

a passionate Hungarian aristocrat. Bearing the features of “unified” exoticism, these characters, created by some of the most popular British writers, suggest much about the stereotypes and prejudice English popular fiction instilled in its readership about Central Europeans as a single mass of people rather than representatives of different nations. This chapter seems particularly inspiring for further study of Western stereotyping of “the Slavic stranger” in the numerous film adaptations of the above literary texts, following the theoretical basis found in Chapter 1.

Despite being targeted to an academic (professional) audience, this collection may be interesting to a less scholarly reader curious about the cultures of Central Europe. While literary historians, cultural comparatists, or theorists will find it insightful in terms of literary/intermedial comparative studies in Czechoslovakia and later Slovakia, the wider readership will be fascinated to learn about the ways certain ethnic

stereotypes were shaped by some national literatures, spread out in foreign lands, and have remained fixed in contemporary culture by media other than fiction, especially if it concerns the works of popular culture. Given its focus on imagology in Central Europe, the book could have benefited from further discussion of recent comparative work in the region, including the issues of the journal *World Literature Studies* edited by Charles Sabatos and Róbert Gáfrík on frontier Orientalism (1/2018) and by Anton Pokrivčák and Miloš Zelenka on images of remote countries (2/2019). Nevertheless, *Stereotypes and Myths. Intertextuality in Central European Imagological Reflections* can be highly recommended to connoisseurs from the fields of comparative Slavic studies, Central European area studies, and world literature.

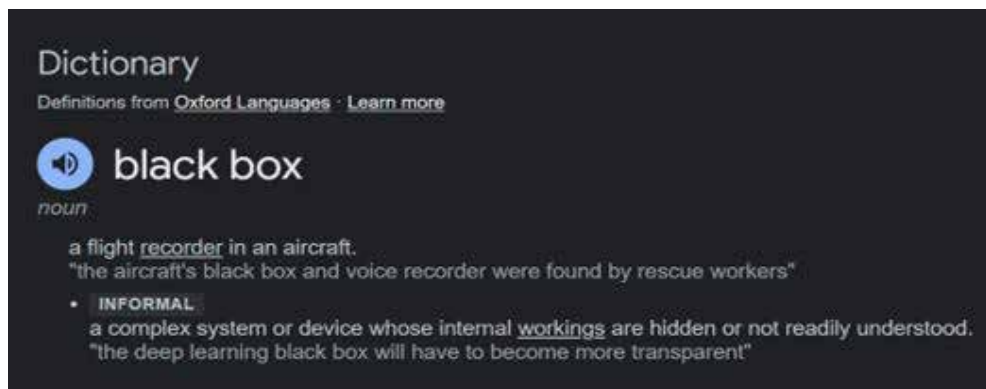
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**JANA HORÁKOVÁ – MARIKA KUPKOVÁ – MONIKA SZÜCSOVÁ (eds.):
The Black Box Book: Archives and Curatorship in the Age of Transformation of Art Institutions**

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your eyes are entering the body

A necessity for transparency of the deep learning black box got an exclusive promotion even in the linguistic explanation of the meaning of the expression “black box”. This notion referring to an object, on which casts no light, which might or might not be a container of other objects (functional as in code or physical as in space), voices, nodes, strings, or narratives, has been symbolically attributed to the programs of artificial neural networks, into which internal processuality we have not yet been able to peep in. We know the datasets, inputs, training mechanisms, parsing processes, and get the outputs, however, the whole internal working of neural networks is a black box for us. We painted it black, it is the new black, black not yet Pandora’s from 700 B.C. We received it sealed with a sign “Handle with care”. Its fragility is yet to be discovered. And felt on the skin. In our (s)kin.

since behind the windows float moist words

“The more historical processes become steeped in technology, the more a discipline that is capable of comprehending these materialities becomes necessary,” writes David Link as the first sentence of his book *Archaeology of Algorithmic Artefacts* (2016, 11). The monograph *The Black Box Book*, edited by a trio of researchers/curators/editors Jana Horáková, Marika Kupková, and Monika Szücssová presents, discursively analyzes, interdisciplinarily interprets, and in a highly actual mode discusses the most contemporary issues in the curatorial studies, digital media theory and history, synthetic arts practice, and artistic research in the field of generative and media arts. Four main approaches divide the whole book of twelve chapters into these clusters: Digital Curating and AI Curating: The Network of Terms, The Black Box: The Lock-Down Curatorial Project, Curating Online 2020, and AI Curator. To zoom into the terminological embeddedness of the authors sailing within digital currents around 2020, Jana Horáková

and Monika Szücssová prepared an explanation of the crucial terms that resonate within most of the chapters, and thus offer a smooth ride also for readers from other disciplines. The book reverberates with up-to-date, internationally approved theoretical propositions in digital curating, like “curatorial digital divide” (see, for example, Gaia Tedone’s Ph.D. dissertation “Curating the Networked Image: Circulation, Commodification, Computation”, 2019), “network of care” (see the publications of Annet Dekker *Collecting and Conserving Net Art. Moving beyond Conventional Methods*, 2018; or “Networks of Care” in *The Networked Image in Post-digital Culture*, 2022), “development of critical meaning in partnership and discussion with artists and publics” (suggested by Barnaby Drabble in her article “Fw: March Theme” in *New-Media-Curating Discussion List*, 2003), “a collective and distributed executable that displays machinic agency” (proposed by Joasia Krysa in her Ph.D. dissertation “Software Curating: The Politics of Curating in/as (an) Open System(s)”, 2008), “curating online” vs. “curating on the web” (a distinction suggested by Marialaura Ghidini in her text “Curating on the Web: The Evolution of Platforms as Spaces for Producing and Disseminating Web-Based Art”, 2019), “living archive”, whilst in the core of its studies addresses a (web)site-specific, locally and temporarily authentic situation of Czech artistic content, digital or digitally present, in and after 2020.

Where is that cold world? I cannot know that much

In the chapter “What to Look for in a Black Box?”, Marika Kupková and Monika Szücssová map and contextualize the curatorial activities of Brno-based Galerie TIC that during the Covid 19 pandemic adopted the “organizational aesthetics” (see Olga Goriunova’s *Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet*, 2012) of the web interface that due to its media specificity steers us “towards paths of experimentation, invention, humour, or collapse” (Goriunova 2012, 17). Galerie TIC, curated by Monika Kupková,

Zuzana Janečková and Katarína Hládeková, decided to use its sources in the pandemic time for the support of artists, and to present new works on the platform that thanks to its specifics does not follow the exhibition logic of a white cube. Their conceptual position diverges from the practices of many galleries at the beginning of pandemic that can be described as “browsing the catalogue with a new interface” (2022, 64), as authors state after Dekker, but is, not just regarding the light spectrum of this black box, an opposite to a white cube. The authors of the article summarize the curator’s endeavor followingly: “[t]he gallery has thus practically tested the extensive theoretical research carried out in the past decades, which thematizes the issues of the presentation of (digital) art online and in physical space” (64). Concentrating on the practical realizations of the networks of (human) care and living archives, as well as organizing online curatorial symposia, the gallery adopted a crucial role in the modelling of online and offline alignments, as well providing a platform for discussion, education, and experimentation, whilst focusing on an essential factor of experiential art horizons. Three online curatorial symposia provided a space for an international mix of curators to present their views on the situation, whose outcomes still resonate. Not just in the world, but also in the frame of this publication since many of the texts stemmed from the initiative of these symposia.

The living archive was in this black *case* curated by a non-living agent, a new archivist, or alien curator, as the authors Jana Horáková, Štěpán Miklánek and Pavel Sikora named the AI model created using the unsupervised learning method that stands behind the organization and visualization of images on the Black Box website. This approach opposes the anthropocentrism and a certain cultural conditioning of traditional curatorial studies and provides a purely statistical and data-driven approach of an alien agent that crosses borders of the digital humanities ad absurdum while enriching them with a technological gaze.

The designers of the Black Box web, Alina Matějová and Oliver Staša, let us understand the process behind the creation of the website from the visual, conceptual, functional, and synthetic point of view through a telescope of their chapter “Web Is the Key: On the Design of the Black Box”. Their approach, consisting of a layering of visual and textual material of artists connected with strings, plays with the possibilities of web design in an innovative and conceptually attractive fashion. Besides this, the web page contains an online version of this book, iconoclastically designed also by Alina Matějová.

and while nobody comes, not to forget

The third division of the book, *Curating Online 2020*, answers the crucial questions that curators had to face in the pandemic times to establish online curating as a distinctive discipline with its own set of strategies, tools, and technological specifics, among others: How to curate media-specifically for the artistic web environment without purely reappropriating the strategies from physical space but provide conditions for connectivity and sustainability? In which artistic approaches can the curatorial collectives find predecessors or inspirations? How to enrich the participatory experience in a web-based milieu with digital artistic content? How to diverge from the daily user interface design to communicate artistic topics and artistic research? Or in the words of Gaia Tedone, who, following the fact that contemporary art world started to be interested in the digital, considers this topic in this regard: “But how did this interest manifest, which new strategies and tactics were put in place and what institutional models were endorsed?” (2019, 174)

Marialaura Ghidini uses the concept of *curating online* as distinctive from *curating on the web*. Even though the later one understands as a subset of the first one, it enables her to address an umbrella term for a context-specific curation that embraces “the social context in which such medium evolves” (158) and pay attention to the online speci-

ficity in the digital curatorial process. By examining the cult works of net.art that established a distinctive position for art created for and presented in the digital already since middle 1990s, Ghidini writes that these are the projects, where the curator “creates new spaces for the production and distribution of contemporary art, whereby each new and evolving presentation format has politics inscribed within it” (160).

In her chapter “2020 Digital Odyssey: Online or Nothing”, Gaia Tedone argues about the difficulties of traditional art institutions to explore the creative potential of the networked culture and its interactivity when being transferred to the digital sphere. Rather than using its potential, Tedone writes, they approached it as a tool. These problems stem from these positions: “first, the difficulty for the galleries and museums to radically rethink the notion of aesthetics; second, the resistance to reimagine its categorical distinctions, as well as its curatorial formats and the whereabouts of its operations” (2022, 185). The lighthouse can be perceived in the adoption of *networked co-curation* that relies on a more fluid and inclusive curating that understands digital platforms as a culture, whose operational strategies can “replace cultural gatekeeping and single authorship” (187). On some of its examples, Tedone refers to a *networked co-curation* as to a process that connects “both ends of the curatorial digital divide, that pointed to the possibility of approaching online curating as a distributed, collaborative, networked and performative process and practice” (185).

Tracing the specifics of preservation of networked art practices, Sarah Cook and Roddy Hunter approached the conservation of such digital works and practices in their chapter “Networked Art Practice after Digital Preservation”. Following the practices of software art, net.art and generative art, whose digital platforms became obsolete or unstable due to their materiality and programs, the authors find the inspiration in the archiving of performative arts, in re-enact-

ments or, another shift provide the strategies adopted by Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine.

Another chapter dealing with the crucial topic of digital preservation is the text by Michal Klodner, in which he articulates the issue of digital archiving in the context of media ecology that does not exist in isolation, but rather, influenced by a natural ecology, in the whole complex of media-art-technological-social-cultural-environmental ecology, where all these agents have a specific and hierarchically valid stance, with a necessary precondition of a sustainability mindset of the human agents in the game.

I have a feeling that a mirror is not magical

The last division AI Curator consists of texts by Andreas Sudmann, Lukáš Pilka, UBERMORGEN, and Barbora Trnková. While Sudmann considers a more general context of computer creativity in the upheaval of AI Springs that resonates also in the visual arts, Pilka concentrates on a quite specific example of the use of machine learning as a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Prague. UBERMORGEN comes with an innovative and hype suggestion vibing with a postanthropomorphic attitude: “the next biennial should be curated by a machine”, a suggestion that was already commissioned by Whitney Museum of American Art New York and the Liverpool Biennial 2021. Trnková conceptually framed the exhibition “AI: All Idiots” that was displayed at Meet-Factory Gallery in Prague in 2021. Her text references the use of AI in this exhibition context, in line with the title, into a more subversive, playful and in the methodological sense truthful to the state of arts, in which machine learning appeared in 2021. “Cohesion without coherence”, thus condenses Hannes Bajohr in his paper “Kohäsion ohne Kohärenz. Künstliche Intelligenz und narrative Form” (2023) the stylistics of GPT models. Behind the exhibition project stands the curatorial collective ScreenSaverGallery, consisting of Barbora Trnková, Marie Meix-

nerová, Tomáš Javůrek, that used the hacking potential of GANs to implement Czech database of visual works into the world database, for the Czech art to, virtually, influence the world art for a limited time range. This hack, resulting in a trans-medially portrayed exhibition, proved, that the human-machine assisted creativity can be as sexy as humans want it to be dressed (or undressed). Or, in the words of Alex Sudmann: “we typically value and admire those achievements of machines that we also value and admire related to humans” (2022, 275). The variability of the texts in this section proves that the topic of AI Curator is not a boom of 2022, but existed before, even beyond the mental projection and is extremely worthy of studying and get inspiration from, in whichever line the recipient is standing or moving. Trnková writes that the generated images are not the instances of the strongest visual experience but “the output of this technology as a whole produces a sensation of immanent familiarity, a *déjà vu* of Western culture. It makes it possible to make souvenirs out of images of the recent, digitalized, selective present” (348).

your face is random again

The Black Box Book is a publication suitable for authors from the digital, medial, technological, art, textual, audio, video field, for curators specializing in online and offline cultures, for researchers, philosophers, ethics, gallerists, museologists, designers, and for students of all these disciplines. I believe the editors and authors of this collective book of network(ed) care cut the strings that opened this box, whose inside walls form a black jewel of knowledge and experience that can shine on our voyage through virtual waters: not as sinkers, but as survivors in the mirrors of reality. Since, as UBERMORGEN wrote in their contribution: “Our reality is imagined, developed, fed, curated, and subsequently collectively hallucinated by all of us, humans, animals, and machines and the new networked organisms that are us!” (334)

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& the poetic subtitles generated by a poetic
neural network LIZA GENNART

MAGDALENA GARBACIK-BALAKOWICZ: Filozofické souvislosti v literárním díle Sándora Máraiho [The philosophical context in the literary work of Sándor Márai]

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Monografie Magdaleny Garbacik-Balakowicz *Filozofické souvislosti v literárním díle Sándora Máraiho* se věnuje transtextuálním souvislostem mezi autorovou románovou tvorbou a filozofickými proudy jeho doby. Románopisec, dramatik a publicista Sándor Márai (1900–1989) patří k nejznámějším a nejprekládanějším maďarským autorům, přičemž mezinárodní objevení jeho díla nastalo teprve začátkem 90. let minulého století, se zpožděním několik desítek let po

jejich prvním vydání, až po autorově smrti. I když první překlady jeho děl vznikaly v zahraničí již koncem 30. let, autorovi stejnou popularitu nepřinesly. Máraiho česká recepce měla podobný průběh: v roce 1936 přeložil Arno Kraus jeho román *Cizí lidé* (Julius Albert, 1936), v roce 1942 následovalo české vydání románu *Host v Bolzanu* (Evropský literární klub, 1942) od téhož překladatele a román *Štěně* (Literární a umělecký klub, 1942) v překladu Viléma Peřiny. Do povědo-