The index: a mostrum in the text

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Fabula in tabula. Dal racconto degli indici alla retorica del testo elettronico :
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Franceschini, Certosa del Galluzzo, 21–22 ottobre 1994 con il patrocinio
dell'Università di Firenze[1].

A net of the text, its mirror or a cobweb, a labyrinth or its map; all those (and many
more) are good images to understand why indexes are such a valuable and fascinating,
a monstrous and essential thing for knowledge of the texts. Everybody refers to the
indexes and their composition belongs to the literary tradition itself, but there are quite
rare opportunities to study them. Furthermore there is very little consciousness that
in today's research for the application of the information science to the reading of the
texts, we must see also the result of long years of study, meant to achieve the indexation
of several ways of writing or if you like, to "map" the environments where the writings
live.

In order to face these problems, and following the conference organized once
again in Florence last year dedicated to the "Machines for reading" (whose papers have
already been published by the CISAM of Spoleto), the Foundation *IBM* Italia and the
Foundation Ezio Franceschini and under the patronage of the University of Florence,
have organized a conference on the subject "Fabula in tabula. From the tale of the
indexes to the rhetoric of the electronic text". The conference, held in the centre of the
Foundation Franceschini at the Certosa del Galluzzo, on the 21st and 22nd October
1994, started from the idea that any index is a map of the text; it happens at least in two
ways: firstly because every index is double-natured, it is verbal and graphical; secondly

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[1] LEONARDI (Claudio), MORELLI (Marcello), Santi (Francesco), 1995 (Eds) : *Fabula in
Tabula. Una storia degli indici dal manuscritto al testo elettronico. Atti del Convegno di studio della
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1994* (Firenze : FEF, "Quaderni di cultura mediolatina" 13). L. 110000.

✉ Fondazione Ezio Franceschini; Certosa del Galuzzo; I–50124 Firenze (Italia).
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because a text can be given several kinds of maps. These plasticity of the indexes can not be underestimated at this announced invasion of the electronic publishing: with the large amount of texts available on CD-ROM, the new readers will doubtless have to refer to a sophisticated and well thought methodology of the indexes. The indexes should not possibly be used as more tools for getting information, on the contrary, they should conquer their own right to represent the texts in a brief, but specific way, revealing at the same time the great variety of "logics" that every literary text has got.

We can say that the indexes as a literary genre in itself has quite a rich background and, thus on take on this task. Its background is partly similar to the history of rhetoric, because the mapping of the text was one way to remind the orators of their speeches and to reveal their logical waft; in another part it deals with the specific history of the indexes, which are, of course, schematic texts in order to find, by conventional graphical devices, definite passages in other texts; in another part still it deals with the history of the logical calculations: the image associated to the text is meant to show the irrefutable legitimacy of a presumed argumentative geometry.

Even the medieval history of indexes is rich. Tabula in medieval Latin can mean, at the some time, "painting", "game" and "index". Fabula expresses the reality of the tale when it is spoken, in the very moment it is said . Joining this merely literary dimension to its images, that is finding a fabula in the tabula, has been the aim of the convention, which wants to take in consideration both the historical and theoretical aspects of the employment of the images to represent the texts.

The meeting has therefore been organized in three sections: the first dedicated to the HISTORY OF THE INDEXES has been introduced and presided by Tullio Gregory (University of "La Sapienza" Rome), by a wide panorama and the final proposition to carry out a big index of the most important enterprises of indexation of all times (from the manuscript to the information science). A first contribution to this point has been given, doubtless, by the paper of Olga Weijers (of the Constantijn Huygens Instituut voor tekstedities en intellectuele geschiedenis, of The Hague), *Are indexes a literary genre?*; of Giuseppe Cremascoli (University of Bologna), *Tabulae of middle Latin lexicons*; of Malcom B. Parkes (Keble College, Oxford), *Folia librorum quaerere*; of Marzia Pieri (University of Trieste), *The index on stage; subjects, plots and utility men*; of Paolo Vian (Vatican Apostolical Library), *From the Platina to the Bishop: experiences of indexation in the Vatican Library between the XVth and the XXth century.*

Following these contributions, tightly and thematically connected to them, there have been a series of short, but important contributions of José Santos Paz (University of Santiago de Compostella), *Way of Perception and way of representation: the function of the tabulae in the Sciuias*; of Letizia Pellegrini (University of Padova), *Tabula super sermons of the XIIIth–XVth centuries*; Simona Bianchi (Foundation Ezio Franceschini, Florence), *The logical square. The employment of explanatory pictures in the Aristotelian tradition*; of Luigi Borgia (Superintendence of the archives for the Tuscany, Florence), *The coats of arms: juridical tabulae*; of Domenico Fiormonte (University "La Sapienza", Rome), *Fabula et tabula. Remarks about the indexes of Roberto Vacca and the Hypertext ante litteram of Massimo Bucchi.*

The second section of the meeting has been dedicated to THE INDEXES AS A TOOL FOR READING in the contemporary historiography: introduced and chaired by Paul Tombeur (*CETEDOC* — Catholic University of Louvain), has had the contributions of Giancarlo Garfagnini (University of Florence), *Compiling indexes for a comprehension of history*, who has spoken of the experiences of indexation at the National Institute of Studies on the Renaissance; Giacinta Spinosa (European Intellectual Lexicon, Rome), *A synoptic access to the origins of the modern cultivated lexicon: the indexes of the Aristoteles latinus*; Mario Ricciardi (University of Torino), *Indexes of the words and narrative maps*, who has illustrated the experience of Information Center for reading of the text of the Faculty of Letters of Vercelli; Jean-Louis Lebrave (CNRS, Paris), *For an electronic philology*, has illustrated the several possibilities given by such an extremely versatile index as the hypertext, for the reconstruction of the writing-desk of the author, in the tradition of the genetic criticism.

The last section has been dedicated to the information science and its responsibility in taking on the heritage of such a complex history. Under the title of INDEXES, HYPERTEXTS AND RHETORIC OF THE ELECTRONIC TEXT, chaired by Marcello Morelli (Foundation *IBM* Italy) there have been the following contributions by Tullio De Mauro (University "La Sapienza", Rome), *The dictionaries as indices verborum and the language*; by Giorgio Sommi (Foundation *IBM* Italia), *Finding one's way in the electronic text*; by Luca Toschi (University of Verona), *The hypertext of the author*; by Louis Hay (CNRS, Paris), *The semiotic analysis of the literary manuscripts*; by Egidio Pentiraro (*EDITEL*, Milano), *The problems of the reading in the electronic publishing off-line and on-line*; Claudio Leonardi (Foundation Ezio Franceschini, Florence) drew the conclusions, promising that the acts will be published very soon and wishing that these researches could be carried on.

The meeting has explained the most important difference between reading on a monitor and reading in a book. These two places of the writing are doubtless perfectly legitimate, but the one does not take on the other's functions. The book, perhaps, has lost its primary role as a kind of chair of the word, acquiring however specificity. As to the indexes, they are doubtless a literary genre, like the hypertexts are; for a perfect definition of their role, we will have to wait for great quality works, that is some classical works written in this literary genre. In order to achieve this result the experiences and the attempts of a hypertextual writing will have to be multiplied and incentivated.

The problems of "mapping" a text are well known both in the histories of philosophy and literature, furthermore there is an almost uninterrupted traditio of attempts to achieve a meaning collaboration between graphical elements (geometric or even fantasy drawing) and verbal elements. Like in the geographical maps, the pictures, logical schemes or decorations (perhaps decorating the capitals beginning the chapters) combined with the text, thus becoming part of a message of the author. Whenever the history of images and the texts has had a strong development during the XIIth–XIIIth century (with such people as Gioacchino da Fiore, Raimondo Lullo and with Scholastic movement) and in the XVIIth century (especially with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz) it has always marked periods of great creativity. The diffusion of

electronic engines has produced now attempts of mapping; we must hope that they will still coincide with a power of invention.