



## **ERC Starting Grant 2018**

**HANDLING: Writers Handling Pictures: a Material Intermediality (1880-today)**

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## I. Summary

Not only does the writer's hand hold the pen, it manipulates pictures as well. Writers touch, hoard, cut, copy, pin and paste various kinds of pictures and these actions **integrate literature in visual culture** in many ways that have never been tackled as a whole before.

Some writers spent their life surrounded by pictures taken from magazines, creating an inspirational environment; yet others nurtured their imagination with touristic leaflets and visual advertisements; others created fictional characters based on collected portraits. What do writers do with pictures? How does literature stage the pictures handled? From very concrete and banal uses of pictures will emerge a new vision of **literature as intermediality in action**.

This investigation applies the tool set of visual anthropology and visual studies to writers for a deeper **understanding of visual ecosystems**. Covering a **large period**, from the beginning of mass reproduction in the 1880s and the digital practices of today, HANDLING focuses on the **French and French-speaking field** and stands as a laboratory to refashion a broader model for **relationships between image and text**. Its main challenge is to get to the root of contemporary iconographic practices.

HANDLING is unconventional because literary studies usually focus on the text: contrary to the norm, it sets the image at the very centre of the literary act. This approach might yield promising results for **the visibility of literature in the future, especially in exhibitions**. Making these practices visible will make literature itself more visible.

As an internationally recognized specialist of text-image relationships with an in-depth knowledge of French/Belgian literature and photography, I will build a team and lead this 5-year ambitious project. Grounded in **interdisciplinarity**, it will show **the significant and unexpected role of literature in material visual culture**.

## II. State-of-the-art and Objectives

### 1. OBJECTIVES. LITERATURE AND MATERIAL VISUAL CULTURE

My objectives are to enlarge the scope of literary studies by opening them up for **anthropological questions**, to think of it as a **material intermediality** and to integrate the study of literature into a better understanding of **visual ecosystems**.

#### a. Handling and the writers

The main objective of HANDLING is **to contribute to a better understanding of the handling of pictures**, which is the way we look at pictures and interact with them in many concrete ways, as studied by visual anthropology (Belting, Severi). We all handle pictures in our daily lives. However, certain groups of people have a particular relationship with pictures relating to their professional activities. Painters, film directors, playwrights or publicists, for instance, handle pictures they picked for inspiration and creation of an atmosphere. Although lesser-known, handling practices also exist among writers who handle, touch, cut, copy, tear, pin, paste, collect, hoard, carry pictures and stage these practices in literature.

Writers are thus an ideal field of study: they witness and take in the phenomenon at the same time. Because of their capacities of depicting or even dramatizing their relationships with pictures and to put them on a fictional stage, they are able to seize the question diagonally, so that its complexity will appear. Writers reveal imaginaries as well as uses.

#### b. Material intermediality

Visual culture and textual culture should not be necessarily in opposition. “Handling” includes “hand”. The hand of the writer not only holds the pen, it also manipulates pictures. Literary studies usually consider concrete pictures as elements situated outside the literary field, but they are part of it in many ways. My second objective is then **to elaborate a new conception of literature as an intermedial practice**.

While interactions between texts and images, such as in hybrid works, are often studied, my aim is to stand at the earlier stages of the process, to study the handling of concrete pictures as an undercoat of the intermedial phenomena. I want to focus on the materiality in text-image relationship, not the materiality of the book as the result of creation, but the materiality of the visual culture of the writer. The HANDLING project wants to address this genuine research lacuna, enhancing the material part of intermediality, and bridge the gap between materiality and aesthetics.

#### c. Literature and visual ecosystems

The relationship writers have with pictures has too often been considered as one of contamination (see *Textimage* journal for instance). Texts and images are presented in competition-related terms whereas this traditional separation between the realm of literature and the visual field is irrelevant when we look at practices.

HANDLING will show how writing processes are integrated in visual ecosystems. Endorsing the recent statement that literature is “embedded” in visual practices and that “one of the visual practices that literature helps cultivate may be that of looking at pictures” (Bodola & Isekenmeier 2017), this project encompasses the material handling of pictures within the literary sphere. Writers have always made use of what we can call private museums, on their walls, desks and bookshelves or even drawers, until they handle them on their computers. It is then time to envision the phenomenon of the writer-iconographer based on the model of the “artist-

iconographer” (Chabert & Mole 2009). My third objective is then **to show that writers play a big role in both past and present visual ecosystems.**

## 2. SCOPE. A LAB FOR THE VISIBILITY OF LITERATURE

The role of literature in the materiality of the visual culture can be thought in three different ways, which corresponds to the **main fields of this research**:

- in the way writers handle pictures
- in the way pictures are handled in fiction
- in the way the picture handling phenomenon is conceptualized by writers.

The textual and visual interactions in these three fields, grounded in the French and French-speaking literature of a very large 20<sup>th</sup> century, constitute the lab of an enhanced vision of literature.

### a. A large overview: from 1880 to today

What makes this project particularly challenging is the fact that it is historically broad-based and covers an impressive period, from 1880 – at the same time a boom of illustrated magazines and the setting of the mechanical reproduction of pictures in France – to the digital image today. HANDLING is then sensitive to both contemporary mediality and “classical” medial aspects.

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the invasion of pictures in our contemporary lives has been noticed many times. At each step, we may have the impression to reach a new milestone: at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the new technical means allowed photographs and art prints to spread, then in the 1910s and 1920s, when newspapers and magazines were multiplying and postcards were exchanged all over Europe, then in the 1950s and 1960s, when color reproduction techniques and mass produced photobooks boomed, and finally, today, with the digital revolution. A couple of decades ago indeed, the digital image opened a new chapter in the history of our relationship with pictures. **Contemporary mutations should be historicized.** It is now time to turn to the history of our practices, to think of them in a kind of archaeological way.

### b. French and Francophone literature as a lab

The research will mainly focus on one linguistic area, the French and Francophone field, because of the close links between literature and visual arts throughout the period that are already well documented by isolated case studies.

While it is grounded in a specific linguistic field for the sake of feasibility, HANDLING builds a **conceptual model** that could be **exported outside** national or linguistic boundaries. It aims at presenting a panoramic view of the phenomenon and raises broader issues, like in the comparative doctoral dissertation (PhD2), the final conference (WPD5) and the survey published in English (WPF2). Indeed, I see this ERC project as the first step of an even broader project that would deal with European literature.

Furthermore, an important issue is the **transnational scope** of this research: pictures are trans-linguistic objects that do not need any translation. Approaching literature through pictorial issues is also a way to negotiate the limitations of a language-centered understanding of literature in an attempt to go beyond linguistic differences. The subproject dealing with postcards will show for instance how widely artistic facsimile and fancy pictures circulate.

### c. The notion of visibility as an answer to the crisis of literary studies

While we keep hearing that literature and textual culture are in a deep crisis, it is striking to notice how many literary texts have actually escaped their traditional territories. In the last years, writers have massively invaded musical, theatrical and museal spaces (see *Extra!* literary festival at Centre Pompidou in Paris in Sept. 2017 or “Diaporama” series launched in Spring 2018 at IMEC in Caen,

France). Literature tends to be integrated within the arts, and the fact that creative writing is increasingly being taught in art schools all over Europe is also significant.

HANDLING follows this tendency, with the same risk of diluting literature among the other arts. But if it succeeds, the gain will be an **improved visibility of literature**. HANDLING is also a lab in the sense that it wants to try new material and visual forms of literary research. It will lead this experiment in a place located in Brussels where the quest for open-source, academic research and the necessity of spreading the research will be combined. This 5-year program would be a lab for the future creation of a permanent Center for Literary Visual Culture on a European scale, and it will ideally take place within a museum in Brussels.

### 3. STATE-OF-THE-ART. A NEW PATH IN TEXT-IMAGE STUDIES

This crossover of literary studies and visual studies is grounded in text-image studies, but it will go beyond the state of the art of this field, building on visual anthropology and on some recent developments of iconology and photography studies that take into account the “objecthood” (Mitchell) of pictures in a literary context.

#### a. Literary field

**Materiality** has always been a missing part in French and Francophone references regarding art as well as literature. Contemporary research dealing with the way writers handle tangible pictures is still very dispersed. Some recent works are catching up, especially within the renewal of French “critique génétique” at ITEM around Pierre-Marc de Biasi and the team “Aragon”, and among Cergy University research groups revolving around the imagery of the museum (Mayaux 2017) or the “archivist-writer” (Reverseau 2017). If literary studies acknowledge more and more the importance of the visual for writers, it is often focused only on the visual aspect of the manuscript (*Brouillons d’écrivains* 2001) or the book (Peyre 2001), or confined to the boundaries of an artistic movement, such as Surrealism (Adamowicz 2004).

The **manipulation of pictures by specific writers** has been tackled in many articles concerning for instance Aragon (Védrine 2000), Simon (Rogers 1985), Barthes (Nachtergaele 2012), Mesens (Reverseau 2013) or Haenel (Wathee-Delmotte 2017). Academic journals such as *Word & Image*, *Textimage*, *Image & narrative*, and *Arabeschi* have published excellent case studies in this regard. However, handling has never been studied as a whole, as a general phenomenon of material appropriation, from looking at a picture to the cutting, pinning, or tearing of it. Often, the concrete use of pictures by writers who handle trivial images and collect postcards such as Éluard is still considered too anecdotal to be studied and fully conceptualized, which is my ambition.

I will use in particular the theoretical developments of **Bernard Vuilloux**, who studied the relationship of many authors with images as a whole, for instance the “fin de siècle” writer Champfleury (2009) or contemporary writer Pascal Quignard (2010). Vuilloux developed an interesting conception of intermediality as a “co-implication” of verbal and visual on the long run, and not only within a hybrid book or text of mixed materials (1992 & 2017). I will rely more particularly on the important typologies he contributed to and on his broad conception of the visual.

I am also very interested in the development of **text-image studies in Germany**, especially in the notion of “literary visibility” that Guido Isekenmeier divides into three fields (even if it is not well-known in the Francophone field): the material visibility of literature (falling within the history of the book), the issues of description within the text and the readerly visualisation (based on Iser’s work and cognitive science). However, I still feel that HANDLING would fill a gap because it would address the third field, a blind spot of literary material visualities. It will take place in what Wolfgang Hallet called “extratextual functions of intermediality” in his “methodology of intermediality in Literary Studies” (Rippl 2015), which is the less studied part of intermediality.

If this research fully belongs to the **expanding field of word and image studies**, it will open a new path: while this academic field often tackles pictures and images simultaneously in an HANDLING – Reverseau. Description of the action

abstract sense (mental image, poetic image), I want to focus instead on material pictures to prevent the specificity of picture handling to be drowned in the more general field of literary imagination. In my recent work, I started to approach literature in this innovative way: studying the material circulation of writers' portraits in society (Reverseau 2013), the scrapbooks Scutenaire calls "pêle-mêle" (Reverseau 2013) and the impact of postcards on poetry (Reverseau 2012). Actually, most of my former research converges toward the handling issue for literature and even embarks on this new anthropological dimension of literary studies. Since my PhD and the two post-doctoral mandates that allowed me to contextualize my theoretical reflection about writers and pictures, I am convinced that handling practices are one of the most promising fields for the study of literature. However, I am also convinced that the tools we usually use in literary studies cannot be sufficient and that we have to build new methods borrowed from other disciplines.

## b. Visual field

This is why HANDLING will be grounded in the field of **iconology**, studying the power and impact of images, relying, in France, on *Le Musée imaginaire* (1947) by André Malraux, and then on more recent works by Jacques Rancière (2003) and Georges Didi-Huberman (1990 & 2013). This philosopher and historian has significantly put center-stage the work of **Aby Warburg** and his famous picture album *The Mnemosyne Atlas*, which is an essential milestone for my research.

HANDLING will use the recent developments of German iconology, which is lesser-known in France. The "**image-act theory**" ("Theorie des Bildakts") of Horst Bredekamp or the concept of "haptic gaze" of Markus Rath will be of great help to envision the handling of pictures by writers. I am indeed particularly interested by the paths these notions of performative image have opened in Art History, such as in the research of Pierre-Lin Renie about the "image on the wall" (Renie 2006).

Another important cornerstone of this research is the work of German anthropologist and art historian **Hans Belting**. It sheds a completely new light on the "history of images" that is closely linked with the way we look at pictures. According to him, looking at a picture is what turns it into a picture: "There is no image in nature, it's only through representation and memory that they exist" (Belting 2004, 96). To study the uses of pictures by writers, I will then follow the path of **visual anthropology** opened by Hans Belting (2004) and W.J.T. Mitchell (1986, 1995 and 2005) and followed by anthropologists such as Carlo Severi (2003) and Emmanuel Alloa (2015). I aim at opening these kinds of paths in the literary field to tackle the handling process as an anthropological phenomenon in the literary field. I would like to make literature enter the field of anthropology, the same way Watthee-Delmotte has done with the concept of rituality in literature (2010), using Rivière for instance (1995).

Shifting towards visual anthropology, **new paths in photography** will also be useful to better understand the use of pictures by writers. These references (Burgin 2009, Sekula 2013, Stiegler 2015) insist on the contextualization of image and its mixed nature. Others, such as Elizabeth Edwards (2012) and Margaret Olin (2012), consider photography as a cultural object and put the emphasis on the materiality of pictures. My research does not look into the making of pictures but into the way they are used, and how one can draw on it. I will then apply to literature the innovative notions of "image-object", "image appropriation" and "iconographic poaching". These notions have been elaborated by recent French History of photography scholars (Michel Poivert, Clément Chéroux, André Gunthert, and the team of *Études photographiques*). This new approach keeps a distance towards the more traditional ontological perspective on photography (Metz, Schaeffer, Barthes) and explores photography as a cultural practice, focusing on the diversity of historical uses. One of the starting points of my research is then the exhibition and catalogue *La Subversion des images* (2009), dealing with the various uses of the images by surrealist artists and writers.

More broadly, HANDLING will settle on recent developments of **transmedial studies**, thinking of the image as a tool of cultural transfer (*Transmédiation* 2012). As for the field of **digital image and new media** that has been booming in the last years, I will use, among many references, the works of Joanna Sassoon, Abigail de Kosnik, Ray Siemens and Gilles Bonnet.

## **4. IMPACT**

### **a. Theory of literature**

HANDLING will have a strong impact on what we can call the “field” of literary studies, leading eventually to a shift in the literary paradigm. Very concrete and even banal uses, practices that cannot be called “literary”, shed a new light on literary production as a whole. Thus, this research tackles the concept of literature itself. Considering that the handling of pictures by writers is an important part of literary history means that literature is not only the production of a text but also a set of gestures. Indeed, literature belongs to visual and cultural history.

### **b. Visibility of literature**

This different view on what literature is will lead to a different view on how it can be taught, studied and displayed. My research impacts indeed the unusual issue of the visibility of literature. The way we show the work of a writer and the way museums and galleries make literature visible is a very important part of this research: how to show what belongs to the literary field? What other things than books could be exhibited? In many cases, pictures handled by writers could be the missing piece of the puzzle. This goes hand in hand with the issue of valorisation which stands at the centre of the project.

### **c. Beyond literature**

Last but not least, my research also has a strong impact on other fields: the way writers handle pictures impacts the traditional iconology and strengthens the importance of materiality in visual culture. It will lead to new perspectives about picture appropriation and iconographic gestures, even in the digital age. It also has an impact on the way writers deal with visual cultural heritage through pictures.

From a historical point of view, this research contextualizes a contemporary social phenomenon in a long-term perspective. In particular, it explores the genesis of what we today call intermediality and crossmediality, the porosity between the media and the so-called invasion of the text by an all-powerful image. The way pictures are handled by writers reveals their ability, dynamism, plasticity to move and metamorphose. From a pragmatic point of view, I will try to export the model I built to other cultural and linguistic fields. This research could then be an opportunity to work on a more international level than the one I used to work with so far. The understanding of the picture handling process could also be adapted to fit the case of philosophers, historians, but also artists such as painters, actors and film directors.



## 5. ICONOGRAPHY

FIG.1



FIG.2



FIG.3

182 LA SOURCE

Et se renverse sur sa chaise qu'il balance.  
Un vieux ménage bien calme mange en silence.  
Impatient, j'attends un plat long à venir  
Et que j'ai réclamé déjà sans l'obtenir.

..

Sur ma nappe est posée une haute bouteille  
D'eau minérale en vogue; on la vante, on conseille  
Son usage abondant et surtout incessant  
Sur un large papier d'un rose caressant  
Entourant fixement la bouteille à sa base;  
Un dessin y figure où du monde s'écrase  
Aux abords d'une source; une donneuse d'eau  
En tablier, ayant en guise de chapeau  
Un nœud de ruban dans les cheveux, sert la foule;  
Elle tient par le fond un grand verre qui coule,  
Tant il est plein de l'eau divine qui guérit.

FIG.4



FIG.5



FIG.6



– penser c'est impossible  
– redéfinir les trajectoires des destins oubliés  
– il faudrait se laisser pour regarder derrière, il  
existe une vallée ou une crevasse, s'approcher, ne  
pas se détourner du vide et du silence, les deux  
grondent  
– c'est une pyramide, un mastaba, une royale  
sépulture mais le roi n'est pas mort et c'est un

161 Christine Jeanney / Sous la surface

animal, petit inquiet enfui, on découvre ses traces  
dans la neige tassée sur la première marche,  
étourdi, la première fois qu'il traverse la première  
blancheur

FIG.1: Touristic brochures from the 1920's and 1930's (André Beucler archives, Private collection, Belfort).

FIG.2: Adèle Godefroy, Michel Butor and his photographs, 2014 (private collection).

FIG.3: Raymond Roussel, "La Source", *La Vue*. Paris: Lemerre. Public Domain.

FIG.4: Elsa Triolet, *La Mise en mots*. Paris: Skira, "Les sentiers de la création", 1969 (100-101).

FIG.5: Photographic portraits used by Roger Martin du Gard to create fictional characters (BNF).

FIG.6: Christine Jeanney, *Les sirènes on ne les voit pas un couvercle est...* Paris: Publie.net, 2012 (161-162).



### III. Methodology

#### 1. SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

Having explained the reasons why I should study the handling of pictures in literature and the state-of-the-art on this interdisciplinary topic, two crucial questions are to be tackled: What is “picture handling” in literature? How should it be approached?

##### a. What does handling mean?

Handling can be defined as a **set of gestures people perform while dealing with pictures** (Sontag 1977). Because it can signify the simple fact of looking at a picture we hold (Crary 1994), it differs from the definition of the manipulation of pictures that implies that we act on the picture. It also differs from image-act theory (Bredekamp 2015), in which the picture is necessarily performative.

A picture can be defined as a possible “image on the wall” (Renie 2006). While working on the difference between a “picture” and an “image”, visual culture specialist WJT Mitchell explained that you can hang a picture on the wall, not an image: “Picture” names a “material object”, something you can “burn” or “damage” (Mitchell 2009, 21). The picture you handle could be the one you keep with you in your jacket, the one you classify in shoeboxes, the one you stick in a photo-album, the one you pin on the wall of your office. At the same time the one you store carefully and the one you forget on your floor. The main handling processes I have identified so far are: **collecting, stocking, organizing, displaying** and **exchanging**.

Handling is then an **anthropological phenomenon**. As such, it can be encompassed on three levels: the material, the textual and the imaginary (Wathee-Delmotte 2010). These levels of understanding the phenomenon require different kinds of approach I will expound below.

##### b. Handling in the literary field

Let us first have a closer look to what picture handling is in the literary field, in the life of writers first, in their texts second, and finally in the writing processes.

- Like all of us, writers are **surrounded by pictures** of all sorts. The most common function of a picture is something we look at. Before they handle them, writers look at them. Pictures are part of what Pierre Mac Orlan calls the “creator’s study” (“Graphismes” 1929). The novelist and journalist André Beucler, a forgotten figure of the French interwar period, liked to be **surrounded** by advertisement pictures for liners and touristic destinations that feed a “poetry of escape” (“Invitations aux voyages” 1932) and his friend the poet Léon-Paul Fargue loved to pin pictures of trains and train stations on his walls. Other uses are more sentimental, such as Louis Aragon who covered the walls of their common apartment with pictures when Elsa Triolet died in 1970.

We can transform the pictures surrounding us by cutting, pinning, tearing, painting or drawing over them. It is a way to **appropriate**, to get into a creative universe. Handling pictures is a common hobby shared by many writers, especially in the avant-gardes of the interwar period (Surrealism and dada) and later (in the 1960s and 1970s). In the archives of Tristan Tzara, for instance, you can find several montages made of newspaper clips and postcards. In 1952, Paul Éluard confessed to his friend Jean Hugo, “I cannot live without images” (*La Photographie timbrée*). A passionate collector of Belle époque postcards (when his wife Gala left, he told her to take everything except his albums of pictures!), Éluard also made some collages that were recently discovered on title pages of their books. Belgian surrealist Mesens also liked to assemble pictures in

his various activities: at the same time a poet, a collagist, the picture editor of the magazine *Variétés*, the manager of an art gallery in London, this “writer-iconographer” lived in a joyful bric-à-brac of pictures (Reverseau 2013). Handling pictures can also play a role in the quest for inspiration: when he was feeling unable to write, Michel Leiris, who was also a picture editor for *Documents* (Kleiber 2017), related in *Biffures* that he used to cut and paste “illustrations cut from magazines” (Leiris 1948).

For writers, as for all of us, pictures are circulating objects and may be **exchanged**. Indeed, the handling of pictures is not only the solitary activity of someone pinning pictures on his wall, it also has a strong collective dimension. Postcards are a good example of this process: some writers-penfriends – such as Valéry Larbaud and Léon-Paul Fargue or ELT Mesens and Marcel Mariën – used the pictures they sent and received in a creative way.

- Second, **picture handling appears in texts**, either in fiction when characters handle some pictures, or in non-fiction when writers testify or discuss the manipulation of pictures in essays, autobiographic works, letters, and so on.

Following the pioneering works of Huysmans and his character Des Esseintes in *À rebours*, fiction is full of characters whose profession or hobby implies to manipulate pictures. In **poetry**, we can evoke the three texts by Raymond Roussel published at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: each time, the lyric “I” is looking closely at a vernacular image: an advertisement for mineral water (*La Source*), a touristic view of the Atlantic Coast (*La Vue*), and so on. In the **novel** *Rémy Floche*, Pierre Albert-Birot stages a very mediocre man, assembling some reproductions of works of art on the walls of his attic. Rémy Floche has common features with Laurence, the character working in advertising created by Simone de Beauvoir in *Les Belles Images*. The opening of the famous Goncourt-Prize, *L’Amant* by Marguerite Duras, also dramatizes the handling of several photographic portraits of the main character. This example shows how the manipulation of pictures is important in **autobiographical writing** and the introspective works of Roland Barthes, Pascal Quignard or Annie Ernaux also contain interesting scenes of picture handling.

In addition to the gestures related, described or staged in literary texts, we should add the texts theorizing the handling processes in **critical works** by writers, in interviews, correspondence, and so on. Some book series also tried to gather the reflexions about the way writers handle pictures and how it affects their relationship with art and their own creation. The series “Les sentiers de la création”, published by Skira at the end of the 1960s and the 1970s, gives the floor to artists and writers such as Prévert, Simon, Aragon and so on. In *La Mise en mots*, published in this series in 1969, Elsa Triolet reveals the importance of postcards, small format art works and illustrated paper clips for her writing. The book series “Musées secrets” launched in the 1990s by Flohic editions addresses the same kind of questions but focuses on a single artist at a time.

- The last place to find picture handling in the literary field is at the junction of the first two fields, that is to say in the **influence the manipulation of pictures has on the writing process**. It deals with the interactions of pictures with text, with the “action”, so to say, of pictures (Bredekamp). This last object of the research, the transmediatic aspect of handling, is also the most complex. How can pictures become texts? How can they be used as **springboards for literary creation**?

Pictures can trigger literary texts and act as a “before-text”, literally, a “pre-text”. In the early 1920s, French novelist Roger Martin du Gard used photographic portraits to visualize and describe the characters within his fiction (*Brouillons d’écrivains* 2001, 138): he de-contextualized the studio portrait of his time and implemented some characteristic of the pictures into the novel *Les Thibault*. More recently, playwright Valère Novarina used some walls he covered with sketches and drawings of the characters while he was writing a play. It is an example of re-mediation, as well as in the case of Jules Supervielle, who wrote the poem “Le portrait” based on a photographic portrait of his mother when she was young. Other uses of this kind could be found in the works of Raymond Roussel and Paul Nougé. The picture may be present or absent in the final work. It can be used as an *incipit* and then disappear and be explained years later by the writer himself, as Louis Aragon did in *Je n’ai jamais appris à écrire ou Les incipit* (1969 & Védrine 2000) or by the study of the

manuscript (in the manuscript of “Un air embaumé”, Louis Aragon pasted the advertisement for a Rigaud perfume that was the matrix of the poem). For Aragon, the **initiating function of picture** is something he is very aware of and chooses to provoke. But most of the time, the process is more subliminal and the picture stays “in absentia”. Hallet calls this phenomenon “**covert intermediality**” (Hallet 2015, Wolf 1999).

In the digital age, it has never been so easy to appropriate images. Digital pictures are now also commonly used as springboards for writers on the internet. A good example of these contemporary practices is Christine Jeanney, who worked on two constrained series of writing, *Fichaises* (every evening she finds an image to illustrate the text she has written during the day and posts both online) and *Todolists* (she uses a “trigger-image” among a stock she “cultivated” via Twitter). This kind of literary practices should be thought in context of amateur creative writing classes in which a frequent exercise is to start from a picture, and, more broadly, of brainstorming with word and images frequently used to organize ideas.

This springboard action is thus very challenging to describe, even when the picture stays “in presentia” (“**overt intermediality**”). In the dynamics of the process, I will distinguish, based on Genette’s co-text typology (1987), the implementation of picture (when it becomes a text), the picture used as an infratext, published as a peritext or simply as a context.

### c. Main methodological approaches

To study these different versions of literary handling, I propose a combination of approaches.

- The first method HANDLING will use is **archival and historical**: the reconstitution of handling practices with visual documents such as pictures, documentary films and textual documents such as letters. It will be important to visit writers’ museums when dealing with dead writers, and Pierre Loti is a good case to study because his house is visible today and it still contains the pictures on the walls. André Breton also surrounded himself with pictures and his handling practices have been remarkably documented by his online archive, which is a good example of what should be done for visual literary archives ([www.andrebretton.fr](http://www.andrebretton.fr)).

With contemporary writers, direct investigation will consist of interviews with writers who already suggested that they were manipulating pictures in an original way, such as Jean-Benoît Puech who keeps a copy of every postcard he has sent.

- The second method is focused on the text: a **poetic and strictly literary approach** is useful to understand how pictures are handled by fictional characters in literary texts, how the different processes are staged and dramatized. Traces of possible actions of pictures – being for instance the springboard for a description or the *incipit* of a narrative – will appear within the texts and will be studied with the help of the comprehensive typologies of the complex presence of images within the text, established by Vouilloux or Hallet, as described above.

Literary texts are also the place where the imaginary part of handling is being built and settled (Chelebourg 2005). It is then equally important to consider theoretical texts about handling that could be found in literary works as well as in essays, and non-fiction.

- In addition to these first two methods traditionally used in the literary sphere, we will rely on an **anthropological approach** focused on the study of gestures. We will identify repetitive patterns in the handling of pictures by writers and by the characters they created and elaborate on the notion of appropriation. We will also take into account the social impact of the appropriation of pictures by writers, especially on collective cultural memory.

This kind of approach has already been tested in recent works, for instance about Yannick Haenel (Wathe Delmotte 2017) or Leiris (Kleiber 2017). My anthropological approach will also tackle the notion of visual fetishism through “image-objects”, that is to say through the material presence of images (Belting 2004, Mitchell 2005 & 2009).

- The fourth approach is a **conceptual one**. The first three steps in the analysis of picture handling will be at the same time completed and bridged together by a theoretical reflection about image theory, based on the German bibliography (Rippl 2015, Bodola & Isenkenmeier 2017), on the recent development of the notion of intermediality (Vouilloux 2005 & 2017, Hallet 2015) and the current reflections about the specificities of digital handling (Sassoon 2004, de Kosnik 2016).

More precisely, it will be very important to distinguish the theories of material picture and of mental image. Then, we will take the notion of picture as a common item at the core of the notion of shared communities. Picture is an ideal tool for transmediation studies, as Walter Moser showed in his works about cultural passages and transfers (*Transmediation* 2012, 10).