

To acknowledge that the beginning of the twenty-first century has witnessed the rise of literary narratives that make extensive use of visual or graphic elements such as photographs, typographical experimentations, unusual page layouts, drawings, illustrations, etc., is not a novelty *per se*. Neither is it, in recent years, to explore digital narratives and their affordances. Rather, these explorations have received much attention in narrative theory and in contemporary literary and cultural criticism. Since the digital turn, new studies have approached both subjects. However, while most of these studies are either inquiries into new digital devices and digital narratives (e.g., digital narratology) or focus on experimentations with the materiality of the book (e.g., multimodal narrative), this article will consider the two issues as part of the same phenomenon. On the one hand, literary experimentations with the materiality of the book have been especially flourishing since the emergence of new digital technologies. On the other hand, contemporary fictional writers, who are becoming more and more aware of the affordances offered by digital media, have started exploiting the properties of these new technologies to supplement their print narratives. These new but recurrent practices are thus both historically grounded in the socio-cultural context of the twenty-first century and consistent with a knowledge-sharing mode embedded in web 2.0 technologies.

As I will show, the correlation between (a) the materiality of the book and (b) the digital supplementary material to be found on writers' personal websites and blogs and in social media finds its origins in Gérard Genette's concept of paratext and, in particular, in his subdivision into (a) peritext, i.e. the paratextual elements situated in proximity of the text, and (b) epitext, i.e. the paratextual elements "not materially appended to the text within the same volume, but circulating [...] in a virtually limitless physical and social space" (Genette [1987] 1997: 344). In the first section of this article, I highlight how the concept of paratext, despite some lacks and ambivalences, is still able to offer a valuable perspective on contemporary practices. I will introduce recent investigations on issues of media, mode, and materiality in order to contextualize my study in a wider cultural and theoretical discourse. The second section analyzes how paratextual elements are employed in a contemporary novel, Jennifer Egan's *A Visit From the Goon Squad* (2010). This analysis sheds new light on the way visual and digital elements may be used in a literary narrative. Drawing on this paradigmatic case, the third section puts forth my proposal of "paratext 2.0." Formed by the categories of material peritext and digital epitext, the conceptualization of paratexts 2.0 allows for the identification of several functions.

Far from containing a definitive reconfiguration of paratext for literary narrative in the digital age, this article provides new a vocabulary and, more significantly, new insights to answer some of the urgent questions twenty-first century literary practices are posing to narrative theory.

1. Thresholds and interferences

Combinations of words and visual elements in literary narrative date back at least to *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* by Lawrence Sterne (1759–66). They were a characteristic feature of the Italian futuristic movement at the beginning of the twentieth century and of the French avant-gardes (Dadaism, Surrealism).¹ Since then, the merging of textual and visual forms has continued to be explored by, for example, the Oulipo group, William Burroughs and his cut-up method, and several postmodernist writers.² The new millennium, most likely as a consequence of the rapid development of digital technologies and new media,³ has seen a tendency toward the literary production of hybrid narratives that integrate images, typographical variations, and specific design into the text.⁴ Accordingly, a renewed interest in research on word/image combination has emerged. Katharine N. Hayles, for instance, highlights the significant role of the materiality of the artifact: “an emergent property created through dynamic interactions between physical characteristics and signifying strategies” (2010: 3). Another new media scholar, Anne F. Wysocki, stresses how new technologies, the Internet, social networking sites, and the blogosphere have facilitated new ways of producing meaning, i.e. new media texts (2004: 1–41). According to Wysocki, new media texts “do not have to be digital; instead, any text that has been designed so that its materiality is not effaced can count as new media” (15). Or again, the concept of “remediation,” introduced by David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999), describes the way in which media refashion other media forms according to two strategies, one that “erases or eliminates the signs of mediation,” and another that “multiplies and makes explicit signs of mediation” (2005: 497).

More specifically with regard to narrative theory, since Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen defined multimodality as the “use of several semiotic modes in the design

¹ On writing as artifact, visual poetics and electronic media, see Drucker (1998).

² For a case study of William Gass’s *Willie Masters’ Lonesome Wife*, see Pier (2011).

³ A correlation between the materiality of the artifact and the diffusion of electronic textuality has been advocated by Hayles (2002: 19).

⁴ To name a few: *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000) by Dave Eggers; *House of Leaves* (2000), *Only Revolutions* (2006) and *The Fifty Year Sword* (2012) by Mark Z. Danielewski; *Everything is Illuminated* (2002), *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *Tree of Codes* (2010) by Jonathan Safran Foer; *Austerlitz* (2001) by W. G. Sebald; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) by Mark Haddon; *The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet* (2009) by Rief Larsen; *The Autograph Man* by Zadie Smith (2002); *Nox* (2010) by Anne Carson.

of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined" (2001: 20), new investigations on narrative and multimodal narrative analysis have focused on the "dynamic interplay of semiotic resources as they contribute to narrative meaning" (Page 2010: 8). Scholars such as Alison Gibbons (2010: 285–311), Wolfgang Hallet (2009: 129–153), and Nina Nørgaard (2010: 63–80) have described contemporary novels like *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski or *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) by Jonathan Safran Foer as multimodal novels. Nørgaard defines these narratives in terms of a "high modality" effect, namely "what we see is what we would have seen if we had been there" (van Leeuwen 1992: 35–58, qtd in Nørgaard 2009: 148), and she points out that images enhance the authenticity of narratives (2010: 73). Hallet defines the multimodal novel as "a type of novel that [...] incorporates a whole range of non-verbal symbolic representations and non-narrative semiotic modes" in such a way that they do not have a disruptive or disturbing effect on the reading process (2009: 129–131). Gibbons further explains that not only "multimodal literary novels [...] utilize a plurality of semiotic modes in the communication and progression of their narratives," but those modes "have distinct means of communicating [and they] constantly interact in the production of narrative meaning" (2012: 2).

Making all these proposals rely on the concept of semiotic mode may still cause some confusion, as the distinction between mode and media at times is not so clear-cut. For instance, while Ruth Page defines "mode" as "a system of choices used to communicate meaning [...] realized *materially* through particular media" (2010: 6, emphasis added), Marie-Laure Ryan distinguishes between a transmissive definition that describes media as channels of communication, and a semiotic definition that identifies them as "*Material* or technical means of artistic expression" (2005: 289, emphasis added). Despite the overlapping terminology – what Page defines as mode corresponds to what for Ryan is a medium in its semiotic acceptation – the transmedial approach to narrative has the merit of bringing to the fore the relevance for narrative studies of media and of medium-specific analysis. Indeed, as Ryan highlights, media are "material supports of information whose materiality, precisely, 'matters' for the type of meanings that can be encoded" (2004: 1–2).

These various lines of inquiry (new media studies, multimodal narrative analysis, transmedial approach) all indicate that the importance of discussing the medium, the mode, or the material quality of a literary text has been strongly acknowledged over the last few decades. Before the digital revolution, though, other attempts had been made in this direction. Among them we find Genette's idea of paratext. Paratextual elements, such as the cover, the typesetting, the title, the dedications, the epigraphs, the prefaces, the postfaces, the footnotes are, according to Genette, necessary

precisely to “present the book and [...] make it present, assuring its presence in the world, its ‘reception’ and its consumption” ([1987] 1997: 1) That is, these elements concern the materiality of a narrative. The concept itself, however, presents a number of problems that have prevented its usage in this acceptance, despite the evident correlation between what is now known as the materiality of the book and Genette’s idea of paratext as the sum of the elements that make this material presence possible.

First, we know that the definition of paratext is very broad, encompassing a “heterogeneous group of practices and discourses characterized by an authorial intention and assumption of responsibility, that functions as a guiding set of directions for the readers” (2–3).¹ Second, we may observe an ambivalence underlying Genette’s idea. On the one hand, the metaphor of the threshold is employed to describe the paratext as possessing an indeterminate quality. On the other hand, the elements composing the whole category are classified in a very systematic way² that leaves little room for such indeterminacy. The typology that results is too well defined to belong to a transitory, undefined space and, at the same time, not sufficiently descriptive to accommodate the many hybrid or unconventional elements that can be found in a literary narrative. All in all, an extensive categorization does not correspond to an adequate theoretical discussion.

Despite the ambivalences and lacks, however, the term paratext is now generally accepted and widely used. In recent years, probably due to the current interests in issues of authorship and media-affordances, as well as to the greater use of paratextual features in contemporary fiction (e.g., footnotes), the concept has received renewed attention. Paratextual investigations have simultaneously increased. Edward Maloney, for instance, taking account of the complexity of the paratextual category of footnotes, provides an extensive discussion of their use in fictional narratives where they are “incorporated into the story as part of the internal narrative frame” (2005: ii). Dorothee Birke and Birte Christ, more recently, started to map the field for studies dealing with the connection of paratext and digitized narrative, pinpointing three primary questions: the materialization of the object, the boundaries of the text, and the question of authorization (2013: 68–70).

¹ Proposed by Genette for the first time in *The Architext: an Introduction* ([1979] 1992: 82), the concept of paratextuality was briefly introduced in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* ([1982] 1997). Here, Genette describes the paratext (the second type of transtextual relationships) as “one of the privileged fields of operation of the pragmatic dimension of the work – i.e., of its impact upon the reader – more particularly, the field of what is now often called, thanks to Philippe Lejeune’s studies on autobiography, the generic contract (or pact)” ([1982] 1997: 3).

² According to their location (attached to the hard book or not); time of appearance; mode (verbal or other); communication agents; and function (Genette [1987] 1997: 4).

The question of authorization is indeed problematic in contemporary digital practices. Writers' websites are most likely written and designed in collaboration with software designers. This aspect, together with the impressive amount of (ephemeral) data present on digital platforms, pushed Birke and Christ to focus on a new functionality of the paratext that, according to them, results from the interplay of an interpretative, a commercial, and a navigational function (67–68). After all, Genette himself believes functionality to be “the most essential of paratext's properties,” since “whatever aesthetic intention may come into play as well, the main issue for the paratext is not to ‘look nice’ around the text but rather to ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author's purpose” ([1987] 1997: 407). Genette's paratext thus highlights its functions according to authorial intentions. On these grounds, more recent reformulations of the concept have sought to shift the emphasis from author to audience, such as Werner Wolf's concept of framing borders and its six functions.¹ Wolf especially criticizes the excessive attention Genette directs to paratextual elements with a “text-centered” function (e.g., generic markers) at the expense of those with a “self-centered function,” i.e. *defamiliarized* framings that foreground “conventions of paratexts or constitute a space for experimental games” (2006: 29–30, emphasis added).

Wolf's objection – especially as far as the questions of materiality and multimodality are concerned – seems particularly urgent today, although the practice of “foregrounding the materiality of the text instead of effacing it” was already a hallmark of postmodernist novels (McHale 2005: 459). According to Brian McHale, graphic experimentations are connected with the tension created by the juxtaposition of the real world of the material object and the fictional world projected by the narrative. What he calls “*iconic shaped texts*” either stress the ontological tension between the book as object and its narrative, or simply “illustrate [...] their own existence” (1987: 184, emphasis added). This unconventional use of typographical elements or other visual interventions were, on the contrary, scarcely contemplated in Genette's typology.² Nevertheless, a “defamiliarizing” or “iconic” element is not necessarily less relevant to the concept of paratext. In this regard, Genette is explicit: “no reader should be indifferent to the appropriateness of particular typographical choices, even if modern publishing tends to neutralize these choices by a perhaps irreversible tendency toward standardization” ([1987] 1997: 34, emphasis added). What happens, though, when typographical choices challenge this standardization?

¹ Text-centered, self-centered, context-centered, sender-centered, recipient-centered, and self-referential or meta-referential (Wolf 2006: 30–31).

² Jan Baetens pointed out soon after the publication of *Seuils* that from the typology proposed is missing “what is characteristic of modern literature: the paratextualization of the text and the textualization of the paratext, i.e. not the breakdown of boundaries, but the multiplication of relations between two poles that are no longer antagonistic opposites” (1987: 713–714). See also Pier's (1992) case study of Nabokov's *Pale Fire*.

What is their role in contemporary literary narrative? To what extent are “unconventional” paratexts linked with a new poetics?

On the other hand, the question of the materiality of the artifact, foregrounded by paratextual practices, represents only a part of the problem. While we can argue that the domain of paratext is mainly limited to the reader’s interpretation “within generic categories, historical epochs, author’s oeuvre, [and] sociopolitical controversies” (Herman, McHale, Phelan 2010: 308), it is also true that a piece of paratextual information outside a narrative may transform it “without, at the same time, changing a single word of it” (Abbott 2008: 31). Therefore, how can we account for the increasing use of digital media by fictional writers that has emerged since the diffusion of the Internet and web 2.0?

This question, together with the considerations above, strengthens my argument in favor of refining and re-contextualizing the category of paratext in line with today’s practices. In order to illustrate my proposal, I will now present the analysis of a paradigmatic twenty-first century novel that makes use of both unconventional paratexts that foreground the materiality of the book and supplementary elements to be found in the digital world.

2. *A Visit from the Goon Squad* as case study

Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad* thematically deals with the changes that new technologies are bringing to our lives. As the narrator in chapter two points out: “the problem [is] digitization, which suck[s] the life out of everything that [gets] smeared through its microscopic mesh. Film, photography, music: dead. An aesthetic holocaust!” (23, original emphasis). Through a disconnected temporal ordering, the novel addresses some cultural and ethical issues relative to the by-products of new media, such as the death of music as a business (at least, as we know it). The narrative maps the evolution of the music industry from the late seventies punk-rock bands to a not-so-distant future where people have never heard live music. The events involve several characters and narrators whose story lines intertwine throughout the narrative progression. Echoing Ryan’s concept of *proliferating narrativity*, according to which contemporary fiction “becom[es] a collection of little stories loosely connected through common participants” (2006: 10), the story lines of the two main characters – Bennie Salazar and Sasha Blake – function as larger narratives around which the other embedded stories are narrated. The rhetorical effectiveness of the overall narrative thus depends largely on discovering the multiple relations of the various characters despite the continuous analepses and prolepses.

The novel grants a significant role to the way media and technology affect our lives, but in what way are media *materially* approached? What kind of paratextual elements accompany the narrative? How does the paratext of Egan's novel function as a guiding set of directions for readers, and how does it challenge a more conventional mode? On the one hand, we have the usual suspects: a title and an epigraph, with the former offering a disparaging metaphor of time as a goon and the latter coming from Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–27). Both confirm readers' intuitions about the overall thematic dimension of the narrative, i.e. the consequences of the passing of time, especially in terms of the changes new technologies are bringing to humankind.¹ On the other hand, we have several paratextual elements not so easily falling within Genette's typology. One of them is the two title pages employed to divide the thirteen chapters that form the narrative into two parts: one page shows the letter "A" right before the first chapter while the other shows the letter "B" before chapter seven. This graphic choice would not be so significant in itself, but as the narrative unfolds it becomes clear that the two letters mimic the structure of LP records, with the two letters standing for the two sides, and the chapters for the musical tracks.

The intermedial reference to a medium with an analog sound storage *materializes* the criticism of the relentless digitization of music expressed through the narrative. Similarly, the twelfth chapter, "Great Rock and Roll Pauses by Alison Blake," materializes its own story. The chapter is graphically realized as the printout of seventy-five PowerPoint slides. The fictional author of the slides is Alison, a young teenager who keeps track of her family life through a digital journal, written with a piece of presentation software. The material inclusion into the narrative of an unconventional medium – presentation software, which becomes itself part of the narrative world – is somehow justified by a futuristic setting, the year 202-something. The story level of a possible future in which writing will consist of combining new technologies and new software programs is materialized in its graphic realization. But why was this medium materialized? Or, to put it better, what is the function of such materialization? If we look at the story, there is an older generation (represented by Alison's parents) who tries to resist the idea of a life fully dependent on new technologies, and a younger one (represented by Alison and her brother Lincoln) that deals with it more spontaneously. Alison's digital writing is an exemplification of a possible (future) relationship with new technologies.

¹ As remarked by Bennie's line: "Time's a goon, right? You gonna let that goon push you around?" The "goon squad" in the title refers to time. Instead, the epigraph states: "Poets claim that we recapture for a moment the self that we were long ago when we enter some house or garden in which we used to live in our youth. But these are most hazardous pilgrimages, which end as often in disappointment as in success. It is in ourselves that we should rather seek to find those fixed places, contemporaneous with different years." (Egan 2010: 332).

The graphic realization, moreover, has an iconic power. Lincoln is obsessed with pauses in rock and roll songs. (This is partly due to his slight autism, but the idea of pauses is itself embedded in the recurrent theme of the narrative, as pauses delimit a period of time.) The music pauses are graphically represented as empty frames whose iconic power can be compared to panels in sequential art: their dimensions influence the readers' perception of duration. But which other effects are they trying to elicit? Since the graphic realization of the narrative recalls an LP, with thirteen chapters/songs all following a similar (conventional) typographical pattern except one, we could further speculate that the exceptionality of pauses in rock-and-roll songs symmetrically recalls the exceptionality of the slides in a book. According to this simile, the slides would be the pause in the narrative. However, this exceptionality of pauses in rock songs is also linked, at the story level, with their ability to reproduce sounds, like "smokiness" (247), that are still non-replicable in digital formats. Therefore, when looking at the material slides as "narrative pauses," to which kind of additional abilities are they referring?

Following Ryan's idea that "narrative can actively fight some of the properties of the medium for expressive purposes" (2006: 30), we could first argue that in *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Egan exploits the medium at her disposal for expressive purposes. Charts, arrows, and diagrams become artistic devices to convey narrative meanings. Thus, the overall effect of the paratextual feature will not be disruptive but rather enhancing. The telling of the slide-journal is substituted with its material reproduction, as though the material presence would make it more real, more authentic. This meta-discourse on paratextual devices is then juxtaposed onto a sort of generational clash in terms of how much we rely on technology to express ourselves. Alison's mother, Sasha, seems not to understand her daughter's writing habit to the point that she does not even consider this activity as writing at all. As Alison reports in her journal, Sasha would ask her "Why not try *writing* for a change?" A question to which her daughter replies, laconically: "Ugh! Who even uses that word?" (253, original emphasis.) The question of whether the slides are a "valid" writing medium, therefore, turns back to the readers who, through the reproduction of Alison's journal, are better able to judge them.

Significantly, PowerPoint slides are not a new medium in themselves, but rather, borrowing Wolf's terminology, a *defamiliarized* one. The slides are, at the same time, generally familiar *per se* but uncommon in fictional narration. In this way, they reinforce an overall thematic dimension devoted to showing how much digitization is already part of our lives, thanks to devices that are becoming, whether one likes it or not, increasingly familiar. Adopting a postmodernist perspective, we could further

connect the unconventional usage of the slides to the destabilizing effect provoked by the ontological tension between the real world of the artifact and the story world of the narrative. The slides (and the physical turning of the book necessary to read them) are a constant visual reminder of the material object that frames the narrative and “makes it present.” Readers’ interests, in rhetorical terms, focus on the narrative as artificial construct. The epistemological question relative to whether a slide format is a satisfactory mode of expressing meaning overlaps with an ontological incertitude. If it is true that the slides foreground the presence of mediation, the peculiarity of their printout (as opposed to their digital presentation through a slideshow) also highlights its very limits. The narrative both *lights* the properties of print and, at the same time, limits those of the presentation software.¹

On the other hand, the slides do exist in their digital format, and they can (quite intuitively) be found on Jennifer Egan’s website.² On jenniferegan.com, in a section called “Court Street, July 2009” (as well as in another one, aptly entitled “Great Rock and Roll Pauses”), the seventy-five slides composing the twelfth chapter of *A Visit from the Goon Squad* are presented in a slideshow format. In this format, Alison’s slide journal better exploits the properties of the presentation software. Here, the slides embed the actual sound of Lincoln’s rock-and-roll songs with pauses. They appear in full color, increasing their iconic power as compared with the printed ones, which are in black and white. With sound, color and motion, the digital version of chapter twelve offers a different, somehow in turn remediated, narrative form.

Chapter twelve in the slideshow format is not the only supplementary element to be displayed on Egan’s website. There are several sections with information on Egan’s creative process of writing the novel. She provides, for each chapter, the chapter’s original title; the location where she came up with the idea of writing the story, and/or where she experienced a personal life event that triggered the idea of writing such story, and/or where she actually wrote it (e.g., a café, a room, an armchair); a short life narrative about such event; a soundtrack, either as verbal suggestion or as a link on the iTunes Store, the video-sharing website YouTube, or the online retailer Amazon.com; some memories about her experience related to the thematic component of the narrative; and the beginning of the chapter.

To exemplify the kind of additional materials offered, let’s take a look at one of the sections of the website, the one concerning the first chapter of the novel. While the first chapter, “Found Objects,” opens with one of the main characters, Alison’s

¹ It might also be argued, in terms of processes of remediation, that the old media form refashions the new one.

² Perhaps to assume that readers will surf the internet to search for further information on the narrative is too bold a statement, but to consider it a possibility seems necessary nowadays.

mother Sasha, stealing a wallet left unattended on the lavatory in a hotel bathroom (she suffers from kleptomania), on the author's website, readers are provided with the information that Egan personally experienced a similar situation. She was at "The Regency Hotel, on Park Avenue and 61st Street" when, "washing [her] hands in the bathroom, [she] noticed a fat green wallet inside a wide-open bag beside the sink"; afterwards, she "sat down with that wallet in [her] head and a pen in [her] hand, to see what might happen." In addition, Egan indicates that the original title for the story was "Happy Ending;" she provides another personal narrative about her experience as the victim of thefts in Spain, Lisbon and New York; and she suggests a soundtrack through a link to the iTunes Store for Death Cab For Cutie's concept album "We Have The Facts And We Are Voting Yes" (2000). For each of the thirteen chapters of *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Egan's website offers additional content of this kind. Are these elements part of the narrative's paratext? If so, what is their relationship with the narrative? How could they be re-contextualized alongside Genette's typology?

A first observation concerns a sharing aptitude underlying the digital addenda. Consistent with social media affordances, it emerges especially in Egan's nonfictional descriptions of the creative process and in the references to music embedded in the various sections through hyperlinks that direct readers toward other artworks. This sharing mode can also be found on another archetype of the digital era used to provide additional material to the narrative: a blog site. Created with the open-source blogging tool WordPress, *avisitfromthegoonsquad.com* contains the materialization of the intermedial references to music in the form of YouTube music videos embedded in the webpage, a blogroll featuring interviews with Jennifer Egan, a link to her Facebook profile, and again excerpts from the novel. Through the blog site, it is also possible to download an application software (app) for the novel.

This intermedial transposition of *A Visit from the Goon Squad* is not a mere reproduction of the printed format. Rather, it features additional elements as far as temporal ordering and sharing options are concerned. At the opening of the app, readers are asked to make a choice between: "read, listen or liner notes." The "Liner Notes" section (again a reference to music) is interactive concerning temporal ordering. It displays thirteen round drawings, each of which depicts an iconic object to represent the corresponding chapter. By choosing the "Original" option, the chapters' icons are displayed following the temporal (dis)order consistent with the printed version of the narrative. Conversely, by choosing the "Date" option, readers are allowed to read the narrative without its continuous analepses and prolepses. The "Shuffle" option is meant to offer a casual temporal order. Additional features include several pop-up windows appearing when chapters' icons are pressed. The

content of these pop-up windows can be divided into three main sections. The first section, called "Sharing," allows (by clicking on the link provided) to share chapter excerpts on the readers' Facebook walls. The second and the third sections offer almost the same extra material as can be found on Egan's website. The second section, called "Jennifer's Notes," shares again nonfictional information about "Jennifer's" writing. The third section, called "Discography," provides once again a soundtrack with hyperlinks.

The sharing mode characterizes all three supportive devices considered above. While readers are invited to share an excerpt of their reading activity on a social network site, the author shares her personal life stories, such as her "notes" or her soundtrack. The soundtrack of the particular occasion of Egan's writing may, in turn (through the hyperlinks), become the soundtrack for the particular occasion of reading. To conclude, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* is a narrative that employs paratextual elements in an unconventional way, both with regard to the foregrounding of the book's materiality and concerning the additional materials provided through digital media. In the following, I will draw on this paradigmatic case to delve deeper into these two phenomena that the novel brings to the fore.

3. Paratexts 2.0: A proposal

As the brief analysis above shows, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* is an exemplary case study with regard to many important issues concerning twenty-first century literature. First, it is a novel in line with many others employing visual and graphic elements in their narratives (see note 2). Second, the author exploits new media technologies to offer additional material and supplementary (personal) narratives. In so doing, Egan also offers an image of herself as author within a public discourse which goes beyond the image implied in the narrative. Arguably, both phenomena affect narrative communication, but their modalities and functions have not been thoroughly explored yet.

The idea of paratext, from a rhetorical perspective at least, may still provide a coherent conceptualization in this regard, precisely because it offers to distinguish between the peritext and the epitext of a given narrative. The overarching category of paratext is thus able to account both for the unconventional visual elements in the printed text (in the case of *Goon Squad*, the slides) and the elements interacting with the narrative communication, although not materially attached to it (e.g., the slideshow, the author's personal narratives, the sharing and interactive options). On the other hand, these new elements also challenge Genette's typology, since it mainly describes paratextual elements neutralized by publishing conventions and located in

proximity to the material book. For these reasons, I propose to extend Genette's categorization in accordance with twenty-first century literary practices. The up-to-date version, which I will call "paratexts 2.0,"¹ accounts for issues relative to the peritextual (positioned not exclusively at the beginning of narrative progression, or merely used as generic markers)² and epitextual elements. More specifically, the reconfigured framework I propose aims at providing a heuristics for contemporary narratives whose authors exploit various semiotic modes in their printed books and the affordances of Web 2.0 technologies in the digital world. At the same time, the idea of paratext 2.0 brings to the fore issues that go beyond the creation of an analytic typology. Rather, my proposal aims at setting the stage for further explorations of some key issues of narrative theory, such as medium-specific analyses of printed literature, the narrative communication model, a theory of authorship and the relationship between digital and printed narratives. As a result, this new discussion of paratext would serve two aims: (a) the creation of a theoretical framework for contemporary narratives that foreground their (new) paratexts; and (b) the extension of the categories and functions formulated by Genette to include issues of media affordances and digital support.

Building on the peritext/epitext distinction and their joint use in contemporary fiction, I propose to define *material peritexts*, or the visual, iconic and material elements (i.e., the multiple semiotic modes), as "graphic realization inseparable from literary intention" (Genette [1987] 1997: 34); and *digital epitexts* the digital paratextual elements officially produced or released by the author as support to her narrative. While material peritexts consist of unconventional typography, color, drawings, images, illustrations and so on employed by an authorial agency in combination with the verbal medium, what I call digital epitext comprises extra-textual elements to be found on authors' websites, blogs, videos, social network sites and intermedial transpositions. But if we agree with Genette (and Birke and Christ) on the primary role of the functionality of paratextual elements, how can we further describe the functions to be associated with material peritexts and digital epitexts?

A cluster of recurrent functions can be identified building on what we may now call *A Visit from the Goon Squad's* material peritexts and digital epitexts. Let's first consider material peritexts. When peritextual elements materialize the narrative at

¹ The label 2.0 is in part meant to create a connection with the practices of Web 2.0. Coined by tech guru Tim O'Reilly in 2005, the term 2.0 refers to the higher degree of interaction featured on social media. Social media – i.e. Internet-based applications such as social network sites, video sharing, blogs, discussion forums, microbloggings, wikis – are primarily characterized by user-generated content.

² Although contemporary literature has challenged Genette's categories also in this regard (see, for instance, the recent rise of the personal essay and memoirs), a discussion of the question of paratexts and genre is beyond the scope of the present article, as it opens up to several other highly debated issues.

the story level (such as the slides materialize a future, hybrid literacy), they serve what we may call, for lack of a better term, a *narrative* function. Further examples from twenty-first century literary narrative include: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010) and its cut-out words, materially missing to remind readers page after page that the story is made out of another story to which, in turn, some words are missing, as its author, Bruno Schulz, was assassinated by a Gestapo officer in 1942; Mark Z. Danielewsky's *The Fifty Year Sword* (2012), which employs colored quotation marks to delineate the five alternating narrative voices; Reif Larsen's *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet* (2009), whose drawings graphically narrate part of the story.

Since by foregrounding the materiality of the book, material peritexts urge readers to focus on what the rhetorical approach (Phelan and Rabinowitz 2012: 7) calls the synthetic component (the narrative as artificial construct), peritextual elements could also serve a *synthetic* function. The significance of the synthetic function concerns especially the ontological tension that McHale pointed out with regard to postmodernist fiction. For twenty-first century fiction, however, the ontological juxtaposition would include not only the real world of the material object and the fictional world projected by the narrative, but also the digital world, intended as both the place where the narrative is artificially created and as the place where the same narrative can be supplemented with extra materials. For example, in *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, the slides allow for a juxtaposition of the fictional world in which Alison writes her journal, the real world in which readers hold the book in their hands, and the digital world in which they find another (digital) version of the slide journal. In this sense, narratives whose material peritexts serve a synthetic function may also be accounted for by Brian Richardson's framework for antimimetic narratives, as they "refuse to obey or openly flout mimetic conventions" (2012: 21).

When material peritexts invite readers to explore additional material on digital platforms, we may say that they serve a *cross-referential* function. Although such functionality is open to further criticism,¹ it might also outline a future tendency. In *A Visit From the Goon Squad*, the black and white reproduction of the PowerPoint slides might function as a cross-referential device for the readers to find them on Egan's website in their conventional medium, a slideshow format. The cross-reference works symmetrically, for if material peritexts refer to the digital epitexts, digital epitexts may also serve a cross-referential function for their print narrative. Arguably, in addition to the communicative or guiding intent, digital epitexts serving a cross-referential function are also partially committed to advertising the

¹ For instance, how exactly would readers spot such invitations? Still, if the aforementioned extra material is created by the author as a sort of appendix to the print narrative, it is not too implausible to assume that the print narrative would contain cues to trace back the narrative's digital epitexts.

narrative. The presence of promotional intent, however, should not prevent us from identifying possible further functions relative to digital epitexts.

When digital epitexts visually enhance and/or extend the printed narrative (e.g., materializing intermedial references; adding colors, sound, animation; sharing life events relative to the writing), they may serve what we could call an *augmentative* function. Other than the epitextual elements observed above on *jenniferegan.com*, on *avisitfromthegoonsquad.com* and on the app, digital epitexts with these augmentative and cross-referential functions can be found on, for example, *tsspivot.com* (a website for Larsen's *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet*, with narrative-related interactive material); Danielewsky's *onlyrevolutions.com*, which includes the author's readings of the corresponding narrative together with music and pictures with interactive sequences; Jonathan Safran Foer's *eatinganimals.com*, which offers links to get involved against factory farming; and Jonathan Lethem's *jontathanlethem.com*, where the section Promiscuous Stories is dedicated to a project of co-authorship.

The question of intermedial transpositions of print narratives in application softwares or eBooks might seem more problematic to tackle in terms of paratext. After all, they "contain" their own text, and in most cases they do not offer further paratextual material to the narrative. They are, by all means, narratives with their own medium specificity. There are cases, however, in which they offer extra features, such as music, animation, colors, sharing options, interactive choices. Such extra features might just as well be considered digital epitexts to the print narrative as material peritexts to the narrative in the digital format. The app of *A Visit From the Goon Squad*, for instance, presents a certain level of interactivity and a sharing option that could guide us to identify another function to be served by digital epitexts, something we may call a *social* function. Analogously, a functionality of this kind can be found also on authors' websites or social networks, which embed the very idea of sharing experience. Significantly, many contemporary fiction writers, among whom are Nathan Englander, Alison Bechdel, Mark Haddon, Douglas Coupland, Salman Rushdie, Margaret A. Atwood, Chuck Palahniuk, engage in social activity, sometimes daily, interacting with their audience through several social platforms (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) or websites that allow them to share videos, photos or life narratives. These contemporary authors are not only challenging the established definition of paratext, but they also seem to urge a reconfiguration of authorship for those approaches to narrative that exclude "real" authors. Indeed, as the digital age has stimulated a new media awareness – of which material peritexts are an example – the affordances to which the new technologies give rise are fostering a new awareness of the (public) *social* presence of fiction writers.

4. Conclusion

From a diachronic perspective, it is remarkable that a diffusion of epitextual elements in digital media has corresponded with an increasing use of unconventional peritexts in the print book. As observed, both events can be linked to the rise of digital technologies and new media culture. While many studies have focused on the two phenomena separately, I seek to draw attention to the combined use of these paratextual practices. Moreover, paratexts 2.0 preserve and propagate the ontological uncertainty intrinsic in their prefix “para.” The elements forming the paratext, according to Genette, have no clear-cut boundaries. Rather, they belong to an undefined, but also undefinable zone. The prefix “para” is meant to express this uncertainty: “*Para* is an antithetical prefix which indicates at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority [...] a thing which is situated at once on this side and on that of a frontier, of a threshold and of a margin, of equal status and yet secondary, subsidiary, subordinate” (Miller 1979: 217–253, qtd in Genette [1987] 1997: 1).

My proposal, therefore, far from being an exhaustive account of the whole range of functions to be associated with twenty-first century paratextual practices, suggests some patterns that contemporary literary narratives seem to follow. At the same time, the reconfiguration of paratexts 2.0 maintains the core property of the original formulation. The categories of material peritexts and digital epitexts necessarily conserve a blurred ontological quality, even though Genette’s typology was not able to place enough emphasis on this aspect. While he defined the boundaries of the various paratextual elements quite systematically (leaving little room for many practices that stretched those boundaries long before the digital revolution had actually happened), the boundaries of the functions outlined in this article are not meant to be clear-cut. On the contrary, the elements are seen to be in a relation of fluid interconnection (see figure 1 below).

Paratexts 2.0		
Categories		Possible Functions
Material Peritexts	Visual, iconic, material elements (e.g., unconventional typography, different colors, layout, images, illustrations, drawings)	Narrative (materialization of the narrative at the story level) Synthetic (foregrounding of the narrative's synthetic component)
Digital Epitexts	Digital elements officially produced or released by the author on authors' websites, blogs, social network sites, intermedial transpositions	Cross-referential (references to additional material on digital platforms/to the print narrative) Augmentative (visual enhancement) Social (sharing options/mode)

Figure 1. Paratexts 2.0: Categories and Possible Functions

To conclude, the reconfigured pattern of paratexts 2.0 is meant (a) to complement Genette's original typology with twenty-first century practices; (b) to open a channel for investigations of such practices; and (c) to suggest a twofold phenomenon of media-exploitation that links the new pivotal role given to the materiality of the artifact with the extension of print narrative through digital media. Moreover, since the reconfiguration of paratexts 2.0 attempts to provide a framework to address contemporary (and future) tendencies for literary narratives, it may also serve as a comparative model for contemporary narratives that reject its patterns. Digital epitexts and material peritexts denote a certain disposition toward new media, for instance. Therefore, their use or rejection may signal different authorial stances toward digitization, new technologies and social media. Finally, paratexts 2.0 may become a distinguishing feature of twenty-first century fiction and, as such, set the stage for a renewed discourse on authorship and the author-reader relationship for literary narrative in the digital age.

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