other are important, too. With each change of perspective another connection between the texts comes to light.56

To point out that any work on this overly complicated palimpsest would require a paratextual orientation would be tautological after what has already been said, but the observation that “in the course of things all texts change” should be emphasized and taken seriously. Applied to the scholarly study of questions related to paratextual phenomena, this suggests on the one hand that the undoubtedly performative dimension of “allography” cannot be systematically excluded from the domain of paratexts,57 and on the other hand that we (too)—we philologists, media scholars—are the ones who are writing these texts.
