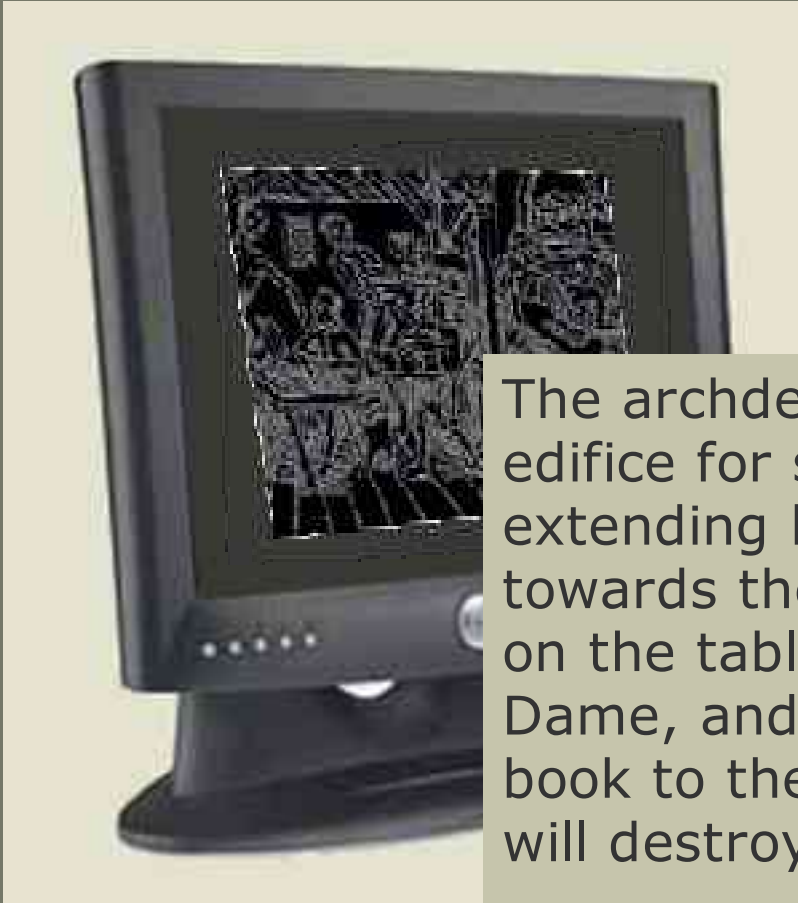


What's the Matter with Books?



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Ceci tuera cela

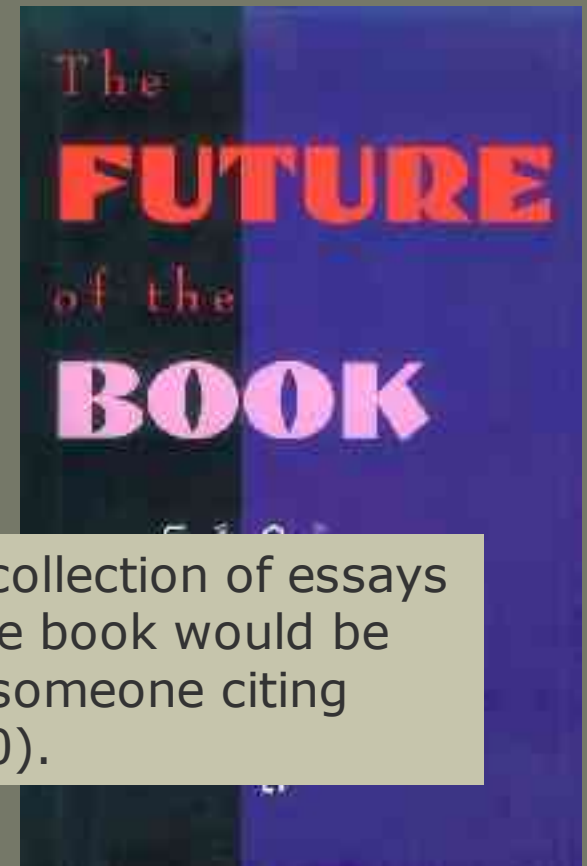
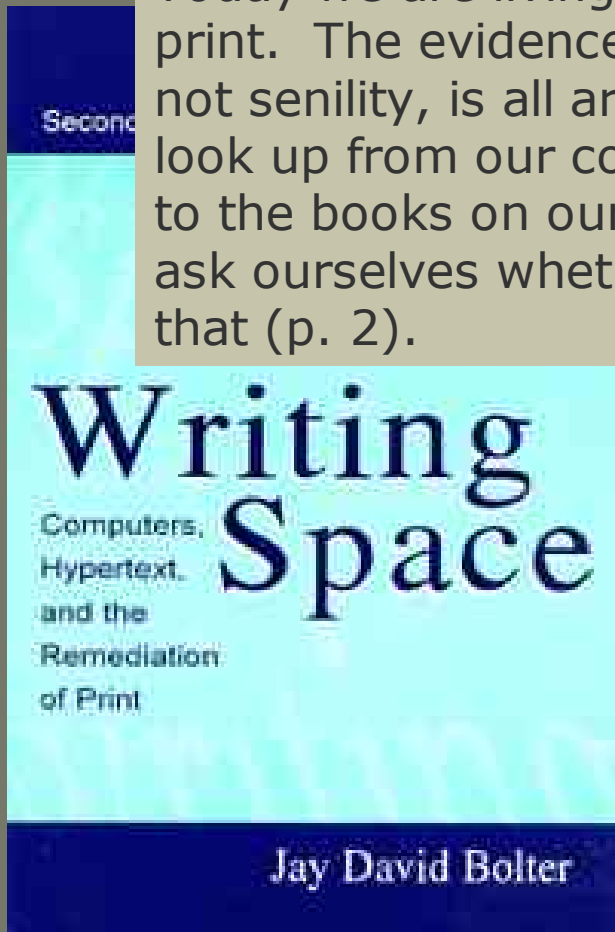


The archdeacon gazed at the gigantic edifice for some time in silence, then extending his right hand, with a sigh, towards the printed book which lay open on the table, and his left towards Notre-Dame, and turning a sad glance from the book to the church,--"Alas," he said, "this will destroy that [ceci tuera cela]."

Victor Hugo
Notre-Dame de Paris

Ceci tuera cela

Today we are living in the late age of print. The evidence of senescence, if not senility, is all around us. And as we look up from our computer key-boards to the books on our shelves, we must ask ourselves whether this will destroy that (p. 2).



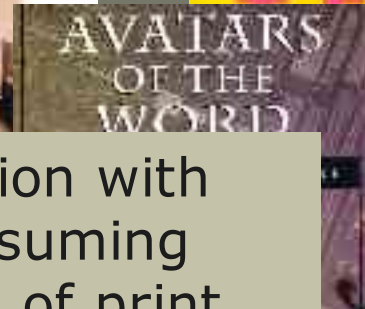
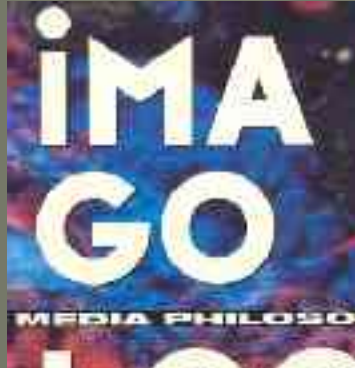
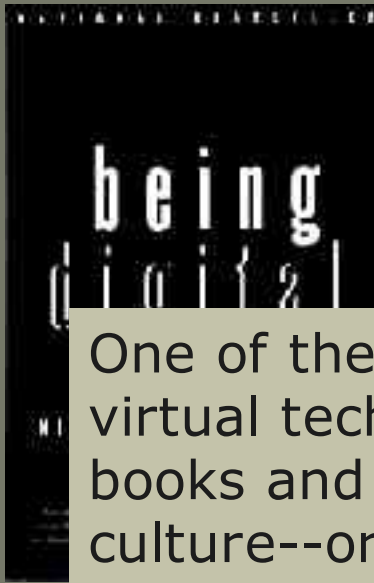
No conference or collection of essays on the future of the book would be complete without someone citing these words (p. 10).

1. The Paradox of a Book
2. Signs of Print
3. Complications

1. The Paradox of a Book

One of the ironies of our culture's fascination with virtual technologies is its fondness for consuming books and articles that proclaim the death of print culture--or its disappearance into the matrix

Robert Markley
Virtual Realities and Their Discontents
(1996)



2. Signs of Print

The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, 'thing' here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. (p. 9)

This structure presupposes that the sign, which defers presence, is conceivable only on the basis of the presence that it defers and moving toward the deferred presence that it aims to reappropriate. According to this classical semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both *secondary* and *provisional*: secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation. (p. 9).

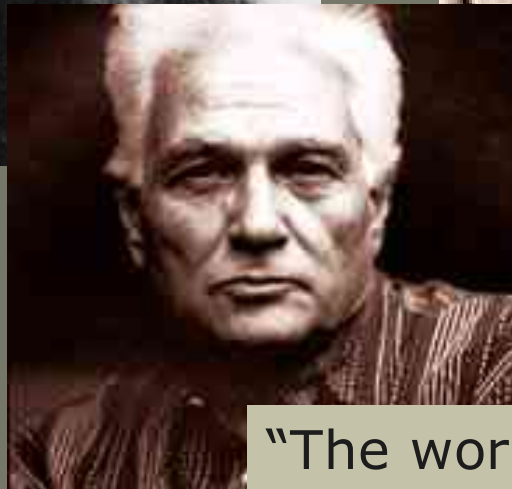
Jacques Derrida

MARGINS
of Philosophy

Translated with Afterword Notes
by Allen Bass

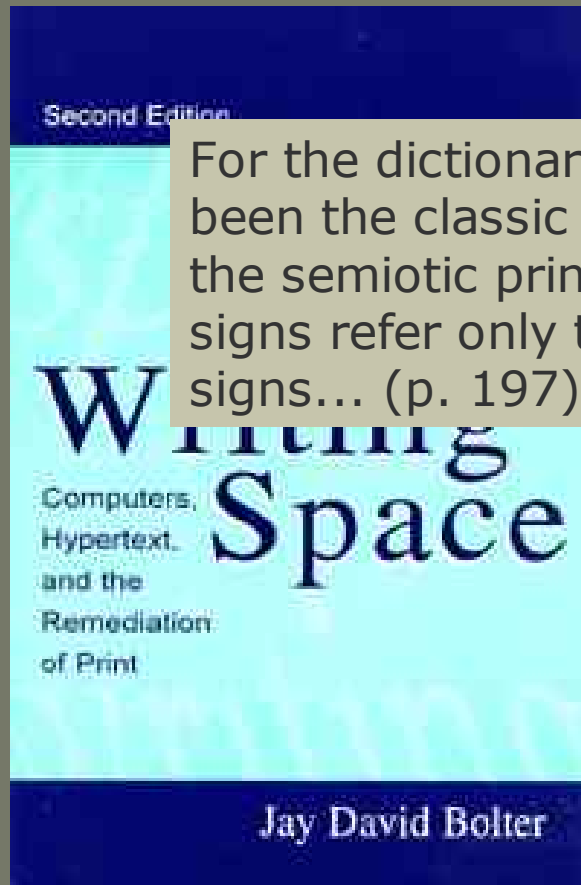


3. Complications

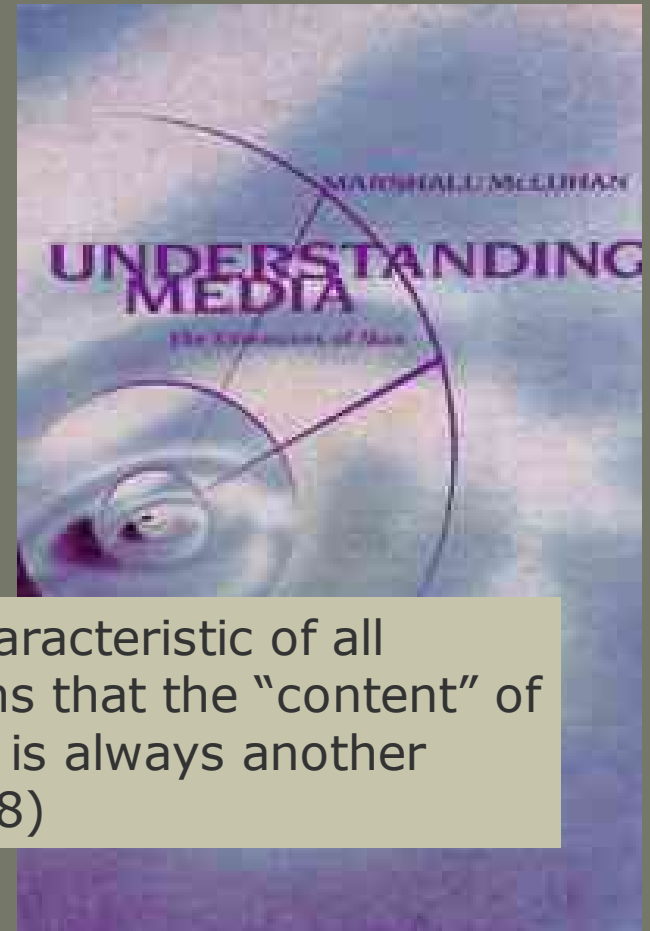


"The world does not exist outside its expressions" (Gilles Deleuze, 1993)

3. Complications



For the dictionary has always been the classic example of the semiotic principle that signs refer only to other signs... (p. 197).



This fact, characteristic of all media, means that the "content" of any medium is always another medium (p. 8)

Conclusions

1. There is nothing outside the text
2. Material matters
3. Self-reflective investigation





The full paper will be published in
Configurations in 2004

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<http://www.gunkelweb.com/papers.html>

