Preface

Despite the fact that the concept of "text" is unstable and in constant shift, texts have not been able to surpass their root meaning. As we know, the term "text" is linked with the word "to weave" (Ong 13). Whether inscribed on paper or displayed in computer screens, texts have remained as fabrics comprised of a set of symbols or formulas, as well as intricate combinations of elements. Even though they are believed to be mostly comprised of words, images and graphic elements are often used as the interweaving thread holding texts together. Digital media seem to reinforce this idea, and to demonstrate that texts are not anchored in verbal language.

Since the introduction of computers, we have watched texts being turned into superimposed windows; into chunks of verbal and graphic material; footnotes interconnected by links (Landow 3); audio and video files; strings of letters that become images, or messages popping up on the screen of our mobile devices. We knew already that texts could be read, performed or listened to. However, digital media have provided alternative forms of contact between text and user, as well as further ways to combine semiotic modes. The act of reading is no longer exclusively related to the process of decoding letters or interpreting static images, but it is also linked with an invitation (or challenge) to assemble, play, activate, download or install. Besides scrolling up and down and zooming in or out, a reader can experience a text by moving across a room, touching a screen or speaking into a microphone. Sounds and gestures initiated by the reader can morph into words, letters or pictures displayed on a wall or a computer screen. In fact, digital texts need the cooperation of several languages (such as machine or assembly languages) in order to be understood by a human. The underlying code allows a text to generate itself and to shapeshift right before our very eyes. Thus, digital texts do not merely remain at the surface: they exist elsewhere, in our devices, or spread across the web. Locating the text—or bringing it to the surface—has become an intrinsic part of the reading act.

Digital media also allow readers to share their texts instantaneously. From self-generated poetry to beguiling bots, digital media have allowed the creation of additional ways to defy the role of the author. In so doing, they pose new challenges concerning publication, copyright, archive and access to information.

The implications of all these changes are analyzed in the essays included in this collection. Thus, the reader of this anthology may find unexpected connections between apparently disparate topics. Comprised of six parts, this book aims to offer the reader a broad perspective over the relationship between text and digital media, from creation to archiving of digital texts. The

first part, "Nothing Comes of Nothing" presents an essay written by Dene Grigar, where a link between electronic literature and oral tradition is emphasized. In the same part, we can read Jörgen Schäfer's text whose title, as the reader may notice, is based on Italo Calvino's stimulating essay and Alan Turing's influential test. While reading this first part, we are reminded that electronic literature is not born *ex nihilo* (Hayles 60). In fact, electronic literature continues a dialog established long before digital computer was created.

The second part, "Introspective Texts," is focused on the way texts can be self-reflexive and mirror the process of their own creation or reading (Portela 25). The essay shared by Otso Huopaniemi explores a link between machine translation and self-translation. In the same part, Sandy Baldwin and Gabriel Tremblay-Gaudette underline a connection between poetry and video games by analyzing a performance which turns a game into an introspection about literature.

In the third part ("Where is Narrative?"), the reader will find essays about the way digital media can be used to tell a story or build a narrative. The essay written by Carlos Reis is focused on the survival of characters in (digital and print) fictional worlds. María Goicoechea De Jorge describes Shelley Jackson's work, *my body—a Wunderkammer*, as an exploration of the grotesque. In an essay about choice and disbelief in digital fiction, the reader is invited to revisit the debate around the concepts of immersion and interactivity, as suggested by Marie-Laure Ryan.

The reader will also find a part focused on digital literacy and the teaching of electronic literature. In "Teaching the Digital," María Mencía argues for the benefits of adopting a practice-based research inside the classroom. In the same part, Mia Zamora offers us the opportunity to know *Networked Narratives*, both a course and a project designed to promote digital literacy.

The third part, "Trans-Multi-Inter-Meta (The Medium)," aims to describe the role of the medium in the production, transmission and comprehension of texts, as well as to evaluate the conditions of media interaction, convergence, and divergence. Anna Nacher analyses materiality by focusing on the intermedial component of Shelley Jackson's work, *Snow* (2014–). In this part, María Teresa Vilariño Picos shares her reading of several transmedia stories.

The final part, "Tracking and Preserving Texts," presents essays concerned with the process of gathering and archiving texts. In this part, the reader will have the opportunity to know Devon Schiller's research about vocabulary for describing facial expressions. An account of my experience as the curator of the exhibition "Shapeshifting Texts" is also shared with the reader.

This collection culminates with an enticing and thought-provoking postscript written by the pioneering artist and professor, Frieder Nake.

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