

Liquid Times: Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story*

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Noise, system theory and chaos appear as a limitation on the founding principle of classical science: determinism. At the same time, however, they widen the scope of rationality and testify to the taking into account of actual systems, dynamic, open, often unstable and fluctuating. These concepts [...] form the epistemological base of hypertext (Clément, "L'hypertexte..." 185).

The electronic hyperfictions published in the 1990s have been haunted by the poststructuralist ghost of an ideal mode of empowered reading that supposedly enables the reader to appropriate, co-author and recompose the text in a perfectly fluid fashion following the associative logic enabled by hyperlinks, a contention largely inherited from a misreading of so-called French Theory of text (that needs to be qualified) as well the influence of contemporary physics. The very metaphor used by Michael Joyce in the preamble to *afternoon, a story* contradicts, however, the image of the reader's free flowing circulation through his hyperfictional work. We find ourselves groping through a succession of screens, trying to feel literally our way in to find the *words that yield* to the touch of the cursor in pursuit of *texture*. Despite the apparent contradiction between the metaphors of fluidity and texture, Michael Joyce's own images tend to suggest a more complex form of textuality where texture surfaces as a fold, or a wave affecting both space and time, ushering in a form of quantum textuality:

The electronic text is a **dissipative (belief) structure** and the reader is apt to believe that its states and forms are exactly the same thing. **The electronic text thus embodies a multiplicity of forces** in the associational schema that it presents. Contours are not forms in the text, the author, or the reader, but rather those **moments** that express relationships among them in the form of the reader as writer. (Joyce, *Othermindedness* 26 — *emphasis mine*)

The reference to the physicist Prigogine's notion of a dissipative structure throws into new light the theoretical framework lying behind the conception of *afternoon*: the reader's actions upon the text are likened to a source of energy that flows through an environment placed in a turbulent regime, and therefore subject to multiple reconfigurations. A dissipative structure not only maintains

itself in a stable state far-from-equilibrium¹, that is to say a dynamic equilibrium in which a system is constantly changing, but may even evolve toward a greater state of complexity as it goes through new instabilities and transforms itself into new structures of increased complexity (Schneider and Dorion 81-82). The emergence of “texture” could be then compared to the formation of Bénard cells in a heated bath of silicone oil once the system reaches a critical point of instability even though this metaphoric description of the formation of new patterns in the narrative weave may, once again, sound like an idealization and possibly a misinterpretation of the non-linearity of hypertextual structures. This description certainly stands true, however, from a syntagmatic point of view but not from that of the physics of fluids when referring to turbulent, non-linear systems to be approached as an echo to the scientific concepts turned into metaphors that nurture hypertext theory.

The reader’s freedom is nonetheless limited. The conditional hyperlinks underpinning the general narrative structure of the work channel our choices in a semi-random fashion through multiple paths (Gautier np). It could be construed, however, that the digital environment adapts and adjusts its behavior to our navigation as a means of control over our actions. As David Savat puts it in the wake of quantum theory: “... in the context of using digital technologies any action one performs is always already almost instantaneously also an observation and recording as one always already writes or constitutes oneself as code,” (Savat, 50) a contention that is partially illustrated by the presence of conditional links in *afternoon, a story* and that may account for the type of interactivity claimed by Michael Joyce: “...the real interaction, if that is possible, is in pursuit of texture. There we match minds” (/in my mind). If the reader’s, or interactor’s behavior could actually be scripted, that is to say anticipated, the presence of conditional links would amount to a pre-programming of flows, thwarting our agency and possibly our hermeneutic approach to the text. However, this form of modulatory control is rendered ineffective as Michael Joyce did not compose *afternoon* from a preexisting narrative map, or external decision tree, but instead configured the various narrative blocks somewhat intuitively, on the fly, working within a constantly shifting environment which required constant readjustments (Joyce, “Liquid fictions” 24) to escape too deterministic a narrative model. Besides, the sheer number of nodes, 539, and links, 950, exceeds by far the author’s capacity for anticipatory programming even though the guard fields, or conditional links, may be construed as sluices of sorts bearing in mind that the main narrative pattern in *afternoon* is still the loop.

More often than not the reader will stumble upon the same nodes which will eventually come into focus and highlight part of an otherwise hazy picture, or may as well take on a different meaning depending on context (Clément, “*afternoon...*” np). Clicking for instance on the active word “crystal” in the lexia entitled “begin” will take the reader along Nausicaa’s story, both the mythological character from Homer’s *Odyssey* as well as that of a character

within the narrative, with an intertextual hint at Joyce's *Ulysses* too that accounts for the intertwined stream of consciousness encountered along the narrative voyage. In one of my readings, it took me twenty-four lexias along with an analeptic incursion into Lolly's story (whose relationship to Nausicaa and Wert's characters was still to be determined at that point) to reach the lexia entitled "flying" in which the metaphor for taking drugs, "riding the crystal stallion" found in "Lethe" (third node in this sequence), is framed within what turns out to be Nausicaa's history (and possibly Lolly's, for the narrator's identity remains unclear). There is only one default path from "flying" that takes the reader back to "Lethe" and into a loop until she reaches a lexia entitled "Nausicaa" again. The electronic environment is akin to an eddying pool disturbed by the reader's actions that trigger more complex reconfigurations as the narrative loops back upon itself. The musical metaphors found in the lexia entitled "speak memory" — one of the numerous metafictional nodes in the work, some of them staging Michael Joyce himself — illustrates both the nature of the reader's quest and her aesthetic reception of the work:

< [...] It is simply that there is more to know, all these indices pointing somewhere, and the thing becomes a web. You feel the vibration as something snags itself and then crawl [*sic*], tortuously, expectantly out of the margins.>

< It is like music, when you write like this, all the interconnected notes, the counterpoint.>

There is another recurrent image in Michael Joyce's critical essays that may challenge too restrictive a notion of fluid control versus structural discipline, that of contours as *moments in the text*. The fleeting emergence of texture is described as an interactive process in both time and space when the reader becomes the author of the text as the coordinates of a particular node suddenly fail to map upon themselves, shifting the general structure of the work while thwarting the preset hypertextual architecture of the narrative. This disjunction interrupts the narrative flow, inducing the reader to redistribute the coordinates along new lines of flight that cannot however be recovered through rereading, due to the complexity and contingency of Joyce's hyperfiction: "Hypertext narrative produces the present-tense contour of meaningful structures. Meaning in narrative is an orderly but continual replacement of meaningful structures throughout the text" (Joyce, *Of Two Minds* 191) as one frame replaces another, shifting the reader's focus while the previously visited nodes tend to fade out like a fleeting memory. Meaning emerges in the interstices of the hypertextual containment structures that shape, or sift the flow of words into linear systems whose coordinates happen to fail to map upon themselves, each time redistributing the points along new lines of flight, "transform[ing] form itself into new flows" (199).

The elusive and uncharted points foster resistance and add texture to an otherwise fluid textual environment as they ceaselessly remap the grid of the

syntagmatic onto the complex topology of a foliated and mobile paradigm. Not a fixed object, but an objectile (Regnauld *et al.*, "afternoon..."), *afternoon* is intrinsically unstable, capable of generating a considerable number of variations questioning the notions of truth and origin within the narrative² while calling for a new theoretical framework. Quoting Jean Clément, one may state that "a hypertext is a text with n dimensions" (Clément, "L'hypertexte..." 183). In other words, as soon as the reader deviates from the default path limited to 36 nodes, this small variation provisionally reconfigures the whole range of possibilities until the next action taken by the reader, entailing an entirely different narrative evolution pertaining to a form of chaotic logic.

The variations themselves generate their own frame of interpretation depending on the context of observation in which they appear, or as Deleuze puts it: "It is not a variation of truth according to the subject but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject" (Deleuze, *Fold* 20). It is worth noting here that despite the greater stability of print, the main character in Michael Joyce's 2007 print novel, *Was: annales nomadiques/ A novel of internet* is "the fleetingness of information itself," and this nomadic novel is composed of elusive shifts "from character to character and locale to locale from moment to moment" ("Liquid fictions" 27) as Michael Joyce tries to capture the experience of Internet surfing in a literary medium, enfolding "abrupt shifts into the succession of pages, lightening the task of the writer and softening the blow to the reader." "Narrative liquidity," a notion he has developed in a more recent 2011 essay entitled "'Liquid Fictions': Between the Electronic and Paper Fiction," differs in degree rather than in nature, print in the age of electronic reproduction being influenced by the digital in a feedback loop that highlights the impermanence of forms.

"The new status of the object no longer refers its condition to a spatial mold - in other words to a relation of form-matter - but to a temporal modulation that implies as much the beginnings of a continuous variation of matter as a continuous development of form" (*Fold* 37) observes Deleuze, who happens to be one of Michael Joyce's main philosophical sources (in his critical essays Joyce quotes extensively from *A Thousand Plateaus*). It should be noted here that the contours that shape the electronic text into textured, almost palpable zones do not fully belong on an optical, striated space and are more aptly envisaged as mixed states or impermanent forms that temporarily channel or modulate the narrative flow into a ghostly shape before reimparting smooth, fluid space. In other words, even though the notion of contour belongs to geometry, it should be understood topologically and not topographically.

We read such electronic texts as paradoxically flickering material forms that offer a kind of resistive, or haptic presence, a visual quality of touch fostered by a virtual and quite paradoxical sense of extended reach into a digital space perceived as a manifold topological surface. Quoting Michael Joyce's rather fitting metaphor, we may state that "the jellyfish is a form of water," or in other

words that “the movement of the map makes the mark.” The electronic text is in a constant process of becoming as our reading action transforms the coordinates of its map. Even though in later works such as *Twelve Blue*, the interface may be thought to help us take our bearings thanks to the graphs on the left and the corresponding coordinates that appear at the bottom of the screen, but the threads are deceptively linear representations as they actually connect points in both space and time that do not coincide, or at least do not partake in a narrative sequence just as in *afternoon*. Electronic texts fail to map themselves against the geometric as is the case with print (Joyce, *Othermindedness* 24). They actually offer performative topological environments.

“Place becomes space,” (Joyce, *Othermindedness* 19) — in other words, the coordinates of the map open onto an entire range of possible locations — while chronological time can no longer be organized in a linear manner or disciplined into the shape of an arrow or a circle: it operates in multiple folds, ripples or strokes. Michael Joyce draws his inspiration from catastrophe theory and the notion that forms are but structurally stable moments in a dynamic system. Potentiality is not only open onto the future but involves a ghostly remanence: former contours haunt the reader’s memory as she longs for something that keeps eluding her grasp. “[...] the text becomes a present tense palimpsest where what shines through are not past versions but potential alternate views” (Joyce, *Of Two Minds* 3). Now, if we are to follow Kwinter’s logic as exposed in a sentence quoted by Michael Joyce in one of his essays, the catastrophe, or event produced by the failure of a given point to map itself onto itself, creating a disturbance in an otherwise liquid environment, is also a temporal phenomenon: “Singularities designate points in any continuous process (if one accepts the dictum that time is real, then every point in the universe can be said to be continually mapped onto itself)” (quoted in Joyce, *Othermindedness* 24).

From a narrative point of view, temporal causality often does not apply to the construction of the text even though we may interpret it otherwise throughout a reading practice that tends to realign a constellation of nodes into a chronological sequence. Yet in the absence of clearly referenced deictics, including not only time markers but also personal pronouns, we are often confronted with a free-floating narrative in which past, present and future merge³. In other words, the reader tries to project a geometric mapping onto a fluid topological surface on which patterns emerge under certain conditions. Again, it must be said that such phenomenon may be encountered in print. However, electronic hyperfictions exacerbate the drift in a postcinematic fashion that spatializes time in the shape of discontinuous and elusive freeze-frames of sorts. The reader is confronted with a perpetual present cut off from its temporality when reading each node in an isolated fashion while trying to project an architectural structure onto an ever-elusive

whole composed of sheets of a traumatic past. The seminal event of the accident keeps differing from itself: it can never crystallize into a recollection-image for it has never been present (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 106).

Fluids lack force and recognizable forms though and must therefore be contained to produce patterns. Sandra Braman's analysis of history in a topologically mapped universe aptly illustrates the transformative action of reading or navigating through the text over the emergence of meaningful forms and patterns:

In a topologically mapped universe, the location of a point is less important than how it got there, for it is the self-amplifying causal processes in which it is participating or by which it is affected that will determine future direction – not location itself (quoted in Joyce *Othermindedness* 15).

The reader's trajectory traces her path through the story as she maps out its digital environment. We happen to either loop through the same nodes which then take on a different meaning depending on context, or through deceptive variants of the same node as if we had been caught in a self-amplifying causal loop ending up in a deviation from its original condition, a phenomenon which emphasizes the impression of déjà-vu as exemplified in the following nodes. "Begin" is both the starting point of the story and potentially a point in the various loops of the narrative in the same way as "False beginning." The rewriting process at work in these two screen-captures aptly illustrates the way the whole narrative is built on a system of resonances and repetitions, as if it were constantly rewriting itself. Such a system of echoes both reinforces the thematic coherence of the narrative while undermining deixis.

In *afternoon*, the reader is steeped into a haptic space, groping her way through the text without a map to guide her. As she navigates blindly, the reader plots regions of the text onto a grid of her own that she commits to her limited memory, most often losing her bearings until she has learned how to play her part. Interestingly, Deleuze and Guattari associate the smooth not only with a close, haptic vision, but also with the writer's and painter's supposedly short-term memory (493). In this sense, reading *afternoon* may be construed as an exercise in striation that calls for its own repeated performance as a continuous variation reimparting the smooth. Memory is that of a past that has never been present, oriented instead toward its own repetition within and without a discourse encapsulated within a succession of individual frames. Peter, the main character and sometimes narrator, may or may not have committed murder in *afternoon*, possibly killing his estranged wife and son while failing to remember the event that remains virtual all along.

Electronic hyperfictions tend to twist hypertextual information management systems to complexify our reading experience instead of pursuing their original aim, that of augmenting human cognitive capacities as we are being confronted with an ever-increasing data proliferation. Each hypertextual node functions both like a separate unit of space and time and a point threaded into an invisible,

complex, foliated space-time continuum that evades the reader's cognitive capacities. As one frame replaces another, meaning seems to *come in and out of focus* intermittently, depending on the contours and echoes the reader may perceive in the text. The chronology of the narrative is thus caught within a non-chronological series of instants that possess their own internal temporality as micro-narratives, or vignettes that we nonetheless attempt to string together along our blind exploration for lack of a predetermined temporal or spatial map of the work. The computer screen appears as a space of constant commutation where textual inscriptions lose any durability and each reading becomes a form of montage that includes a temporal dimension deeper than a mere linear narrative. With each repetition, or reiteration of the same node, a form of continuity is being reintroduced into a series of discontinuous instants, the author replays the death of live experience in the instant of its archiving while in an opposite movement the very performativity of the archive allows for a temporary reactualization and subsequent alteration of a spectral memory.

Michael Joyce's works register the acceleration induced by technological shift from static and stable images to fleeting and unstable images whose duration does not exceed retinal retention in the case of cinematography (Virilio, 29) while their persistence on screen is being threatened by the anxiety of the click, if not by their flickering, seemingly immaterial nature:

Even when static, electronic text seems frantic. It constantly re-enacts its making, bobbing up from the dark beneath with the same buoyant insistence it has when you type it. [...] Print stays itself; electronic text replaces itself. If with the book we are always printing-always opening another text unreasonably composed of the same gestures — with electronic text we are always painting, each screen unreasonably washing away what was and replacing it with itself. The eye never rests upon it, though we are apt to feel the finger can touch it.⁴

Following Deleuze's analysis of the cinematographic time-image, we may state that "as in mathematics, cuts no longer indicate continuity solutions but variable distributions between the points of a continuum" (*Cinema 2* 121) along what I will designate as topological foldings of time rather than "sheets of past" whose interconnection may be accounted for by what Michael Joyce calls the interstitial. The interstitial functions like Deleuze's

[...] sheet of transformation which invents a kind of transverse continuity or communication between several sheets, and weaves a network of non-localizable relations between them. In this way we extract non-chronological time. We draw out a sheet which, across all the rest, catches and extends the trajectory of points, the evolution of regions (123).

However, I contend that the non-chronological and textural nature of time and space in Michael Joyce's works, that is to say "the coexistence of sheets of virtual past" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 105) forming a fluid continuum is better reflected by the topological logic of an infinite and baroque folding

rather than that of foliation per se. How can we delineate the contours of a text and shape it into a meaningful and stable form since they literally *never took place*, except as part of an uncharted occurrence failing to map itself upon itself?

In the non-Euclidian space of computer environments where every point virtually stands at equal distance from each other, the depth of field of the postcinematic flat screens that pop up one after the other, can no longer be measured in terms of spatial distance or perspective, but in terms of duration as paradoxically illustrated by the stubbornly spatial notions of coextensivity and depth respectively defined by Michael Joyce as “the replacement of one writing by another,” (Joyce, *Othermindedness* 27) or “the degree impingement and dissolution among elements of a hypertext” (25)⁵, and as “the capacity for replacement among elements of a hypertext,” (25) and further “the dimension or absence or indefiniteness that opens further discourse and other morphological forms of desire” (26). These two notions point not only to a spatial dimension, but also to a non-chronological form of time as well:

Contours are the shape of what we think we see as we see it but that we know we have seen only after they are gone and new contours of our own shape themselves over the virtual armature, the liminal form, the retinal photogene (after-image) of what they have left us. (Joyce, *Of Two Minds* 222).

Contours are both mobile and remnant aspects of our reading paths that persist in time as memories rather than inscriptions in space, that is to say as unstable striations, or ripples at the surface of the text constantly dissolving into a smooth and fluid continuum. The sheets of a past pertaining to an architectural vision of time are constantly smoothed over by a plastic and perpetual present cut off from temporality, in suspension, reimpacting a fluid environment akin to a complex topological surface: “Our eyes rewrite each surface of a sculptural or any other smooth three-dimensional morphological form, replacing surfaces of coextensive contours” (Joyce, *Of Two Minds* 239-240).

Michael Joyce’s use of the database model⁶ to account for the workings of anamnesis in *afternoon, a story*⁷ merits further analysis as it places the reader in a simulated form of posttraumatic amnesia, cycling around a crucial and yet ever missing element in the story. It should be noted, however, that the apparent disconnectedness inherent in the writing spaces or nodes displayed on screen, one frame erasing the other seems to foreground a real time aesthetics, grounding the reading experience in the here and now of pure sensation. Joyce’s works thus interrogate the very possibility of experience in the age of electronic reproductibility marked by its overall devaluation (Benjamin): story is being replaced by information, and narratives informed by recombinant databases (Manovich). The hypermnesiac capacities of databanks imply a virtually unlimited access to the archival traces of the past exceeding by far the brain’s function as a repository for atrophied human memories. In the same way as the work of art loses its aura through mechanical reproduction, the destruction

of experience originates in the development of ever more effective technologies of inscription and preservation culminating with electronic archives and databases. This process also affects our sense of self. The elaboration of subjectivity cannot be dissociated from an ongoing remembering process which constantly brings the past back into the present to prevent the self from dissolving into meaningless fragments and to weave an identity narrative (Ricoeur). Michael Joyce therefore questions the way machinic repetition hollows out and exhausts the notions of identity and authority as well as the possibility for the self to persist as story through time and memory: "the text becomes a present tense palimpsest where what shines through are not past versions but potential alternate views," (Joyce, *Othermindedness* 3) which not only corroborates the vertical, paradigmatic structure of the database model but also reinforces Virilio's notion of time as surface developed in the essay entitled "The Overexposed City:" "On the computer screen, a time period becomes the 'support-surface' of inscription. Literally, or better cinematically, time surfaces" (442).

In other words, the accelerated speed of transmission destroys the physical experience of spatial distance, or at least that of a journey situated within the framework of human experience. As indicated by Michael Joyce in the introduction to his collection of essays entitled *Of Two Minds* : "the text becomes a present tense palimpsest where what shines through are not past versions but potential alternate views" (3). One is tempted to interpret the shining metaphor as something pertaining to a revelation beyond its photographic interpretation. It points to *an impression* of infinity fostering a confusion between the realm of the suprasensitive and that of the transcendental. The emergence of the texts that are revealed by the photons hitting the internal surface of this virtual palimpsest transforms memories into a series of elusive instants popping in and out of sight as they manifest themselves on screen.

The new temporal regime opened by the broadcasting of data flows in "real time", however, tends to imprison the user in a present without a past, precluding the possibility of a synoptic vision of the data archived in the computer memory. One can only access the underlying database through sampling. What seems to escape our understanding and vision induces a quasi-transcendental vision of machinic memory: the continuous present without a past that is displayed on screen points to a seemingly infinite archive whose totality eludes our grasp. Machinic hypermnnesia transcends the human experiential field in its relation to time and space, opening onto a dimension close to that of the sublime (Liu, 220). It is therefore quite tempting to draw a parallel between the relation of "pure" memory to the image in which it is actualized according to Bergson's theory in *Matter and Memory* and the relationship between the data recorded within the machine and their representation on screen. Bergson drafts this actualization process in the shape of an inverted cone image whose basis represents the totality of our memories — akin to the hypermnestic memory of the computer — and whose summit is situated at the contact zone between

memories and the present perception and action that puts sensorimotor mechanisms into play, that is to say the screen itself according to the analogy we have just drawn above.

The metaphor of the inverted cone accounts for the physical limitations of the machine as well as those of our cognitive capacities while maintaining the metaphysical postulate of an unforgettable, immutable substrate, that is to say an eternal memory. Quite interestingly, in one of his essays, Michael Joyce happens to redefine memory in terms of a *visual hauntology*, a term borrowed from Derrida which aptly describes our reading experience as the gradual formation of a series of patterns in a smooth environment that cannot be encapsulated within a clearly delineated verbal or visual figure, introducing *différance* into the Bergsonian metaphysical concept of “a pure recollection” that supposedly always already underlies all memory as a former presence:

While not merely taking on but surrendering its contour to the reader’s inscription, the transformed and replaced contour should nonetheless conserve its depth, continuing to hold the shape it had for previous readers beneath the finger that races the replaced contours of the transformations made by successive readers. Rather than playing ping to the unseen, we shape the visible object of our longing (Joyce, *Of Two Minds* 244).

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Notes

¹ In thermodynamics, far-from-equilibrium is a type of dynamic equilibrium in which the state of a system is constantly changing with time due to an external energy (or matter) input. ...In a loose sense, according to Prigogine, far-from-equilibrium states of systems, are those subjected to flows of matter and or energy, in the non-linear (i.e. turbulent) regime, wherein the system can lose its stability and evolve,

being driven by internal fluctuations, into one of the many states available to the system. (*Hmolpedia*, "far-from-equilibrium", <http://www.eoht.info/page/Far-from-equilibrium>. Accessed August 15, 2019.)

- ² For further reference, one may read the chapter Jane Yellowlees Douglas dedicates to *afternoon*, providing a very precise account of four different readings. For instance, what seems to be the key to the plot at first — has Peter killed his estranged wife and son in a car accident that particular morning? — may take the reader in entirely different directions and completely fade out in the background depending on the paths she chooses to follow (97-116).
- ³ Joyce, Michael, *Of Two Minds* (Chicago: Michigan UP, 1995) 231. Jill Walker Rettberg's article may prove quite useful here as it provides a narratological approach to the text highlighting the elusive temporality of certain sequences.
- ⁴ "Even when static, electronic text seems frantic. It constantly re-enacts its making, bobbing up from the dark beneath with the same buoyant insistence it has when you type it."
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 482. Michael Joyce differentiates between coextensivity as "a manner of being for space" and depth as "a manner of being in space, misquoting Deleuze and Guattari who do not establish such a distinction in "The Smooth and the Striated": "To think is to voyage; earlier we tried to establish a theo-nological model of smooth and striated spaces. In short, what distinguishes the two kinds of voyages is neither a measurable quantity of movement, nor something that would be only in the mind, but the mode of spatialization, the manner of being in space, of being for space. Voyage smoothly or in striation, and think the same way...".
- ⁶ Clément, Jean. Claire Brossaud and Bernard Reber eds. "L'hypertexte, une technologie intellectuelle à l'ère de la complexité." *Humanités numériques 1. Nouvelles technologies cognitives et épistémologie* (Paris: Hermès Lavoisier, 2007), 186. According to Clément, hypertexts are built on three different layers: the first one is constituted by a set of data organized into a database, the second one by the conceptual hypertext and the third by the user interface.
- ⁷ Regnaud, Arnaud. "The Ghostly Touch of the Blue Devils' Second Coming: Reading *Twelve Blue* by Michael Joyce." *RFEA 141 - Transferts du religieux. Religious Transfers* (Paris: Belin, 2014) 145-158. For a study of archival spectrality in *Twelve Blue* please refer to Regnaud's article.