

SCHOLARLY EDITION OF BORN-DIGITAL LITERARY SOURCES: A CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

“Most records today are born digital, and libraries and other collecting institutions increasingly receive computer storage media as part of their acquisition of “papers” from writers, scholars, scientists, musicians, and public figure”

Kirschenbaum, Matthew G., Richard Ovenden, and Gabriela Redwine. 2010. “Digital Forensics and Born-Digital Content in Cultural Heritage Collections” Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources.
<https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub149/>.

Most literary archives are hybrid: paper and digital

MAKE THE BORN-DIGITAL SOURCE A SCIENTIFIC OBJECT OF STUDY

to be archived, preserved, described, analysed, **edited**.

THE CASE STUDY: BERNARD COMMENT, "EN MER"

Bernard Comment (1960), Swiss author, translator
and publisher.

Swiss Literary Archives (SLA) / Archives littéraires
suisse (ALS): 139 boxes and 1 hard disk.

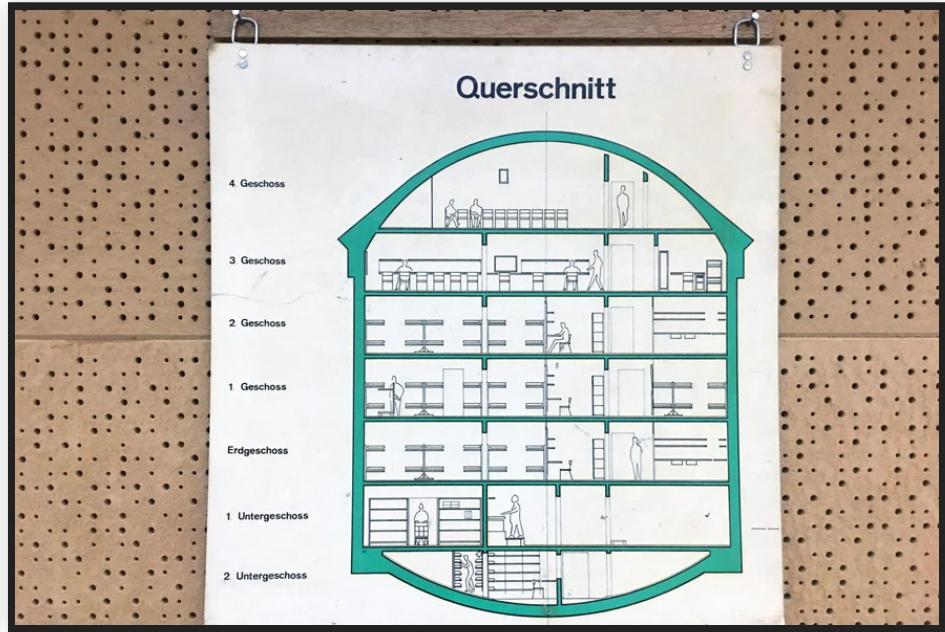
Short story "En mer"

1998. Commissioned for the radio.

1999. Published in the journal *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (NRF)

2000's. Included in various writing projects

2011. Published in the book *Tout Passe* (Christian Bourgois publisher), winner of the Prix Goncourt de la Nouvelle



Sources: <https://i1.wp.com/www.publicdomainpictures.net/pictures/30000/velka/cargo-ship-1354685728RZI.jpg>, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/resource/image/42395500>

THE PROTOTYPE

*Bernard Comment, “En mer”.
A scholarly edition prototype,
including born-digital and paper genetic materials*

comment-enmer.github.io

RECAP

In this case study (no forensic traces, only recent formats) ...

Textual criticism methodogological and technical tools are largely applicable to born-digital sources and hybrid archives

- collection and ordering of witnesses
- transcription and encoding
- (collation)
- (establishment of a critical text)

(OPEN OR SOLVED) ISSUES

- **granularity of the archive catalogue**, difficulty of finding contents, lack of identifiers ↔ depending on the cataloguing status of the fund, but it seems to be a structural issue;
- **limited metadata**, available only upon request ↔ use of forensic tools and by whom;
- **manuscript description** (identification, physical description) in the context of the edition ↔ existing metadata standards from libraries and archives and adjacent fields;
- **facsimiles**, what and for what ↔ simulation, emulation, pathfinders;
- **TEI encoding** of the text ↔ regular mechanisms of TEI customisation
- **ethical and legal issues** (mostly when forensic techniques involved)

“Agli strumenti tradizionali dell’archivistica, della filologia d’autore e della *critique génétique* andrà aggiunta una maggiore e diversificata attenzione alla nuova tipologia di documenti e ai metodi della videoscrittura, impiegando anche tecniche forensi. Tuttavia, queste discipline si sono sempre adattate ai supporti: si tratta solo di entrare in queste diverse officine degli autori e verificare i fenomeni sul campo.”

Carbé 2023, p. 129

Case studies to

- test and verify assumptions, study single authors
- study the **dialogue between paper and digital archive**
(different organisation logics, individual working habits)
- **advocacy and collaboration** with the archive

“The social challenges are where textual scholars can play a leadership role in literary studies and the preservation of born digital literary material, helping to ensure that **documents and records survive in useful as well as usable form**, just as textual scholars have long fulfilled advocacy roles in traditional library settings”

Kirschenbaum and Reside 2013, see also Carbé 2023, Gooding et al 2019, Ries and Palkó 2019

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ASK QUESTIONS TO BORN-DIGITAL SOURCES AND HYBRID ARCHIVES AS OBJECT OF STUDY

Thank you

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Bibliography

