

Periodicals as/in Media Constellations



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# Periodicals as/in Media Constellations

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# Introduction





Daniela Gretz, Alice Morin & Jens Ruchatz

## Media Constellations: Proposing a Key Concept for Periodical Research, and Beyond

### 1. Periodicals and/as Media

As of yet, the concepts of «mediality» and «medium» (not to be confused with the singular «media») have only been used occasionally in the study of periodicals and if so, rarely as a key concept in a precisely defined way. In this volume, we argue that conceiving of periodicals as a medium is a particularly fruitful way to situate them historically and systematically in relation to the media culture at large that assigns them their specific cultural and epistemological position.<sup>1</sup> We will briefly outline such a relational understanding of mediality, before the cases presented by our contributors demonstrate the value of focusing on «media constellations», connecting the periodical – in various ways – to other media.

When conceiving of the periodical as a medium, we suggest to stay clear of two ways of phrasing the concept of media which seem prominent. On the one hand, we want to emphasize that media are not reducible to *mass media*, as the sociologically oriented anglophone mass communication research, German communication studies and sociologically-minded researchers typically assume, i.e. channels for the dissemination of messages or information, which have little bearing on what is transported. Indeed, periodicals typically act as means of mass communication that boast large circulation, as well as their power to disseminate literature, news and advertisements. Yet instead of evaluating their efficiency in getting the message through to as wide an audience as possible, we plead to explore the formative powers of media, the way they condition and format what they present, and how their audiences experience it.

On the other hand, we neither want to define media as «technological agencies» that exert an external influence on society, dictating subjects' perceptions, thoughts, and imaginary, without themselves being subjected to any formative sociocultural impact. This position, strongly associated with German media theory through the radical thinking of Friedrich Kittler, has been inspiring to think media afresh, but has become outdated in the partisan and polemical form propagated from the 1980s to the late 1990s. In the context of periodical studies, it is interesting to note that Kittler, in his scrutiny of the subject-forming

1 For an earlier plea for a more pronounced use of the term «media» in periodical studies, see Faye Ham-mill / Paul Hjartarson / Hannah McGregor: Introducing Magazines and/as Media: The Aesthetics and Politics of Serial Form. In: *English Studies in Canada* 41.1 (2015), pp. 1–18.

effects of the literary culture of the «Aufschreibesystem 1800» [«discourse system 1800»] was blind to the non-trivial circumstance that many textual productions he brings into play had been initially brought to their readers piecemeal and in periodical form.<sup>2</sup> American media theorist Marshall McLuhan for his part frequently used magazines as an ideal way of grasping the contemporary culture of the 1950s and 1960s. In the media inventory, making up the second half of his most prominent book *Understanding Media*, he reserved a chapter to «the press», stressing the mosaic-like quality of newspapers and magazines alike, which he interpreted as a materialization of society's collective viewpoint, substantially diverging from the individualistic world view represented in the monographic book.<sup>3</sup> Still, McLuhan's understanding of the press, reducing it to one paramount trait, remains as reductive as his slogan «the medium is the message».

Possibly, our objections have been shared by periodical researchers, as the term «medium» was not taken into consideration even in the rare instances when the objective has been to pin down what is characteristic of all periodicals. Harking back to Margaret Beetham in 1989, the term «genre» has been preferred to pinpoint the specific qualities of the periodical. The choice of «genre», drawn from literary theory, could be justified by delimiting the «single number [...] or the whole run of numbers» as a textual unit in its own right,<sup>4</sup> not as merely an assembly of separate texts. Summarizing the «formal characteristics» or «formal qualities» of the periodical is done with the intention to define its «distinctiveness as a literary or publishing genre».<sup>5</sup> Whereas Beetham does not even mention the term «medium», more recently James Mussell has shed at least some light on how thinking about periodicals (or newspapers) as a genre and a medium could be related. Stating that the challenge of periodical theory was to take into account «both the materiality of each individual printed object and the broader

2 Friedrich Kittler: *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*. Stanford 1990. Kittler's dismissal of the periodical becomes particularly apparent when Kittler deals with Friedrich Schiller's only attempt at a novel, *Der Geisterseher*, a text that had been originally published serially in the magazine *Thalia* and remained a fragment; see Friedrich Kittler: *Die Laterna magica der Literatur. Schillers und Hoffmanns Medienstrategien*. In: *Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik* 4 (1994), pp. 219–237. For an extended discussion see Vincent Fröhlich / Jens Ruchatz: *Komplexität und Vielfalt: Plädoyer für eine medienwissenschaftliche Zeitschriftenforschung*. In: *MEDIENwissenschaft: Rezensionen | Reviews* 35.2–3 (2018), pp. 157–173, p. 164.

3 See e. g. Marshall McLuhan: *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge MA 1994 [1964], chapter 21, p. 204: «human interest» is a technical term meaning that which happens when multiple book pages or multiple information items are arranged in a mosaic on one sheet. The book is a private confessional form that provides a 'point of view'. The press is a group confessional form that provides communal participation. [...] [I]t is the daily communal exposure of multiple items in juxtaposition that gives the press its complex dimension of human interest.»

4 Margaret Beetham: *Open and Closed: the Periodical as a Publishing Genre*. In: *Victorian Periodicals Review* 22.3 (1989), pp. 96–100, p. 96.

5 Ibid. See also the expanded version in Margaret Beetham: *Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre*. In: Laurel Brake / Aled Jones / Lionel Madden (edd.): *Investigating Victorian Journalism*. Basingstoke / London 1990, pp. 19–32.

virtual structures that gives it meaning»,<sup>6</sup> Mussell follows Beetham by resorting to the concept of «genre» to understand the latter. To Mussell, the periodical genre is the virtual structure forming the background for all the publications as such, framing text production, distribution and reception: «Genre provides a way of conceptualizing formal repetition while rooting it in cultural production. It is more than just typology: it is both situational and pragmatic, mediating between a specific utterance and the social situation in which it occurs.»<sup>7</sup> Yet, in a paper titled «The Matter with Media», observations on media remain surprisingly scarce and therefore enigmatic: «genre accounts for the way media mediate.»<sup>8</sup> Another article by Mussell, dealing with the forms that defined the «newspaper as popular genre», avoids explicit theoretical clarification, but still gives some hints as to how the «print genre»<sup>9</sup> and the medium could be related. The newspaper is described as a «medium for information» and likewise as a «medium for text», whereas advertisements «transformed a wide range of objects into media for print.»<sup>10</sup> Apparently the medium is understood as a space or channel where content – current news items in the case of the newspaper – may appear, whose form – the way it mediates – is set out and structured by the associated genre. We want to suggest that it is more productive to draw both aspects together and understand the medium as a social institution which provides an array of forms which rely on what the specific materiality allows, but which are at the same time further configured by continued social practice, which is inscribed into the structure of the medium.

In our view, media serve as conditions of form-formation that themselves emerge from prior form-formations stabilized into a media format regulating the production, presentation, and reception of content.<sup>11</sup> As defined entity, single media only come into view indirectly when what they do is reconstructed by way of comparison with other media.<sup>12</sup> In

6 James Mussell: *The Matter with Media*, unpublished paper, «What is a Journal? Towards a Theory of Periodical Studies», MLA 2013 special session, URL: <https://magmods.wordpress.com/2012/12/28/mla-roundtable-paper-3-the-matter-with-media/mussell-mla-2013/>, p. 1.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

9 James Mussell: *Elemental Forms. The Newspaper as Popular Genre in the Nineteenth Century*. In: *Media History* 20.1 (2014), pp. 4–20, p. 4.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

11 The concept of media as conditions of form-formation goes back to Niklas Luhmann: *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main 1995, pp. 165–214; Niklas Luhmann: *Theory of Society*, vol. 1. Stanford 2012, pp. 113–189. In respect to the concept of the «media format», see Nicola Kaminski / Jens Ruchatz: *Journalliteratur – ein Avertissement (=Das Pfennigmagazin zur Journalliteratur 1)*. Hannover 2017, pp. 31–32, and Alice Morin / Jens Ruchatz: *Photography In/Between Media Formats. The Work of the Format from Magazine to Books*. In: *Interfaces* 45 (2021), <https://journals.openedition.org/interfaces/1978>, pp. 92–117.

12 See Jürgen Fohrmann: *Differentiating Media*. In: Ludwig Jäger / Erika Linz / Irmela Schneider (Eds.): *Media, Culture, and Mediality. New Insights into the Current State of Research*. Bielefeld 2010, pp. 19–36, pp. 19–21; Jens Ruchatz: *Medienbeziehungen des Films: Intermedialität, Transmedialität und Remedialisierung*. In: Thomas Morsch / Bernhard Groß (Eds.): *Handbuch Filmtheorie*. Wiesbaden 2021, pp. 649–670.

short: a single medium is inconceivable without relationships to other media. This is what German media scholar Jens Schröter has provocingly termed «ontological intermediality»<sup>13</sup> – a specific ontology that entails the paradox that all media are socioculturally constructed in relation to other media. In the terminology of our volume, we would rather start from the equally paradoxical premise that media constellations act as preconditions of mediality.

On the most basic material level, there are no clear-cut differences between the print media book, magazine, and newspaper. All of them consist of typeface on paper, sometimes completed by the addition of pictures. Even if one adds the condition of a periodical rhythm of publication, this does not automatically and inevitably produce the qualities that have become associated with the periodical's aesthetic, most notably seriality and miscellaneity.<sup>14</sup> These properties emerge – as they are also sometimes expressly brought to the fore – in order to establish the periodical as a recognizable media format connected to a particular repertoire of forms and contents, distinct production and reception practices, specific economies and forms of distribution. The periodical is so revealing as a case because it makes visible the strategies used to construct a new medium that, from a purely technological and materialistic perspective, is insufficiently different from the existing print media. Based on a post-ontological concept of media, the periodical's precarious distinguishability, which situates it uneasily between the book and the newspaper, lends itself as an ideal-typical example to show how media difference is produced and continuously performed anew in the interplay of a technological basis and sociocultural specifications, «interpreting» and limiting what would be possible to a more homogenous range of options. The continuous media history of this process, of the cultural production of «the periodical», has yet to be written.

The area of periodical theory where the issue of mediality came up most prominently so far, has been the digitization of periodicals.<sup>15</sup> When one no longer leafs through periodicals in paper form, but scrolls through volumes on a screen or even searches entire print runs with key words, it raises considerations about the extent to which digitization has transformed the periodical into a different material aggregate state – some sort of «re-mediation».<sup>16</sup> Even earlier, the question came up of how the bound periodical volume, somewhat masquerading as a book, relates to the «original» individual issue.<sup>17</sup> In comparing these different formations of seemingly identical content, distinctions between the cultural value, modes of handling, reception and circulation, as well as potential intertextual connections come into view.

13 Jens Schröter: Discourses and Models of Intermediality. In: CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 13.3 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1790>, pp. 5–6.

14 Daniela Gretz / Marcus Krause / James Mussell / Nicolas Pethes: Media (B)Orders Between Periodicals and Books. Miscellaneity and Classification in Nineteenth Century Magazines and Literature. Hannover 2019 (= Pfennig-Magazin zur Journalliteratur, 4).

15 See Hammill / Hjartarson / McGregor (s. footnote 1), p. 9.

16 For an exemplary assessment of the changes of the temporal regimes, see James Mussell: Repetition: Or, «In Our Last». In: Victorian Periodicals Review 48.3 (2015), pp. 343–358.

One of media theory's basic premises is that media tend to efface themselves in their everyday use, that their potency to form and mediate a reality is invisibilized by habitualized media practice.<sup>18</sup> It is the operation of comparison, contrasting the form repertoires, structures, dispositives, etc., associated with different phenomena considered as media, which cuts through the illusion of medial transparency. It is thus where media meet (or are made to meet) that we can perceive what a medium does – at a given point in history because, as socio-technical institutions, media are prone to change, not the least in relation and competition to other media. Consequently, media practices and aesthetics are typically reconfigured when a new and competing medium appears. At the same time, new points of comparison emerge and are brought to bear on the identity of already-existing media, changing their identity by bringing new relations into the equation. The present volume aims to bring such media relations to the fore in order to explore how the periodical acts as a repository constellating content originating in a variety of media on the one hand, and constellates itself with surrounding media which it can observe and comment on the other hand. In both ways, media constellations are brought to bear on the periodical's very own identity. Talking about the media constellations of the periodical thus means talking about its very own medial identity.

The invisibility of media is but one part of the picture, though. At times, media themselves tend to showcase their relation to other media, not simply mining them for content, but at the same time showcasing other media's qualities, especially when they can somehow incorporate elements of these media's mediality or possibly emphasize their own superiority, in dealing with a «neighboring» medium.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, one does not need to determine the points of comparison, but can follow periodicals, for instance by perusing them with an eye for the medial comparisons they themselves operate and the forms they develop to do so, extracting the implicit and explicit media knowledge which they enact. To sum it up, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, periodicals – in particular in their capacity to act as meta-media – have been central sites to unfold and discuss media developments and constellations.

The mediality of the periodical is constantly renegotiated and engages in a continuous and lively dialogue with its media environment. This is made particularly visible when the said environment undergoes substantial changes, for instance when new media emerge. That was the case in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when telegraphy and photography changed how information that went into print media was produced. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

17 See also Beetham (s. footnote 4), pp. 97–98.

18 An early form of this observation is to be found in McLuhan's claim (s. footnote 3), p. 18, that the function of media content was to draw the media user's attention away from the powerful effects of the medium itself.

19 These observations echo Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's argument that the process of remediation, picking up or incorporating other media in a (mostly new) medium, is characterized by the complementary logic of «immediacy», driven by the ideal of medial transparency, as well as of «hypermediacy», emphasizing the potency to incorporate other media and their qualities; see Jay David Bolter / Richard Grusin: *Remediation. Understanding New Media*. Cambridge MA / London 1999, pp. 44–54.

periodicals were confronted with the rise of cinematography and radio, both competing narrative and news media whose forms of display and modes of distribution could no longer be mimicked directly by the print medium. Later in that same century, television, that shared the dominant mode of serialization with the periodical, emerged as a competing medium and became a major site for the transmission of visual news.<sup>20</sup> Yet the apparition of television, like radio and film before, has brought about the emergence of new genres of magazines focused on providing information that interpret the new medium and provide essential information for its daily workings. Periodicals thus entered into diverse constellations with these media, to which the issue of how to represent them on the periodical page was crucial.<sup>21</sup> Such media relations have had multiple consequences on periodicals' own mediality: they led to a thematical differentiation of the magazine market and the establishment of magazine genres that – like film and television magazines, for example – specialize in the monitoring other media. Besides, processes of the remediation of such envioning media, e.g. processes pertaining to the transcription of filmic montage or TV's serialization, have had a decisive influence on periodicals' aesthetics, balancing the impulse for distinction with the need to go with the flow. And yet again, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the mediality of the periodical faces new transformations in the wake of a massive turn to digitalization, questioning the periodical's (and other media's) material «ontology». When challenged by new modes of operating – be it turning to digital-only editions, combining print and online versions thus increasing periodicity, or digitizing the entire run of discontinued magazines – can the periodical still be considered *one* medium; or a medium at all?

The present publication aims less at addressing the competitive relationships between various media – a matter repeatedly conjured up in media- and culture-critical discourses – but is rather interested in the productive mechanisms that connect periodicals to other media, from which historical constellations can be inferred. Against this background, one fundamental question could be whether such constellations can be associated with the emergence of various mass media (such as film, radio, television) on the one hand and digital media on the other hand; and whether these constellations can be organized into a consistent, meaningful periodization. Subsequently, three systematic areas of interest emerge:

- 20 For a comparison of the media aesthetics of magazine and television see Vincent Fröhlich / Jens Ruchatz: Teil 2: Die Zeitschrift als Fernsehen des 19. Jahrhunderts? Serielle Formen in Fernsehen und Zeitschrift im Vergleich. In: Vincent Fröhlich / Lisa Gotto / Jens Ruchatz (Eds.): Fernsehserie und Literatur. Mosaik einer komplexen Beziehung. München 2019, pp. 111–135.
- 21 For case studies showing how the cinema's mediality was reconstructed and restituted on the printed page see Vincent Fröhlich: Foto Film Flächen. Zirkulierende Filmbilder in Medienkonstellationen illustrierter Filmzeitschriften. In: Fotogeschichte 42.164 (2022), pp. 25–35; idem: Where the Film Has the (Visual) Word? On the Visuality and Materiality of Illustrated Film Magazines Exemplified by *Neue Filmwelt* (1947–1953). In: periodICON 1.1 (2021), pp. 21–48. <https://doi.org/10.46586/PerIc.2021.1.21–48>. Concerning radio see Debra Rae Cohen: «Strange Collisions». Keywords Toward an Intermedial Periodical Studies. In: English Studies in Canada 41.1 (2015), pp. 93–104.

1. periodicals' *mediality in shifting material contexts*, extending to the specific manifestations of periodical publications on the page and their specific printing and distribution technologies and infrastructures – or, more recently, with regards to the changed materiality of digitized periodicals, or digital magazines and e-papers;
2. periodicals *as media constellation*, pertaining to the medial diversity of the material assembled and organized on the respective sequence of (double) pages and to aesthetic strategies, devices and practices that are established in order to incorporate forms derived from different media in the pages of periodicals, either minimizing or emphasizing the medial distance;
3. periodicals *in media constellations*, examining how relations to the contemporary neighboring media unfold by observing, commenting and criticizing them on periodicals' pages, but also how the periodical asserts its medial identity against rivaling media, which puts a re-evaluation of its supposedly own media specificities on the table.

On all these three different levels, how the periodical understands and presents itself as a specific medium in relation to the media it is based on, the media it incorporates, and the media it refers to, is at issue.

## 2. The Mediality of Constellations

On the one hand, the mediality of the periodical only emerges in relation to the media environment in which it is historically embedded, i.e. when it is considered in media constellations. This entails considering not only periodicals' relationship to specific individual media such as books, photography, radio, film or the Internet, but also the overarching media ecology<sup>22</sup> – socio-economic conditions, legal and ideological frameworks, institutional organizations, networks of action and communicative environments.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, as meta-media, that observe and reflect other competing media such as telegraphy, photography, film, radio and television, periodicals also discursively and structurally incorporate and reflect this media ecology and historical media constellations (and thus their own mediality). Regarding the re-mediation of other media and the resulting intermediality, periodicals themselves appear as media constellations characterized by their own specific constellation techniques. In the contributions to this volume, both aspects of periodicals

22 See Ann Ardis: Towards a Theory of Periodical Studies. Working Paper, Special Session 384, What Is a Journal? Towards a Theory of Periodical Studies. MLA Convention, Boston MA January 1–4 2013 (n.p.). (URL: [https://seeeps.princeton.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/243/2015/03/mla2013\\_ardis.pdf](https://seeeps.princeton.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/243/2015/03/mla2013_ardis.pdf)) (date of last access: 02.04.2025)

23 See Jutta Ernst / Dagmar von Hoff / Oliver Scheiding (Eds.): Periodical Studies Today. Multidisciplinary Analyses. Leiden 2022.



in/as media constellations are observed, and at the same time constructed as broader objects of analysis.

An introductory reflection on the term and concept of constellation(s) will allow us to define more precisely the specific epistemological achievements as well as the potential problems of this approach. The term «constellation» has both astronomical and astrological origins: the scientific analysis of the position of the stars in relation to each other, and the hermeneutic interpretation of the meaning of their concrete position at the time of a person's birth. It developed into a productive metaphorical field with flexible applications in the cultural studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Max and Alfred Weber, Walter Benjamin, Karl Mannheim and Theodor W. Adorno, among others.<sup>24</sup> The use of the term as a «background-metaphor» of cultural studies theory<sup>25</sup> is characterized by a «certain indeterminacy, ambiguity and versatility»<sup>26</sup> as well as an «overdetermination»<sup>27</sup>. Accordingly, James McFarland states that the notion of constellation primarily has an analytical «place-holding role»: «What does «constellation» mean as a theoretical term? *Stricto sensu*, nothing. It holds open the site of eventual meaning, presenting an occasion for conceptual reflection and analysis.»<sup>28</sup>

However, there are at least two relevant aspects of these conceptualizations which could be productively applied to periodical research. Firstly, both astronomers and astrologers understand the change and alternation of observable constellations as the result of a «dynamic of intrinsically powerful elements», whereby the said «dynamic process» is both «represented as a spatially arranged structure» and «provided with a temporal index of development», as it is «composed of stable, «eternally» recurring movements and randomly occurring, singular events».<sup>29</sup> Secondly, «as planar arrangements of what are, in reality, widely dispersed astronomical bodies in the depths of universal space», these constellations are not «out there» at the edge of the cosmos, they only «appear to us, from our position»<sup>30</sup>, thus depending on the position of the observer.

24 For an in-depth introduction to the various theories of the time using the concept of constellation see Andrea Albrecht: *Konstellationen. Zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Karriere eines astrologisch-astronomischen Konzepts bei Heinrich Rickert, Max Weber, Alfred Weber und Karl Mannheim*. In: *Scientia Poetica* 14 (2010), pp. 104–149. On Benjamin's and Adorno's notions, concepts and practices of constellation see the more detailed: Nassima Sahraoui / Caroline Sauter (Eds.): *Thinking in Constellations. Walter Benjamin in the Humanities*. Cambridge 2018, and Andreas Lehr: *Kleine Formen. Konstellation/ Konfiguration, Montage und Essay bei Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin und anderen*. Norderstedt 2003.

25 Albrecht (s. footnote 24), p. 106.

26 Ibid., p. 146.

27 Barbara Hahn: «Still und bewegt». Rahel Levins *Konstellationen*. In: *MLN* 126 (2011), pp. 486–494, p. 490.

28 James McFarland: *Sailing by the Stars. Constellations in the Space of Thought*. In: *MLN* 126 (2011), pp. 471–485, p. 473.

29 Albrecht (s. footnote 24), p. 148.

30 McFarland (s. footnote 28), p. 474.



In recent literary and cultural studies, this has led to the ensuing attempts to define the term constellation. Andrea Albrecht states that

constellation generally serves to designate a multi-digit relationship structure, i.e. an ensemble of different (political, economic or cultural) positions and factors which – at least in the perception of the observer – form a dynamic, variable context of effects and can only be adequately explained or understood from this relational context.<sup>31</sup>

Andrea Krauß argues similarly, focusing especially on textual structures:

Constellations arise out of the conjunction of certain factors that are significant for a situation, a process, a (textual) structure; they result from the presence and the arrangement or grouping of certain factors or elements. With reference to their astrological/astromonical semantic content, talk of constellations can be rendered more precise both discursively and in terms of a theory of representation (*Darstellung*). Constellations thus point toward a theory of reading.<sup>32</sup>

For Krauß, this accentuates reading as a «constellating practice [...], an object-*formation*, in which reading finds itself referred in a specific way to other possible readings»,<sup>33</sup> which also applies to the field of periodicals. From this perspective, the constellation presents itself as a «paradoxical concept», that «designates both the instrument and the object of reading, mutually intertwined with each other in a complex interaction» which always has a «self-reflective dimension» and considers «a possible alternative».<sup>34</sup>

The following five central aspects, which can also be applied to research on periodicals, characterize the concept in literary and cultural studies:

1. the combination of objectively existing distinct elements (e.g. the texts and images in a magazine, analogous to the stars in the sky) and a subjective perspective (depending on the observer's position) from which these elements can be assembled by the reader (e.g. in a spread or in the course of the periodical's publication) to form a meaningful constellation, which simultaneously unfolds a self-reflexive dimension by mirroring the subjective perspective that determines it;<sup>35</sup>

31 Albrecht (s. footnote 24), pp. 107, 147: «Konstellation dient dabei in der Regel zur Bezeichnung einer mehrstelligen Beziehungsstruktur, das heißt eines Ensembles differenter (politischer, ökonomischer oder kultureller) Positionen und Faktoren, die – zumindest in der Wahrnehmung des Beobachters – einen dynamischen, veränderbaren Wirkungszusammenhang bilden und auch nur aus diesem relationalen Zusammenhang heraus angemessen erklärt oder verstanden werden können.»

32 Andrea Krauß: Constellations. A Brief Introduction. Trans. by James McFarland. In: MLN 126 (2011), pp. 439–445, p. 439.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., pp. 439–440.

35 See e.g. Sylvia Sasse / Sandro Zanetti: Statt der Sterne. Literarische Gestirne bei Mallarmé und Chlebnikov. In: Maximilian Bergengruen / Davide Giuriato / Sandro Zanetti (Eds.): Gestirne und Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert. Frankfurt am Main 2006, pp. 103–119, p. 105, who emphasize the contextuality and historicity of the constellative interpretations of stars in configurations. Or Christine Weder: Sternbilder und die Ordnung der Texte. Anmerkungen zur Konstellationsforschung. In: Maximilian Bergengruen / Davide Giuriato / Sandro Zanetti (Eds.): Gestirne und Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert. Frankfurt am Main 2006, pp. 326–341, p. 333, who points out a balance between methodological constructivism and realism.

2. the construction or projection of a constellation by the viewer-reader that refers to real, existing individual elements, but draws «imaginary connecting lines»<sup>36</sup> between them, in an experimental arrangement.<sup>37</sup> This gives constellations an epistemologically hybrid character, both real and fictitious. Based on a clear revaluation of the medial and material foundations of the individual elements, a multitude of «possible interpretations based on certain parameters» and «unexpected future readings»<sup>38</sup> are opened up.
3. the «dynamics of interacting forces»<sup>39</sup> as an «intensifying quality of the reciprocal effects in a constellation»<sup>40</sup>. This can already be derived from the underlying metaphorical area, in that the luminosity of the stars is associated with the radiation of the reabsorption of their own original energy in a transformed form. Similarly, the interpretation/meaning of a textual or pictorial element in a magazine, as its «radiant power», is multiplied when it is perceived in the «light» of a constellation of others.
4. the «irreducible multi-digit nature and unavoidable contingency»<sup>41</sup>. The multi-digit nature of the elements of a constellation is intensified by the «multiplicity of human perspectives and positions [...] whose incommensurability is no longer mediated by a superordinate authority».<sup>42</sup> In this context, chance, in the sense of the provoked possibility of different ways of interpreting and reading, cannot be banished, it can at best be acknowledged.<sup>43</sup>
5. the attempt always to consider an imaginary totality in the observation of discrete elements.<sup>44</sup> By recourse to the allegorization of the starry sky, the modern insight into the subjective construction of supposed objectivity and the ambiguity of the world is thus always assumed to have an anticipated meaning. In this respect, Andrea Krauß states the emergence of an otherwise inaccessible meaning through the constellation of discrete, discontinuous elements: «*constellation* names that epistemo-critical figure in which a truth not <direct[ly]> knowable is able in a mediated way [...] to become legible.»<sup>45</sup>

36 Weder (s. footnote 35), p. 331.

37 On the constellation as an experiment that must be justified by its results, see also Peter Utz: *Tanz auf den Rändern*. Robert Walsers «Jetztzeitstil». Frankfurt am Main 1998, p. 11.

38 Sasse / Zanetti (s. footnote 35), p. 105: «Bereich möglicher Deutungen aufgrund bestimmter Vorgaben» / «Eröffnung künftiger, unvorhergesehener Lektüren».

39 Albrecht (s. footnote 24), p. 148.

40 Weder (s. footnote 35), pp. 328–329, with reference to Karl Ameriks: *Konstellationsforschung und die kopernikanische Wende*. In: Martin Mulsow / Marcelo Stamm (Eds.): *Konstellationsforschung*. Frankfurt am Main 2005, pp. 101–124, pp. 107–108.

41 Albrecht (s. footnote 24), pp. 112–113, see also *ibid.*, p. 148.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

43 See Sasse / Zanetti (s. footnote 35), p. 107.

44 Albrecht (s. footnote 24), p. 174.

45 Krauß (s. footnote 32), p. 441.