Introduction

The anthology is a form of cultural preservation. It can be historical, political, and technological, and can expand into forms of narrative adaptation, experimentation, and organization. Since the origins of writing systems, this editorial structure has provided not only a conceptual shape to oral and written narratives, but also a material means for cultural survival. Traditionally referring to collections of short literary works, anthologies have offered important curatorial frameworks for the development, organization, and retrieval of stories – prose, scripts, epigrams, or poems – contributing to recounting a partial history of human societies through organized arrangements of narrative artifacts. From paper-based media to machine-generated content, throughout a series of discontinued analog and digital technologies, they have adapted to the ubiquitous acts of categorization of knowledge and information that characterize internet culture. In its multiple occurrences, the practice of anthologization has represented more than a pragmatic solution to the need for a systematic classification and storage of documents.

From a critical perspective, anthologies were found to be instrumental to the definition of cultural authority in a comparable way to reading lists or bibliographies. While not all anthologies constitute authoritative canons per se, they contribute to determining canonical principles for the archival of heritage records by enabling a process of exclusion and inclusion and, ultimately, assigning value to a selected collection. With its potential to generate a series of small archives around a range of literary categories, themes, or styles, over time the anthology form transitioned from being a space dedicated to validating the vision of dominant cultures to serving as a literary refuge for marginalized communities seeking to reconstruct their own histories outside of the traditional Western canon. Within this ambivalence, anthologies came to act as tools of power as much as tools for subversion, resistance, and repair. As sites of constant renegotiation between overarching dynamics of cultural imperialism and informal, under-documented cultural movements, they remind us that "canonicity is not a property of the work itself but of its transmission, its relation to other works in a collocation of works" (Guillory 2013, 55).

This book is about anthologies as modes of conservation, transmission and mediation of cultural heritage. By observing their multilinear evolution from analog to digital culture, it examines how traditional editorial practices of anthologization intersect with data-driven content classification. More than ten years on, this research complements Milad Doueihi's seminal works, *Pour une humanisme numérique* (2011a) and *Digital Culture* (2011b), in which he describes digital environments as inherently anthological, made of fragmented and yet interconnected records aggregated via a semantic network of tags and labels. In this view, the anthology form stands out as a way to manage cultural memory (Doueihi 2011, 151), allowing for extensive track-recording and content archival practices. While Doueihi's work focuses on digital culture and content production as seen in the early years of online platforms, the present volume expands the conversation to include pre-digital and post-digital (Cramer 2014), algorithmic culture. By doing so, it aims at reconstructing the socio-cultural conditions of existence (Foucault 1972) and techno-cultural histories (Parrika 2012) that lie behind the anthology form. Through a genealogical study (Apprich and Bachmann 2017) that combines the analysis of historical records with new media research, the chapters examine the connection between narrative structures, editorial traditions, and technological forms. In particular, observing media as techno-cultural apparatuses, the anthology is considered at the intersection of technological specificities and cultural commonalities, in the context of "all the organizations and *milieux* in which artistic, intellectual, and scientific work goes on, and by which entertainment and information are produced and distributed" (Mills 2008, 204, his emphasis).

The historical lens serves as the main analytical framework for understanding anthologies as both narrative forms and forms of knowledge in the *longue durée* (Braudel 1982) of cultural structures. Moreover, it draws a connection between curatorial practices for heritage preservation and data-based forms of content organization as common attempts to regain control over the archival uncertainties (Thylstrup et al. 2021) of our time. Given the lack of a comprehensive publication on the anthology form across media, this work inaugurates an interdisciplinary construction site for building a genealogy of anthology series using a hybrid methodology that combines archival research and data collection, with comparative historical analysis and media studies. Drawing upon previous studies on the anthological turn in digital culture (Doueihi 2011), data classification (Bowker and Star 1999), and platform infrastructures (Poell et al. 2021), the book retraces the cultural roots of the anthology form, reconnecting it with contemporary practices of algorithmic curation. The purpose is to investigate the relation between

anthological *forms*, distribution *platforms*, and consumption *models* by proposing a comparative approach to the study of anthologies that leverages *cross*-cultural, *cross*-historical, *cross*-media analysis.

Overall, the research behind this volume touches upon several inter-disciplinary concepts and approaches. First, a distant reading analysis of the evolution of the anthology in literature, publishing and broadcasting was conducted to better understand the transition that accompanied this editorial form from its early etymological origins to more recent occurrences in television, and, in later years, on digital platforms. This approach led to further observations on how hierarchical and networked industrial dynamics have operated in specific media contexts with consequences on the emergence of anthological narrative features. Thereafter, I have reviewed theories borrowed from the field of design as they intertwine with the history of anthological models and their applications. In particular, I have investigated notions like form and affordance as found in disciplines that examine the role of design in processes of storytelling and content organization (i.e., narrative studies and platform studies). Finally, starting from a preliminary historical overview and conceptual framing, I opted for qualitative cultural and media analysis in order to accompany this research with a thorough case study.

Chapter after chapter, the book engages in a discussion about the historical, formal, infrastructural, platformed components of cultural production and distribution, as the driving forces that contributed to shape contemporary anthological practices and uses. In this process, the notion of anthology is explored through four lenses: history, design, infrastructures, and platforms. Each one of these keywords highlights different aspects that lead us to an updated definition of anthology and outline an anthologi-cal approach to the practice of archiving for the future. Chapter 1 focuses on the *history* of the anthology form by considering its etymological and cultural relevance, as well as its cross-media transformations. This first section situates such a form in an evolutionary context that spans from its primordial archetypes in early analog media to its contemporary uses. A genealogy of the anthology model serves as the point of departure for observing recent practices of content organization from a cultural and media studies standpoint. We will notably see how, in their evolution from printed to broadcasting media, anthologies have consolidated new structural features (e.g., a recurring introductory tagline and sometimes a closing line as means of framing a collection of stories). Furthermore, taking a media-ecological standpoint, the paragraphs provide examples of how narrative forms can be both cultural and political in response to the surrounding

social and industrial context. The intent is to redirect the attention to the ways the anthology form is actively constructed and designed across a range of techno-cultural scenarios.

To tackle the generative nature of the anthology form, Chapter 2 proposes a *design*-oriented framework for the study of digital culture, one that can explain the epistemological as well as morphological and pragmatic relevance of anthological variations by introducing the concepts of form and affordance. The chapter echoes Caroline Levine's *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015), which adapts the notion of form to the fields of literature and the arts. Following Levine's work, this section considers the functionalities and potential uses of forms as properties that are not only perceptual (e.g., visual, tactile, auditory), but also social, psychological, and intellectual. Such a perspective is reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan's (1994) definition of media as human extensions with personal, social, cultural, political, economic, aesthetic, ethical, and moral implications. With this reflection on the relation between media forms, affordances and knowledge design (Schnapp 2014), the chapter opens up to an interdisciplinary conversation that will be present all throughout the rest of the book, spanning from narrative theories to media, infrastructure and platform studies.

In the attempt to provide a background for the establishment of the anthology form in algorithmic culture, Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of archival classification strategies and discusses the transition from analog to digital data that led to the current mediascape. Central to the volume, this section tackles the issue of storing digital records and introduces the reader to the complex set of structures and *infrastructures* that lie behind streaming platforms. In doing so, it demonstrates how modern-day anthology-making practices, as they evolved into a diverse array of forms, are grounded in the ecological thinking (Bowker et al. 2016) of media platforms, in that they respond to the organizing urge of digital ecosystems where individual narratives are woven together mimicking ecologies in the natural world. By tackling the ecosystem features of internet environments, this chapter digs deeper into the challenge of online content sorting and retrieval, anticipating some of the themes addressed in Chapter 4 on *platforms* and algorithms.

Covering the platformization of culture and the introduction of algorithmic technologies, the final chapter takes a closer look at forms of classification and indexing of audiovisual records on streaming platforms. As part of the "anthological turn" in digital culture (Doueihi 2011), it observes practices of editorial anthologization online as they interact with computational approaches to content filtering and recommendation. In this process, it guides us through a series of examples and case studies by approaching

media platforms as infrastructural organizations for cultural diffusion, or else as techno-cultural apparatuses that produce narratives of their own and can give rise to forms, impose norms, and define standards. Building upon a post-modern and post-structuralist perspective, this research accounts for the complex relation between the anthology form and narratives, industrial and social spheres, temporal continuities/discontinuities, and techno-cultural transitions, which help understand today's coexistence of human and computational practices. With regard to this digital destiny (Floridi 2002), the conclusion returns to the epistemological impacts of anthological and algorithmic forms of content classification, asking just whose canon, whose heritage (Hall 1999), and whose revolution (King 2003) the anthology came to be, and which affordances it acquired in the process of becoming digital.