

Ph. D. thesis

The Poetic and its Avatars: Mallarmé's Model and Analogous Poetic Experiments in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Ioana-Eliza Deac

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania

Keywords: the poetic, textual materiality, free verse, poetic image, visibility in literature, Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés, livre de dialogue*, Tristan Tzara, *Vingt-cinq poèmes*, experimental poetry, e-literature, hypertext

Summary

Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *A Throw of Dice* is basically the story of a shipwreck: in the centre of the abyss in which the ship is about to sink there is the master or the captain fighting against the waves, undecided about the right solution, seeming to glimpse, for an instant, on the horizon, the elusive shape of a mermaid, while at the end of the memorable crisis, above the sea that has erased any trace of the human event, there appears at a great distance the constellation of the Septentrion. The voyage at sea is very common topic in the literature of the 19th century, from the marine scenes depicted in the poems of Hugo, Vigny, Poe, Baudelaire or Hérédia to the adventures around the world in Jules Verne's novels. But in Mallarmé's poem, the narrative does not fulfil a mimetic role since the event serves only as a fictional illustration of a hypothesis, nor a referential one since its key images represent, just like in other poems of this author, metaphors for the poetic act, which confers them a self-referential function. Jacques Rancière's conclusion in *Mallarmé. La politique de la sirène* about the sonnet *À la nue accablante tu*, which is thematically related to *A Throw of Dice*, can also be applied to the latter: the plot of the shipwreck constitutes a figural debate over the issue of the poetic action and of its chances to materialise during a period of transition – of interregnum, as well as an account of the status of the book at a time when the codex faces serious competition from new means of communication.

Read in a self-referential key, the story of the Master (*Le Maître*) becomes the story of the meter (*le mètre*), more specifically the story of the classical alexandrine faced with the conceptual uncertainties generated by the invention of the free verse, which, according to Mallarmé, could result in the appearance of a new genre or art. This interpretation of the poem is also prompted by

the fact that its vocabulary borrows the terminology which the author uses in his articles in order to characterise the novelty brought about by the symbolist innovation. Thus, the Master who, “en maniaque chenu”, rolls the dice in the name of the waves can be seen as the personification of “l’alexandrin [...] qui [...], au lieu de demeurer maniaque et sédentaire comme à présent, sera désormais plus libre, plus imprévu, plus aéré” (*Sur l’évolution littéraire*). The throw of dice from the centre of the abyss and the constellation that appears at the end illustrate the launch of a new form of versification, with an unpredictable destiny, which could engender an unprecedented and not yet exemplified poetic form: “Ainsi lancé de soi le principe qui n’est – que le Vers! (...) Signe! Au gouffre central d’une spirituelle impossibilité que rien soit exclusivement à tout, le numérateur divin de notre apothéose, quelque suprême moule n’ayant pas lieu en tant que d’aucun objet qui existe” (*Solennité*). The potential genre, which seems as fleeting as the mermaid with “impatientes squames ultimes”, is a still chimerical version of the book: “Chimère, y avoir pensé atteste, au reflet de ses squames, combien le cycle présent, ou quart dernier de siècle, subit quelque éclair absolu – (...) jusqu’à illuminer ceci – que, plus ou moins, tous les livres, contiennent la fusion de quelques redites comptées: même il n’en serait qu’un – au monde” (*Crise de vers*). This genre about to take shape is described as an equivalent of the theatrical space reduced to its essential elements, where the verse acquires the mobility of the actor, of the dancer or of the mermaid as a consequence of a distribution which departs from the traditional rules concerning the typographical layout of poetry. The double page supplants the rhyme as a means of creating the effect of parallelism, indicating that the construction of the text moves below the level of the linguistic signifiers, starting from the material aspects of the book as a physical object, which serves as the visible foundation for the edifice of visions. The inclusive approach to all the components of the book – both material and immaterial – in the creative activity aims at controlling chance – the random outcomes of the publication process – entailed in the transposition of the ideas in a concrete form as well as at establishing a correspondence between the content and its vehicle. Consequently, “[u]ne ordonnance du livre de vers point innée ou partout, élimine le hasard” (*Crise de vers*).

Secondly, the poem is also an anticipatory projection of its own future as experimental work, which imagines itself as a possible starting point for a new art. The story of the metre is ultimately the story of the Master – Mallarmé – as a model for the next generations. His influence is exerted rather in the random manner of the fall of the dice, whose consequences are not always predictable, than in the form of an evolutionary process – of generation or direct descent. The studies on modernist poetry tend to privilege the metaphor of the generation, attempting to identify lines of descent from the poets of the 19th century, including Mallarmé, to the poets of the 20th and 21st centuries. However, the application of this model, reflecting the intention of literary history and criticism to include the individual productions in a well-organised system, leads to results which

never fully succeed to account for all the varieties of modernist phenomena. A telling example, in which the metaphor of the poetic generation is replaced with that of the iceberg in order to suggest the existence of modernist poetic areas which have been less visible and explored, is the study of Gheorghe Crăciun *The Iceberg of Modern Poetry* (2002), whose key distinction – intransitive vs transitive poetry – proves, as the author himself admits, insufficient to explain a third category of works, which he describes, among other things, as experimental. If all of these studies refer back to Mallarmé as one of the original masters of the intransitive trend in poetry, more and more recent studies propose him as the main originator of the experimental trend precisely through his last poem – *A Throw of Dice* – which has often served, explicitly and implicitly, as term of comparison for a constellation of avant-garde and experimental manifestations throughout the last two centuries.

The aim of this thesis is to offer a detailed analysis of the Mallarméan model and to explore the experimental area of modernist poetry in a manner which is not guided by the intention to establish a new line of poetic genealogy but follows a less strict order, which, nevertheless, accounts more authentically for the unpredictable character of literary connections and is inspired precisely by the structure of Mallarmé's final poem. This poem is divided into three sections, which represent three stages of a possible history of literary influences: the proposition of a theoretical hypothesis, the launch of a model and the subsequent appearance of some textual constellations, more or less close or similar.

The hypothesis of Mallarmé's poem is a simple one: it consists in redistributing the two thirds of blank space which, according to the traditional typographical conventions, surround the poem placed in the centre of the page. For Mallarmé, the composition of these spaces between words and letters in unprecedented ways is as important as writing the lines of verse (*Sur la philosophie dans la poésie*). *A Throw of Dice* is the actual result of this premise, illustrating a typographical arrangement where, in the poet's own words, “des motifs de même jeu s'équilibreront, balancés, à distance, ni le sublime incohérent de la mise en page romantique ni cette unité artificielle, jadis, mesurée en bloc au livre. Tout devient suspens, disposition fragmentaire avec alternance et vis-à-vis, concourant au rythme total, lequel serait le poème tu, aux blancs” (*Crise de vers*). In the third place, the possible outcome of this poem – “rien ou presque un art” (*Observation relative au poème*) – is figuratively presented as a constellation, the result of a stellar throw of dice, different from the Master's, which seems distant and rather parallel than directly connected to this one. The artistic trends in the 20th and 21st centuries confirmed the second part of the prediction – what resurfaced after the shipwreck of the alexandrine against the free verse is an art with a diversity of manifestations, whose common point consists in the purposeful correlation between the content and its vehicle, no matter what the medium of choice is.

The first part of this paper has a double objective: on the one hand, to offer a bird's-eye view

on the relatively numerous attempts to order the poetry of the first half of the 20th century so as to highlight the areas that these theoretical hypotheses leave out of their circumscriptions; on the other hand, to explore theoretical alternatives developed in specialised fields, adjacent to literary criticism and theory, to see how their conceptual contributions could be put to use in order to account for the neglected modernist phenomena.

Although there is no lack of theories concerning the characteristics of the poetic modernism, they seem elaborated in a more or less individualistic way, either because they concentrate only on a particular national area or simply owing to the lack of awareness of similar pursuits in other contexts. The first section puts side by side some of the most important contributions to this investigation in order to bring into relief the common points, the differences, the poetic areas that remain out of their focus as well as the global idea that emerges out of these individual studies. Such attempts follow two main courses: firstly, they aim to identify the specific features of modernist poetry and, secondly, they try to establish lines of poetic genealogy. The studies in the first category form a three-layered structure. The surface level is represented by classic works like Hugo Friedrich's *The Structure of Modern Poetry* or Harold Bloom's series, which starts with *The Anxiety of Influence*. The second level is illustrated by two Romanian contributions written in direct response to Hugo Friedrich – *The Iceberg of Modern Poetry* by Gheorghe Crăciun and *The Paradigm of Modern Poetry* by Alexandru Muşina. Crăciun's notion of "transitive poetry" or what Muşina terms the poetry of "full immanence", as opposed to the meta-physical poetry of romantic descent, represents the reverse of what Friedrich and other theoreticians identify as the defining characteristic of modern poetry and adds a new layer to the modernist structure since the relation between intransitive and transitive poetry is not simply one of succession but of coexistence. Both authors argue that transitive poetry constitutes the invisible side of modernism – the overshadowed complement of intransitive poetry. However, the analysis of these examples reveals that there actually is a third area of modernist poetry which various forms of criticism, from formalist theories and New Criticism to deconstruction, tend to overlook – namely the poetry that can be placed under the loose term of "visual poetry". Some accounts of this phenomenon – studied under various names: visual poetry (Willard Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry 1914-1928, Modern Visual Poetry*), graphic poetics (Lennart Nyberg, *Bodies of Poems: Graphic Poetics in a Historical Perspective*) or experimental typography (Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art 1909-1923*) – attribute its disappearance from the critical horizon to the institutionalisation of the modernist theory which argues for the specificity and purity of each artistic domain to the exclusion of every hybrid form. However, some recent studies have suggested alternative readings of modernism which explicitly aim to take into account the exploration of the visual and material aspect of the literary work for aesthetic purposes. Such studies propose new

lines of descent: for instance, for the Anglo-American area, Jerome McGann indicates William Morris as a precursor, Marjorie Perloff – Ezra Pound (as opposed to Wallace Stevens, who is the central figure in Bloom's studies), while for the French area it is mainly the Mallarmé of *Un Coup de Dés* (Laurent Jenny, *La fin de l'intériorité*) and of *Le Livre* (Vincent Kaufmann, *Poétiques des groupes littéraires (Avant-gardes 1920-1970)*) that is placed at the head of a diverse series of visual experiments.

Secondly, the theoretical section of this thesis carries out an investigation of the Mallarméan hypothesis with the instruments provided by a series of disciplines, which complementary tackle the problem of the material existence of the literary work of art: the history of the copyright (which explains the origin of the dematerialised perspective on the literary work of art), the new editorial and textual theories (arguing for the determining role of the means of textual materialisation in the construction of meaning), the new media theories (which also underline the important role of the medium in the production of signification), the history and theory of writing (which states that any written text is both language and image), the most recent theories of the verse (which consider the standard free verse as basically a graphic form) as well as recent attempts to disambiguate the notion of literary image (which is to be understood not only as a figure of speech, but also as a graphic one). All of them converge on the idea of the relevance that the material form acquires on the level of signification, which is the result of an explicit design in the case of the so-called visual poetry, but proves to be just as valid in the case of the literary works which circulate in written form and, more recently, through different media. This perspective contradicts the premise of the immateriality of the literary work, which informed not only the romantic theories of idealist origin that the symbolist trend carried to extremes, but also the literary criticism and theory which took them over and perpetuated them throughout the 20th century. From a deconstructionist perspective, the obliteration of the physical aspect of the literary text constitutes an act of *figural evasion* (Paul de Man), while from the point of view of new media theories – it is an instance of *medial ideology* (Matthew Kirschenbaum). In a very schematic presentation of modernism in contrast with the preceding movements, it can be stated that, while romanticism was defined by the conflict between a poetics of orality which actually overlooked the graphic mode of existence and while the symbolist authors developed a musical poetics despite the fact that the form they invented was a visual one (the free verse), modernism is the first period when the authors programatically exploited the actual means of materialisation of the literary work of art. In the field of poetry, it is Mallarmé that operated the mutation from a musical symbolism to a visual modernism, employing the musical metaphor to offer spatial descriptions of the free verse in his articles and using the free verse in his last poem in a manner which highlighted its purely typographical condition.

The second part is an extensive analysis of the editorial interpretations of *A Throw of Dice*,

considering the fact that Mallarmé's demise interrupted the work on the definitive edition and that the editorial activity both of the poet and of his posthumous publishers focused almost exclusively on the extra-linguistic elements considered intrinsic to the poem. The rediscovery of the sets of proofs of the abortive version in the 1960s generated a series of editorial enterprises to print the poem in a form that would be the closest to Mallarmé's ideal, illustrating thus the extent of the influence that *A Throw of Dice* exerted on the next century. The analysis takes into account all the material aspects on which the poet expressed an opinion directly or indirectly – the physical structure of the book, the typography and the paratext – and studies comparatively the different forms that they take in successive editions, the reasons behind them and the way in which the objectives and the meanings of the poem are highlighted or reduced as a result of such decisions.

The comparison relies on a selection of restitutive editions which appeared throughout the post-Mallarméan century, from 1914 to 2007. The materialist approach to the Mallarméan text by its modern editors is justified not only by the new orientation in the bibliographical disciplines during the last decades of the 20th century, but also by the poet's own vision on the text, which he imagined, at the end of the 19th century, as inseparable from its physical vehicle. His ample correspondence with his publishers, particularly with the Belgian editor Edmond Deman, is another proof in this sense. This detailed examination constitutes both an illustration and an argument for a method of literary research which goes beyond the linguistic level it usually stops at in the light of the conclusions put forward by the disciplines of materiality presented in the first part.

Seen in the larger context of its time, the materialisation of the poem can also be read as a history of the French book from the moment when the monumental edition of the classical period became the established way of validating an author to the poem's immediate contemporaneity. *A Throw of Dice* takes part in a larger debate of those times, generated by the editorial crisis in the 1890s, which marked the victory of the publications that circulated on a large scale but were of poor quality. This debate turned into a polemic concerning the possible alliance between art and industry and in the conflict between the luxurious book and the book as industrial product. Many writers and authors initiated a series of projects meant to lead to the renaissance of the qualitative book. Concerning Mallarmé, it is not only his last work, but in fact all the volumes published during his lifetime that went through a similar process of authorial involvement at every stage of the book production, whether they were published in collaboration with the innovative literary magazines of the time, as in the case of the manuscript edition of his *Poésies*, or in collaboration with artist typographers such as Deman. Consequently, it is possible to read *A Throw of Dice* not only as the story of a critical moment in the history of the verse, but also as an allegory of the crisis of the book, both on the level of the reading practices, since the book enters into competition with other means of entertaining, and on the level of its physical construction. The editorial effort required by

the literary magazines on the part of the authors in association with the artists reflected precisely the attempt to withstand the randomness that was affecting the publication of literary works.

The third part opens with a sketch of the artistic experiments of the 20th and 21st centuries which can be or have been considered of Mallarméan descent. From this cluster of more or less direct or distant influences, we selected for exemplification several works situated at the extremities of the temporal sequence that starts with Mallarmé and continues up to the present day. Firstly, from the immediate posterity of the French poet, we have chosen a few poems illustrating the dadaist period of Tristan Tzara's work, which reflect a preoccupation that he shared with Mallarmé, usually overshadowed by his experiments from the avant-garde magazines, namely the closed attention that he paid to the construction of the volume of poetry, starting from its physical level. The analysis focuses mainly on the bibliographical characteristics of the 1918 edition of *Vingt-cinq poèmes* published by J. Heuberger at Zurich. By comparing the forms that three of these poems – *pays voir blanc*, *saut blanc cristal* and *printemps* – initially printed in the *Dada* collection take in the 1918 edition and in the volume of complete works published by Flammarion in 1975, we have highlighted the particular way in which this edition puts into practice the dadaist programme formulated simultaneously.

At the other end of the timeline, the interpretation has in view three cases in which the text is transferred from the book to the digital space or is specifically created for this context in order to bring into focus direct links or affinities generated by the generalisation of Mallarmé's ideas as well as a series of artistic effects resulting from the application of the new media in the literary field. In the first place, the exploration of the differences between the medium of the book and that of the computer starts from intermediary works, which exist both on paper and on the screen. The first example is a poem adequately entitled *Ars poetica* since it illustrates the key principles of a recent initiative, in direct descent from the Mallarméan model of *A Throw of Dice*, self-defined as *liberature*, a term which evokes all the three meanings of the Latin word *liber*: liberty – of creation, book – as material for the creative activity, weighing – of the words and of the letters that compose them. The double manifestation of the poem – typographical and digital – reflects the intention of *liberature* to move one step forward towards what may be called, by analogy with the term *e-literature* (*electronic literature*), *e-liberature*. The second example is a collection of poems – *V: Wave.Son.Nets/ Losing L'Una* – which claims no direct connection with the French experimental work but explores the same topic of word constellations and whose version for the web – *V: Vniverse* – is an actual representation of the celestial writing – “lumineusement, sur champ obscur”, using “l'alphabet des astres” (Stéphane Mallarmé, *L'Action restreinte*) – which constitutes the model for the human writing – black on white – in the book: the black screen is dotted with shiny points which are grouped either into figures of constellations or into constellations of text. The last

example is Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995), one of the earliest hypertext fictions and a classic work of the emerging canon of this genre, which remains a notable example of the kind of conceptual negotiations that occur at the meeting point between traditional and innovative literary forms. Previous readings of this hypertext and of such early works in general are usually guided by the intention to highlight their novelty in terms of medial specificity and to explain their unique manner of putting to use various medial features for aesthetic purposes. However, they tend to downplay the literary connection claimed by the hypertext itself, which can provide valuable insights into the conceptual changes that favored and accompanied its development. This hypertext, which presents itself both as a book unbound and as a dismembered body, grafting a series of concepts born in the old literary medium to the new media, becomes the object of a double examination: on the one hand, with the instruments provided by established literary criticism and theory and, on the other, with the conceptual apparatus of new media studies. The first reading is justified by the complex net of intertextual relations that this hypertext purposefully maintains with the field of literature, drawing on works of fiction and literary theory not only to define itself as a new genre by way of contrast, but also to weave into its body of text carefully designed patchworks of quotations. The time span of its selective literary references extends from antiquity to its immediate contemporaneity. Thus, the text invokes theories of writing from Plato to Derrida, views on textuality from ancient rhetoric to contemporary theories on hypertext, set in connection with long-standing interpretations of a marginal and problematic area of literature, namely pattern or figurative poetry, and the poetics of Romanticism with its double-sided incarnation, exemplified in the works of the two Shelley – Mary and Percy: prose and poetry, low genres and high genres, feminine writing and masculine writing. The second reading relies on the medial characteristics of the programme used for creating this hypertext and underlines the conceptual affinities with the Mallarméan project, which point out, retrospectively, the hypertextual thinking of the French poet and, prospectively, its distant echoes in forms of medial manifestation which seem to embody it more precisely than the codex.

The bibliography, in turn, follows the structure of the thesis. The list is divided into ten sections which indicate the disciplines that inform this research theoretically and practically as well as the works selected for analysis and the corresponding studies. This type of research, which starts from the premise of the essential role that the material context plays in the configuration of meaning, was made possible by a recent initiative of various publishing houses, most of them newly founded, to recuperate, very often as facsimiles, a series of documents of limited circulation or inaccessible. Thus, the manuscript of the poem *A Throw of Dice* and some of the sets of proofs corrected by Mallarmé became available to the public through their publication by La Table Ronde in 2007. Ypsilon Publishing House, which proposes one of the possible final versions of the poem,

was founded in 2007 precisely for this reason and specializes in the publication of books that illustrate the preoccupation with the materiality of the text. Another Parisian publishing house, Dilecta, shows a similar interest in circulating avant-garde texts in their original form. Tzara's dadaist volumes of poetry were published as facsimiles by Dilecta. This more and more visible tendency is in itself a proof of the change in view concerning the modes of existence of a literary work and the reconsideration of the role of the forms of circulation at different moments in time. Such publications allow one to perceive textual particularities that the standard editions regularly eliminate as irrelevant, although they are designed as constitutive elements, which is why their elimination results in reductive interpretations – not only of the text, but also of their larger significance in the conceptual context of their epoch and for the evolution of ideas from a literary trend or period to the next.

Considering that the higher the effort to establish the precise frontiers of the so-called visual poetry, the more confuse this notion becomes, an alternative approach, which would lead to more nuanced results, consists in reversing the terms of the expression and investigating different forms of visibility in poetry. A more adequate though less common term would be that of visibility in the sense indicated by Jerome McGann through the expression “the visible language of modernism”, which designates a variety of concrete means that the authors employ in order to give a perceptible form in writing to their poetic ideas. Replacing the notion of visibility, which also refers to the realm of the imagination, with that of visibility highlights the literal sense in which this term is used.

To ensure methodological precision and to avoid the ambiguities which lead to figural evasion or medial ideology through the use of some common notions of literary criticism without distinguishing enough among their different homonymous values, this research has tried to establish as clearly as possible the limits between their literal meaning and the figural one before using them as instruments of analysis. The main conclusion of the preliminary investigation into their employment in the critical and theoretical discourse is the systematic deprecation of the literal meaning of some current notions such as *writing*, *free verse*, *language as medium* or *image* in the context of the poetic or analytic trends informed by the idealist romantic thinking, which occupied the foreground of the literary field in the 20th century. In this view, writing as inscription on a material surface is overshadowed by its figural reinterpretation as speech, the exclusively graphic condition of free verse is masked by the musical analogy, the idea of language as the medium of poetry ignores the fact that, in this sense, the language is to be equated with the actual markings on paper, while the definitions of the poetic image do not make a proper distinction between the reference to the products of the imagination and the concrete shapes that such ideas are given on a writing surface, the latter being an aspect that traditional rhetoric has systematically excluded from its preoccupations.

From this perspective, Mallarmé's poetical and theoretical interventions represent a turning point in which the figural employment of certain images of the symbolist vocabulary serves as a means of transition towards the literal meanings that become explicit with modernism. As the analysis has shown, his theoretical vocabulary is the same with his poetic vocabulary and the meanings circulate from one area to the other. The radical changes in meaning take place under cover. The antanaclasis is a defining procedure not only in the case of the musical terms, which are used to express spatial relations, but also in the case of any other literary concept that he employs.

The poem *A Throw of Dice* concentrates several meanings of the notion of image, independently explored by different modernist trends or individual experiments. The first meaning concerns the image as illustration produced by a visual artist, resulting in the phenomenon called *livre de dialogue*, which represented a manner of publication that Tristan Tzara or the surrealists, for instance, exploited on a regular basis. The second type of image present in the poem is the typographical image, with variable degrees of figurativity. Various interpretations of the text have proved that the figurative aspect of Mallarmé's typographical arrangements is not entirely absent, but this feature is far from the figurativity of the *calligrammes*. At the middle of the 20th century, the concrete poets were inspired precisely by this particular form of the image from the last work of the French poet. Thirdly, the revelation of the strictly graphical nature of the standard free verse of modernism in *A Throw of Dice* leads to the conclusion that any creation which uses this technique takes the form of an individualised graphic image, particularly when the segmentation goes against syntax and creates multiple effects of meanings, which are entirely dependent on the context thus created. This is the case, for example, of Tzara's dadaist poems analysed in the third part. In the fourth place, the verbal image in the sense consolidated by rhetoric is also present in the poem and what becomes interesting to observe is the interaction with its equivalent on the page, which leads to the mutual amplification of the signification.

The four meanings of the notion of image indicate four possible directions for continuing and extending the research on modernism and on the experiments that followed: along the line of *livre de dialogue*, of typo-illustration, of the graphic effects of the free verse or of the collaboration between the visual forms and the verbal image. This classification is obviously schematic and inevitably simplifying since the four aspects are never entirely separated, but interfere and require a stratified analysis. But, at the same, they are differently emphasized in various artistic products.

Another connection between Mallarmé's poem and the works chosen for exemplification is represented by the theme of the book in the sense of total work of art, in which every component – from the material to the spiritual ones – brings its contribution to the construction of meaning. This is one of the reasons why the selection left out the concretist movement, although it explicitly claims a connection with the Mallarméan experiment. Concrete poetry is very often limited to the

typographical arrangement, neglecting the ampler context of the codex. On the other hand, even if the analysis of the hypertext in a poetic context seems at first contrary to its genre, this impression is caused by the exclusive concentration on the verbal content. However, the hypertextual structure can be seen not only as one of the avatars of the book in the digital space, but also as the embodiment of a few Mallarméan ideas, such as the mobility or the combinatorial dimension of the text, which are literally possible only in this medium.

In this way, our research also proposes a reading method extended to the forms of textual materialisation. Depending on the medium, this method requires the alternation of the instruments: from rules of versification, typographical codes and descriptions of the book structure for the printed works to information on the characteristics of the programmes and of the storage media in the case of the digital works.

Two conclusions concerning modernism stand out at the end of this research. Firstly, the necessity to reconsider the established perspective on the segregation of the arts and, consequently, of their method of investigation. The frequent collaboration between the artists of the word and of the visual space, as well as between different types of language prove to constitute the rule rather than the exception concerning the mode of existence of the works of art. Secondly, in the light of the connections discovered between Mallarmé's experimental creation and various experiments of the 20th and 21st centuries, the lines of poetic descent seem to require a more nuanced configuration. From this point of view and temporal distance, the historical avant-gardes of the beginning of the 20th century seem less radical and unruly and more intensely involved in giving specific answers to the preoccupations they shared with the predecessors and the contemporaries. The present-day recuperation of the avant-garde publications in the original collaborative and experimental forms impose a change of focus from the manifests, which draw one's attention through their provocative rhetoric, but whose imaginary projections about the significance of their initiatives can be misleading, to the carefully contextualised interpretation of the actual artistic results they generated.

This particular way of recuperating the works of the past opens up new directions of research such as: a new reading of Apollinaire's *calligrammes* according to the method developed in this dissertation since they have become available in all their forms of manifestation through the publication of the volume *Calligrammes dans tous ses états* (Calliopées, 2008) by Claude Debon, a reconsideration of the role of spatialism among the experimental trends after the publication of the complete works of its main promoter – Pierre Garnier – by Vanneaux Publishing House in 2008 or a reevaluation of the stakes of concrete poetry, starting from the premise that its accessibility – its translations in France, Spain, Switzerland or Romania – also raises the question of the validity of its claim to the universality of its language since the translations alter not only its linguistic structure but also its graphic form.

As far as the current media ecology is concerned, one of the main conclusions is that a collaboration between the literary disciplines and media studies becomes necessary if one wishes to weigh the results of various experiments claimed by the literary field beyond its conventional frontiers. Similarly, the new media theories, which were initially founded on concepts elaborated for the literary products, should regard themselves in the mirror of the literary domain in order to avoid such errors as medial ideology. The connection between these fields of research is provided by the disciplines of the typographical materiality, which offer a set of instruments that can be useful in both domains.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

1. Hypotheses: the experimental poetry of the 20th and 21st centuries on the horizon of literary criticism – conflicting perspectives and theoretical resources for a new interpretation 10

1.1. Critical and theoretical perspectives on modernist poetry: included and excluded areas 11

1.2. Premises for a new interpretation: the status of the graphical form in the poetics of the modern trends 23

1.2.1. Critical views on romanticism 24

1.2.2. Critical views on symbolism 48

1.2.3. Alternative hypotheses about the major directions of poetic modernism 54

1.3. The reevaluation of the material dimension of the text in fields adjacent to literary interpretation 74

1.3.1. The history of copyright 78

1.3.2. Current editorial and textual theories 81

1.3.3. New media theories 89

1.3.4. The history of writing 98

1.3.5. Theories of the verse as visual form 104

1.3.5.1. The symbolist ambiguity 105

1.3.5.2. The exclusively graphical character of standard free verse 106

1.3.5.3. Current criteria for the distinction poetry – prose 109

1.3.5.4. The current definition of the verse 113

1.3.5.5. Modernist meanings of the poetic 117

1.3.5.6. Lines of descent 120

1.3.6. Meanings and mutations of the concept of image 122

1.3.6.1. The transformations of the poetic image within and beyond rhetoric 122

1.3.6.2. The poetic image – figural and literal meanings 125

1.3.6.3. The poetic image in modernism 129

1.3.7. Conclusions: forms of visibility in literature 132

2. Stéphane Mallarmé's <i>Throw of Dice</i>: the hypothetical launch of a new artistic genre	144
2.0. Preliminaries	150
2.1. The Paratext	158
2.1.1. The Illustrations	159
2.1.1.1. Illustrated books and lithographic albums – common points	162
2.1.1.2. The principles of literary and visual representation	164
2.1.1.3. Perspectives on illustration	168
2.1.1.4. The illustration of the poem <i>A Throw of Dice</i> – iconological aspects	170
2.1.1.5. The illustration of the poem <i>A Throw of Dice</i> – formal and distributional parallels	175
2.1.1.6. Conclusions	181
2.1.2. The Preface	184
2.1.3. The Genre, the title and the name of the author	188
2.2. The Physical structure of the book	191
2.2.1. The cover	191
2.2.2. The number of sheets	201
2.2.3. The dimensions	204
2.2.4. The binding	209
2.2.5. The format and the fold	210
2.3. The Typography	215
2.3.0.1. Typography as staging the text	216
2.3.0.2. Typography as auto-illustration	218
A. The Macro-aesthetics	220
2.3.1. The double-page spread	220
2.3.2. The internal and external margins	222
2.3.3. The placement of the words	227
2.3.4. The blanks (between letters, words and lines of verse)	237
B. The Micro-aesthetics	241
2.3.5. The punctuation	241
2.3.6. The characters	242
2.3.6.1. The font(s)	242
2.3.6.2. The size(s)	251
2.3.6.3. The contrasts	252

2.3.6.3.1. Roman – italic	253
2.3.6.3.2. Upper case – lower case	255
2.3.6.3.3. Combinations of contrasts	256
2.4. Conclusions: the genres of the codex	257

3. Constellations about to appear: a few innovative poetical results of the Mallarméan *Throw of Dice* 264

3.0. After Mallarmé: direct influences, collateral effects, parallelisms and echoes in the artistic experiments of the 20 th and 21 st centuries	264
3.1. Tristan Tzara and the dadaist revolutionising of the book	274
3.1.1. The Mallarméan connection	274
3.1.2. <i>Dada Manifesto 1918</i> – a recapitulation of a few principles based on the principled rejection of any principles	283
3.1.3. From magazine to book: the graphic forms of three dadaist poems	288
3.2. Poetic experiments with a double mode of existence: in books and on the screen	308
3.2.1. The <i>E-Liber</i> -ated codex: <i>Ars poetica</i> from print to screen	309
3.2.1.1. Mallarmé as author of liberature	311
3.2.1.2. Literature/ liberature/ e-liberature	312
3.2.1.3. The mobile book	313
3.2.2. <i>V: Vniverse</i> – from constellations on the screen of the page to constellations on the computer screen	317
3.2.2.1. “L’AIR (...) anime (...) l’extérieur du livre”	318
3.2.2.2. “l’air (...) ANIME (...) l’extérieur du livre”	324
3.2.2.3. “l’air (...) anime (...) L’EXTÉRIEUR DU LIVRE”	326
3.3. “Le Genre, que c’en devienne un...”: the hypertext as the dismemberment of the book in <i>Patchwork Girl</i>	327
3.3.0. Book/ hypertext	331
3.3.1. Stability/ mobility	334
3.3.2. Unity/ fragmentary aspect	339
3.3.3. Poetry/ prose	344
3.3.4. In conclusion: back to writing	348

Conclusions 351

Bibliography 354