

The Canonization of German-language Digital Literature

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CLCWeb Volume 7 Issue 4 (December 2005) Article 5**Florian Hartling,****"The Canonization of German-language Digital Literature"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol7/iss4/5>>

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Abstract: In his paper, "The Canonization of German-language Digital Literature," Florian Hartling discusses "Net Literature," a relatively young phenomenon, that has its roots in experimental visual and concrete poetry and hypertext. With the use of new media technology, this new genre of literature has acquired much interest and is now considered to be one of the most important influences in contemporary art. Not only does Net Literature connect sound, video, and animation with interactivity and allows new forms of artistic expression, it also impacts significantly on the traditional functions of the literary system. Hartling suggests that, in relation to Net Literature, the notion of the "death of the author" gives birth to the "writing reader." Hartling presents the results of his study where he applies the concept of "canon" to German-language Net Literature and where he attempts to find out whether, in this new form of literature, a "canon" has already been formed. Based on Karl Erik Rosengren's framework of "mention technique," a sample of German-language reviews of Net Literature was analyzed. The study intends to test the applicability of Rosengren's method to the analysis of Net Literature, that is, whether it is valid to use a method that was originally developed for the empirical study of the traditional literary canon for the study of an emergent Net Literature.

Florian HARTLING

The Canonization of German-language Digital Literature

Translated from the German by Benjamin Kraft

Since the explosion of the world wide web onto the landscape of new media, digital literature has established itself as a new form of art and this has been studied in scholarship extensively. Of course, the development of and interest in new media art forms occurred and occurs as tied to new media technology available on a wide scale in economically advanced countries (see, e.g., as early as 1995 Alain Vuillemin and Michel Lenoble's *Littérature et informatique. La littérature générée par ordinateur*; for digital literature per se, see, e.g., the English-language *Electronic Literature Organization* <<http://www.eliterature.org/>> or the Spanish-language *Hermeneia: Estudios literaris i tecnologies digitals* <<http://www.uoc.edu/in3/hermeneia/cat/>>, etc.). In the past decade there have been many attempts to establish a competition of German-language digital literature ("Netzliteratur," in the following referred to as Net Literature). So far, the contests failed, mostly because the juries could not agree on the standards to be set for such literature or on the criteria to determine the quality of digital poetics. Nevertheless, there seems to be a need for such competitions and from 2001 until 2003 the largest internet service provider in Germany (T-Online) and one of the largest German-language publishers of pocket books (DTV) organized yet another ambitious competition for Net Literature. After two successful years the third competition ended with similar results (see *dichtung-digital: journal für digitale ästhetik* <<http://www.dichtung-digital.com/Verschiedenes/Events/dtv03.htm>>; Indeed, out of the first contest, the first German pocket book on Net Literature cheap enough to attract a larger audience was published (see Simanowski, *Literatur. digital*). Not only did it contain articles on Net Literature, it also incorporated a CD-ROM that contained the most impressive works of the contest. This cross-media publication seemed to be an effort to introduce Net Literature to German-language readers. Additionally, since 2002, it has been possible to observe an increase in the number of articles on digital literature in the mainstream national press. Newspapers and magazines such as *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* have published a number of stories that deal with the new literature on the internet. It is no coincidence that at the same time the search for a "Goethe" of Net Literature has begun to gain momentum, that is to say, the search for a canon of Net Literature. During the inauguration of the T-Online/DTV contest its chair, Roberto Simanowski, described the complications this new poetry faces: "What is the object of analysis in a competition on digital literature? Is it the stories and poems that have been written on the computer? Is it the hypertexts? Is it the multimedia? Collaborative works? But why is not it called Net Literature? And to what extent is this still literature if the word gives way to the image more and more? Why not simply call it Net art? Or call it interfictions? ... But even if the subject we are talking about is clarified, the question remains: How to decide who the winner is? Which criteria should the criticism be based on? What is the position of the professors?" (Simanowski, "Digitale Literatur?" <<http://www.t-online.de/literaturpreis/essay/index.htm>>; unless indicated otherwise, all translations from the German are by Benjamin Kraft). Of course, Net Literature is a relatively young phenomenon with roots in the experiments of visual and concrete poetry as well as in applications of hypertext. With the extensive use of computer and network technologies, this new kind of literature has grown up and is now considered to be one of the most important influences on contemporary art in Germany. Not only does Net Literature connect sound, video, and animation with interactivity and allows new forms of artistic expression, it also impacts on the traditional functions in the literary system: The death of the author seems to give birth to the writing reader (see Wirth, "Wen kümmert's," "Der Tod des Autors"; the author does not simply disappear, of course, and there are many counter opinions available on this). In German-language discourse, until recently there existed no agreement as to a definition of "Netzliteratur" (see Simanowski, "Interfictions" 14-23; Heibach, "Literatur" 15-19) and one of the most urgent and pressing problems of the discussion about Net Literature is thus the subject itself. Apparently, there seem to be as many different definitions as there are participants in this discussion and one can also observe astonishing

disagreements about the criteria of quality with regard to digital literature. Here, I propose a definition of Net Literature in contrast to "Literature on the Internet": Literature on the Internet makes use of the internet only as an inexpensive and nearly unrestricted medium for publication and distribution. Without exception, such texts are traditional in form and content and they are written originally for traditional publication in books and magazines. As a result, neither the internet nor its techniques or protocols are used for creative production. By avoiding the conventional distribution channels, authors are able to publish their texts quickly and in an uncomplicated manner. However, this advantage comes at a price: Without the intervention of editors and publishers, one can find a tremendous amount of online texts with substandard content, form, style, and grammar.

Net Literature differs from traditional online literature in that it uses the internet and its communicative, social, and technological aspects for the literary production in a more sophisticated way: Texts are designed using computer hard- and software as well as internet techniques and communication patterns. The German notion of "Net Literatur" summarizes three different aspects: 1) Ordinarily the internet represents the place of publication for which Net Literature is designed and where it is perceived, 2) Unlike traditional literature, it is based on connected text and multimedia fragments, technological elements, protocols, and plug-ins; thus the skills of authors or "producers" of Net Literature are threefold: They not only need literary competence, they also have to be experienced in programming and designing. Additionally, they need social and communicative competence, and 3) Increasingly, we see how the author's function differs from that of the traditional one. In fact, in Net Literature the traditional author often does not exist anymore; instead, in many cases Net Literature represents a collaborative effort of many "writers." Therefore, the term Net Literature describes a phenomenon where the traditional functions of the literary system (following the categories of production, processing, reception, post-production processing as proposed by see Schmidt, see his *Grundriß*) are actually shared among all of the participants of the net discourse and thus the death of the author seems to deprive the publisher of his power and gives birth to the writing reader. Further, the different genres and categories of Net Literature can be divided into two groups: A) Projects that use computer-based techniques mostly, such as interactivity, intermediality and production ("Inszenierung"). These techniques are used in different compositions which allow the distinction between four main genres: hypertext, hypermedia, multimedia literature, and computer-generated literature and B) collaborative projects that are based on internet structures. These structures use the internet as a medium for communication and interaction. Normally, in this projects, the traditional roles of author and reader are reversed, blurred, and finally destroyed. Every reader is encouraged to participate in a literary project. Basically, this kind of Net Literature seems to be of the highest importance. Many net theorists regard collaborative projects as a new form of literature specific to the internet in which the traditional concepts of work, author, and reader become completely obsolete (see Heibach, "Literatur im Internet"; Heibach, "Literatur im elektronischen Raum"; Ortmann; Rau; Simanowski, "Interfictions"; Suter and Böhler; Winko). However, there are no subgenres of collaborative literature as of yet, because the main specifics remain the same; this category can be subdivided according to the different media that are used for these projects such as the world wide web, e-mail, (literary) newsgroups, (literary) mailing lists, multi-user dungeons, weblogs, podcasts, and wikis. However, while the discussion regarding different ways of collaborative writing is about to begin (collaborative writing vs. con-creativity) (see Mathez), it is too early to draw any conclusions about these projects.

In a pilot study I conducted in 2002 and some of whose results I present here, a first attempt was made to apply the concept of "canon" to Net Literature: Does a "canon" already exist and if so, what are the techniques and procedures that form this "canon"? Based on the theory of action (see Barsch, Rusch, and Viehoff; Jonas <<http://www.sjschmidt.net/konzepte/texte/jonas1.htm>>; Schmidt, *Grundriß*, "Einleitung") and a modification of Karl Erik Rosengren's "mention technique" (see below), samples of German-language reviews and essays on Net Literature were analyzed. The main points of interest during this research were with regard to how reviewers refer to Net Literature, which projects are considered to be of exceptional quality, and which internet services

influence this process of canonization and how. This study was also regarded as a test of the applicability of Rosengren's method to the analysis of Net Literature as to whether it would be valid to use a method that was originally designed for the empirical study of the (traditional) literary canon. Canons of literature, as social constructs, and canonization, as one of the most important functions in our cultural system, are phenomena that have been much discussed in the study of literature: In German-language scholarship, one of the most important books on this is Renate von Heydebrand's *Kanon – Macht – Kultur* (see also Assmann and Assmann; Berger and Lüsebrink; Poltermann; on the English-language landscape of scholarship, perhaps the most important book is John Guillory's *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* [1993; it is an altogether different issue that Guillory appears to be unaware in his much acclaimed book that many of the concepts he proposes have been discussed extensively in German-language scholarship since the early 1980s]; as to English-language scholarship on Net Literature, see, for example, Van Looy and Baetens). This discussion, that has also influenced other fields such as film and television studies, has provided new insights in the process of canon formation in these areas. Therefore, it seems appropriate to determine whether the results of this debate should not be applied to the internet as well. According to Siegfried J. Schmidt and Peter Vorderer, the canon model is based on the model of action roles within the media system. In turn, canonization is understood as a process where the extraordinary role canons play in the literary system becomes clear when the effects on all participants in canon formation are taken into consideration. For writers, canons serve primarily as a way to orient themselves not only during their period of development, but also in the process of producing their own texts. On the one hand, canonized authors are emulated consciously while young authors often also try to set themselves apart from them. In the field of distribution, canons basically dictate the market's development. The canonical value of an author has a direct influence on the print run, design, marketing, and placement of a work. Lastly, for readers, canons serve as mechanisms for selection and orientation. In the overwhelming range of literary works, canons help to focus on texts which are considered valuable and timeless and can therefore be incorporated into the culture's memory. Acceptance and refusal of literary (sub-)canons help to define identity or to set it apart from others. In the processes of literature, canons take on the quality of collective knowledge, which the actors continually presume each other to have in the form of assumed expectations. Research and scholarship are important factors in the processes of canonization where literary criticism assumes three different levels, with each level building on the previous one: journalistic feature-page critiques (relevant to the daily or weekly time frame), criticism in essay form in journals and magazines (relevant to the monthly time frame), and academic criticism (relevant over a period of years). This model corresponds to a vertical layering, which is best applied on a national level (in most cases, this model will most likely be based in the author's native country) (on this, see, e.g., Rees; Schmidt, "Abschied vom Kanon"; Segers; Viehoff, "Literaturkritik als literarisches Handeln"; Viehoff, "Neben Brecht"). While I agree with this view of the processes of canonization, I propose that it is imperative to take into account a further factor, namely the role that the distribution of literary texts plays in the process of canonization. Furthermore, I propose that the canonization level that contains the "most important mechanism of canonization" (Schmidt and Vorderer 148), namely the incorporation into university curricula and encyclopedias, must necessarily also be separated from the others analytically.

In the following, based on the model of action roles in the media system as functioning specifically in Germany, I suggest expanding the three-level model of literary criticism discussed above to a five-level system of canonization of literature. Initially, this schema would apply to the traditional literary system; however, it would also be possible to apply it to the peculiarities of Net Literature:

The First level of canonization occurs when completed manuscripts are turned over to publishing houses for evaluation. Editors review the manuscripts and decide whether or not to publish them. A full 99% of all books ever handed in for review already fail to clear this hurdle. This is not necessarily due to the quality or workmanship of the texts in question; rather, authors are "bought" according to their prominence and consequent market value. The publishing houses' fo-

cus on the highest possible financial gain has led to the increasingly common practice of granting authors advance payments and royalties reminiscent of those Hollywood celebrities enjoy. It should therefore come as no surprise that an author's suitability for television has replaced his literary importance as the main selection criterion in this kind of environment.

The second level of canonization occurs in order to penetrate into the consciousness of the literary public after the text's publication: A book needs to attract the attention of feature-page reviewers. This, in turn, depends greatly on the (financial) effort a publishing house puts into marketing a book, i.e., advertisements in the press, presentations and readings by the author, appearances on radio programs or talk shows on television, etc. The (prominent) placement of books in bookstores, where it is treated as a precious commodity, is also a highly decisive factor in this process of marketing. This kind of extra-literary marketing as well as the author's fame and recognizability have enormous influence on the decision whether or not a book will even be reviewed by the media. Should a book fail to get reviewed, it does not exist for all intents and purposes. It will go unnoticed by the readers and consequently by critics including those in the academe.

While the first two levels affect mainly marketing mechanisms aimed at maximizing profits, literary criteria (for quality) become increasingly important factors starting with the third level. Only through reviews in literary journals, magazines, and other forms of publications (e.g., essay-form books) does it become evident that books make a valuable contribution to the literary discourse. Here, the main criterion for selection seems to be a specific (usually very narrowly understood) definition of literature that should for the most part sort out such works that are rated as trivial or popular. Besides, the literature to be reviewed is not only selected by the critic, but also by the journal's publisher. With this decision, he/she takes on the role of an additional factor of canonization. The fact that the function of the publisher is often shared among a team only makes this factor more complex.

The fourth level of canonization is academic-scholarly criticism in the form of monographs and dissertations. Further, literary prizes and awards belong also to this level in the processes of canonization. While newspapers, magazines, and literary journals tend to respond to newly published works and trends immediately and directly thereby sometimes falling prey to short-lived fads, monographs of scholarship call for a certain permanence. They organize the many-faceted discourse from a (temporal) distance that comes with the production time associated with such a work. Authors are not judged by a single work and are, beyond that, shown within the "bigger picture," including the many awards and prizes available to German-language authors. Importantly, studies dealing with literary works of art can be conducted with more complexity and greater attention to detail than would be possible for an article in a literary or scholarly journal. At the same time, a monograph that is able to accomplish this also poses a financial risk for the publisher which has to be borne either directly by the publishing house or indirectly through a sponsorship of the author by the scholarly community. In any case, such a study will only be funded for specific reasons, the most prominent of these being relevance. The relevance of an author and his/her work must have already become apparent through the discourse in journals. A monograph serves to solidify this importance by giving it a better foundation and it manifests itself in the physical, tangible form of a book. The relevance of an author/book is amplified even further, since monographs in turn inspire new works, the total number of which becomes an indicator for the author's/text's canon-worthiness. Monographs are perceived as having much higher authority than articles in journals, which increases their influence on the canonizing effect. This is a result of the greater influence of the business of literature, which has much greater selective capabilities through sponsorship, publishing houses, and editors.

The fifth level of canonization, the final step of the process of canonization, is that the author and his works make their way into encyclopedias, university curricula, and schoolbooks. Only after this occurs is an author considered "fully canonized," only then have their works become part of the literary canon. Their oeuvre is now among the timeless cultural portfolio that is considered to be worthy of preserving and which will be passed on to future generations. These so-called classics are entrusted with the task of conveying the underlying cultural values and standards. They are

considered general knowledge and become the basis for judging all other literary texts. Schmidt and Vorderer are therefore correct when they characterize the "incorporation of a canon-item into (school-)curricula" as "the most important stabilizing mechanism" (148).

Literary canons constitute an especially important cultural factor. In 1987, the search for a method to analyze canons adequately led Schmidt to an interesting statement which, in turn, is based on his own model of action roles within the media system: "Current (or, more precisely: acute) canons make it evident to all actors in the respective art-system who considers what in his or her artistic actions innovative, weighty, important, and artistically relevant" ("Abschied vom Kanon?" 337). Along these lines, Schmidt also refers to the necessity of making canons an empirical concept and thereby to a method of analysis that was taken up in the study presented here (see also Gaiser). Next, I present an application of the above model of canonization to Net Literature: Is there such a thing as a canon of Net Literature, and how is it currently developing? The world wide web allowed the publication of texts using sophisticated layouts is now almost two decades old. Net Literature itself started to become relevant as a large-scale phenomenon beginning with the internet boom of the years 1994-95. Is it perhaps not too early at this point to contemplate phenomena of canonization of such a young art form in a medium as young as this? In my opinion, there are four significant reasons in favor of such an enterprise, although more can probably be found without much effort: 1) Over the past few years, the internet has begun filling in a dominating position within the spectrum of media. It is so ever-present in the public's consciousness that it has given a name to an entire generation, "generation@." There is good reason to believe that it represents a highly influential cultural factor. According to an optimistic perspective, the digital age seems to be flourishing in the triumph of a global economy and the establishment of a world-wide communication society. As a consequence, the traditional schemes of production, distribution, reception, and processing are being completely restructured; 2) Net Literature, as a new form of art, has become a much discussed phenomenon both in the study of literature and in media studies. It has given both media euphorians and traditionalists a forum to wage emotional discussions about what it is that defines Net Literature: "Is it the avant-garde of tomorrow's literature" or "is it the arrièrè-garde of yesterday's literature" (Suter and Böhler 7). This discussion has already crossed over into traditional media, thereby becoming a part of academic-scholarly discussion. In German, the scholarly publications of the last several years are already legion (see Arnold; Auer; Block, Heibach and Wenz; Böhler; Heibach, "Literatur im Internet"; Heibach, "Literatur im elektronischen Raum"; Ortman; Rau; Simanowski, "Interfictions"; Suter and Böhler; Schmidt-Bergmann and Liesegang). As I suggested previously, with the publication of the first affordable pocket book bundled with a CD-ROM by one of the most renowned German publishing houses (DTV), the discussion is now reaching the general public. The most important recent contest for German-language Net Literature has been sponsored by Germany's biggest Internet service provider (T-Online). These two developments only serve to underline the fact that this new form of art is growing out of the experimental stage and is beginning to attain pre-canonical status; 3) Questions about the artistic quality of Net Literature are always also questions about the criteria that characterize certain projects and make them stand out. Consequently, they are at the same time an expression of the demand by authors, readers, and critics alike for standards, role models, and orientation points by which to judge and categorize these new works. In short, they seek a canon of Net Literature. Publications such as hyperfiction (see Suter and Böhler) are a good indication that the processes of canonization have already begun. Suter and Böhler's Hyperfiction, for example, offers both theoretical texts as well as a representative compilation of Net Literature. The anthology, published in the form of a static CD-ROM, is obviously intended as a counterpoint to the dynamic spirit of the net and, as such, has been made to last; and 4) In the field of media studies, the processes of canonization have been studied extensively and successfully regarding literary texts (see Gaiser, "Literaturgeschichte"; Poltermann; Rees; Schmidt, "Abschied vom Kanon"; Segers; Viehoff, "Literaturkritik"; Viehoff, "Neben Brecht"). Canons of cinematographic films exist as well, as do canons of television movies and series (see Brombach and Wehn; Wehn). Selection and stabilization represent cultural functions which must necessarily be fulfilled in any system of art. Why, then, should such processes not also be evident on the internet? Currently, the most

promising tool for analyzing temporally and regionally narrowly defined literary canons and their canonization processes is the "mention analysis" technique, developed by the sociology of literature scholar Karl Erik Rosengren. Originally developed towards the end of the 1960s to study empirically the literary "climate" of the 1880s as well as that of the 1950s and 1960s, the method has meanwhile also been successfully applied to the analysis of other processes of canonization (see, e.g., Lundén et al., <<http://www.engelska.uu.se/research.lit.gen.html>>). Based on these findings, it is reasonable to assume that this analysis can also be employed for the study of canonization processes on the internet. In the following, I summarize Rosengren's notions followed by my own modified version of his methodology for the analysis of canons of Net Literature.

Rosengren's methodology is based on the observation that authors of literary criticism often link the text they have reviewed or its author with other authors. The frequency with which a certain author is referenced in reviews could, then, be interpreted as a measure for that author's success. The starting points of his research project are literary criticism and the processing role in the media system. This includes reviews in the daily press and in literary magazines, as well as the "scientific" handling of literature. Literary criticism evaluates and interprets literature, and decides, above all, which authors are included in or excluded from the literary system. These decisions are based on a commonly shared literary frame of reference, which contains a "hierarchy of fame" of the included authors. Here, the authors and their positions within the hierarchy differ depending on the time period. To determine this literary frame of reference, Rosengren employs a modified quantitative content analysis of literary reviews, which he calls "mention analysis." A "mention" in this context would be any appearance of an author's name in literary reviews not written by that author himself/herself. These mentions are then counted within the scope of an empirical analysis of literary reviews and their sum can be interpreted as an indicator for the topicality of the author in question. The quantitative analysis of all reviews of a given period or at least a representative selection thereof allows statements to be made about the literary frame of reference as well as the literary milieu of that time. Mentions can be identified relatively easily, quickly, and in an uncomplicated manner and taken together they allow statements about the literary frame of reference, such as for example its geographic composition or its structure. Beyond that, this method offers the possibility of comparing different frames of reference (such as different eras of a country, different countries within an era) to each other relatively easily. This reveals the changes during and continuity within a literary period. Lastly, concrete canons can also be compiled for each of the periods that were analyzed. To study the frame of reference of those processing Net Literature and the canon of Net Literature, respectively, a modified version of the mention analysis was developed (my modification incorporates the Gottfried Gaiser's work), while at the same time taking into consideration the fact that a stable frame of reference cannot yet be expected to exist for a phenomenon as young as Net Literature. In short, the model was expanded in two directions: On the one hand, scholarly essays were also analyzed in addition to the literary reviews; on the other hand, a detailed system of categorization, which goes beyond the individual author, was developed. In the research project at hand, a total of 24 non-independent medium-size scholarly works dating from 1999-2002 were analyzed. All of these were taken from anthologies on Net Literature published within this time frame, as well as the identified online publications. Looking at the list of German authors of this sample it becomes clear that currently the scholarly discourse on Net Literature is dominated and shaped by only about a dozen authors. The comparison of the academic frame of reference with that of the critics of Net Literature that was originally planned could unfortunately not be carried out. The reason for this was quite sobering: there seems to be a pronounced lack of German Net Literature. At the moment, there is only a single major forum for reviews, which is in addition strongly dominated by one publisher (Simanowski, "dichtung digital"). The sample of reviews therefore comprises only seven texts. Also, most reviews only made sparing use of the ability to cross-reference other authors and scholars. If anything, these reviews represented text-immanent interpretations. As a result, it can be said that a widespread and differentiated discourse on Net Literature does not exist in German-speaking cultures. Therefore, the pilot study described a phenomenon that is still in its early stages.

The data suggest the following: At this point, neither an established system of criticism for Net Literature nor a large group of critics can be observed. Consequently, a canonization process through the critics can also not be verified and this assessment holds true up to 2005. In the German-language world wide web there exists only one major forum of review ("dichtung digital"), at which work is shared among only a handful of reviewers. The reviews of Net Literature seem to be more of a text immanent, interpretative nature. In short: The critical discourse is currently still in its beginning stages, although the analysis has shown the first tendencies of this discourse. In the case of scholarly papers, however, canonic structures that point to a common frame of reference shared by all processors can indeed be shown to exist. "Hit lists" were compiled, which can be interpreted as a visualization of this frame of reference. Examples of "hit lists": Net Authors, Net Texts (number of mentions in parentheses). Hit List 1: Net Authors: Auer, Johannes (6), Berkenheger, Susanne (6), Joyce, Michael (6), Kieninger, Martina (5), Döhl, Reinhard (4), jodi (4), Klinger, Claudia (4), Adler, Olivia (3), Böttcher, Bastian (3), Grigat, Guido (3), Idensen, Heiko (3), Lialina, Olia (3), Moulthrop, Stuart (3), Stilloch, Sven (3). Hit List 2: Net Text: Abfall für alle (8), Afternoon, a story (8), NULL (8), Die Aaleskorte der Ölig (7), Hilfe! (7), 23:40 (6), Assoziationsblaster (6), Imaginäre Bibliothek (6), Beim Bäcker (5), TanGo (5). Projects and authors that show a high "mention rate" can already be considered canonized. It has also become clear what a wide spectrum of references the processors of Net Literature use. In addition to references to literary projects, there are also those to traditional literature, to literary scholars, philosophers, to other works of Net Literature, etc. On the other hand, this data is put into perspective through the inherently referential character of the text type "scholarly text." Nonetheless, in my opinion, the test of Rosengren's methodology seems to have been rather successful. It has proven itself to be very flexible and adaptable, able to furnish valuable results even when applied to a completely different medial context than the one it was developed for. As Gaiser has already pointed out, it is impossible to analyze every frame of reference and every canon using this method. For example, to analyze scholarly texts, it would have to be modified in such a way that the highly referential nature of this type of text did not drown out the canon references. At any rate, additional supplementary studies are required, for example sophisticated statistical techniques to verify the context of the references.

When trying to apply the canon model developed above to the internet it becomes obvious that it has been shortened by at least two levels. Without going into greater detail, the model currently seems to manifest itself as follows. First level: Since it is now possible for everyone to publish his/her works on the internet, the role of the publishing house and the book store will be passed on to the webmasters that oversee the commented lists of linked literature. If a project is not linked to the world wide web, it does not exist for the public on the internet, although it can theoretically be accessed on the server; Second level: Reviews in E-Zines such as *Dichtung Digital* <<http://www.dichtung-digital.com/>> will take on the role of the feature-page reviews. This level is not yet fully developed for Net Literature; Third level: As of yet, forums for essay-style literary criticism do not exist. Whether the category of Net Literature would be taken up in prominent German-language scholarly journals remains to be seen. As it looks today, this level will probably be established in the offline-world; Fourth level: Academic-scholarly critics have not yet taken note of Net Literature; Fifth level: Although Net Literature is already used in various curricula at universities and in schools today, individual projects have not yet made it into well-known and relevant encyclopedias. Although the *Brockhaus* encyclopedia, for example, unlike its counterpart the *Kindler*, shows entries on "Net Literature," "hyperfiction," and "collaborative writing," neither of them offers more detailed information on specific projects. As a result, it appears that at most the first three levels of the canonization process are currently open to Net Literature and that the two remaining levels are not yet being reached. Therefore, a real canon of Net Literature does not and cannot yet exist. Thus, it has become clear that the phenomenon of Net Literature, similar to Net Literature processing and canonization are still in their very early developmental stages. As a result, the findings presented here should be regarded more as a survey of the "nursery" of this young artistic phenomenon. Nonetheless, this new form of art, along with the academic-scholarly discourse accompanying it, is growing up. The last several years have seen an increase in the

number of publications, websites, and conventions dealing with Net Literature. The entry of online essays into the realm of the academic-scholarly discourse can be interpreted as an indication of this development: Net Literature and the problems associated with multimedial authorship are slowly being recognized as a serious topic in traditional scholarship, and are, consequently, being integrated into research programs and academic curricula. Finally, with the successful continuation of the contest mentioned and the ever-increasing coverage of digital literature in the mainstream German-language press, the broader public is beginning to take note of this new genre of literary text. Granted, the utopian ideas and the concepts behind Net Literature are still being viewed rather skeptically, but at the same time, structures from traditional literature are being sought and incorporated, making Net Literature presentable. While the popular German political and cultural magazine *Der Spiegel* declared the "Demise of Net Poets" in 2002, thereby (still) expressing its own skepticism of this type of avant-garde literature, at the same time it contributed to its establishment and canonization (see Petersen and Saltzwedel). When Simanowski is described as the "German pope of Net Literature" and works by such as Susanne Berkenheger and Rainald Goetz are interpreted in detail, this can be regarded clearly as a symptom of a fallback to the terms and methods of "traditional" literature (see Petersen and Saltzwedel 178.) Thus, a process of canonization of authors and producers of Net Literature as well as their works has begun even in the field of mainstream journalism. This observation is still valid even if taking into consideration such a publication's more "popular" focus that, as of yet, is not dealing with the aesthetic characteristics of Net Literature.

Note: The above paper is an updated and shorter version of work published in Florian Hartling, "Netzliteratur: Begriff-Handlungsrollen-Dispositiv." *netzliteratur.net* (2002):

<http://www.netzliteratur.net/hartling/netzliteratur_begriff_handlungsrollen_dispositiv.htm>[inactive], "'dass hier kaum mehr von Netzliteratur die Rede ist...' Erneute Überlegungen zur Relevanz von Mailinglisten für die Kanonisierung von Netzliteratur." *netzliteratur.net* (2003):

<<http://www.netzliteratur.net/hartling/ml/maillinglisten.pdf>>, "Wo ist der Online-Ulysses? Kanonisierungsprozesse in der Netzliteratur." *HALMA: Hallische Medienarbeiten* 19 (2004):

<<http://www.medienkomm.uni-halle.de/forschung/publikationen/halma19.pdf>> & *netzliteratur.net* (2004): <<http://www.netzliteratur.net/hartling/hartling-online-ulysses.pdf>>).

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