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From Storytelling to Intercreativity in the Era of Distributed Authorship

Edited by

Matteo Ciastellardi
Giovanna Di Rosario

Contributes:

Amorós, L.
Arana, E.
Bazzarin, B.
Bonacho, F.
Ciancia, M.
De Kerckhove, D.
Jenkins, H.
Kinder, M.
Koskimaa, R.
Landow, G. P.
López-Varela, A.
Manovich, L.
Mimenza, L.
Narbaiza, B.
Pedranti, G.
Roig Telo, A.
San Cornelio, G.
Tavares, S.
Tosca, S.

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Foreword: Transmediature

By Derrick de Kerckhove

Transmediature is the literature of the age of digital media. Not only is it developing an esthetic but, just like the old fiction it has a mind bending purpose. Media shape heads, we know that now, but art makes that shape. We became what we read, we now become what we watch, what we trigger, and what we share.

Transmediature picks up from where medieval theatre left off when the printing press rendered obsolete the practices of the manuscript culture. Transmedia share a number of key features with sacred plays that were performed outside the church on the town square. These performances involved the public, using the media available at the time. They involved participation, games, storytelling, local news and politics and their various stages would operate simultaneously. There presented too a kind of hypertextual layout in that people could choose to go from place to place without any particular order unless they preferred to follow the Magister Ludis. Like transmedia today, they were based on a world, the Earth in relationship to Heaven and Hell and allowed for much improvisation on the part of the actors.

Transmedia educates us to hypertextual cognition and multimedia imagination. Breaking the linear imperative, mashup fiction has shattered video in fragments. The job is to re-member them. Connected intelligence ties contents and people over time and space in networks. Transmedia Literacy is putting Humpty Dumpty together again.

Transmedia Literacy: A Premise

Matteo Ciastellardi

Politecnico di Milano

Giovanna Di Rosario

Université Catholique de Louvain

doi: 00000000000000

matteo.ciastellardi@polimi.it
giovanna.dirosario@uclouvain.be

For several years now, when thinking of education and literature, we have seen that cultural references and practices are in a continuous process of transformation and redefinition, both because of the available digital tools, and because of several emerging channels of dissemination and distribution that reflect the increasingly dynamic abilities of mass (self)-production.

In a 2005 study by Amanda Lenhart and Mary Madden reported by Henry Jenkins, research emerged demonstrating that “more than one-half of all teens have created media content, and roughly one-third of teens who use the Internet have shared content they produced. In many cases, these teens are actively involved in what we are calling participatory cultures”. (Jenkins 2009, XI)

The participatory culture that Jenkins discusses represents an important milestone in the process of self-awareness and personal engagement in cultural production. The way people maintain a lifelong learning process no longer depends strictly on hierarchical structures devoted to educative purposes, but mostly on the socio-cultural environment of interpersonal and intermediated communication. Jenkins’ definition of participatory culture underlines specific aspects of this paradigm shift:

A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices. In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another and, at the least, members care about others’ opinions of what they have created. (Jenkins 2009, XI)

If, on the one hand, this definition perfectly suits the attitudes of digital natives, conversely, it can be considered the most reliable definition of “prosuming audiences”, meaning people, of different ages, active in the production of creative content versus being passive consumers.

If we reflect on the evolution of cultural technologies and the possibilities that different supports have offered in terms of expression, circulation, and engagement, we notice an exponential transformation of what is today called Media Literacy. If the birth of language represented the first footstep into a new social dimension of consciousness and communication, then such has undergone exponential growth with media-based literacy. Three hundred generations ago writing reframed the principal social patterns of everyday life. Almost thirty generations ago, the printing press led to another step toward mass communication and improved pedagogical tools. Then, suddenly, from the eighteenth century to the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the industrial revolution led to shortened lines of relation, interpersonal communication, and greater participation between people. With the constant growth of “new” new media (telegraph, photography, telephone, cinema, radio, television, web, computer, mobile, wearable devices, etc.) what has changed is not only the possibility extending knowledge in unpredictable directions, but also the ability to explore new frontiers of communication. What has changed is the architecture of intelligence itself (De Kerckhove 2001) and the intellectual development of the brain. (Wolf 2007)

Moving a step backward, in order to gradually interpret this change through the lens of media history, according to Castells (1996), we can say that we have started this paradigm shift by moving from the model of the “Gutenberg Galaxy” (press, mass distribution), to the revolution of the “McLuhan Galaxy” (new media, hypertext, collective participation, etc.).

The first result of top-down driven communication spread through mass-media channels (television, newspapers, radio and cinema among the most popular) and this created a specific kind of media spectatorship, educated and trained to comply with monolithic aspects of “pretailored” consumption. The emergence of a networked society (Castells 1996; Taylor 2001) and the rise of a convergence culture (Jenkins 2006), both sustained by an impressive amount of tools, platforms, and systems to enhance participation, creation, and the self-construction of content, favoured the migration of media audiences in search of any possible entertainment experiences they wanted. This change of perspective has produced two consequences. Firstly, it has affected the transformation of media producers and consumers into participants of the same market economy: as Jenkins suggests, “convergence culture is getting defined top-down by decisions being made in corporate boardrooms and bottom-up by decisions made in teenagers’ bedrooms” (2006b). Secondly, this transition has triggered

a different form of understanding and learning, and a new asset of education for people at any levels and at all ages (not limited, thus, to the strictly scholarly perspective). This passage represents the last step of a shift which began in the last century, when the dimension of literacy moved from a semiotically-measured geometry (De Saussure 1916; Hjelmslev 1966) to a dislocation and a deconstruction of contents and channels that give expression to new products (Derrida 1974; Bolter & Grusin 1999). Therefore, the impact of social media on narratives, narratology, and storytelling has redefined the meaning of readership and authorship, and the constant growth of different supports and tools freely available to wider audiences has favoured new experiences across media, in an informal environment where skills can improve in a transparent way.

From the ability to use, understand, and create media and communications in a variety of contexts, to a model of convergence culture where content fully permeates the audience's lifestyle, favouring the use of multiple platforms where every element contributes in a unique way to create and explore entities in a narrative universe, we can affirm that we have moved from the perspective of Media Literacy to a more pertinent Transmedia Literacy.

In this sense, Transmedia Culture defines a new cross-networked and amniotic literacy, considering that we are not facing a simple adaptation of different narratives from one media to another: different media and languages participate and contribute to the construction of a transmedia environment, where several audiences can express, through various supports, their participation in any possible emergent pattern in a socio-narrative space.

In order to capture and study the models of this change, in 2013 we set up, in Barcelona, a transdisciplinary research program and organized the first International Seminar: "Transmedia Literacy. From Storytelling to Intercreativity in the Era of Distributed Authorship". The initiative was aimed at building a research model and a research hub on the topic of Transmedia Literacy, an interdisciplinary, interconnected, and immersive model, in which the goal was not to analyse and interpret the transposition of different narrative forms from one channel to another, but to develop a framework of joint observations and participations, where different media platforms, languages, and formats contribute to forming a meaningful environment for users.

Linked to the seminar and the research hub was the idea of creating a new journal to describe, analyse, reflect on, and discuss the concept of transmedia as a process of emerging literacy, taking into consideration the epistemological sphere of participation, production, and transmission of knowledge and culture, the crisis of authorship, the new dimension of participation and relationship offered by the Web, the liquid structures of narrative spaces, and the intercreativity favoured by network narratives and collaborative digital environments.

The concept of Transmedia Literacy, which we have been exploring since 2013, stemmed from the need of changing the analytical perspective of the previous models that had discovered different stages of development and evolution over the past years. The very idea of literacy has always been linked to the concept of written text and its method of analysis and creation. As we have said in brief, the advent of mass media has successively introduced an initial change of perspective, offering the opportunity to broaden the spectrum of skills and ways of learning through a variety of channels, languages, platforms, and formats to communicate and use different contents. What ensued was Media Literacy, and, afterwards, with a different depth, Digital Literacy, which has found widespread support in many educational settings, as it has enabled skills' developments in the use of new media, and has offered new forms of expression through registers that emerging technologies began to provide to users.

Media Literacy has been defined in many different ways. For example, Ofcom (the Independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries) defines Media Literacy as “the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms” (Livingstone 2004, 2). The very definition of Media Literacy proposed by Ofcom is based on the homonymous concept developed at the Aspen Institute in 1992. Media education does not concern only the ability to decode information available in a variety of media, but also to acquire the necessary abilities to respond critically and to produce the same amount of contents with the same tools. Paul Gilster defined this digital literacy as: “the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers [...] (Not) only must you acquire the skill of finding things, you must also acquire the ability to use those things in your life. Acquiring digital literacy for Internet use involves mastering a set of core competencies. The most essential of these is the ability to make informed judgments about what you find on-line”. (Gilster 1997, 1)

Certainly, the users' abilities — users that have become active audience and participative consumers (prosumer: union of producer and consumer) — and the constant sharing of contents and experiences, through mixed channels of decoding and fruition, has further shifted the focal point of the question, not focusing on tools or on media any longer, but on means of expression, production, and the consumption of the content itself.

A first concept that reorganizes the scenario in this direction is the “Trans-literacy” one. This concept was born in the Anglo-Saxon world, between the two coasts of the Atlantic. In 2005, in the United States, Alan Liu developed and formalized the term “Transliterations” at the English Department of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Simplifying, according to Liu, “Trans-

literacies” are the set of practices related to reading online. Almost simultaneously in England, at the University of Montfort, Sue Thomas, inspired by and reworking Liu’s work, proposed the concept of “Transliteracy”, defining it as “the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks”. (Thomas et al. 2007, online)

Again simplifying, Sue Thomas focuses on interaction, on the practices of writing and communication. Although the term here does not relate to the concept of “Transmedia”, as to the meaning of “transliterate” (in *Transliteracy: Crossing Divides*, the authors clarify that for them the English word “transliteracy” comes from the verb “to transliterate”), the model carried out by Thomas and her colleagues opened up a first breakthrough towards a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary field of research. According to them transliteracy in fact offers a broader analysis of reading, writing, and interaction across a range of platforms, tools, media, and cultures: “Transliteracy does not replace, but rather, contains the ‘Media Literacy’ and also the ‘Digital Literacy’”. (*ibidem*)

If the concept of “Transliteracy” has a double origin (on the one hand the American approach of Alan Liu, conversely, the British one proposed by Sue Thomas), the two models, though complementary, offer two different contents. To these two approaches, according to Alexandre Serres, it would be necessary to add a third, characteristic of libraries and of certain Anglo-Saxon universities, where the transliteracy concept covers the set of digital skills, especially communication skills, proper to information processing and social networks. (Serres 2012)

In parallel to this scenario, a complementary one has been developed, which has gradually captured the signs of change: from production modes to consumption practices of content. This model is one that sketches, within different perspectives, the transmedia concept.

The term transmedia was used for the first time by Marsha Kinder in 1991. Kinder used the term “Transmedia Intertextuality” to precisely define and discuss how narrative for children had moved into different forms of “media” (movies, television, and video games) and presented different levels of interaction. The prefix trans- (also present in “Transliteracy”), in fact, suggests the idea of passage, to go further, to change from one condition to another, and to exchange. Since Kinder’s definition, Transmedia has normally been accompanied with “storytelling”, assuming a specific connotation on how narratives based on different channels and multiple languages are constructed.

Henry Jenkins was the first researcher to formalize the concept of Transmedia Storytelling. Already in 2006, Jenkins prefaced, in his book *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*, the change of the user’s role, of

the market, and the ways in which new contents were produced in a fully trans-media context. According to Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story”. (Jenkins 2007, online)

The unique contribution made by different media is also highlighted by Marie-Laure Ryan. According to her, the medium-term embraces a wide range of phenomena and should distinguish between: a) media as channels or information systems/communication/entertainment; and b) media as material or technical means of expression (Ryan 2003). Ryan, indebted to McLuhan’s expression “The medium is the message”, reminds us that the use of each medium influences the type of information that can be transmitted and, therefore, may alter the conditions of reception.

Moving from an idea of transmedia (storytelling) as an example of knowledge and production (Jenkins) and Sue Thomas’ vision (who also saw in “transliteracy” an open source model intended to evolve over time), the concept of Transmedia Literacy will offer a set of theoretical and analytical tools to be able to acquire the skills needed to critically understand the characters and the possibilities of the emerging culture.

This first issue of the International Journal of Transmedia Literacy aims to function as a starting point to reflect on, analyse, and discuss Transmedia Literacy as an emerging but fundamental literacy for contemporary society and culture. This issue comes as result of the input given by research presented during the International Seminar “Transmedia Literacy. From Storytelling to Intercreativity in the Era of Distributed Authorship” we mentioned above.

Some of the papers published herein were presented during the above-mentioned seminar, whose title is now the title of this publication. We also decided to have a section called TL Grassroots, where we will republish articles and/or interviews we consider important so as to retrace a history of Transmedia Literacy in order to put forward new analyses and new approaches. In TL Grassroots, we would like to highlight the theoretical frameworks that have defined the origins of transmedia in terms of a different literacy. For this first issue we decided to republish Lev Manovich’s “Cinema as a Cultural Interface” (1997), which, according to us, perfectly underlines some of the most important passages that have constituted the definition of a “Transmedia Literacy” moving from the recognition of cinema as a cultural interface. The other paper published in this section is the interview Henry Jenkins made with Marsha Kinder in March 2015. This interview enables readers to quickly reflect on the evolution of the digital arts and humanities and on the term “transmedia” itself, while it also proposes alternative ways of framing issues

of medium specificity. Moreover, it draws on how the term “transmedia” has been reformulated, moving from Transmedia to Transmedia Storytelling, to Transmedia Learning, Transmedia Branding, etc. In this, the interview demonstrates how reformulations of the term are possible. As noted, the aim of this journal is to foster discussions about a new literacy, shifting the focus from Transmedia Storytelling to Transmedia Literacy.

The first article by Raine Koskimaa, *Playing with Time in Digital Fiction*, analyses a particularity of digital fiction: the use of time. The article discusses the temporal dimension of two digital fictions: the *Braid* (by Jonathan Blow, 2008) and the *Spore* (by Will Wright for Maxis, 2008), focusing on the possibilities given to time thanks to digital writing. Susana Tosca’s *We Have Always Wanted More* proposes the concept of “transmedial desire” to characterize the impulse of audiences to engage with their favourite fictions across different media. The third article, *Transmedia Ekphrasis. From Analogue to Digital Formats* by Asunción López-Varela Azcárate, examines Lewis Carroll’s poem *Jabberwocky* (which is included in his novel *Through the Looking-Glass*), and compares it to Jan Švankmajer’s 1971 movie of the same title. This article also analyses Simon Biggs’ 2010 installation *reRead*, which was inspired by Carroll’s novel. The three works are used as examples of art works which break analogic principles and bring to the fore, each in a different medium, the metamorphosis of ekphrastic processes. George P. Landow’s *We Have Always Had Mashups, or Mashing Up Transmediality*, observes the intertwined concepts of media, information technology, and mash-ups, and then draws upon examples from ancient Greek literature based on orality, Latin scribal culture, and printed poetry to demonstrate that the practice of the mash-up is central to our understanding of both media and transmediality. Some of the other papers propose case studies: Gemma San Cornelio and Antoni Roig Telo, in their paper *Being Lucky. Transmedia and Co-Creation Practices in Music Video-Clips*, take as a case example the “Evolution of Get Lucky”, a collective experiment by musician PV Nova, to analyse co-creation practices from the perspective of Transmedia Literacies in music and video music. Valentina Bazzarin’s *Is the Community a Medium? Is ‘That’s Me!’ the Message? The Story of #Placevent: We Are Using Social Media to Hack the Academy* examines a research/action plan to collect and observe students’ self- and community-representation, by using digital-ethnographic methods and assigning students —involved in the research/action plan — problem-solving tasks. They created a group — #placement — where students promoted innovation through different communication practices. Edorta Arana, Bea Narbaiza, and Libe Mimenza offer in their paper *Korikka, A Transmedia View*, another transmedia case study: Korikka, a popular relay race in favour of Euskara, which also involves the use of social networking, web resources, and social mobilization elements, puts forward

a transmedia experience/practice. Mariana Ciancia's *Transmedia Design Framework. Designed-Oriented Approach to Transmedia Research* defines the "design-oriented" approach used for her PhD research in the transmedia field. The description of methodology and methods enables each researcher to develop observations about their role of studying this field, as well as the relationship between researching and teaching experience. *Friends, Partners & Co: A Sustainable Model for the Media?* by Gabriela Pedranti analyses a transmedia object: *Orsai, nadie en el medio*. Born as a blog, *Orsai* became a high-quality paper magazine with no advertising in 2011 and later a publishing house. Pedranti studies the role of prosumers (or active audience) in building up the transmedia product. *Paratextual Prometheus. Digital Paratext on Youtube, Vimeo, and Prometheus Transmedia Campaign* by Sérgio Tavares focuses on correspondences between book literacy and online video platform literacy. In particular, he studies the role of paratext, the authors, and (active) audience in online video platforms. *New Technologies On the Street. CINEMATIC* by Lucía Amorós offers us an example of daily life using ICTs on the street (in an educational open environment) in order to promote quality education through the analysis of the use and impact of ICTs. And, finally, Fernanda Bonacho's *Alice's Anima: The Obligation of Transmedia Reading* studies *Inanimate Alice* by Kate Pullinger and Ian Harper (the cover of this issue of the journal is taken from a scene of *Inanimate Alice*) as an example of a transmedia narrative that triggers a new reading experience whilst proposing a literary alterity between reading and performance.

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PART ONE
Articles

Playing with Time in Digital Fiction

Raine Koskimaa

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

doi: 0000000000000

raine.koskimaa@jyu.fi

ABSTRACT

The exceptional quality of digital fictions lies in their inherently dynamic nature, how they may be flexibly programmed to generate new content and alter the already existing contents. This adds a new temporal level, compared to traditional fictions. Digital games, especially, incorporate aspects of simulation and narration in their structure. As interactive and dynamic media form, games are specifically temporal in nature. They offer us the flexibility and preciseness of digital simulations, with the potential of psychologically engaging narrative qualities, which together open up a whole new field of experimenting with temporally dynamic media. Much of the new media fictions partake in a wider transmedia story worlds with temporal implications of their own. In this article the temporal dimension of the digital fictions the *Braid* (by Jonathan Blow, 2008) and the *Spore* (by Will Wright for Maxis, 2008) are discussed. We will focus on how these digital fictions, employing aspects of simulation, play and narration, highlight the idea of time as resource.

Keywords: the Braid (game); digital fiction; fictional time; narration; the Spore (game); simulation; temporality.

1. INTRODUCTION

The exceptional quality of digital fictions lies in their inherently dynamic nature, how they may be flexibly programmed to generate new content and alter the already existing contents. This adds a new temporal level, compared to traditional fictions. Already the history of digital fictions presents us with a variety of temporal practices, even though this dimension has not been thoroughly discussed so far.

Digital games, especially, incorporate aspects of simulation and narration in their structure. As interactive and dynamic media form, games are specifically temporal in nature. They offer us the flexibility and preciseness of digital

simulations, with the potential of psychologically engaging narrative qualities, which together open up a whole new field of experimenting with temporally dynamic media. Much of the digital fictions partake in wider transmedia story worlds. Here, the fictional time necessarily blends with the true time of the audience.

In this article, we will discuss the temporal dimension of two digital fictions, the *Braid* (by Jonathan Blow, 2008), computer game with time-reversal as game mechanic, and the *Spore* (by Will Wright for Maxis, 2008), a game with simulated evolutionary time-scale and a wide transmedia dimension.

Games are a specific class of simulations, where time figures also as a game element, posing challenges and limitations to the player. Narratives, according to the Aristotelian tradition, are imitation of human activity. In more modern framework we may consider narratives not only as imitation, but also as simulation of activities. In this article we will focus on digital fictions which employ aspects of simulation, play and narration, and which highlight the temporality of existence and experience.

Digital fiction includes games (with fictional content), digital literature, and transmedia franchises with digital storytelling elements. What is common with all types of digital fictions is that they combine elements of gaming / playing, narrative, and simulation. These aspects are enabled by the fact that by being based on digital media technologies, digital fictions are dynamic, they may be programmed to behave in various ways. The dynamic nature directly relates to the temporal quality of digital fiction, which is more complex than time in more traditional forms of fiction. One of the first attempts to theorize game temporality was Juul (2005), where the play time and the fictional time of the game-world were differentiated, and various mappings between them modeled (141-156). Juul also counted for certain temporal violations which are routinely accepted by players (like the discrepancy between time taken for individual moves in football games as compared to similar moves in real football match, 151-152).

To begin with, it is important to note that time within a fiction is a fictional construct. Thus, it would be possible to play around with temporality and break free from the model of the real world time. Some fundamental properties of time, however, are very seldom violated in fiction. The 'arrow of time', especially, the notion that time only flies in one direction, from past through the present and towards future, is usually maintained. Time-travel stories are a notable exception to this rule, and there are a few fictions where time runs backwards, such as Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* (1991), Philip K. Dick's *Counter-clock World* (1968), and Oldřich Lipský's film *Happy End* (1966). In addition to mainly obeying the arrow of time, fictional time is ruled by many conventions, which maintain the temporal realism. This is important

as time in, especially, literature bears only a vague relation to real time. Gérard Genette, for example, has coined the concept of 'pseudo time' to explain how the amount of text, a spatial measure, is translated into a temporal measure when the amount of text used to describe certain events determines how 'slow' or 'fast' the narration is (1980, 33-35). For the purposes of this article, we can define direction, order, and speed as the main aspects of fictional time.

Order and speed are qualities which may be distorted in several ways, but this relates usually to the narration, not to the narrated events. Episodes may be narrated more slowly or quickly (per pseudo time), and they may be narrated non-chronologically as is often the case in murder mystery where the event of finding a dead body is narrated first, and then, piecemeal, the earlier episodes leading to the murder are disclosed. This is different, however, than breaking the causal order in the narrative world.

2. GAME TIME

We start the scrutiny of temporality in digital fiction from games, as time is a fundamental element in most games (the most notable exceptions being puzzle games and turn-based strategy games) and consequently, it is possible to find a number of ways to manipulate time in them. To begin with, games usually allow going back in time, in the sense of returning to an earlier point within the fictional world of the game.

The going back in time may be installed in different ways. Quite typical is to force the player to return to an initial state of the game, in case of failure in given tasks. If the player fails to avoid the barrels thrown around by Donkey Kong, she is taken back to the beginning and has to start the climbing all over again. It is only in such cases where the initial state is fully resumed that we may consider that as going back in time, whereas if modifications in the player character or in the game environment endure, then it is simply a case of spatial relocation.

Many games enable saving the game state, either at any point or at certain specific places (so-called save points). It is then possible for the player to load the saved state later, in order to re-run the subsequent game from that point on. Loading a saved game is, in effect, a time machine allowing return to earlier states of the fictional game world. In games with narrative content there is often a structure of alternative story lines within the same fictional world, and the player may have several states saved, allowing her to switch between the alternatives. In this case, it is not only a question of travelling in (fictional) time, but also switching between parallel fictional worlds (for example, in *Star*

Wars The Knights of the Old Republic, the player may traverse the game both as a Jedi or Sith apprentice). Espen Aarseth has made classification to three temporal levels in games, the event time, the negotiation time, and the progression time. It is specifically the existence of the negotiation time in games, which enables the temporal back-and-forth movement (1999, 37-38).

Even in the most realistic, simulation type of games, the temporal aspect is usually condensed. Whereas in all other aspects realistic perfection is aimed at, the duration of the game is kept unrealistically short. In combat games, so-called 1st Person Shooters, the weapons, for example, are very precisely modelled. Still, one round of combat seldom is longer than 5 to 10 minutes. Even though it is understandable from the playability perspective that this sort of adjustment is needed (very few players would be willing, or able, to engage in weeks and months long non-stop campaigns), it is still notable how little this has effect on our appreciation of the realism of the game. Also in sports games, like the FIFA Football Game Series, appraised for their level of realism, you may choose how long the “45 minutes” of a period actually lasts. The temporal distortions are closely related to the spatial aspects of game worlds, and the player needs, as discussed by Aarseth in relation to *The World of Warcraft* (2008, 118-119) and Anders Løvlie (2007, 73) in relation to the *Battlefield 2*. According to Juul, the main motivation for these temporal distortions is to avoid what the player’s experience as dead time, the need to “perform unchallenging activities for the sake of higher goal” (2005, 155) such as traversing a long stretch between two locations.

It is also a stock device in many games that the game actions gradually gain speed. This may be used to make the game harder by increasing the kinesthetic challenge (Karhulahti 2013) as in *Tetris*, where quicker and quicker reactions are required. The opposite effect is to give the player a ‘boost’, enabling the player to move faster in the game world and thus making it easier to beat the challenge. Often, the boost effect only lasts for a limited amount of time.

The boosting device already refers to the more general phenomenon of having several temporal layers at play simultaneously. In an arcade racing game collecting a rocket motor makes the player’s car move considerably faster as compared to the competing racers, creating a different temporal framework within the game world. *Max Payne* employs a device called bullet time, which enables the player to slow down action in game world, for a limited amount of time, in order to make it easier to fight the enemies, or, to take certain actions requiring high precision. The player may initiate bullet time at will, but once used, it cannot be initiated immediately again but there is a certain wait period. The bullet time is also mimicked occasionally in short cut scenes in the middle of fights, as some of the enemies killed are stopped mid-air and their falling down is shown in extremely slow motion.

There are also more complex instantiations of the temporal layering, as in the *Civilization* game series and many other games belonging to the same genre. In *Civilization* games the player starts building a town, and, over dozens of turns, creates a civilization with several cities, either fighting the neighboring civilizations or seeking friendly relations with them. Each turn in the game designates a number of years passing by in the fictional game world. During each turn, the player has to micro-manage the daily tasks of her units, make ideological choices of how to develop her civilization and decide which technologies to investigate. There is, then, the layer of the historical development of the civilization, spanning millennia in the fictional world of the game, juxtaposed with daily tasks of the units and city management. Furthermore, the game employs so-called technology-tree, which governs how the technologies may be developed. The technology-tree, as such, is a logical structure telling that one has to develop a wheel first, before a chariot may be built. As it entails causal relationships, however, it imposes a temporal framework of its own upon the fictional game world. The fictional time as counted in fictive years is not always in synchrony with the technology tree, at least if compared to our own history. Certain inventions may appear much earlier or later in the civilization's development as one might expect, and also, especially if the player chooses a strategy in which a particular strand of technology is emphasized, there may co-exist highly developed technology in one field (for example, airplanes) and much less developed ones in other field (rowing boat as the most advanced form of seafaring).

The *Civilization* games also exemplify the class of turn-based games as opposed to the real-time games. In turn-based games, in a sense, time stands still while the player is making her move and nothing in the game world changes during that pondering period. The actual time spent on playing the game is strictly cut off of the fictional time of the game. In real-time simulation games the opponents continuously proceed in their activities, which puts pressure on the player to make quick decisions, but it also brings along the possibility to simply make mistakes in controlling the game units in haste. In simulation games especially, we can talk about reflective temporality of turn-based simulations and competitive temporality of real-time simulations.

The final aspect to note here is that it is common in games to regard time as a very concrete resource. In game levels where a time limit is set (the level has to be finished within a set time, often shown as a diminishing time bar), the player may win more time, as when collecting a special item stops the counter for a while, or lose it, a failure in certain task either slowing her down or making the counter bar drop instantly. It is this reification and manipulability of time that is very specific to digital games. Timothy Barker has developed the idea how digital technologies produce time, as exemplified in digital art, but there

are clear corollaries to digital games as well (2012). We may have experiences of time running exceptionally slow, or time flying (when you are having fun, or in a state of flow), but these are subjective experiences and only meaningful in relation to the objective time measured by clocks. In the fictional game worlds, time may really be running faster or slower, and furthermore, we have devices to affect the temporal pace.

3. CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF TIME

Our notion of time has been characterized in many ways. We refer here to just a few well known examples. Henri Bergson made a distinction between the scientific, measurable time, and the experienced duration. The duration is something qualitative, simultaneously a multiplicity and a unity. It can only be grasped through intuition. When we look at the forms of digital fictions, be it the way how things are presented on screen, or how they are run in the code level, we are dealing with the measurable time. The experienced duration, however, is related to the player on the one hand, and to the fictional characters in as much as they manage to evoke feelings of identification in the player. That is, a game may communicate fictional experiences of duration, even though traditional fiction in literature and film is much better developed in this area. (cf. Bergson 2002)

Historian Fernand Braudel made an influential classification of three temporal levels. The first level, geographical time, is that of the environment, with its slow, almost imperceptible change, with cyclical repetition of recurring ice ages and such. The time scale is millennia. The second level of time comprises social and cultural history. Change at this level is faster than at the level of the environment, but the development of certain inventions from the conception to the integration in the whole society may take hundreds of years, as in the case of printing press (from Gutenberg's invention to the full scale internalization of print text in 1800's). The scale on this level is decades and centuries. The third level is the time of daily events, the history and life-world of individuals. The time scale varies from minutes and hours to days, months and years.

We believe that a fourth level is needed, in addition to Braudel's three, that is, the micro-time of physical events, taking place below or behind the human perception. Much of what happens within the microprocessor takes place on this level. Mega and giga Hertzses speak about this rhythm quite incomprehensible for human brain. Mark N. B. Hansen, for example, has attempted at theorizing this machinic time, connecting it to the "nonconscious neural scale of duration" (235).

Simulation with digital technologies, offers us a tool to render both micro and macro levels of time to the human event-scale. We may witness the billions of years development of our Cosmos in one hour of a Planetarium show. Or the fragment of a second of a particle collision within a particle accelerator slowed down to minutes. It is exactly this practical aspect of flexible and precise adjusting of the temporal variable which makes simulations so efficient tools for all sorts of practices, and which is behind the temporal multiplicity in many games.

4. GAMES AND MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES

In what follows we'll discuss more in detail two digital games, Jonathan Blow's the *Braid*, which employs all imaginable temporal distortions integrated in the game play, and Will Wright's (Maxis) the *Spore*, a game with evolutionary time scale and transmedia extensions. They serve well in exemplifying how most of the digital fictions are based on multiple temporalities (or, multi-temporality following Barker 2012), where some of the temporal frames are dictated by the game system logic, some by the fictional story-content, and still others derive from the player's real-life situation. The set of temporalities is related to the types of the games, and especially the multi-player games bring along their own complexities in the whole (see Tychsen and Hitchens 2007). The multiplication of temporalities may lead to a kind of playful take on time itself, but in many cases one of the temporalities clearly dominates the game experience.

4.1. *The Braid*

The *Braid* is a game created by Jonathan Blow, originally for Xbox 360 (2008). It won the Independent Games Festival Award in 2006, for 'Innovation in Game Design' (the award was given to an early version of the game, before the commercial publication). The *Braid* is a platform puzzle, with a framework story provided in text format in transitional passages between the levels, where the player embarks on a journey through a strange world to save a Princess. The main peculiarity of the game is that it enables time-reversal at any point. The player may 'rewind' the events simply by pressing one button. The time-reversal is not fully consistent, however, and to proceed in the game, it is often crucial to detect the incoherencies and use them to solve the puzzles.

There are six stages or 'worlds' within the game, each employing a different temporal game mechanic: (the list begins with the World 2, as the World 1 is accessible only after completing each of the other five worlds)

- World 2: reversal of time by pressing 'Shift'. All actions performed may be reeled back without limitations.
- World 3: specific objects (designated with greenish glow) are not affected by the time reversal. It is possible, for example, to get a key by performing a jump which kills the character. Through time reversal the character is returned to an earlier position and resurrected, but still holding the key which was taken during the fatal action. Moving objects which are needed as jumping platforms can be synchronized by minutely accentuated time reversals, as some of the objects are not affected by the reversal.
- World 4: space and time are intertwined, so that when the character moves to the right the time moves forward, leftward movement triggers reversed time, and if the character stays still or jumps upwards time stays still. This requires extremely careful planning of all actions as it is a highly counterintuitive condition.
- World 5: when the player reverses time, a shadow character appears which performs the actions that the real character took before the reversal. There are such specific objects with which both characters may interact. Some puzzles require coordinated actions of the past and the present character.
- World 6: the character carries a magic ring, which may be used to slow down time within the proximity of it (spatially limited slowing down of time).
- World 1: time runs backwards constantly here and using the time reversal restores the normal movement of objects.

It is obvious that there are close connections to the notions of time and temporality as explained by modern physics here, the time-reversibility being one of the key issues in quantum computing (cf. Brown 2000), time and space entanglement stemming from Einstein's theory of relativity, splitting to parallel realities known through the popular example of Schrödinger's Cat etc. On one level the game can be seen as an instantiation of these kinds of temporal peculiarities in modern physics (cf. Davies 1996).

4.2. *Fictional World vs. Logical System*

There is also a strong narrative aspect in the *Braid*. In the frame story the game-character Tim tells how he has done something in his life, which he strongly regrets (related to his former girlfriend) and he wishes he would be able to render the deed undone. It is this narrative motivation of the in-game time-reversal which makes the *Braid* so intriguing. It is obvious that the Princess the protagonist is chasing after has at least double meaning. On one level the Princess is the former girlfriend of Tim, but on the metaphorical level the Princess stands for some ultimate goal that Tim the scientist is looking for, truth,

wisdom, knowledge, power... There are plenty of signs alluding to the possibility that Tim has been involved in developing the first nuclear bombs, the detonation of the first bomb possibly being the terrible deed he wishes to be made undone, and the Princess standing for the mastery over Mother Nature. More elaborated interpretations equal Tim with Albert Einstein, the Princess in this case standing for the Unified Field Theory Einstein did seek for in vain.

The game-play does not relate closely to either of these story lines. There are, however, puzzle pictures within certain game stages, depicting persons who could be related to the love story. The time manipulations on the other hand link to the scientist/Einstein story. Even more challenging would be to reconcile these two stories somehow with each other. What is more important, however, is that there is a recognizable story, evoking a fictional world with characters with which the player may, more or less, identify.

In the beginning of the game the logic of time reversal is quite simple. The possibility of reeling back time is, in principle, similar to the possibility of saving a game state and reloading it after a mistake. The difference is practical, in that the time reversal in the *Braid* is easier to accomplish, and because of that, enables a kind of real-time trial-and-error method simplifying the task of adjusting certain challenging movements. Of course, it also neatly fits with the frame story and its insistence on undoing past mistakes. In this game level, the only thing that is transferred across the time barrier is knowledge: an earlier game state is reinstated but the player possesses the memory of the cancelled events which helps in finding more efficient ways to proceed in the game.

In the subsequent worlds, with elements and objects not affected by the time-reversal we have a more complicated situation. It seems that we are facing an incoherent fictional world, where various elements follow different temporal logic. This is not, however, that strange a situation, and there are several works of literary and film fiction where similar cases can be found. But since we are dealing with a digital game here, there is another dimension involved, too, that is the game as a system of structured challenges. When emphasizing the game aspect of the *Braid*, it is not necessary to consider the fictive narrative at all, in order to succeed in the game. The logic of controlling the game character and environment can be learned through experimenting with the controls and observing the game behavior without referring to the game narrative. How much an individual player focuses on the fictional narrative, and how much on the game challenges as a formal system, cannot be estimated without empirical research of actual players (which is out of scope of this paper). It is, however, quite apparent that the balance of narrative versus ludic challenge in games with narratives depends both on the qualities of a particular game and the character of each individual player. On this scale, the *Braid* has invested quite much in integrating the narrative with the game system, but many of the chal-

lenges are repetitive and kinaesthetic in a way which is prone to alienate the player from the immersion in the fictional world.

There is also a procedural counterpart for the game system in the code level of the *Braid*. When looking at the digital state machine on which the software code of the game runs, the connection to the fictional world is cut off, and the game system is reduced to a set of logical, rather than temporal, connections. In this framework we are not dealing with any sort of time-paradoxes, but simply with synchronizing different systems of state-machines. This approach is fully based on the measurable (scientific) time of Henri Bergson, of which the personal experience of duration is abolished. Even though we are here stepping to the field requiring empirical research, it might be possible to hypothetically argue that the emphasis on measurable time happening during so-called grinding periods in game play (extended periods of highly repetitive and mechanical action), partly explain the often reported failure to notice the amount of time spent on playing digital games.

The *Braid* seems to confirm the notions of the elusive nature of time. Even though it is probably the richest example of time-based game mechanics, when each of the mechanics is looked closely enough, they seem to lose their temporal nature in favour of logical and spatial puzzles. What is most intriguing, after all, in the *Braid*, is its playful approach towards the mystery of time. It does provide ingredients for deep philosophical reflection for those so inclined, but one doesn't have to delve in such reflections in order to enjoy the wild experimenting with the game world.

4.3. *The Spore – Playing with Evolution*

One of the most ambitious games released lately has been the game called the *Spore*, which is a simulation of long-term processes of evolution within the game world. Even though *Spore*, as an online game, has a much longer time span than usual stand-alone games, it still needs to condense the temporal dimension considerably. It would be worth examining more in detail, how the evolutionary processes develop within this simulated world. In our real world evolution requires a huge amount of selection situations, for certain tendencies to emerge. Artificial, designed factors need to be introduced in the game world, to facilitate faster evolution.

The *Spore* allows a player to control the development of a species from its beginnings as a microscopic organism to an intelligent and social creature, eventually able to interstellar exploration as a spacefaring culture. The evolutionary scope of the game is combined with open-ended gameplay based on procedural generation allowing emergent phenomena. Whereas the game in

stand-alone mode is limited to relatively short play time and offers closure through alternative winning states, it is possible to transport one's creatures to the online Sporepedia, and that way, to other players' Spore Worlds where it can continue its life independent of its creator.

There is a strong element of transmediality in the *Spore*. In the game, there is a built-in functionality to release one's own video captures in the Youtube Spore Channel. The Sporepedia is a forum, where the players may upload their creations done with *Spore* editors, and share them with other players. The Sporepedia keeps track of every creature and provides an alternative mode for the *Spore* experience, where the game itself turns into a complex tool for content creation and communication device with the rest of the community. There is also a number of the *Spore* creatures mimicking cartoon, game, and other media characters, likening it to fan fiction in certain aspects. An in-game SporeStore is also available, where it is possible to purchase Spore-based merchandise like t-shirts, posters, and expansion packs.

Temporally the *Spore* provides an evolutionary time-scale, with an even longer span than the civilization building games (like Sid Meier's *Civilization* Series), as the game begins from the early stages of life on earth including Cell and Creature stages. At the other end, there is the ultimate goal of the Space stage, as in most civilization games. The *Spore*, thus covers billions of years in life's evolution, which requires speeding up of the game time considerably. There are also significant temporal lapses in that the game entities abruptly jump from one stage to another, for example from Cell Stage to Creature Stage, with undefined period skipped in between. The various stages in the game are also unevenly divided, the cell stage covering billions of years, whereas the civilization stage is a matter of millennia. Thus, the speeding up is several factors higher in the early stages compared to later stages.

The sense of temporal direction, the arrow of time, is provided by the development of the game entities. The player has a god-like power to affect this development through various selections, but the backbone of evolution is enabled by the "procedural generation" based on a programmed behavior in each creature. This, in a sense, should enable emergent phenomena as the creatures react to the changing environment, but in practice, the game programming severely limits the development only allowing certain "evolutionary steps". The evolutionary progression only proceeds until certain end states, after which the creatures may still continue their lives in the player's own, or in other players', Spore Worlds, but it does not evolve any more. This juxtaposes two modes of temporality, one seeing time in teleologic terms, as progression towards ever higher states of being, the other being fundamentally circular, in that when there is no progression but only various permutations of possible states this ultimately leads to every state recurring endlessly.

In addition to the grand time scale, the *Spore* is also interesting in the way how it plays along parallel temporalities. When a creature is transferred to another player's *Spore* world, it shifts from one temporal continuum to another one. Following one's own creatures in parallel worlds happens through the Sporepedia. This is quite different activity compared to engagement with a game. The Sporepedia-mediated experience in many ways is close to participating in social media, with frequent but usually short peeks to how things are evolving in the *Spore* universe. The combination of deep engagement with game world and the frequent visits to the social sphere is what characterizes the transmedia experience more in general.

4.4. *Time in Transmedia*

The transmedia worlds usually refer to such fictional universes as based on the *Matrix* or *Star Wars* franchises which deliver their stories over various media (films, games, tv series, books, mobile content etc.) the *Spore* is not the most typical example of transmedia, but the way how the players' participatory activity is central for developing new content to the Sporepedia and how the game world expands to the realm of additional products and merchandises is very much transmedial.

Temporally, the most notable aspects of transmedia is the challenge in maintaining coherence in distributed story worlds, and the intertwining of fictional time with the player's real time. Because of the distributed nature of transmedia storyworlds and storytelling, the producers usually develop and refer to so-called Transmedia Production Bible which provides the canon of the fictional world. Each individual episode, in every format possible, has to follow the Production Bible, to avoid contradictions and confusions. Carlos Scolari has listed four strategies (found in the TV series 24) to expand the main storyline: the creation of interstitial microstories, parallel stories, peripheral stories, and, user-generated content platforms and fanfiction (2009, 598). The interstitial stories fill in temporal gaps between episodes, thus making the flow more continuous. Parallel stories expand the story world inside the given temporal frame, whereas peripheral stories may stay more ambiguous in respect to the temporal continuum as they are not affecting the central characters or events. Users are not tied to the Production Bible, and the user-created content may contradict with the main story line. In some cases, this is an intentional purpose, as in much of the so-called slash fiction where alternative (sexual) identities and orientations are created for the fictional characters. Often different additional modalities are presented through different media, like interstitial micro stories as webisodes, and peripheral stories as print

novels, which means that also the way how the users engage with them differ. There are then various modes to suit the circumstantial needs of the user, which enables the user to access the fictional world more flexibly, this being the main reason that the experience is increasingly seamlessly fusing with the everyday experience.

There is not much research on the consumption patterns in relation to transmedia storytelling, and the time distribution between various transmedia elements, but in regards to game like *Spore* we may assume, that the everyday measurable time becomes more dominant in perceiving the development of one's creature, when it is followed through the Sporepedia, rather than the in-game fictional time scale. It is also quite possible, that the time spent in a state of flow inside game world affects our sense of duration also in physical reality. According to Hansen, that might be understood as "enlarging of the now of perceptual consciousness" (2004, 257).

5. COMPETING TIMES

The peculiarity of digital fictions lies in their dynamic nature. The dynamics, in its turn, is based on computer code executed by microprocessors. As computing devices have evolved into an expressive media (or metamedia, as it is also argued) the digital fictions may combine the flexibility and preciseness of digital simulations with the potential of psychologically engaging media narratives. This in itself opens up a new field of experimenting with temporally dynamic media contents, but also changes our habitual ways to engage with media.

The *Braid* foregrounds our implicit notions of the flow and direction of time, in making the game time reversible, but also manipulatable in various other ways. In a deeper level it raises ethical questions implied in the situation where it would be possible to return to previous points in time and changes one's choices – would that mean that we are obliged to erase certain deeds with negative catastrophic consequences, even if that would also annihilate most of our life and its accomplishments? As a game, however, it emphasizes the competitive temporality to the extent, that there may not be enough of reflection time for the ethical questions to be evoked, in the first place.

In the *Spore*, the temporal interest lies foremost in the huge, evolutionary time scale of the game, which simulates the development of living organisms from simple cell stage to space faring civilization. This requires both condensing time within the stages, and leaving wide gaps between the stages. Whereas the game time has predetermined, definite endings, the creatures may continue their life in other players' *Spore* worlds though the Sporepedia

website. In a transmedial way the user generated content, like the videos made using the *Spore* creatures, may provide interstitial stories showing what has happened during the transitional gaps between the stages, while the creatures in parallel *Spore* worlds may be seen as parallel or peripheral stories. The fictional time is intertwined with the player's real time more intimately when it is possible to log in to the *Spore* events in various modes, not just through engaged game play.

The examples discussed here seem to confirm the notion that in playing the real time seems to be dominating over the fictional time. It does not entail, however, that the fictional time would be useless, but rather, that the players are quite flexible towards the fictional time. It can be tweaked in many ways, as long as certain key moments are maintaining their relative places in the temporal continuum. When this kind of flexible notion of time is transferred back to the real life experience, it may result in the "timeless time" of the information networks, as Manuel Castells has described it. As there is blending of several temporal modalities taking place, it might be more accurate, however, to call it rather multiple time than a timeless one. When time is considered as a resource, the more acquainted one gets to the multiple time through games and other digital fictions, the better she is able to manage that valuable resource.

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We Have Always Wanted More

Susana Tosca

IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark

doi: 0000000000

tosca@itu.dk

ABSTRACT

This essay proposes the concept of “transmedial desire” to characterize the impulse of audiences to engage with their favourite fictions across different media. I argue that transmedial desire is the essential force that makes fictions become transmedial in the first place and offer some historical examples of three different kinds of desires: experiencing, inhabiting and transforming.

Keywords: transmedial world; desire; fiction; storytelling; audience; experience; transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

When I was eight, I made a Lego Smurf village so that me and my little brother could play with our plastic Smurf figures. It stood for weeks and weeks, occupying a big part of the living room, and we would rush from school everyday to play and make stories in our favourite world. Until my mother got tired of it and put all the pieces in their box, and then inside the cupboard. We were really angry; she had destroyed our world! We really cared about that village, and were extremely invested in the Smurf stories: we read the comic books, watched the cartoons, drew Smurfs all over the place and made up new stories every day which we enacted with our figurines. Without knowing it, we were part of building a transmedial universe; our enthusiasm and love for the characters had made us want to extend their world into different media. And we were by no means the first to do something like this.

This essay will take you in an uneven romp through history in search of traces of transmedial desire. My aim is not (at least not only) to show that transmedial storytelling has always existed, since the act of representing a popular story across different media has probably been there since our prehis-

toric ancestors painted a tale of a legendary hunt into the walls of a cave. I want to use historical examples to illustrate different desires associated with transmedial representations and the motivations of audiences to engage with them. This is not an empirical paper, even though it is based on previous empirical experience working with transmedial fans (Klastrup and Tosca 2004, 2009, 2011, 2013), it is an essay.

The notion of transmedial desire, which I will define in the next section, is inspired by the work of Peter Brooks and his definition of narrative desire. In *Reading for the Plot. Design and Intention in Narrative* (1984), Brooks makes a convincing case for applying the psychoanalytic notion of desire to the study of literature. He argues that desire “is always there at the start of a narrative” (1984, 38), where the opening paragraphs set a stage that defines what kinds of things the reader will want to know, as the desire to know more is what motivates readers to engage with texts. He looks at the different kinds of “engines” texts can have to afford different kinds of pleasures, all the time insisting in reading as a dynamic and playful operation. His model is built upon Freud’s and Lacan’s characterization of desire, and the motivation it provides human with, to seek the object of desire (in this case the fulfillment of the story). One of Brooks examples is the *Thousand and One Nights*, which literally thematizes the desire for a plot, a story that continues into the next night. Shahrazad “cures” the sultan of his sick sadistic death wish “by prolonging it, precisely by narrativizing it. Desire becomes reinvested in tellings of and listenings to stories, it is reconstituted as metonymy – over a thousand and one nights – until the Sultan can resume a normal erotic state, marrying Shahrazad” (1984, 60-61). Metonymy is also an illustrative trope to how transmedial fiction works, where experiencing one of the narratives evokes the whole universe. I want to expand Brook’s idea of narrative desire, from the single text to the relation to the whole textual universe.

2. TRANSMEDIAL DESIRE

I define *transmedial desire* as a pulsion common to enthusiastic audiences that are driven to seek more contact with the fictions they love, turning them into transmedial worlds (Klastrup and Tosca 2004) in the process. Audiences will read more books, watch more movies and revisit the same universe again and again. This pleasure of extending contact with the beloved fiction is similar to that found by Jennifer Hayward in relation to the consumption of serial texts, which, by virtue of their being extended in time, create a world and a desire for completion, of knowing more in Brooks sense (Hayward 1997).

Hayward is very interested in how serial audiences have different ways of being active, and not all are about producing fan fiction; she stresses the active aspect of “the processes of collaborative interpretation, prediction, metacommentary and creation” (Hayward 1997, 2). This is the same for transmedial audiences, where only a few will take their enthusiasm further and create their own stories within the transmedial universe (such as writers of fan fiction). I deliberately want to also pay attention here to the more “passive” desires of consumption, and not only to those of production. The reason for this, which I will return to at the end of the essay, is that I want to acknowledge and celebrate transmedial desire as an important cultural factor per se, without being distracted by distinctions (and evaluations) of which of its forms is preferable.

Have you ever done it? Daydreamt about being an inhabitant of your favourite fictional world? Debated with Frodo about the best way to get to Mordor while hiking through a forest? Asked yourself what Sherlock Holmes would do to identify the co-worker that systematically steals your soja milk from the common fridge? Played the *Star Wars* soundtrack on your headphones while you jog, heroically avoiding the imperial forces? You know you have. Maybe you have also created a fiction of your own that inhabits the same universe: a little poem, a short story, a costume party, a computer game... all to make your favourite world come alive. If so, you can be said to suffer from transmedial desire. *Suffer* because it is, as any desire, a realization about a lack. As Lacan (quoted in Brooks) puts it, desire is born “of the difference or split between need and demand” (Brooks 1984, 55); you want something which you don’t have, so you seek it. Unlike other desires though, it is often not difficult to satisfy, especially if your interest is in one of the most popular transmedial worlds such as the examples I introduced above.

Traditionally, transmedia theory has focused on the fictions themselves (trying to figure out the aesthetic characteristics of worlds that have transmedial appeal, Klastrup and Tosca 2004), on the intertextual relations of the different “units” comprising the transmedial world (for example by exploring questions of canon and deviation, like in Leavenworth 2014), or even on the strategic opportunities of transmedial communication (one company launching a story across different media, like in Dena 2011). This emphasis on the fictions and the producers can be traced in the proliferation of expressions such as *franchise* or *media convergence* and the many practical guides to transmedial storytelling that have been published in the last five years. When we talk about a franchise, we are considering the strategic planning and making of different fictions within a transmedial universe. But just launching a franchise (even a well made one with a sound business model and solid promotion strategy) is no guarantee that it will become a successful transmedial universe. Maybe not enough people will watch your movie, so nobody will play your computer

game or play with your figurines, and the fora of your fan communities will stay painfully dead as your impact time slot quickly diminishes and disappears. It is not possible to predict what people will fall in love with, and without the enduring enthusiasm of the audience, no transmedial world can exist.

However, not many theorists have talked about the people in the other end of the mediatic and authorial efforts: the transmedial audiences (unless it is to characterize fan production activity, like for example Jenkins 2006). We often ignore that the reason why so many contemporary fictions are parts of transmedial universes is simply because people want them. Many readers/viewers/users/players are consuming transmedial products without actually never producing any content themselves, which is kind of embarrassing if we think that the only thing that can redeem an audience is their willingness to engage creatively with their source of inspiration/fandom. Instead, many people just seem content to sit back and watch/read/play, maybe going so far as to engage in social media or fan fora discussing plot twists and character deviation problems. From a transmedial desire perspective, they are all contributing to keeping the world alive by the mere act of engaging with it at an interpretive (and sometimes productive) level again and again.

If we adopt an aesthetic perspective, we could say that experiencing the transmedial fiction realizes the work itself, so that the transmedial world becomes into existence every time someone engages in an act of interpretation and aesthetic interaction. This approach is related to the interest that theorists of reception like Jauss, Iser, or Eco have in the active role of recipients, but it goes beyond it, as it imbues the reception act with a creative significance of its own.

This is the philosophical stand behind the definition of transmedial world which Lisbeth Klastrup and I proposed in 2004:

Transmedial worlds are *abstract content systems* from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms. What characterises a transmedial world is that audience and designers share a *mental image* of the “worldness” (a number of distinguishing features of its universe). (Klastrup and Tosca 2004)

I emphasize “abstract content system” and “mental image” to insist on the fact that we consider the reception/aesthetic experience act as the defining one for the existence of transmedial worlds. In other words, a bunch of interconnected fictions doesn’t become a transmedial world until people begin to perceive it as such, and are able to make an abstraction of the world characteristics that are not exclusively tied to any particular plot (in our paper defined as “mythos, topos and ethos”, (Klastrup and Tosca 2004). In this essay, I argue that this act of creation is always fuelled by desire. It starts by an effort of comprehension that develops into a wish of *experiencing* more that can also be

about *inhabiting* our favourite worlds, maybe also into a wish of *transforming* the transmedial world ourselves.

These are the three main aspects of transmedial desire, which I will try to illustrate using some historical examples below. My motivation for using historical examples rather than contemporary ones, is twofold. Firstly, I want to move away from the idea of franchise, and propose examples that are not planned by a corporation but created by the actual audiences; in a way to explore the flip side of spreadability. Secondly, a lot of transmedial theory (our own included) focuses on examples taken from popular culture, particularly genres like fantasy and science fiction. I want to argue that transmedial desire can be detected in other genres and times, including works that we normally identify as belonging to the “high culture” canon.

2.1. Experiencing more: representation across media

This desire refers to probably the most straightforward way of media migration, where a character, scene or setting from one story is represented in another medium. A classic example could be Bernini's statue representing the myth of Apollo and Daphne, which had been told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (and which he in turn had reworked inspired by older Greek sources). We enjoy experiencing the same stories in a new way, and also have a wish to display them to the world, to give them flesh in different media.

Emperor Tiberius had his Sperlonga villa decorated with several big statuesque groups retelling the adventures of Odysseus/Ulysses. The statues were strategically placed around a grotto where the emperor liked to dine, with a triclinium built upon an artificial island in the middle of a pool. It must have been quite a marvelous setting, the sculptures illuminated at night, the water and the opening to the sea and the sky. The heroes of old, as it were, invited to dine with the emperor.

But experiencing more is not only just about representation. It can also be about illuminating aspects of the story that were not entirely fleshed out in the original fiction. And the case of Odysseus is again a good example, as we could say that *The Odyssey* was the first spin-off of literature, with one of the charismatic characters of *The Iliad* getting his own show.

2.2. Inhabiting our favourite worlds

Our passion for certain stories can also compel us to build a world within the real world where we come to briefly inhabit the transmedial universe; that is,

we go beyond contemplation, and set up a scenography that can be lived in, even if it is a fiction. In our contemporary world it is easy to find examples of this, such as the thematized rides of amusement parks, or the computer games that virtually allow us to have active roles within our favourite fictions. But this desire has also been present in earlier times. I hesitate to name the *naumaquias* of the romans as the very first example as they typically reenacted historical battles and not fictional ones. But I mention them because they are an extreme example of the lengths humans can go to give flesh to a story, as here by constructing big pools (or flooding an amphiteater), and letting several ships destroy each other, as well as hundreds of men die to entertain the people. It was brutal, expensive and very realistic.

Other world creation enterprises are less dangerous, such as the Neuschwanstein castle constructed for King Ludwig II of Bavaria as a romantic version of a medieval castle, with a lavishly decorated interior so that the king could live out all his wagnerian fantasies. Incidentally, this castle also has an artificial grotto with fake stalactites and a waterfall, that serves as a passage between two areas of the castle. One can only speculate as to what kind of use the king would have given this “room” if he had lived enough to move to the castle for good (he only slept there a few nights before he died), but maybe just passing through the grotto would inspire in one the right aesthetic (romantic) attitude.

Use is important in the habitable transmedial worlds, which have to allow for some reenactment that gives the “user” an experience that is richer than the act of looking. They have to afford some sort of performance that goes beyond aesthetic appreciation.

To illustrate this we can use the example of Queen Marie Antoinette of France’s “Hameau de la Reine”, a small leisure retreat in one of the parks of Versailles, that is built in the shape of an idyllic rural village with a few constructions including among others a farmhouse and a barn. The Queen and their friends would spend a lot of time in their private world, fleeing the formalities of the Court, dressed as shepherds and farmers, occasionally milking the cows or taking part in other menial farm duties. The Hameau is not just an attempt to recreate a simple natural life, it is also directly inspired by pastoral literature, an old genre, cultivated since antiquity, that had flourished in France for many years with poets like Honore d’Urfé or Pierre de Ronsard, and painters like Boucher. The Hameau affords direct participation in the transmedial world of pastoral poetry, by enabling a bucolic life of contemplation and simple tasks.

2.3. Transforming stories

The third desire I want to exemplify is a transformational one, where it is not only about recreating the transmedial world in another medium, as in the first desire (where no new elements are incorporated) but also about changing it in various ways. Maybe the reader disagrees with some aspect of the tale, or would like to change the way in which a character behaves, while at the same time respecting the essence of the work. Because I believe that this desire for transformation is always initiated by love of the original subject, even if it ends up rather far from it in some crucial ways, as it happens for example in slash fan fiction.

The simplest way of transforming a story is by adding to it, by extending it, maybe by creating our own version of what happened in a part of the world not covered by the foundational story, or by telling what had happened before or would happen afterwards. I would argue that this is the case of *The Aeneid*, in which Aeneas, a very minor character of *The Iliad*, is radically boosted many levels up and becomes the foundational hero of the Roman civilization. It is not, like *The Odyssey*, a part of the same story; this is a completely different story that covers another part of the world but still wants to keep a strong relation to the main Greek mythos.

Transformations can also be about reframings and reinterpretations that not necessarily result in a full-fledged literary work that contests the first one. Kristina Milnor argues that the popular graffiti found in the walls of Roman Pompeii shows how ordinary people responded and sometimes rewrote aspects of canonical literature of the time (Milnor 2014). And again, as in the other examples, this is a work of love; no reader would bother to write a funny pun about a poem if it hadn't moved her in some way.

But of course the most spectacular transformations are those with a transgressive aspect, either because the philosophy of the original works is twisted into something else, or because the author of the transformation proposes a radical departure/change. A good example of this anarchic spirit is the *Quixote of Avellaneda*. Miguel de Cervantes had published the first part of *Don Quixote* in 1605, and had slowly gained quite a lot of success. Nine years later, someone (whose identity we don't know) published a second part of the adventures of the world's most famous knight under the pseudonym of Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda. Cervantes, who was working on his own second part of *Don Quixote*, was mortified, and used a lot of energy in distancing himself from this person, even though he was more inspired by the content of the apocryphal work that he would like to think. Actually, the content of the Avellaneda Quixote is not anarchic, as it respects the original and continues the adventures in a very believable way (that goes well with the mythos, topos and ethos of the original story). The rebellious spirit is rather due to the fact that

whomever this fan was, he couldn't wait for the master to write the second part, and so he did it himself¹.

3. BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

I started this essay arguing that transmedial desire was an important cultural factor, as it was the fuel behind a lot of invention of enthusiastic audiences taking their love for a story on to new media, always searching new developments and new scenarios.

If we had to ask why audiences indulge in their transmedial desires, we would have to question why we engage with fictions at all.

The three desires that I have proposed in relation to transmedial worlds are, not surprisingly, well aligned with research about the emotional involvement of readers. Richard Gerrig has proposed to metaphors to understand why people read at all, that of "being transported" and that of "performing" the narrative (Gerrig 1993). It is important to note that performance is not only about reenacting, as in roleplay, which some of my examples above could afford, but also about interpretation and inference (Gerrig 1993, 27). "I believe that many criterial properties of narrative worlds emerge directly from the ordinary and obligatory operation of basic cognitive processes" (239). He concludes with "Through both active participation and passive acquiescence, our lives are enhanced by richly diverse experiences of narratives (241).

Of course, different media afford different kinds of pleasures, and each medium merits its own analysis. But even scholars who have studied the reasons of why people engage with other media such as videogames (Taylor 2003, Mortensen 2007, Calleja 2011) or cinema (Benshoff and Griffin) report that the desire of inhabiting worlds of fiction is one of the strong attractions of these media. This desire is not named as such in their work, but they talk about the pleasures of experiencing digital environments, or the pleasurable escapism of movies.

I argue that the here proposed transmedial desires are not media specific, but that they ultimately refer to the essence of fictions and our engagement with them as audiences. A logical next step would be to investigate how this approach could enter a productive dialogue with the work of Kendall Walton on mimesis, Frank Zippel on transmedial fictionality or even Yi-Fu Tuan on escapism. I will certainly keep on building.

¹ The similarity of this behaviour with fan fiction writing has also been noticed by Spanish scholar José Antonio Millán (<http://jamillan.com/quijap.htm>).

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Transmedial Ekphrasis. From Analogic to Digital Formats

Asunción López-Varela Azcárate

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

doi: 0000000000000000

alopezva@ucm.es

ABSTRACT

Art is a way to give autonomy to sensorial experiences beyond natural perception. Thus, it serves as a form of meta-representation, a model for raising awareness in recognition and cognition. In the West, the first discussions on aesthetics, coming mainly from ancient Greece, inscribed art within analogy and representation (mimesis) and, simultaneously, within telling and narration (diegesis). The term *ekphrasis* was used to describe the skills that enabled the translation of artistic content and its expression in different formats, whether painting, sculpture, oral poetry, writing, dance, performance and so on. Until the 20th century, *ekphrasis* was mainly contemplated as the verbalization of aesthetic aspects from visual media (mostly painting and sculpture). In this paper, I examine Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky" included in the novel *Through the Looking-Glass*, and compare it to Jan Švankmajer's 1971 movie by the same title. I also explore Simon Biggs' 2010 installation *reRead*, inspired in the novel. The three works are used as examples of art works which break analogic principles and bring to the fore, each in a different medium, the metamorphosis of ekphrastic processes¹.

Keywords: Ekphrasis; Jabberwocky; Lewis Carroll; Jan Švankmajer; Simon Biggs; Transmedia; digital formats.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of analogy lies at the root of comparisons between the arts in early Western thought. The Greek Simonides of Ceos, for instance, defined poetry as painting that speaks. To him, painting was silent poetry (Markiewicz 1987,

¹ I am indebted to Prof. Lars Elleström (Linneaus University, Sweden) for bringing Jan Švankmajer's work to my attention. For more information on Švankmajer's "Jabberwocky", see Elleström's recent volume *Media Transformation* (2014).

535; Campbell 1991, 357, 363, 497). The combination of words and of colours was believed to follow bio-physical ordering principles. Thus, in the *Theatatus* Socrates relates: “Methought that I too had a dream, and I heard in my dream that the primeval letters or elements out of which you and I and all other things are compounded, have no reason or explanation.” (Drucker 1995, 111) The Greek word for alphabet, *stoicheia*, also carries the meaning ordered elements and the cosmological and atomistic analogies, working at the macro and micro levels, attached to the term. One of the first descriptions of the analogic relations between the elements of the world [στοιχείον], letters, numbers, music and the harmony of the universe can be discerned in Plato’s dialogue *Timaeus*:

It is necessary to consider, what was the nature of fire, water, air and the earth before the birth of heaven and what were they then. By now nobody explained their origin, but we call them elements and consider them to be elements [στοιχείον] of the Universe as if we knew what the fire was and what was the rest, but it seemed clear to each at least a little intelligent man in mind that there is no ground to compare it with some type of syllables. (531)

In the same paragraph, following the Pythagorean tradition, Plato goes on to describe the creation of the world as a recursive modelling of parts. If for Plato, words were inferior to images for reproducing the mimetic faithfulness of representation (Krieger 1992, 14) Aristotle’s *Poetics* draws attention to the use of analogy within the different arts, each varying in relation to the medium, subject (also term agent by some translators of Aristotle) and manner. The Greek philosopher develops the parallel between poetry and painting and claims that although the object of both arts is the imitation of human nature in action, their means for achieving this are different. Poetry uses language, rhythm and harmony, and painting uses colour and form. Aristotle explains genre division with regards to the subject/agent who performs the analogy or mimetic act (1987, Parts III-IV).

Similarly, in Book One of *De Rerum Natura* the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius draws the analogy between atoms and letters to explain the idea of structure: “Atoms then are to bodies what letters are to words: heterogeneous, deviant, and combinatory” (Gale 2007, 35; Rasula and McCaffery 1998, 532). The close relation between poetry and painting, the latter being ‘silent poetry’, and the idea of perfection that distinguishes the fine arts was captured more importantly in the work of the Roman scholar Horace’s *Ars poetica* as *ut pictura poesis* (Markiewicz 1987, 535).

The repetition of these patterns gradually became assimilated as ordering principles within certain semiotic correlations in the cultural unconscious, becoming part of languages, writing systems, and other forms of cultural representation (i.e. geometry, algebra, and so on). (López-Varela 2014a) Thus,

ekphrasis was initially defined as a sort of modelling mechanism for drawing analogies between words and images, the first creating a vivid description and evocation as if placed before the listener's or the reader's inner eye.

The prevalence of the word was also reinforced by the spread of Judeo-Christian traditions across Europe and the Mediterranean. This devaluation of painting in favour of the culture of the 'Book' (referring to the Bible which serves as basis for the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions) can be seen, for instance, in the absence of painting from institutionalized Western forms of knowledge, as developed in the first European universities which taught the seven liberal arts (Trivium – grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic – and the Quadrivium – arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music). Painting and sculpture were considered manual rather than intellectual labor and therefore classified with the mechanical arts.

In the Renaissance, several attempts were made by painters and sculptors to reclaim a place for the visual arts and their status as artists, rather than artisans and imitators. For example, Leonardo da Vinci's *Paragone* (ca. 1510) reversed Simonides' comparison by claiming that if painting is "mute poetry," then poetry is "blind painting." (1992, 209) Despite these efforts, in the Western world and till the 18th century, most visual pieces – engravings, paintings, and so on – were inspired in written texts, many taken from religious passages. Illustrations had a secondary role and were frequently used to clarify or embellish the supremacy of the written word.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, with the onset of the new rhythmic patterns of industrialization, inquiries on the representational differences between the arts were directed toward the temporal, rather than the spatial aspects of analogy. In *Laokoon* (1766), the German writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing emphasized the ability of poetry to excite mental pictures in a temporal sequence, thus creating the illusion of reality. Lessing expresses his belief that the visual artist is more limited than the poet as he can only capture one point of view in a particular instant in time. Painting functions within simultaneity, as a static object, while poetry moves on the axis of succession, and is thus better able to create an illusion of reality. (Mitchell 1986, 97)

The idea of the complete work of art began to emerge at this time. The term *Gesamtkunstwerk* was first used by the German writer and philosopher Karl Friedrich Eusebius Trahdorff (1827) in his *Ästhetik oder Lehre von Weltanschauung und Kunst*, and later reformulated by Richard Wagner in accordance with his aesthetic ideals regarding music. He envisioned opera as a fusion of music, poetry and painting, and created a complex web of leitmotifs and recurring themes associated with the characters and themes of his compositions, many of them inspired in stories from the Germanic tradition and Arthurian legends.

The Parnassian turn in late 19th century French poetry owes much to the visual arts and Greek mythology, including the poems by Théodore de Banville, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, under the influence of Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire (Wettlaufer 2003, 64-66). In Great Britain, work by the romantic poet William Blake and Victorian authors like Algernon Charles Swinburne, or the pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his sister Christina, cultivated both the pictorial and the poetic, drawing aesthetic correspondences between the two in order to incorporate sensorial aspects from human real life experiences in their art works². Similarly, Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) wrote many of her descriptions under the influence of John Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1843).

In the 20th century the debate on art and aesthetics became institutionalized, and most discussions came from scholars and academics. The contemporary usage of the term *ekphrasis* was coined by Leo Spitzer in his analysis of Keats's poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1955), inspired by a painting by Claude Lorrain. Spitzer defined *ekphrasis* as "the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art, which description implies, in the words of Théophile Gautier, 'une transposition d'art', the reproduction through the medium of words of sensuously perceptible *objets d'art* (*ut pictura poesis*).'" (Spitzer 1955, 207)

As 'description', *ekphrasis* continued to emphasize the role of words in drawing the analogy, but following Gautier, Spitzer speaks of 'transposition' of art, acknowledging changes in the spatial configurations (position) depending on the medium. For other scholars, as for Aristotle or Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, the difference was not so much on the spatial, but on the temporal patterns. Thus, for Heidegger's pupil, the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, poetic expression captures the original idea/emotion by echoing biophysical perceptual rhythms in alliteration, homonymy, synonymy, and by means of contrastive variations such as antonyms, negative parallelisms and other defamiliarizing techniques (Gadamer 1960) The term 'defamiliarization' had entered the academic milieu via Russian Formalism and, to a certain extent, it indicated that the declarative value of art and its mimetic and analogic qualities began to be questioned.

² Many artists have acknowledged the inspiration of visual compositions of various kinds upon their works. For example, E.T.A. Hoffman, Victor Hugo, Edgar Allan Poe, Honore de Balzac, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Rudyard Kipling, Oscar Wilde, Antón, P. Chéjov, Gabriele D'Annunzio, Guy de Maupassant, Rainer Maria Rilke, Pio Baroja, Edith Wharton, Henri Michaux, and more recently Günter Grass, and Leonora Carrington or José Saramago, among others. graphic poems: The interplay between text and image manifest itself in poems such as George Herbert's "The Altar", Dylan Thomas's "Vision and Prayer", Lewis Carroll's "Long and Sad Tail of the Mouse", e. e. cummings's "L(a)", Edwin Morgan's "Siesta of a Hungarian Snake," François Rabelais's "epilenie," or Guillaume Apollinaire's "Il pleut".

As interest shifts towards the temporal aspects of analogy (López-Varela 2004), definitions of *ekphrasis* emphasize the mechanisms used to “interrupt the temporality of discourse, to freeze it during its indulgence in spatial exploration” (Krieger 1992, 7; Heffernan 1993, 3) discussed as a “pregnant moment in painting,” (Steiner 1982, 41) still an attempt to imitate the visual arts by describing a static moment.

2. THE VICTORIAN VIEW ON EKPHRASIS

The use of text and images became widespread during the Victorian period, a time when the model of analogy became widespread in realism, and was simultaneously questioned, as seen for instance in the persistent metaphor of the looking-glass. The mirror becomes the center of attention in many Victorian and pre-Raphaelite paintings, as well as in early daguerreotypes and photographs. The looking glass problematizes the concept of mimesis, creating a confusion between the real and the reflected. This inquiry takes place at a time when realism reaches its zenith, questioning the reversibility between the real and its shadow or its mirror reflection. In literature, the most important critique of the realist model is the novel *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1872) by the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, English writer, logician and mathematician, also known as Lewis Carroll, a pseudonym created by the play of words (Latinizing his first and middle names and reversing their order). This inquiry into the real and its reflection, sometimes interpreted as a shadow (or copy of the real) continues in Robert Louis Stevenson’s novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). A deeper questioning of the ‘fringe’ (to use the title of a contemporary television serial) between what might be two connected worlds begins to take place in early 20th century under the influence of psychoanalysis. Under Carl Jung’s view, the shadow may refer to an unconscious aspect of the personality which the conscious ego does not identify in itself (it rejects it or remains ignorant of its non-desirable aspects), or to the entire unconscious (Jung 1938, 131). One of the most popular examples of psychological narcissism is James Matthew Barrie’s character *Peter Pan*.

In this paper, I concentrate on a poem entitled “Jabberwocky” included in Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*. My purpose is to compare it to Jan Švankmajer’s 1971 movie by the same title, and to Simon Biggs’ 2010 installation *reRead*. The three works are used in this paper as examples of art works whose purpose is to break analogic principles in order to surprise their audiences and call attention to the way representation functions. In doing so, they bring to the

fore, each in a different medium, the metamorphosis of ekphrastic processes.

In the section of the novel where “Jabberwocky” is included, Alice is talking to the white king and queen, presented as chess pieces, and finds a book written in a strange language that seems to make sense only when read through a looking-glass in an inverted manner. According to Michael Bute y Brian Talbot, Carroll’s poem may have been inspired by a legend from Sunderland, a region where Carroll lived in his childhood. The legend told the story of John Lambton, inheritor of a property under the same name near Durham. After his return from the crusades, Lambton had to fight a giant dragon-worm who had appropriated his father’s land. He was able to beat the dragon with the help of a local witch, but a curse arose that was to last for nine generations in which the male heirs of the family were to die some kind of violent or accidental death. The legend was transmitted in the form of a ballad, sung in the local Mackem dialect, close to the Scottish language but with reminiscences of old English. Another possible source for the poem was a ballad by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, translated into English in 1846 by Menella Bute Smedley, one of Carroll’s relatives. In this, the monster resembles a griffon. Other sources mention that the ‘Tumtum tree’ recalls some of the trees in the gardens of Christ Church at Oxford University, where Carroll taught mathematics, and that the purpose of the poem would have been to satirize Oxford snobbish and pretentious criticism by creating a parody of the archaic prosody and morphology of the English language, and mocking epic pretensions with a monster-slaying heroic plot (Gardner 1999, 154).

The 1871 illustrations of “Jabberwocky”, by John Tenniel, reflect Victorian fascination for evolutionism and paleontology, since the dragon reminds of a pterodactyl, a hybrid flying creature, half an insect, half a lizard, with a sort of crest, the body covered by hair, and some kind of tense membranes of muscle fiber that served them as wings (Gardner 1999, 196). The title reflects this hybrid nature, made up of a polysemic cluster of two words, ‘jabber’ (unintelligible jargon), as well as ‘jab’ (poke sharply or punch with short quick blows), and ‘wocky’, meaning perhaps the ‘wock’ (or wok) where words and fried together, carrying also resonances to ‘wacky’ (funny or amusing in a sort of peculiar and stupid way).

The first stanza of “Jabberwocky” appeared for the first time in 1855 under the title “Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry”, when Carroll was twenty-three. It was published in *Mischmasch*, a journal belonging to the Dodgson family. Apparently, Carroll revised the stanza before extending it into a poem (Gardner 1999, 191-192). The final version has seven stanzas in rimed iambic tetrameter (although the last stanzas have only three feet instead of four). The words are combined by means of coinages of multiple roots, suffices and prefixes, and that this ‘portmanteau’ technique (the terms derives from ‘port-

manteau luggage', a piece of luggage with two compartments that comes from the French 'to carry' and 'coat') multiplies their connotations, as Carroll himself explained. For instance, 'furious' and 'fuming' becomes 'frumious'. Similarly, 'gallop' and 'triumphant' yield 'galumphing'. (Gardner 1999, 195-196)

It can be appreciated that many words are onomatopoeic, that is, their meaning can be inferred from associations to their pronunciation and to other natural sounds, thus working on principles of analogy. However, these combinations show that words are more than abstract symbols, and that they retain many iconic and indexical features. Many words in the poem function morphologically as verb, adverb or noun, a fact that again multiplies their meanings.

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wade;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.*

*"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"*

*He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought –
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.*

*And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!*

*One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.*

*"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Calloob! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.*

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.*

It is interesting that the first and last stanzas are practically identical, with the exception of one letter that changes from d to b ('wade' to 'wabe'). In fact, 'wabe' carries similar sounds to 'way', 'wave' and 'web'. Humpty Dumpty explains later that 'wabe' means "The grass plot around a sundial" and that "[it] goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it." (Carroll 1998, 198-199) These aspects bring forth the inquiry into word formation via analogy that Carroll wants to explore in the poem, as well as its recursive patterns and circularity. In a paragraph following the poem, Humpty Dumpty explains many of the terms to Alice. He does so by means of analogies. However, unlike clear comparisons, the descriptions convey complex forms of logic, where meaning is assimilated to several things at the same time.

"That's enough to begin with," Humpty Dumpty interrupted: "there are plenty of hard words there. 'Brillig' means four o' clock in the afternoon – the time when you begin broiling things for dinner."

"That'll do very well," said Alice: "and 'slithy'?"

"Well, 'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy,' 'Lithe' is the same as 'active.' You see it's like a portmanteau – there are two meanings packed up into one word."

"I see it now," Alice remarked thoughtfully: "and what are 'toves'?"

"Well, 'toves' are something like badgers – they're something like lizards – and they're something like corkscrews."

"They must be very curious-looking creatures."

"They are that," said Humpty Dumpty: "also they make their nests under sundials – also they live on cheese."

"And what's to 'gyre' and to 'gimble'?"

"To 'gyre' is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To 'gimble' is to make holes like a gimlet."

"And 'the wabe' is the grass-plot round a sun-dial, I suppose?" said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.

"Of course it is. It's called 'wabe,' you know, because it goes a long way before it, and long way behind it—"

"And a long way beyond it on each side," Alice added.

"Exactly so. Well then, 'mimsy' is 'flimsy and miserable'. And a 'borogove' is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round – something like a live mop."

"And then 'mome raths'?" said Alice. "I'm afraid I'm giving you a great deal of trouble." "Well, a 'rath' is a sort of green pig: but 'mome' I'm not certain about. I think it's short for 'from home' – meaning that they'd lost their way, you know."

"And what does 'outgrabe' mean?"

"Well, 'outgribing' is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle: however, you'll hear it done, maybe – down in the wood yonder – and, when you've once heard it, you'll be quite content". (Carroll 1998, 271-272)

The poem mentions many living creatures, toves, borogoves, raths, the Jubjub bird, the Tumtum tree, the Bandersnatch, described by Humpty Dumpty.

Along with the Jabberwock, the descriptions of all these creatures function as ekphrastic icons in creating mental images. The physical particularities of these creatures are distinctive and easy to visualize and, thus, memorize, even if the words are made-up and non-existent in the English language. The fact that words may also be used in different morphological roles – verb, noun, adjective – simultaneously contributes to break the indexical logic of narrative deictic (indexical) pointers, materially affecting the relationship between cause and effect, and the temporal sequences of the narrative seem to duplicate, overlap or resonate.

Lewis Carroll's techniques, similar to those used in the 20th century by James Joyce, Jorge Luis Borges, or William S. Burroughs, break alphabetic linear patterns and use language imaginatively (López-Varela 2014a). The purpose is to free discourse from particular ideologies, and call attention to the way meaning is created, frequently under the control of socio-political power structures (López-Varela 2014b). The uncanny (Freud 1990, 335-376) repetition of unknown words and rhythmic patterns produces the impression of a sort of enchantment that suits very well Carroll's mock satire. Tinted with an ironic tone in the use of expressions such "*One, two! One, two! And through and through / The vorpal blade went snicker-snack / He left it dead, and with its head / He went galumphing back*", and the following stanza: "*And hast thou slain the Jabberwock? / Come to my arms, my beamish boy! / O frabjous day! Calloob! Callay! / He chortled in his joy.*" Semantic cohesion is maintained because alien words are intercalated with those belonging to the English language, particularly in the section just quoted, where the killing of the monster is described in words such as "sword in hand", "eyes of flame" "blade", "through and through", "blade", "dead", "head", "slain".

Carroll's work seems to inaugurate a period that culminated in the language and inter-art explorations of the 20th-century. Many avant-garde experiments cultivated crossings not only between poetry and the visual arts but including other arts (see for instance work by Marcel Duchamp or Francis Picabia). The Futurists, for instance, were open to multi-sensory experiments, particularly the impact of typography, ink colours, typefaces, paper texture, book-binding techniques, etc. Many of these inter-art experiments brought to the fore the material aspects of language by focusing on graphic coding, the acoustic and the visual.

3. EKPHRASIS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The gradual re-evaluation of the visual arts in the 20th century was also influenced by the development of technologies that enabled the cheaper reproduction of images – photography, moving pictures or cinematography and, more recently, digitalization and online technologies. These innovations enabled a greater interplay of perceptual modes, enhancing diverse forms of emotional and aesthetic charge, alternating between showing (*mimesis*) and telling (*diegesis*), and enabling the projection of simultaneous occurrences in narrative, for instance, by borrowing techniques from montage in the visual arts and sculpture. In particular, the physical/material boundaries were perceived as capable of enabling certain sets of relations.

In the second half of the 20th century, the discussion on *ekphrasis* focused more and more the antagonistic struggle between oral forms and written literacy in postcolonial environments, and between word and image/icon as socially and ideologically motivated (Mignolo 1989, 58, 62; Ong 1982) W.J.T. Mitchell explained that “The real question [...] when confronted with these kinds of image-text relations is not ‘what is the difference (or similarity) between the words and images?’ but ‘what difference do the differences (and similarities) make?’ That is, why does it matter how words and images are juxtaposed, blended, or separated?” (1994, 91) Ernest B. Gilman diverts from Leo Spitzer and Murray Krieger’s on the centrality of language in giving voice to images, discussing the imperialism of language as central to inter-art comparisons (1989, 23) Similarly, Scott Grant F. Scott sees *ekphrasis* as appropriation of the “visual other” and as an attempt to “transform and master the image by inscribing it.” (1991, 303) Likewise, Jerome McGann (1993) studied the remediation³ of aspects from the oral tradition of knowledge transmission in the Western world, as printed culture became widespread. In turn, Katherine N. Hayles (1984, 1990) has focused on the differences and parallels between scientific discourse, grounded on forms of visibility and experimental proof, and the artistic realm, where, until the 20th century, attention was directed away from the materializations and configurations of writing – print, colour, illustrations, fonts, and so on.

With digitalization, the increasing use of montage and other techniques involving several perceptual modes (mainly visual and tactile), along with the development of software that has made possible the articulation of multiple planes, some of them interactive, has opened online and digital art works to

³ In relation to the remark that the content of a medium is always another medium formulated by Marshall McLuhan, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call the representation of one medium in another ‘remediation’, arguing that it is a defining characteristic of the new digital media. (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 45)

their audiences, posing new questions regarding the structure of knowledge and its ways of transfer. As media evolve, so does the concept of *ekphrasis* which, in the digital world, embraces poly-sensorial forms of embodiment, discourse and action-performance across sign systems that operate with various types of signs. Most ekphrastic processes continue to follow the cognitive-semiotic patterns of human communication modes, functioning according to notions of similarity/difference, expressed by means of metaphors, based on the replication of patterns and structural analogies, (this is also the way in which the human brain maps information by mirroring it across sense perceptions). (Zlatev 2012) Thus, immersion in the virtual worlds seems 'real' from the point of view of spatial relations. However, the mobilization of time in digital formats is fundamentally different. (Flores 2013).

There is also the question of the emotional aspects of artistic communication, neglected for many years. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari situate artistic practices outside mimesis, explaining that their purpose is to find and cultivate what they term 'percepts' which, unlike the usual perceptive mechanisms, free themselves from consciousness and from references to the objects in the world in an attempt to create something never felt or represented before (Deleuze et Guattari 2005, 155; Deleuze et Guattari 1980, 173) Thus, modern art includes geometric and physical imperfections, anomalies that separate it from any model (anology), from anything felt or lived before. (Deleuze et Guattari 2005, 168)

Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari's ideas seem at home in the work by Czech poet and filmmaker Jan Švankmajer. A leading figure in avant-garde cinema and a member of the Prague surrealist group since the early 1970s (Hames 1995, 2, 100) Švankmajer's provocative works convey statements of resistance in the changing political climate of the Czech Republic over the past four decades. Censored and banned for some years, during his time out of cinema Švankmajer channeled his artistic energy into other projects like collages, graphics, and various sculptures drawings, and puppets. His work bridges the gap between live-action and animated cinema, the real and unreal, narrative and non-narrative, providing an interesting study of filmic *ekphrasis*.

One of Švankmajer's primary concerns is the inner (emotional) life of people and objects, discussed mainly in terms of suppressed impulses related to sexuality, violence, and fear. He consistently depicts objects as having or coming to life, producing a bizarre and uncanny effect. His early association with puppetry and theater, his education at the Institute of Applied Arts in the early 1950s, and his work at the Theatre of Masks, the Black Theatre, or the *Lanterna Magika* Puppet Theatre, have no doubt influenced Švankmajer's art practices. In his movies, objects have several functions: some appear act as intermedial/intertextual pointers, referring to other works of art with

special historical significance; others function as markers of space and time; some objects come to life by virtue of the soundtrack; the purpose of their false animation is to point out aspects of meta-representation, questioning the border between the real and the virtual.

Žvablav aneb šatíky Slaměného Huberta ('Nonsense or the small clothes of Straw Hubert') written and directed by Švankmajer and produced by Erna Kmínková, Marta Sichová and Jirí Vanek, is a 1971 fourteen minutes long short featuring colour stop-motion animation. The title (*Žvablav* means more or less 'nonsense') also alludes to the first Czech translation of Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky". The character of Straw Hubert comes from a children's story written by Czech surrealist Vítězslav Nezval in 1936 and illustrated by Jiří Trnka: *Anička skřítek a slaměný Hubert* ["Elfin Annie (or Little Anya) and Straw Hubert"]. The story bears some resemblances to Carroll's poem, and uses the metaphor of straw to signify the lack of certain inner qualities, as in the novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) by Lyman Frank Baum.

Švankmajer's movie is divided in eight parts. The opening scene (part one) displays a child's buttocks being spanked along with the movie credits and music by Zdeněk Liška. The film explores the degradation of the subject in the process of socialization by turning back to the world of a Victorian children who has to follow certain rules and roles. (*Figure 1*)



Figure 1 – Jan Švankmajer "Jabberwocky" Part 1.

In part two minute 0.32, Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky" is read by the voice of an unseen young girl. At the same time, a wardrobe is shown flying through a forest of (Tumtum?) trees. As it glides towards the camera and opens up, the viewer travels back into a Victorian playroom under the supervision of a paternal figure in a portrait, upon which the camera lingers at various times. Initially the objects seen are associated to the world of women. Articulated dolls are a metaphor for the way the female body is manipulated by family life and society. The eyes of the stern patriarch cast a disciplinary glance over the whole sequence during which "Jabberwocky" is read as a sort of enchant-

ment or spell casted over the nursery, bringing the objects to life: children's clothes that arise from a washbasin, the furniture, a pram, a rocking horse, a doll's house, little toy soldiers. As they come to life, these objects recall the odd beings that populate Carroll's poem and Alice's narrative. (Figure 2)

By the time the poem finishes in part three (minute 4:49), the room is almost empty of objects, but music returns and more objects come to life as if from nowhere. This part ends with the image of a small wall made of puzzle cubes that reminds the viewer of a similar scene in *Mary Poppins'* movie. (Figure 3) The wall becomes a two-dimensional labyrinth in part four (4:50-6:59), where a trail of ink from a fountain pen struggles to find its way tracing in silence a solitary line under the supervision of a pair of eyes under spectacles. Before it finds the exit out of the maze, a black cat destroys the puzzle wall and the labyrinth within, and with it any attempt for the ink line to find its way out. This sequence is repeated in the following parts of the movie creating a sense of claustrophobic confinement.

As the music returns in part four, dolls are multiplied as if they were Russian dolls giving birth, coming out from each other's bellies. Soon, they are chopped and flattened like pieces of steak, ironed as clothes, and boiled to the sound of playful music. The smallest dolls are cooked and eaten by the larger ones. This act of cannibalism carries connotations of self-alienation, and the succession of scenes related to the birth of dolls is connected to the world of women and their sexuality. (Figure 4)

Women were responsible for clothing of the entire household and doing the washing, drying, folding and ironing. Initially dolls are perceived as playthings that symbolize women's childhood, but as they become self-animated, they lose their innocence, exposing their sexuality and being chastised (dismembered and cannibalized) by the larger dolls.



Figure 2
Švankmajer "Jabberwocky" Part 2.

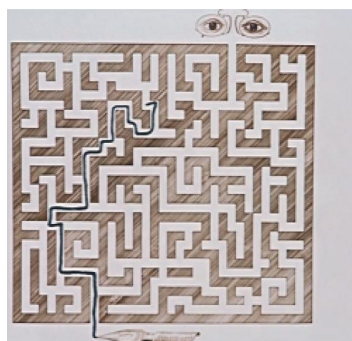


Figure 3
Švankmajer "Jabberwocky" Part 3.

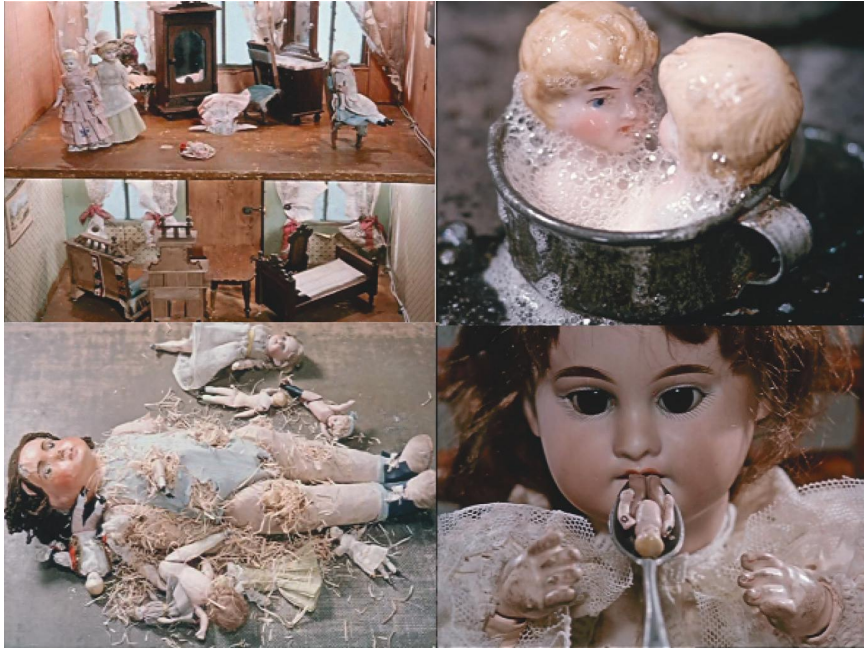


Figure 4 – Švankmajer “Jabberwocky” Parts 3-4.

The Greek philosopher Socrates, whose mother was a midwife, used to draw parallels between the birthing of ideas by means of his teaching method and the delivery of babies. Continuing the work of his teacher, Plato’s allegory of the cave exposes people’s bondage to reality as a visual illusion, that of the shadows that the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave. Visual proof (as in the empirical method based also on analogy) can never be a fundament of truth. But, according to Plato, “Everything that deceives may be say to enchant,” (2009, 209) so that the world of appearances may have a seductive power to which people hold on to as if spellbound. Švankmajer’s movie inverts this pattern by showing that although the objects in the wardrobe (which reminds of the one that leads the children into the world of Narnia in C. S. Lewis’s novel *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. The Chronicles of Narnia*. 1950, 130-131) seem part of an imaginary world, this apparent fantasy may, in fact, show aspects of reality of which the viewer was previously unaware.

The puzzle-wall is the stuff from which new movie images are formed, creating a sort of circular spell from which there seems to be no escape, for everytime the maze appears the viewer anticipates the cat’s irruption. (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Švankmajer "Jabberwocky" Part 4.

Švankmajer's movie subverts patterns of order and disorder in several ways and at various levels. For instance, he may use formal aspects, such as the introduction of self-reflective loops that break the linearity of the movie narrative sequence (i.e. the repetition of the wall/line/labyrinth scene). At the thematic level, Švankmajer includes the cheerful music, children's playthings, and grotesque images that border the surreal, such as the dolls giving birth and feeding upon one and other.

In part five (7:00-9:11) attention shifts to boys' education. There is a series of symbols of manhood such as the hobby horse and the sailor suit filled with an invisible body. The collection of tiny tin soldiers, neatly aligned, connects the viewer to the military world of order. It also opens up new inter-textual storylines to other similar stories (i.e. it comes to mind the Danish story by Hans Christian Andersen "The Steadfast Tin Soldier" 1838). However, the association between the little tin soldier and food (in Andersen's story the soldier is eaten by a fish) is not as explicit as in the case of the images of the cannibalized dolls. (*Figure 6*)



Figure 6. Švankmajer "Jabberwocky" Part 5.

In Carroll's poem, portmanteau words with multiple meanings are used to break the linear and unique meaning of alphabetic discourse. In Švankmajer's movie a similar effect is achieved by means of images, oddly contextualized in uncanny situations or bizarre sequences that break the usual cause-effect relations that populate the world of consciousness and rationalism. Indeed, the movie presents many examples of simultaneous patterns that produce strange doublings and ambiguities. The most obvious one the puzzle-cat sequence.

In part six (9:12-10:42) violence escalates as a knife's handle (that brings back the corkscrew in Carroll's poem) in the shape of a woman's body who dances a weird waltz during which the handle gets killed by the blade. The image of the severed handle lying on a lace tablemat covered in fresh blood resembles a sexual toy and brings to the fore once more the relation between violence, sex and women submission. It also signals back to Carroll's poem that tells the story of a decapitated monster. This scene connects Švankmajer's possible interpretation of Carroll's "Jabberwocky" in the context of *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, bringing forth Freudian associations in relation to the topic of authority, order subversion and child's play.

The pages of school notebooks become *Origami* (Japanese paper-craft) ships and aeroplanes in section seven (10:43-12:37). The man in the portrait sticks out his tongue and spits out dominoes. The ending, in part eight (12:38-13:20), shows the ink line finally freeing itself from the puzzle wall-maze of life and escaping the black cat. To the sound of happy tunes, the line moves to the portrait of the bearded man and, defiantly, it scribbles all over the figure of authority before fleeing out of a window that brings to mind Picasso's blue-period painting "Women at the Window" (1925). The squadron of paper planes also flies out, and the plutonian cat is seen in a cage within the wardrobe where the children's clothes are now neatly folded. (Figure 7)

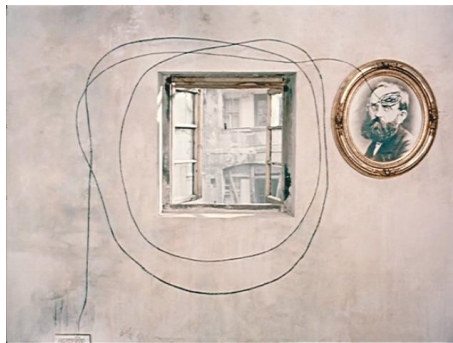


Figure 7. Švankmajer "Jabberwocky" Part 8.

Like Carroll's poem, Švankmajer's "Jabberwocky" is a compendium signs in the form of icons (images), symbols (the reading of the poem) and indexes (intertextual and intermedial pointers) that interconnect past, present and future. Much of its strength lies in the grotesque and baroque excess of signs that overflows the viewer. The effect of 'strangement' or 'defamiliarization' disrupts everyday analogy patterns. The linear narrative is punctured by ironic doublings, many of them arising from other storylines within the main theme. These new threads are not merely intertextual allusion to other texts. There is also a prominent use of images and prints of real outdoor scenes and people's faces in the form of photographs, daguerreotypes, painted portraits and sketches, at various scales and levels of detail. They contribute to the eerie atmosphere half reality half fantasy, where ambiguity, loops and repetitions that "go a long way before it, and long way behind it", as Carroll's poem reads, satirically reinforce the central idea: the awareness of order submission and mindless mimicry implicit in the socialization process that turns humans into automatons. There is, however, a note of hope at the end of "Jabberwocky". The idea that with the cat caged and the monster decapitated, the unguarded maze can perhaps be fled.

4. EKPHRASIS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Undoubtedly inspired in Lewis Carroll's work, Simon Biggs' digital installation *reRead* offers several ways of inquiry into the workings of *ekphrasis* and analogy. *reRead* was presented at the conference of the Electronic Literature Organization held at Brown University (Providence RI, US) in 2010.

Biggs' art-works seek to evoke a subjective failure of differentiation and re-posit the self as non-singular, de-centered and distributed. They also reveal the tensions among different perceptual modes and highlights the incapacity of any one medium to capture the complete multimodal nature of perception, introducing variations in natural language in order to display its monstrous non-meaningful qualities when 'carried over' to unexpected positions.

In his 2008 essay "OntoPoetics," Simon Biggs explains that he seeks to "address this focus through the use of interactive systems, where the relationship between the viewer and the artwork is explicit and active." (n/p) Biggs is therefore aiming at presenting individual subjectivities as constructed in performative processes that operate within a digital environment and in interaction with other subjectivities. "The auto-linguistic artworks I make map an exploration of the manner in which this dynamic of differentiation through reading/writing can be disturbed and opened up as a conscious process." He

adds that the primary element in this strategy is the use of auto-generative texts in order “to create instances of textuality where the text is written of itself. That is to say, the text is generated as a function of language itself. Authorial intent is absent, replaced by a process of auto-generative writing.” (n/p)

Thus, in Biggs’ auto-poetic artworks, the viewers are able to observe themselves reading/writing self-generating texts. Attention is drawn to the fact that new media do not show how things ‘are’ but how things ‘operate,’ and many times these operations are enabled by the machine code and allow for self-reflexive configurations, alien to the linear patterns of narratological cause-effect relations.

In *reRead*, the reader/viewer finds herself facing a screen where auto-generative texts are reflected from a projector connected to a computer situated just behind the viewer. Unlike ordinary projections, here the letters appear backwards. Initially the viewer is unaware of this fact, as she looks at the symbols from what it seems an unknown unreadable language. They move rapidly into shapes that appear to be larger units of text. Eventually, they are recognized as letters of the Latin alphabet and as some kind of narrative pattern. Cognitive scientists have explained that the brain works in holistic self-organizing processes that complete perceived information even before full perception has been accomplished. Under the principle of psychophysical isomorphism, the human eye may not see objects in their entirety but perceiving an aggregated of parts, it would fill up the whole. Some other mechanisms seem to copy information across perceptual regions by means of mirror-neurons and other ways in which the various sensorial modalities communicate and exchange information. (Zlatev 2012)

The eyes follow certain reading directions depending on the language (some a written from left to right; others in the inverse; yet others are read up-down). Printed texts are not read in the same way as texts displayed on a computer screen, where we might need to scroll down instead of passing the pages. Attention is captured more rapidly in the perception of movement. When the text moves, as in *reRead*, the reading experience becomes more difficult. Kinetic texts might cause the reader to pause and think, unable to follow alphabetic and narrative sequences.

reRead complicates reading even more by incorporating the image of the viewer onto the text displayed on the screen as she moves towards it. This is done by means of the computer Webcam connected to the projector situated behind the viewer as she faces the screen. The art-work confronts the audience with an inquiry into the textual and iconic nature of language, following Biggs ideas: “Art is the human activity which can confound basic sense and allow us to see things in a way we might otherwise not have considered”. He adds that “Art functions as a sort of meta-language”, for “It is in the creation of disjuncture between the thing and its representation that we come to see the

thing and its relation to other things (particularly ourselves) anew. In seeking to disturb the manner in which we see things, and thus our accepted notion of self as constructed through seeing, the objective to destabilize our sense of self can be met.”(n/p)

reRead also brings to the fore a questioning of the Self, exemplified in the perceptual confusion which affects the viewers, exposing their Webcam images as fragmented text pieces that disrupt the random pseudo-narrative projected onto the screen by the computer. Initially blind to the meaning of the text that appears backwards on the screen, the viewer engages in action in order to understand, to see. The screen becomes a looking-glass where Alice, the viewer, inscribes herself onto Biggs’ text. As she moves, her actions incorporate the motions of her body within the random backward awkward movement of letters (perhaps words) in a silent performance of text and images.

In Biggs’ *reRead*, vision serves as a sort of third-person bridging modality that links first-person information (self-awareness) to others. Vision is task-oriented and goal-directed, that is, concerned with obtaining information for the discrimination, identification and categorization of objects for later use. In the case of Alice, as onlookers watch her move in front of the mirror-like screen, they also try to understand her intentional actions, that is, to make sense of her motivations and decisions in moving here or there. This contextualization requires a certain degree of ‘trust’, or ‘cooperative principle’, as pragmatist Paul Grice would have put it. The trust placed by *reRead* onlookers on Alice’s performance depends on aspects that range from the contextual to prior knowledge of similar situations. Age is an important factor in engaging in more active behavior. Older onlookers might settle for watching Alice perform the act. The more active and adventurous might decide to have a go themselves. Those not present at the time of the performance, for instance those seeing through my eyes in reading this text, will need to trust my telling.

The process of intermedial ekphrasis, as staged in Biggs’ installation, serves also as a cognitive tool. The artist seeks to challenge human modes of analogic perception by means of complicating ekphrastic processes. He succeeds in capturing attention and awareness. The viewer discovers that human communication relies on analogic principles, either in showing (mimesis), as in performances and gestures, or in telling (diagesis) as in discourse. Unlike gestures, which rely on the contiguity of vision, verbal communicative acts that take place in the present may posit the subject’s experience in a different space-time plane (i.e. the past or the future) and thus, in a new belief mode, distinct from that of the original occurrence. Once verbal language is introduced, situations are (re)presented (*reRead*). The addressee or reader visualizes the scene in her own space-time framework, implying a willing intersubjective coordination between speaker/writer and addressee/reader.

5. CONCLUSION

The examples presented in this paper, Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky", Jan Švankmajer's film by the same title, and Simon Biggs' installation *reRead* provide a glimpse of the metamorphosis that the processes of ekphrastic have suffered under changing media formats. The three art-works offer examples of how art can break patterns of analogy present in human communication modes. In drawing attention to non-linear structures, recursive and self-reflexive forms of intermedial communication, the works discussed question the scientific episteme, modelled on analogic principles, and offer different ways of imaginative projections. The ironic commentary, as in the case of Carroll, an escape into the realm of fantasy, in Švankmajer's movie, and the use of hybrid forms that combine the analogic patterns of human biology with digital coding, in Biggs' installation, the three open the art work to novel ways of audience interaction.

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We Have Always Had Mashups, or Mashing Up Transmediality

George P. Landow

Brown University, USA

doi: 0000000000

george@landow.com

ABSTRACT

After examining the intertwined concepts of media, information technology, and mash-ups, this essay draws upon examples from ancient Greek literature based upon orality, Latin scribal culture, and printed poetry to demonstrate that the practice of mash-up is central to our understanding of both media and transmediality. Translating texts originally created in another language and verse form exemplifies one major instance of transmediality, and the way Elizabethan English poets self-consciously borrow, rewrite, and challenge Catullus provide far more wonderfully outrageous examples of mash-up than modern musical ones.

Keywords: mashup; medium; transmediality; literary tradition; transliterality; Catullus; poems.

The term mashup originally comes from British-West Indies slang meaning to be intoxicated, or as a description for something or someone not functioning as intended. In recent English parlance it can refer to music, where people seamlessly combine audio from one song with the vocal track from another—thereby mashing them together to create something new. – Wikipedia

1. MASHUP, MEDIUM, AND ‘TRANSMEDIA’ LITERACY

According to Wikipedia, that wonderful example of text-and-image mashups in a digital, networked environment, a mashup – or mash up or mash-up – “is a song or composition created by blending two or more pre-recorded songs, usually by overlaying the vocal track of one song seamlessly over the instru-

mental track of another.” According to the Wikipedia article, which contains a useful list of examples, “The original manifestation of mashups in the 2000s was putting an a cappella against a completely different backing track, in order to make a “third song”. Following “A Stroke of Genie-us” in 2001, the genre has continued to focus on this basic premise.” As I hope to show, mashups have been around a lot longer than 2001¹. As should be obvious by now “my” text is already a mashup, a textual collage, as is any text that includes quotations from another, since texts inevitably come into being as collages, mashups, of other texts, particularly when they include material, such as illustrations, graphs, or diagrams, in another medium.

To understand the fundamental connections between text, image, mashup, and transmedia literacy, let us look at what we mean by medium. Perhaps the best place to begin is to emphasize that a medium is always something in the middle, which implies, as Derrida so often emphasized, we always have something between us and the experience, the perception, the thought, the... whatever. Thus, according to various online dictionaries, a medium is “an intervening substance through which something else is transmitted or carried on” or “an agency by which something is accomplished, conveyed, or transferred, as in ‘the train was the usual medium of transportation in those days.’” It is also a “surrounding environment in which something functions and thrives.” This idea that a medium is something between us and something else also appears in another dictionary definition: a medium is also “a specific kind of artistic technique or means of expression as determined by the materials used or the creative methods involved, and it can also mean a specific artistic technique: oils as a medium.”

The multiple meanings of medium complicate the ideas of the transmedia text and the literacy required to understand it. To make things a bit clearer, let us look at the various kinds of mediums found in Orb’s “Little Fluffy Clouds,” techno music whose samplings and remixing inevitably complicates our conception of what constitutes a medium and transmedia literacy. Version no. 2 of “Little Fluffy Clouds” – there are at least seven² – begins with the sound

¹ Another Wikipedia article that defines a mashup in WWW terms as “a web page, or web application, that uses content from more than one source to create a single new service displayed in a single graphical interface. For example, you could combine the addresses and photographs of your library branches with a Google map to create a map mashup.” The article continues, pointing out that the term “implies easy, fast integration, frequently using open application programming interfaces (open API) and data sources to produce enriched results that were not necessarily the original reason for producing the raw source data.”

² Orb 1991a has five versions of the title song, and the one I am discussing runs 2 minutes and 58 seconds. Another version appears on Orb 1991b and Orb 1993 contains a version recorded in Tokyo that is 10 minutes and 55 seconds.

of something falling into water and making a loud splash, after which, seven seconds in, a young man's voice asks, "What were the clouds like when you were young?" After a taking loud intake of air a young woman with a pleasant breathy voice replies,

They ran on forever, they... when... we lived in Arizona. and the skies always had little fluffy clouds in 'em, and... uhhm they were long and clear and there were lots of stars at night, and uhh when it would rain it would all turn it they were beautiful, the most beautiful skies as a matter if fact ahh the sunsets were... purple and red and yellow and on fire 'nn the clouds would catch the colors everywhere. It was unique. I used to look at them all the time when I was little. You don't see that... ahhh.³

A drum beat appears around "they were long and clear," and later the beat slows, at which point a different male voice than that of the initial questioner says rather bathetically, "Those were the days" (irony? sarcasm? inept attempt at seriousness?) At various words the beat speeds up and becomes louder, and after the first run through of the girl's words and interspersed sounds we hear a pause followed by repeated intakes of breath which gradually speeds up as we hear a bell tolling once, and then the words appear in fragments, as "ah-ah-ah" and then are repeated, one of the most obvious and aggressive forms being the repeated first syllable of "little," which appears as something like "lihlihlilih." These sounds come interspersed with phrases from the first speech and other sounds.

So what's the medium here, or rather what mediums do we encounter here? Using one of the most common meanings of the term, we would say that the storage device on which "Little Fluffy Clouds" resides is a medium – in my case either the CD-ROM (not yet a DVD!) on which I first heard the cut I'm discussing or the computer memory in which it remains in the form of computer code on my laptop and also on a backup memory stick. But note: as we listen we hear the (recording of) the young woman's voice sampled and divided into shorter and shorter passages, some of them simply her intake of breath between words, it becomes obvious that her voice itself functions as a medium as do the sentences she has spoken and the individual syllables. Orb takes these sound fragments and, like a popularized John Cage, turns them into music, in this case by adding a rhythmic beat and other sampled sounds and speech. To put this another way, each of these elements functions as both information technology and medium.

Information technology of course does not begin with computers, the first infotech probably taking the form of grunts and other uttered sounds

³ In this slightly incomplete transcription of the beginning of this version of "Little Fluffy Clouds" my ellipses indicate the speaker's pauses rather than omitted words or sounds.

whether combined or not with gestures. Spoken syntactic language is the first great information technology, and chronologically it is followed by ideographic and syllabic writing, printing, printing with moveable type, high-speed printing, telegraphy, photography, cinema, all the way up to networked digital information technology (Landow 2006, 29-33). Here a fundamental change or shift takes place because, for the first time, writing changes from physical marks on physical surfaces to computer code, which allows particular kinds of virtuality, reproducibility, speed of transmission, and so on. As we consider the nature of medium and information technology, we also realize that specific literary forms or genres themselves function as subcategories of both information technology and medium. The invocation of the muse in epic poetry, like stream-of-conscious narration in Joyce and Woolf, is not simply a literary technique but itself a form of technology, and, like the chopped, processed, atomized voice in “Little Fluffy Clouds,” it offers examples of mashup and transmedia literacy.

2. TRANSMEDIALITY, MASHUPS, AND LITERARY TRADITION

Now let's turn to text that during the past two millennia has generated a good deal of fan fiction – *The Iliad* – and let's begin by looking at the invocations of the muses that open two very different English translations (which are, as we shall see, themselves mashups). First, Samuel Butler's Victorian prose translation:

Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus, that brought countless ills upon the Achaeans. Many a brave soul did it send hurrying down to Hades, and many a hero did it yield a prey to dogs and vultures, for so were the counsels of Jove fulfilled from the day on which the son of Atreus, king of men, and great Achilles, first fell out with one another.⁴

Compare this passage to Alexander Pope's translation into neoclassic couplets, into, that is, a verse form emphasizing (and therefore sometimes necessarily creating and imposing parallels and contrasts not in the original):

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing!
That wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain;
Whose limbs unburied on the naked shore,

⁴ Unless otherwise noted I have taken these translations from those available at Project Gutenberg.

Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore.
Since great Achilles and Atrides strove,
Such was the sovereign doom, and such the will of Jove!
Declare, O Muse! in what ill-fated hour
Sprung the fierce strife, from what offended power
Latona's son a dire contagion spread,
And heap'd the camp with mountains of the dead

These two examples of translations that, like all translations, inevitably betray the classical Greek original, we see how they function as mashups in multiple ways. First of all, both Butler's Victorian prose translation and Pope's Augustan poetic one exemplify collisions of the English language with ancient Greek. But the Greek text, is itself a mashup as well as a fictionalization of older oral performances that were partly extemporized and therefore always varied. (I am here for the sake of argument assuming that Homer's oral performances had a single "original," and I am also setting aside the question whether there actually ever was one "Homer" at all). In addition to the transmedia mashups of orality and literacy and those of ancient Greek and modern English there is also the matter of radically different poetic metrics. Such collisions of vastly different ages of technology and media, I suggest, represent far more outrageous mashups that imposing upon each other Taylor Swift and the Jackson Five, as Chamberland has done, or forcing Beastie Boys and Spice Girls into the same musical sound space as Daw Gun Double Shot has done in "If you Wannabe my Ladies⁵." Butler's translation, like Pope's, exemplifies one form transmedia literacy. Now look what happens when Vergil comes along:

*ARMA virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit
litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram;
multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem,
inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum,
Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae.
Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso,
quidve dolens, regina deum tot volvere casus
insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores
impulerit. Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?*

And here is an English translation:

⁵ Googling "Mashup" will produce lists of sites with such musical and video mashups, many of which offer classifications according to mode.

Arms, and the man I sing, who, forc'd by fate,
And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,
Expell'd and exil'd, left the Trojan shore.
Long labors, both by sea and land, he bore,
And in the doubtful war, before he won
The Latian realm, and built the destin'd town;
His banish'd gods restor'd to rites divine,
And settled sure succession in his line,
From whence the race of Alban fathers come,
And the long glories of majestic Rome'
O Muse! the causes and the crimes relate;
What goddess was provok'd, and whence her hate;
For what offense the Queen of Heav'n began
To persecute so brave, so just a man;
Involv'd his anxious life in endless cares,
Expos'd to wants, and hurried into wars!
Can heav'nly minds such high resentment show,
Or exercise their spite in human woe? ⁶

In addition to all the different forms of mashups that occur in English prose and poetic translations of *The Iliad*, others appear when when Vergil challenges and rewrites the Greek written texts he encountered. Homer's epic similes famously compare the acts of its heroes to subjects familiar to a pastoral and agricultural culture, comparing Ajax's stubborn resistance to attack to a donkey unwilling to be pulled from a field. Vergil, however, sings the epic of a city state, and his epic similes draw upon urban life and juridical law.

Similar collisions and mashups occur in John Milton's Christian epic "Paradise Lost":

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos: Or if Sion Hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed

⁶ Project Gutenberg, as far as I can tell, provides no information about the translation or source of the text.

Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian Mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme.
And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss
And madest it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men. (Milton 1968, 458-462)

Once again we encounter an expert in transmedia literacy committing an act of literary, cultural, and religious aggression... and thereby producing major poetry. *Paradise Lost* is a text disseminated and read in print, whereas Vergil's text, though written, represents a hybrid form of transmediaity, since although modern readers almost always read it silently, when it was written and for much of its history Vergil's *Aeneid* (unlike its modern translations) was read aloud and possibly chanted. To be read correctly, I propose, *The Aeneid*, like *The Iliad*, has to be read with a kind of double awareness, one that sees its existence in two modes or two mediums, the oral and the written. It was therefore literally a transmedia art form that created a bridge between orality and literacy, a hybrid that tried and long succeeded holding together two different media and two very different media cultures. Second, "Paradise Lost" is a self-consciously Christian text written in part as a proof-of-concept text, that is, to show that since he believes Christianity is the highest and best and truest religion it must also have the finest poetry, so he must create an epic that challenges and surpasses all Pagan ones, and, moreover, since Milton is a seventeenth-century Puritan highly antagonistic to the Church of Rome, his version of the epic, the best epic, not only has to mashup the best Roman Catholic epic – Dante's *Divina Commedia* – it has to surpass it. So where do we see signs of Miltonic mashup? Take the first line, which announces Milton's epic subject, which turns out to be not the anger of some pagan brute nor the sorrows and triumphs of pagan who (supposedly) founded Rome but the central narrative for him – the "Fall of Man". Note, too, what has happened to Homer's goddess and Vergil's muse: they have metamorphosed into the "heavenly muse" that came to Moses "on the secret top of Oreb, or of Sinai," when it served to communicate divine truth in the form of the moral law, the

ten commandments. But since Milton is a Christian who takes Moses – “That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed” – as a divinely intended prefiguration (or type) of Christ, his muse doubles becoming/revealing itself to be the Holy Spirit that was from the beginning of creation “present, and with mighty wings outspread / Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss / And mad’st it pregnant⁷.”

3. ROMANTIC CONCEPTIONS OF CREATIVITY AND RESISTANCE TO MASHUPS AND TRANSLITERALITY

The question then arises, if the mashup and transmedia literacy constitutes such an important role in European literary history, why haven’t we noticed it more. The answer in brief: mashups, with their appropriations and revisions, do not fit the fundamentally romantic theories of art and literature, which emphasize originality and individuality, that still pervade much of our literature and scholarship. M.H. Abrams’s enormously influential *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953) provides a valuable way into discussing fan fiction and mashups and resistance to the first and explaining blindness to the second (Abrams 1953). Much of our attitude toward such active reading and listening derives from our essentially Romantic assumptions about composition and so-called creativity. Abrams begins his argument by pointing out that the once near-universal tendency to discuss art in terms of author and artist arrived on the scene quite late in the 2500 year-old history of Western aesthetics and critical theory. As Abrams points out, to pose and answer aesthetic questions in terms of the relation of art to the artist – or text, image, and sound to author – rather than to external nature, or to the audience, or to the internal requirements of the work itself, was the characteristic tendency of modern criticism up to a few decades ago, and it continued to be the propensity of a great many – perhaps the majority – of critics today. This point of view is very young when measured against the twenty-five-hundred-year history of Western theory of art, for its emergence as a comprehensive approach to art shared by a large number of critics, dates back not much more than a century and a half.

Abrams explains that all discussions of them discuss four elements – text or work, author, reality or nature, and audience – but define themselves by which one of the four they emphasize. First, there is the work, the artistic product itself. And since this is a human product, an artifact, the second common element is the artificer, the artist. Third, the work is taken to have a subject which, directly

⁷ For discussions of typological symbolism in readings of Milton, see Lewalski 1985.

or indirectly, is derived from existing things – to be about, or signify, or reflect something which either is, or bears some relation to, an objective state of affairs. This third element, whether held to consist of people and actions, ideas and feelings, material things and events, or super-sensible essences, has frequently been denoted by that-word-of-all-work, “nature;” but let us use the more neutral and comprehensive term, universe, instead. For the final element we have the audience: the listeners, spectators, or readers to whom the work is addressed, or to whom, at any rate, it becomes available.

The classical or mimetic theory found in Plato and classical theorists considers text (or the work of art) chiefly in relation to Nature or the universe, so it proceeds on the assumption that the fundamental principle of art is imitation. It therefore downplays the role of artist, who at best should function as a transparent lens. Its basic criterion is accuracy, its associated information technologies are oral and scribal. In contrast, pragmatic, rhetorical, or Renaissance theory, such as we find from Aristotle to Sir Philip Sidney, considers the work chiefly relation to the audience, thus making rhetoric or the arts of persuasion its fundamental mode and its criterion of success producing an intended effect, such pity and fear in tragedy and laughter in comedy. Artists and writers have to be effective not sincere. Here one imitates only in order to convince, entertains only in order to teach. Explicitly taking literature and the other arts as pragmatic techné, pragmatic theory develops the literary technologies known as genres and genre-specific techniques. Twentieth-century reader-response theory, such as that espoused by Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish, is the interpretive sibling of conceptions of art and artist found in the Renaissance and Augustan age. In sharp contrast, romantic or expressive theory, which considers the work primarily in relation to the the artist or poet, emphasizes that they have an experience to which they react and in the next step express it – think Wordsworth’s description of poetry as emotion recollected in tranquility – and with this concentration on the author comes new criteria: sincerity, intensity, originality, and creativity. With originality comes alienation and the need for critics to explain art and literature, which will supposedly always be far in advance of audience understanding. Associated with print culture, first simple hand-set type and later high-speed printing, this attitude towards creativity produces mass audiences and new ideas of intellectual property.

Objective or postmodern theories of artistic production, concentrate upon the relation of the text to itself, emphasizes intertextuality rather than influence and an assemblage, collage, and mash-up, such as we find in digital information technology and its immediate predecessors.

One recent author, tongue in cheek, who sums up the notion of literature as technology in ways that mock the attitudes so resistant to mashups and transmedia literacy is Jasper Fforde, who has great fun explaining an anti-

romantic explanation of the relation of information technology and narrative. In *The Well of Lost Plots* and his other novels set in an alternative universe in which fictional characters and real people move between this real world and the world of fiction, Jasper Fforde creates comedy from many ideas accepted by both eighteenth-century Neoclassical and twentieth-century Poststructuralist literary theorists – not as one might expect by mocking these ideas but by dramatizing them, by making them the stuff of his plots. In particular, Fforde, like any good neoclassicist, rejects romantic and modernist notions of creativity and originality: according to him, literature, especially storytelling, is a technology employing lots of off-the-shelf parts. As Miss Havisham (a very different character than the one finds in Dickens's *Great Expectations*) explains, all characters begin as generic types that authors then modify and embellish as they wish. Plots, too, have a limited number of possibilities, and this turns out to threaten literature as we know it. Most important media and infotech should be thought of as technologies, for as Wordmaster (Xavier Libris) explains, Story Operating Systems,

First there was OralTrad, upgraded ten thousand years later by the rhyming (for easier recall) OralTradPlus. For thousands of years this was the only Story Operating System and it is still in use today. The system branched in two about twenty thousand years ago; on one side with CaveDaub Pro (forerunner of Paint Plus V2.3, GrecianUrn VI.2, Sculpt- Marble VI.4 and the latest, all-encompassing Super Artistic Expression-5). The other strand, the Picto-Phonetic Storytelling Systems, started with ClayTablet V2.1 and went through several competing systems (Wax-Tablet, Papyrus, VellumPlus) before merging into the award-winning SCROLL, which was upgraded eight times to V3.5 before being swept aside by the all new and clearly superior BOOK VI. Stable, easy to store and transport, compact and with a workable index, BOOK has led the way for nearly eighteen hundred years. (Ford 2003)

4. MASHUPS, CATULLUS, AND POEMS WRITTEN ABOUT OTHER POEMS

Certainly, modern sound recording technologies made mashups a popular, prominent part of recent culture, but Cubist collage and fan fiction that goes back at least to the days of the mimeograph remind us that reproducibility has always encouraged it. And when two media ecologies, such as orality and scribal cultures, come together mashups become a dominant, though not always recognized form.

From the mashups of *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid* to reconceptions of Star-Trek and Buffy, Fan fiction in its many forms has been central to major literary traditions in the West. I would argue that the technique and mindset of the mashup is central to the writer's very notion of a literary tradition. Take, for

example, a single poem by Catullus in which the speaker tries to argue the object of desire into his bed, and let us observe how it has generated a chain of mashups in English poetry. First Catullus:

*Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
Rumoresque senum severiorum
Omnes unius aestimemus assis.
Soles occidere et redire possunt:*

*Nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
Nox est perpetua una dormienda.
Da mi basia mille, deinde centum,
Dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,
Deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum.*

*Dein, cum milia multa fecerimus,
Conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus,
Aut nequis malus invidere possit,
Cum tantum sciet esse basiorum.*

Now a version by Robinson Ellis:

Living, Lesbia, we should e'en be loving.
Sour severity, tongue of eld maligning,
All be to us a penny's estimation.
Suns set only to rise again to-morrow.

We, when sets in a little hour the brief light,
Sleep one infinite age, a night for ever.
Thousand kisses, anon to these an hundred,
Thousand kisses again, another hundred,
Thousand give me again, another hundred.

Then once heedfully counted all the thousands,
We'll uncount them as idly; so we shall not
Know, nor traitorous eye shall envy, knowing
All those myriad happy many kisses.

Another by Richard Burton, translator of the Kama Sutra, the Perfumed Garden, who refused (to his wife's annoyance) to excise the bawdier parts of the *Thousand and One Nights*:

Love we (my Lesbia!) and live we our day,
While all stern sayings crabbed sages say,
At one doit's value let us price and prize!

The Suns can westward sink again to rise
But we, extinguished once our tiny light,
Perforce shall slumber through one lasting night!
Kiss me a thousand times, then hundred more,
Then thousand others, then a new five-score,
Still other thousand other hundred store.

Last when the sums to many thousands grow,
The tale let's trouble till no more we know,
Nor envious wight despiteful shall misween us
Knowing how many kisses have been kissed between us.

Frank O. Copley, a twentieth-century translator, has a modernist take on the middle portion of the poem:

the Sun dies every night
in the morning he's there again
you and I, now,
when our brief tiny flicks out,
it's night for us, one single
everlasting
Night. (Catullus 1957)

But let's put Catullus into the guise of the pastoral – a mashup of genres and forms – and pastoral, mind you, as seen by someone writing in Elizabethan England when the English transmutation of the Italian sonnet of Dante and Petrarch has just taken form. Nicolas Poussin might have argued in his famous paintings of Arcadian shepherds deciphering the inscription on a tomb, “Et in Arcaia ego” – There is death even in an idealized pastoral world – Christopher Marlowe and some of those who follow leave out death and *carpe diem* argument: First we have Christopher Marlowe's “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”:

COME live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle

Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;
A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of th purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love.

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

John Donne, who encrusts the pastoral with artifice in “The Bait,” gives it another twist, enticing the desired one with “some new pleasures.” Her are the first two of seven stanzas:

Come live with me and be my love.
And we will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands and cristall brookes,
With silken lines and silver hookes.

There will the river whispering run
Warmed by thy eyes, more than the Sunne.
And there th'inamoure'd fish will stay,
Beggings themselves they may betray. (Donne 1965, 32)

Shakespeare takes a turn, emphasizing not the new pleasures but, like Catullus, that the time of eternal night is soon upon us and there will be no more pleasures:

What's to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty
Youth's a stuff will not endure.
[“O Mistress Mine, Where Are You Roaming?”]

Ben Jonson’s “Song to Celia” returns closer to the Latin source:

Come, my CELIA, let us prove,
While we may, the sports of love;
Time will not be ours for ever:
He at length our good will sever.

Spend not then his gifts in vain.
Suns that set, may rise again:
But if once we lose this light,
'Tis with us perpetual night.

Why should we defer our joys?
Fame and rumor are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies;

Or his easier ears beguile,
So removed by our wile?
'Tis no sin love's fruit to steal,
But the sweet theft to reveal:
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.

Most elaborate and most brilliant of all seventeenth-century Catullan mashups is Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," which prepares for the arrival of death with pretended willingness to defer pleasure:

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Should'st rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow.
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest.

And then comes the turn, as he again expands upon the Catullian argument:

But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near,
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,

Nor in thy marble vault shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust.
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

But as they adverts exclaim on late-night American television and third-rate channels, “Wait there’s more!” One this kind of mashup has entered the popular imagination (in this case the educated nineteenth-century British reader), one can crunch genres and meanings even more wildly, as in this Victorian political cartoon that appeared in *Punch*: (*Figure 1*)



Figure 1

Illustration from “The Passionate Shepherd to his Love”, in Punch, or the London Charivari, Volume 101, December 19, 1891.

The first of the two parodic poems that accompany the cartoon begins:

“COME LIVE WITH ME, AND BE MY LOVE
AND WE WILL ALL THE PLEASURES PROVE
THAT LAND REFORM, ALLOTTED FIELD,
AND VILLAGE COUNCILS SOON MUST YIELD.”
And thou shalt sit at ease, and mock
The Tory Shepherds of the flock,

The nymph's response is based on one by Sir Walter Raleigh:

If I were sure 'twere sooth thou'st sung,
That truth were on thy silvery tongue;
These pleasures must my passion move
To live with thee and be thy love...

But promises so oft are rotten;
I've oft been wooed, and oft forgotten!
Free vote, fair rating, open school,

Good wage, intelligent self-rule,
These are enticements me would move
To live with thee and be thy love.

The transmediality of this group of involves multiple concatenations of word and image – not only the identifying texts in the cartoon that insures the reader will grasp the satiric point but also the relation of each parodic poem to the image and of course to the chain of poems written as much about other poems as about their ostensible subject.

Late on evening while reading through a recently published anthology of Greek poetry that I had received as a present, I came upon the translation by Rachel Hadas of the following poem by Asclepiades (c.300 BC) that made me realize perhaps even Catullus V might be a mash-up, for perhaps this all goes back to

Girl, why so miserly
with your virginity?
None will make love to you
in Hades down below.

Aprodite's joys
are for girls and boys.
We all as ash and bone
lie down in Acheron.

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Being Lucky. Transmedia and Co-Creation Practices in Music Video-Clips

Gemma San Cornelio - Antoni Roig Telo

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

doi: 00000000000000

gsan_cornelio@uoc.edu – aroigt@uoc.edu

ABSTRACT

In this paper we will deal with music related co-creation practices from the perspective of transmedia literacies. We will take as a case example “Evolution of Get Lucky”, a collective experiment by musician PV Nova, that consisted in taking one of the most popular pop songs of 2013, Daft Punk’s Get Lucky, re-interpreting it through the conventions of different musical decades and inviting users to playfully build the pieces of a participatory music video. “Evolution of Get Lucky” is a perfect opportunity to reflect on transmedia literacies, as well as on appropriations of popular culture, the social shaping of music memory and the notion of nostalgia. Our approach to the case study will be informed by our previous work on participatory culture and co-creation practices.

Keywords: co-creation practice; transmedia projects; remix; re-appropriation; crowd-sourced music video; cultural nostalgia; Get Lucky.

1. INTRODUCTION: RE-ENGAGING THE MUSIC FAN

Since the beginning of the steady decline of control over recorded music in the late nineties, the music industry has felt under a continuous strain to re-invent itself, in parallel with the emergence of new cultural practices that, in different ways, have been challenging its copyright-based business model. Even if digitization and the popularization of online music file sharing (particularly of compressed sound files in mp3 standard) have signified a radical paradigm shift in terms of the business of the recorded music industry, controversies on

the legal limits regarding music fan practices go back, at least, to the explosion of home tape recordings from the mid-seventies¹. (Jacobson 2010, 41; Karaganis, 2011, 41-45 Benkler, 2011, 749)

The main challenges contemporary recording music industry is facing can be broadly summarized in two: on the one side, it is the first cultural industry where specific technocultural changes occur, like the popularization of an industrial standard, the mp3 format, for file exchange and mobility, due to its high ratio of popularity versus portability of compressed files (see Sterne 2006). On the other side, changes in consumer practices lead to changes of recorded music as a cultural commodity: digitization processes, but also new cultural practices force to re-introduce added value and to re-think the materiality of music (see Bull 2007; Magaudda 2011).

Dramatic sales drop of recorded music while, paradoxically, musical consumption is growing, have forced the industry to try apparently contradictory strategies, like enhancing the objectual nature of music (through collectable editions of recordings) or the 'immaterial' nature of music in the search of new markets (embracing digital downloads usually attached to DRM solutions, or ringtones) (see Rushtin 2013, Bustinza et al. 2013, Díaz 2013). Interestingly, some different strategies in both trends have been progressively adopted, after acknowledging the consolidation of certain consumer practices in a bottom up fashion. This is the case of vinyl editions, streaming social services or free downloadable tracks. Thus, it is more and more common to premiere new tracks from renowned artists via social audio and video sites like Youtube or Soundcloud, or even full album streaming for free, for a limited time.

It is important to note that different artists, new and renowned alike, have experimented with different ways to reconsider their relationship with their public. This way, closer ties between artists and fans are established, with less mediation – at least apparently – from music labels, thanks to the sense of personalization and intimacy awarded by social networks. A paradigmatic case is MySpace, which steadily became a music-related social network for – mostly – independent artists. We must also mention Bandcamp, a social platform and online music store that connects independent bands (and more recently, also indie game developers) with fans. Anyway, big record labels have found different ways to promote their top artists taking advantage of new consumption patterns, particularly among their younger market. This is the case of the popular music video streaming service Vevo, a joint venture of Universal Music Group, Sony Entertainment Group, Google and Abu Dhabi

¹ A classic example is the British campaign 'Home tape is killing music' in the mid-eighties. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2008/jun/17/popandrock>; <http://cbsnewhd.wordpress.com/2009/02/12/rock-101-home-taping-is-killing-music/>.

Media² presented as a sort of “brandless brand”³, thus securing streaming revenues and viral promotion of top artists and celebrities in social media. This last example shows that, many times, engagement and participatory discourses adopt the form of co-option, which forces us to take into account the contradictory and nature of industry-led discourses on creative participation.

In this paper we will deal with music related co-creation practices from the perspective of transmedia literacies. We will take as a case example “Evolution of Get Lucky”, a collective experiment by PV Nova, a renowned French musician, composer, comedian and YouTube celebrity. For this experience, PV Nova took one of the most popular pop songs of 2013, Daft Punk’s Get Lucky, re-interpreted it through the conventions of different musical decades and invited users to playfully build the pieces of a participatory music video, thus mixing music, interactivity, video, CGI, play and performance. Although it can be considered as a one-off participatory experiment, “Evolution of Get Lucky” is a perfect opportunity to reflect on transmedia literacies, as well as on appropriations of popular culture, the social shaping of music memory and the notion of nostalgia. Moreover, our approach to the case study will be informed by our previous work on participatory culture and co-creation practices.

Regarding this specific kind of participatory phenomena, our main objectives can be stated as follows:

- To identify the participatory dimensions of a music video project with transmedia qualities.
- To analyze the aesthetics of a crowdsourced music video project.
- To consider the role of remix practices as a form of literacy (Manovich 2005; Lessig 2005; Jakobson 2010)
- To analyze the features of playful re-appropriation of pop history through co-creation, connecting to different notions of cultural nostalgia.

2. EVOLUTION OF GET LUCKY AS A PARTICIPATORY PROJECT

There are some features that allow understanding Evolution of Get Lucky as a participatory project and consequently to be connected with our previous research regarding creative practices and processes that invoke some sort of participation and even co-creation. Some of our preceding work has been

² This involves two of the three main record labels, leaving out only Warner Music Group, which has established a partnership with MTV.

³ It is interesting to note that there is no mention of this partnership in the VEVO website, not even in the ‘About’ section.

related to several cultural practices, such as *modding*, photography creative communities, *fanworks*, participatory filmmaking (crowdsourcing and crowd-funding), or DIY video production amongst others. This previous experience has allowed for identifying, firstly, the necessary conditions of participatory projects; in other words, what are the key features that need to be assessed in participatory-related projects. Secondly, the desirable conditions for participatory projects, which force us to distinguish between rhetorical discourses on the supposed participatory qualities of a project and the actual participation processes. In several occasions, there is a notable distance between participatory promises and its actual deployment.

Beyond these general rules for participative projects we have critically analyzed the different approaches to co-creation, connecting them with the notion of innovation in new media (San Cornelio and Gómez Cruz 2014) and the conditions for co-creation in creative communities, more specifically interested in labor issues and informal markets, as well as the emergence of affective economies and new business models (Roig et al. 2013). Through an ethnographic approach we have particularly attended to conflict and negotiation, motivations and rewards in participatory creative processes (DIY/fan-driven creative practices in production, financing and distribution) taking into account that there is an industrial interest in the ‘crowds’ and DIY production (co-option).

According to the previous considerations it must be stated that Evolution of Get Lucky is a participatory project as long as it has some pre-defined rules, which consisted mainly in an open call for videos based on the different decades represented in the music track that the musician PV Nova produced on purpose for the project. The call involved creative visual freedom to interpret and represent visually the variations produced in the sound track according to PV Nova arranging and remix work. In this regard, the field of action for participants is quite clear and limited. Another rule for participation in the project is that it is an open call (to everyone) with a tight deadline. And once the videos are uploaded and received by the musician there is neither a decision-making process on the videos, nor a contest. PV Nova took the responsibility to decide which videos would be included in the final remix, ending up in a linear and closed edition process.

On the other hand, considering other previous co-creation examples, there are other important features that can also be observed in Evolution of Get Lucky, such as the notion of expertise, which is relevant as long as different kinds of literacies come into play: video producing skills are needed in order to elaborate videos with a quality standard, but also the capacity of the materialization of visual ideas, be it in the form of a narrative, through appropriation of visual and cultural codes related past decades – which introduce the topic of

the social construction of nostalgia and questions related to authority –, and, finally, projections of imagined futures.

Another important point in co-creation and more especially in transmedia projects is the notion of ‘experience’, as users are invited to participate in a singular and playful event, marked by a very specific timeline and where creative freedom and authorial control are combined through crowdsourcing processes (Roig 2013; Leivobitz, Roig and Sánchez-Navarro 2012). Thus, this affective experience activates a strong sense of belonging, as participants contribute actively to produce and enhance some of their favorite cultural products, at the same time global and local. In this regard, Evolution of Get Lucky constitutes a very engaging project that contributes to feed the main product of Get lucky by Daft Punk (and all that this means in terms of expanding the iconic power of the band) and at the same time projects the work of the artist PV Nova, whose presence on the web is quite significant, especially within the French context.

Taking into consideration some particularities of user-generated content made by fans, such as connection to a canon, strong affectivity and collective gatekeeping, this project constitutes a clear example of how transmedia and participation can be applied to engagement in creation processes. It is important to note that in the context of this article, we understand canon⁴ as the set of basic rules that must be respected in order to maintain a connection between a derivative, or transformative work, to the original source text (Buse and Helleckson 2006). In the framework of fandom, for instance, it is expected that fanworks respect key features regarding characters (physical and psychological traits, development), world coherence, visual aesthetics, critical story points and narrative development, etc. Put it in other words, canonicity is closely connected to a notion of authorship and authority coming from the original materials that are being subjected to different sorts of expansions and reworking. This is not to say that canon remains inalterable, but even canon transgressions, like crossovers with other cultural products, alternative events, changes in character definition (like sexual preferences) or spoofs are always valued in relation to canon. In the case of relevant fanworks that depart from the original canon in some ways but become highly valued by fan communities, they can constitute a new ‘secondary’ canon – called sometimes *fanon* –, which at the same time established new rules to be followed in this specific branch of fan creativity.

⁴ In the field of music and other arts, ‘canon’ acquire slightly different meanings, tied to aesthetic normativity or representativity of an era or an artist’s body of work. A starting point for discussion can be found in Tieste (2009): http://www.cinetecadelfriuli.org/gcm/allegati/Collegium_Papers_2009.pdf#page=102

In this case, we have to consider as canon the original recorded version of the song in relation to PV Nova's cover, but on the other side, the new rules introduced by the Evolution experience can be considered as a secondary canon, asking the participants to fit into the conventions of each decade included in the song, which becomes essential for the success of the trans-media playful experience.

3. CASE STUDY: EVOLUTION OF GET LUCKY

3.1. *Description of the project*

Get Lucky is a pop song by French duo Daft Punk, and was the leading single of their 2013 album *Random Access Memories*. Already popular for blending of pop, rock, funk, classic synthesizer and contemporary dance music, for *Random Access Memories* Daft Punk were particularly ambitious in combining the new and the old, electronic and live instruments, thus featuring multiple stellar collaborations like guitar player and producer Nile Rodgers (leader of groundbreaking seventies band Chic and sought-after producer in the late seventies and eighties), Giorgio Moroder (considered the pioneer of the introduction of modern synthesizer in pop music and movie soundtracks) and singers as diverse as Julian Casablancas (from punk rock band The Strokes) or hip-hop and Rhythm & Blues star Pharrell Williams. In fact, Williams sang and co-wrote with Nile Rodgers – together with the Daft Punk members – the song *Get Lucky*.

Beyond musical qualities and popularity, all these references are important as they showcase the confluence, in the Daft Punk world, of diverse temporal and stylistic influences⁵. This is made particularly evident in *Random Access Memories*, starting from the album title and through explicit homages and gestures to their heroes: thus, the introductory section of the song “Giorgio by Moroder” is two minute monologue by the man himself telling the story of his beginnings in the music business, before the actual instrumental song takes over (there's still a further short spoken section on freedom of creation in music).

I wanted to do an album with the sound of the 50's, the sound of the 60's, of the 70's and then have a sound of the future. And I said, “Wait a second... I know the

⁵ Daft Punk even came to compose the soundtrack for the movie *Tron: Legacy* (2011), the sequel to a classic cult film from the eighties, *Tron* (1982), famous for its visual game-like aesthetics

synthesizer – why don't I use the synthesizer which is the sound of the future?" And I didn't have any idea what to do, but I knew I needed a click so we put a click on the 24 track which then was synched to the Moog Modular. I knew that it could be a sound of the future but I didn't realise how much the impact it would be. (Excerpt of the spoken section of Daft Punk's song Giorgio by Moroder 2013)

It can be said that, randomly or not, the 'memories' scattered across the whole album show a very specific approach to nostalgia, a nostalgia for an ideal of creative freedom. In a sense, these introductory words have been an inspiration for the experiment we are going to analyze.

Along the 2013 Get Lucky has constituted one of the most popular songs of the year, both in commercial environments and in more selected ones. Actually, a specific sign of this popularity is the number of versions, covers and remixes that take the song has produced⁶. Evolution of Get Lucky, then, would be one of those tributes, but adding some complexities derived from the fact that is a participative project.

3.2. PV Nova Profile and his 'experiences'

Just like Daft Punk, the driving force behind our case study, PV Nova, can be defined for being a notably restless and eclectic character. A member of French music and comedy theatre company Les Tistics, as well as composer and multi-instrumentalist (he released a studio album, *Start Again*, in 2011, available for free in his website), he is notably known by his YouTube page, where he posts remix and studio work and, particularly what his – mostly – one man shows called 'Experiences Musicales'. With a distinct humoristic style, PV Nova experiments and plays (with) different music styles and eras. Although Evolution of Get Lucky is not counted among PV Nova's experiences, it is closely connected to them, as he reproduces completely different styles around the same composition, adding an important twist: user participation and engagement in a transmedial treat.

As can be observed in the Figure 1, the project took place in less than two months, in spring/ summer of 2013. The kickoff event was the release of an interactive video showing a continuous version of the Get Lucky song spanning a whole century decades, starting in the 1920s and ending in the 2020s. At the end of the video, PV Nova explains the rules of the participatory proposal, inviting users to shoot their own visual representation of any decade of their choice and upload it to Youtube. With all the material available, mostly created

⁶ http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/06/12/daft-punk-get-lucky-evolution_n_3426277.html#slide=2591696

by French users, PV Nova selected and edited a linear version, premiered in early August, 2013. (Figure 1)

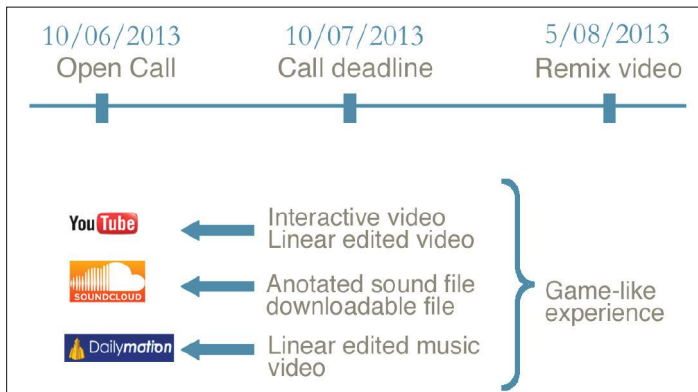


Figure 1 – Evolution of Get Lucky. Project timeline and transmedia elements.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE CASE STUDY

Taking into account the previous considerations, the research has been organized around an analysis that focuses on the material aspects of the audiovisual project and on the actors from a triangulated perspective that includes, the artist who fosters the project, the participants involved in it, and some audience reactions to it. What is presented in this paper is the first phase of the analysis, which involves the set of videos received during the call as the main source of our research. Videos are considered both as independent pieces and part of the whole project Evolution of Get Lucky.

Firstly, we have proceeded to perform a visual and aesthetics analysis of the videos, looking at the cultural references that each video seems to contain. In this regard we focused specially in the videos selected for the final cut. On the other hand, we were interested in different levels of participation in the call, thus identifying the most successful decades, in terms of the amount of videos received corresponding to each decade. Secondly, we have taken into account the information available in the sharing platform, in this case YouTube, in terms of comments, feedback, views, etc. as well as the comments that the project has generated in other platforms and forums. Additionally, a set of interviews with the artist and some of the participants has been initiated, but for the purpose of this edited issue, interviews will be part of the second

phase of the research, and here we will focus mainly in the audiovisual part of the project, which is more related to the notion of transmedia and its possible derivations in terms of literacies.

4.1. Audience participation: some figures and aesthetic notes

Considering the tight deadline suggested, only a month, it might be stated that the call was quite thriving. Regarding the audience participation, the amount of videos presented were 179 in total, although only 137 videos are publicly available. Within this sample, only 38 videos were selected for the final remix, from 33 different contributors. That means that some of the participants posted more than one video, like in the case of participants Art Kitetisse, Artallowsall or Jasmine Seguin.

After undertaking an initial observation of the whole set of videos, we could perceive that the quality of videos was to a certain extent unbalanced, being some of them almost professional works and others just a playful attempt. (Figure 2)

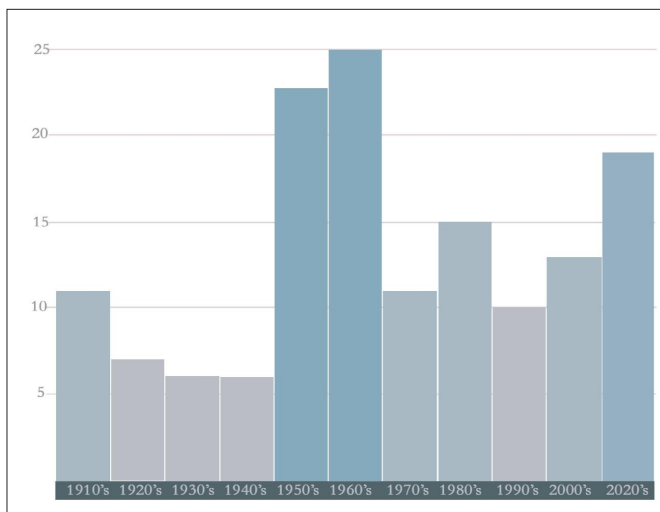


Figure 2 – Amount of videos posted by participants by decades. Source: authors

Considering the amount of videos posted, as the figure 2 demonstrates, the most successful decades are, by far, the 1960's and the 1950's, and in second term, followed by the 2020's. This is an interesting result, since our original hypothesis, based on viewing the final cut and the average age of the partici-

pants in the videos (most of them in their twenties), was that the most representative clips should be placed in the 80's or 90's. Nevertheless, a primary interpretation of the different levels of participation in each decade illustrates both nostalgia and projection to the future. Of course, the challenge involved turning back to the past to interpret a present-day popular music hit, but it is interesting to remark that the materials received for both decades (50-60) almost double the rest of decades. This predominance is probably connected with the centrality of both decades in our contemporary history; the years that followed the Second World War generated a lifestyle represented in an elevated amount of visual materials and references available in films and music likewise. Accordingly, nostalgia⁷ is one of the central formulations related to postmodern aesthetics (Jameson 1990) which revolved precisely in cultural interpretations of those years in cinema and other audiovisual forms (Denzin 1991, 69).

More specifically, in musical terms, a connection with the notion of 'Retro music' could be elaborated. For some authors 'Retro' evokes always the relatively immediate past; mainly stuff that happened in living memory, but, according to Elizabeth Guffey (2006), retro does not refer to all historical periods; it only applies to the recent past, in particular the years after the Second World War. Following the observations made by Cartwright, Besson and Maubisson) people have tastes for pop-rock music that was most popular early in their lives or even before birth. It is interesting that people show a preference for pop-rock music that was released prior to their timeline (2013, 463). In this sense, Reynolds (2011) argues the self-revolutionizing musical innovation that marked the second half of the twentieth century is so largely exhausted that artists are now primarily in thrall to the past.

Evolution of Get Lucky is an example of this process of looking back to the past, which, as previously stated, is also present in the original track and the whole record by Daft Punk. In this regard the suggestion of opening a means of visual interpretation of the different decades, rather than providing with different images of each decade, has produced quite homogenous aesthetics. Most of the videos of the 50's presented similar features, including iconic images such as the poster by Howard Miller's "We Can Do It!" poster from 1943, which is reinterpreted in several videos. (*Figure 3*)

⁷ The author argues that nostalgia facilitates the continuity of identity and provides three working hypotheses as to the meaning of nostalgia. Wilson (2005, 19) writes that: (1) nostalgia is an interpersonal expression of self which subjectively provides one with a sense of continuity; (2) nostalgia is an interpersonal form of conversational play, serving the purpose (3) nostalgia is a form of idealizing or mystifying the past; and (4) nostalgia can be used as a cultural commodity derived from the experience of a particular age-cohort and transformed into a particular market segment.



Figure 3 – Iconic references to the 50's.

Nevertheless, the maximum level of uniformization is shown with the videos corresponding to the decade of the 60's, that include psychedelic references, nature and hippies in most (all) of them. It could be stated that the main source of influences for the performances related to this decade are the big music festivals of the late sixties, like the Woodstock Festival (explicitly featured in one of the videos through fragments of the Michael Wadleigh documentary). Some iconic images, like the Beatles' Abbey Road album cover are also featured. (Figure 4)



Figure 4 – Iconic references to the 60's.

The decade of 2020's, that corresponds to our near future, it is also visually quite homogeneous, but in this case presenting abstracted, post-apocalyptic scenarios and an excessive use of image filters and CGI in many of them. The speculative nature and the lower quality of these videos are probably the reasons why only two of them were selected for the final cut.

Curiously, considering our initial appreciation, the 70's, the 80's and the 90's are less productive decades, regarding the amount of videos produced and

sent by the participants. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that most of the videos received – especially the selected ones – capture accurately the musical clues present in the audio remix made by PV Nova, (which are quite recognizable, by the way). This is very visible in the seventies, represented by disco music, and the eighties reproducing the aesthetics of very popular synthpop bands, such as Depeche Mode, Devo, John Foxx, Tears for fears, or Soft Cell. In these cases, the visual interpretation seems to be more influenced by the musical base remix than by the historical, cultural and musical references regarding a specific decade (for instance, very popular artists from the 80's like Michael Jackson or Madonna are not present).

In this regard, it is quite notable that the decades more distant to our times (20's, 30's and 40's) are represented according to cinema images, rather than its corresponding musical styles, which we assume that are more difficult to identify for a presumable young audience.

Another relevant focus of attention in our analysis has to do with unexpected user appropriations, in some places transgressing the rules. For example, there are seven users that decided to interpret the whole array of decades, instead of choosing one, and consequently did not follow the instructions of PV Nova, choosing to use the musical base for a different purpose. One significant case is a video where PV Nova's work is synchronized to fragments of musical movies from different eras in a *mashup* fashion. In another interesting example, the author chooses a representative movie per decade, mostly French examples like experimental silent film *La Coquille et le clergymen* (1928), *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945), *Tatie Danielle* (1990) or *Le secret de Kells* (2009), along with renowned British and American films, like *Jesus Christ superstar*, *The knack...* and *How to Get It*, *Tootsie* or *Slumdog Millionaire*.

An additional minority but noteworthy trend consists in building a self-contained story in the video into a story, sometimes spanning more than a decade, sometimes playing with a single decade version but in the bigger framework of a short story. Again, this form of appropriation tends to be well received in terms of views and reception. In the cases where users made their work fit into a decade, as stated by the rules, they were mostly selected for the final cut.

4.2. *Feedback and responses*

Other interesting ideas could be reported after examining the data related to the participants, number of visualizations, the most popular videos and the nature of comments to the videos. As for the comments, it is interesting to note the differences stated depending on the decade, that is, the affective distance

and engagement of the followers. In the case of videos set in the earlier decades, comments tend to make reference to the aesthetic ‘look and feel’ of the visual representation, that is, unrelated to musical motives. From accuracy of clothes, ambientation, technology or even visual filters applied to reproduce accordingly the visual codes of the times, to connections to celebrities like Charlie Chaplin. In the fifties, new motives appear again related to authenticity – there are mentions to microphone and guitar models, for instance–. In the sixties, there are two relevant new noticeable findings: there is no discussion on the canonicity of hippy flower power; additionally, fandom discourse shows up in the way The Beatles are referred (highlighting the detail of having one of the actors re-staging the Beatles crossing the pedestrian crossing for the Abbey Road album cover, barefooted, just as Paul McCartney). In the 80s, there are multiple references to standout artists considered as representative, from Depeche Mode to Kraftwerk or Indochine (one of the few references to French artists). In the nineties, references to visual style and editing are mentioned, showing the importance given to music video aesthetics. As for the contributions connected to present and the near future, comments are related to identifying cultural references and technical skills (there are for example more filter effects, animation and Computer Generated Images).

Finally, it is interesting to highlight that there are several positive user comments implying that a participant’s video ‘should be winning’ and that they would ‘vote for them’, which is at odds with the playful rules of the project (PV Nova never stated any voting process in the project rules), and at the same time shows a familiarity with this sort of contest-based crowdsourced efforts, that tend to be mistaken as participatory per se.

Another space we have analyzed is the forum track “Daft Punk’s Get Lucky evolution throughout the ages” in the site Reddit⁸, devoted to comment the original music remix Evolution of Get Lucky, that is the interactive video – without images – that contained the music that originated the call for participation. The conversation started the 11th of June 2013 and has generated a total of 580 comments.

A general overview of the comments reveal a quite enthusiastic reception of the project, where each participant expresses his or her preferences regarding the decade they like most. At the same time they identify different influences in the music track according to their personal observations. An example of that is the sound of the 2020’s, which is identified with the band The Glitch Mob, as well as the 2000’s part is thought to be influenced by Aphex Twin or Skrillex.

⁸ http://www.reddit.com/r/videos/comments/1g40pf/daft_punks_get_lucky_evolution_throughout_the_ages/.

Beyond the ‘external’ influences that PV Nova is supposed to tribute, the conversations in the forum sometimes turn to reflections on the nature of the remix and the music of Daft Punk. In a sense, they are reflecting on the adherence of PV Nova to the ‘canon’ of Daft Punk, since most of the comments say that the different parts of the remix remind to previous records of the band.

More interestingly, the conversations in the forum in different moments focus on one of the main topics we had previously expressed in our analysis: nostalgia. Here we can read two examples:

Maybe in contrast to today’s pop music, but kids in the 70’s and 80’s fucking hated the genre. I HATED pop music of the 90’s and 00’s, yet there was this nostalgic 90’s compilation that hit the front page a few months ago, and there were people commenting on how great the pop songs were! We keep settling for less, it is going to be bizarre in 20 years when we speak of the glory days of Keisha and Skrillex. (powercorruption)

People like being nostalgic about stuff, even if it was rubbish at the time. (elpielan)

For participants in the forum the notion of nostalgia is then something inherent to human nature, supporting the ideas of Cartwright, Besson and Maubisson (2013). Moreover, regarding music two types of nostalgia are identified: the one that is present in the music we have lived (and consequently the one we will defend as the best one), which is expressed in the forum, and the nostalgia of past times that we have not lived, but have been described as the greatest, and consequently we all wish to have lived in terms of music (expressed in the videos).

5. CONCLUSIONS

After considering the results of the video remix that PV Nova presented and the rest of videos sent by the audience it must be stated that Evolution of Get Lucky is a crowdsourced project with some unique features and a few participatory elements. In this regard, it is a closed proposal and a personal project of the artist, which is at the same time very iconic. Regarding the rules, the crowdsourcing is restricted to the video and does not involve the music, which has been previously remixed by the artist. Rules for participating are in this sense very strict, even if there is still some room for different forms of re-appropriation and transgression. In this sense, exploring motivations for participants in crowdsourcing can help modelling successful experiences, which be further explored in future research.

In terms of aesthetics, collaboration this is not necessarily connected with fragmentary or differentiated interpretations, rather, this case demonstrates the

contrary: in many cases, there is an aesthetic uniformization related to cultural interpretations and visual and musical clues.

Considering to the most popular decades, nostalgia and projections of future seem to be equally motivating cultural interpretations. In this sense, it is curious for us the scarce presence of local cultural (French) references in the videos, abounding North American or British influences in most of the decades.

In a more general sense, it can be stated that crowdsourcing connected with transmedia (through remix, or other strategies) can be used as a powerful tool in literacy, e.g. exploring the relations between music and images, and how they influence each other. Producing and remixing music videoclips in a collective way, puts on the table questions of styles and expertise, producing creative re-appropriations and expressions of authority enacted through notions of nostalgia and authenticity.

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Is the Community a Medium? Is “That’s Me!” the Message? The Story Of #Placevent: We Are Using Social Media to Hack the Academy

Valentina Bazzarin

University of Bologna, Italy

doi: 0000000000000000

valentina.bazzarin@unibo.it

ABSTRACT

University students attending socio-humanistic classes are frequently demanding an actual opportunity to apply their digital skills, their informal education and their innovative ideas about communications to local companies and public bodies. Their expectation is to find or to create job opportunities in a depressing national framework. In January 2013 we started a “Workshop for events planning and students’ placement”, quickly replaced with the hashtag #placevent. We run a research/action plan observing and collecting students’ self and community representation, using both digital-ethnographic methods and assigning them problem-solving tasks. We suppose that ritual practices of the Internet interaction are developing, although these have not been codified, because in any community we can observe a process supporting and enhancing shared social meanings and identities. Additionally, we found that individuals may belong to and identify with more than one community contemporaneously and serially, changing affiliations with great fluidity. The main result of this activity is that students feel empowered by witnessing their belonging to a group promoting innovation through practices of communication, as well as by overlapping and matching networks of relationship and widening the community or engaging new shareholders.

Keywords: community; social media; social networks; digital humanities; job market; hacking.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Florida “universities are amazingly effective talent magnets. By attracting eminent researchers and scientists, universities in turn attract graduate students, generate spin-off companies, and encourage other companies to

locate nearby in a cycle of self-reinforcing growth”. (Florida 2011, 310) University of Bologna is attracting talents since 1088 A.D., but the link between Alma Mater’s brand in terms of power of attraction and the real opportunity to exploit fellows’ potential in the job market weakend in the last years, especially for the humanities’ class. Students attending the Master degree in Social and Public Communication Studies at the University of Bologna, ask for a specific opportunity to show their skills and their innovative ideas about communications to local companies and public bodies. Their hope is to find a link with the job market before they complete their final dissertation. A general lack of professional experience is common in fellows’ resumes and they all need professional advices as well as an open access to a network of relationships before the end of the “education chapter” of their curricula. However, both the Italian academic system and the traditional role of “professors” (we are not advisors or a mentors) let graduate students face the job-market almost alone. On the other side small as well as big companies use to close doors in front of students’ enthusiastic request for training, denying any opportunity of reciprocal growth, explaining that there are not positions for people with a humanistic background and without any prove work experience.

Master degree in Social and Public Communication Studies has a strong record of innovative workshops aimed to complete students’ route exploring theories with practical experiences. Placevent is a pilot answer to students’ request to break the rules. A weekly two-hours-workshop started at the end of January 2013 and the original name of the activity was “Workshop for events’ planning and students’ placement”, quickly replaced with the hashtag: #placevent. The virtual places in which students completed their homework and the group used to segment the job-market and to define their position were a blog (placevent.wordpress.com), a YouTube channel where they still upload the videos they produce, and a @placevent account in the main social media: Twitter, Flickr, Instagram, Facebook (both with a closed community and an open page to share the event they were required to organize to obtain the credits) and also LinkedIn, where every student is publishing individually, improving their personal resumes and scouting open positions, information and best practices.

The workshop vision is similar to the one Gideon Burton has put pen (i.e. keyboard) to paper (i.e. doc) in ‘Hacking the Academy – A Book Crowd-sourced in One Week’: “Dear students: I’m about to say something a college professor shouldn’t say to his students, but I care about you a lot so I’m prepared to break the code and say what needs to be said: Your college experience is likely to set back your education, your career, and your creative potential. Ironically, this will be done in the name of education. You deserve to know about this! You have what it takes to reclaim, reform, and remix your education. Don’t let college unplug your future! [...] It will be a long time

before a college diploma is as quaint as, say, getting a public notary's stamp. But there is another system already competing with college, and it will start those bean counters in the tuition office sweating soon enough. This alternative to college credentials is as huge as the Stay Puft marshmallow man from *Ghostbusters* and he's towering over the skyline right where town meets gown: online identity. That's right. Who you are and what you've done will in the very near future be so well documented by your online activities that a resume will be redundant. The time will come when a college degree will be suspect if not complemented by an admirable online record-and I'm not talking about transcripts. Your "transcripts" will consist of your life stream: your blog, your social networks, your creative work published or otherwise represented online. Cyberspace is already more real to you than the physical space of your college campus-it is becoming so for your future employers¹."

Indeed in 2013 Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda, in Warsaw, Poland, declared too: "the main priority has to be dealing with high unemployment. Far too many people are out of work; including 5 million young people. And those aren't just people missing out on jobs. They are missing new opportunities, on getting their own place, on starting their own family. In short, they are missing out on life chances. In that context, boosting digital skills is essential. It helps people find the jobs available: and remember that, in our digital age, almost one million ICT jobs risk going unfilled. It helps our economic competitiveness, ensuring our economy continues to create jobs into the future. And it is well suited to the young generation, of digital natives²." [...] "First, we can ensure people know that ICT careers are an attractive career option. Today, many don't even realise that. Especially, I'm sorry to say, women. Second, they need basic ICT training embedded in their education. Because those fundamental digital skills are like reading and writing – essential for almost any job today, and certainly for ICT jobs. Third, they need somewhere to train. Not just in some faraway university, but close to home. Fourth, once they are finished with their training, they need employers to recognise and reward their skills. And finally, they need to be where the ICT jobs are. Including – if it's needed – to move to another EU country. And that should be straightforward to do – after all, that's what the EU is all about. That's quite a shopping list. And I think it's clear why we need a coalition to achieve it. We can't do this alone. But, to quote someone else determined to create jobs, together, yes we can."

¹ The book *Hacking the Academy* is available at <http://www.digitalculture.org/hacking-the-academy/hacking-teaching> (last accessed February 2014).

² The whole speech is available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-13-598_en.htm (last accessed February 2014).

Despite the risk to partially depreciate the master degree with a technical approach we followed both the hackers' advice and Kroes' recommendations. A flexible structure of the course in Public and Social Communication Sciences lets the experiment run. The whole research/action project is based on two on-going questions: 1) is the community a medium? 2) Is students' claimed role in the society the message delivered by the medium? From the answers given directly by students during debates and in social media discussions, or given indirectly in products produced during the workshop, we can infer some considerations.

2. PLACEVENT AND COMMUNI.ACTION

Since February 2013 group of 30 students attending a workshop once a week for 3 months have learnt how to use 2.0 tools, how to create an online community engaging partners and stakeholders as well as how to curate digital content. They became also information seekers and information gatekeepers; they used open-data to create multimedia content, to write news, to edit videos and to elaborate innovative solutions for data visualization. Moreover they became a group and after a year working together a proper team, able to develop independent projects.

In 2008 Jenkins has written: "participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from one of individual expression to community involvement. The new literacy almost all involve social skills developed through collaboration and networking. These skills build on the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom." (2008: 4) The workshop simulated a work frame with clients asking to solve actual problems. Public bodies and local companies brought their communication problems or projects to develop both in the virtual arena, i.e. posting in Placevent's blog or on the LinkedIn page, and in the offline traditional seminars in class. In these two years the syllabus prepared for #Placevent's activities was following the steps and the keywords suggested, again, by Jenkins:

- Affiliations: memberships, formal and informal, in online communities centered on various forms of media;
- Expressions: producing new creative forms of content;
- Collaborative Problem-solving: working together in teams, formal and informal, to complete tasks and develop and share new knowledge;
- Circulations: shaping the flow of media. (Jenkins 2008)

The unattainable model that inspired the project was the MIT center for civic media; however #placevent activities were focused on digital content production and people's empowerment rather than tools and frameworks' design.

In April 2013 the group of 30 students, who become a community and a proper team in the meanwhile, invited a group of stakeholders to play, i.e. asking questions and challenging them during an open conference. Students decided to organize and to produce in three months a new career-fair format mixing key speakers, professional experiences and a final brainstorming to collect ideas required to draw up guidelines. The conference called CommUni.Action (to assemble all the words describing vision and mission, i.e. communication, community, university and action) was staged at the end of April 2013 and played in 3 parts. The first session, centred on the main speaker, was titled "Guru in Action". Aron Pilhofer, leader of the interactive media team of the New York Times and founder of Hacks and Hackers, had been invited as opening key-speaker. He charmed the audience with the creations of a team that joins journalists and developers. The second part was the "relay-race" and 10 professionals in 7 minutes talked about a single aspect of their work. Each speech had a hashtag and the community had been invited to ask questions and to comment using the proper #keyword. The final session was a typical brainstorming "Community in Action" and involved some academics to draw the guidelines of the future of education in Social and Political Communication Studies.

Students posted articles and comments using the blog platform to share information about speakers and topics.

In summer 2013 half of the students attending the Placevent workshop founded a civil society organization, called Placevent [Hub] to continue the activity as well as to pass the baton to the younger students who are attending the new edition of the laboratory. Members of Placevent community (composed by students, professors, researchers or professionals) are not cheer-leading digital literacy or fostering a technocratic approach despite a creative and critical one, but transmediality in storytelling seems to emerge naturally and innovation in content production lies in the collaborative approach they use and in digital opportunities able to trigger their ideas.

3. TEAM WORK AND DIGITAL TOOLKIT

University students use internet mainly for amusement and not as a learning tool. During the first lesson I asked to the 30 students why and how they access the internet in general and social media in particular. Most of them have a personal computer or a laptop at home, however they use an internet key and they have not a flat internet connection. When they need to do long researches, to watch videos or to talk with someone using VOIP services they use the university wifi connection or the city hall public one. They all have a

mobile phone, but 15 up to 30 have a smart phone and only 5 have an internet connection. Just 2 students have a flat internet connection on their phones. They explained that both the home internet and the mobile connections are too expensive and they are not able to face a monthly cost for something that is not so relevant. About social networks, only one of them has not a Facebook profile, but on the other side only few of them had a Twitter account. The first assignment during the course were to clean their Facebook personal profile (or to create lists to filter the visibility of their personal data), to create a personal account on Twitter and one on LinkedIn.

Some of the information I collected with this informal interview with students are confirmed by general surveys and other studies. According to Mazzoleni, Vigevani and Splendore (2011): “The question of internet penetration in Italy, with its implications for digital divides, is linked to the diffusion of broadband. Although the growth of broadband still lags behind much of the European Union (EU), it is certainly increasing. There are 11.7 million households with broadband technology (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line [ADSL] is most widespread and represents 97 percent of all broadband connections), all with various subscriptions (flat-rate subscriptions for 24-hours internet connections are increasingly common even if the cost remains high despite the market competition among providers). In this field, however, national policies do not seem to be moving in the direction of greater broadband diffusion (investment has been frozen until 2014).”

AGCOM (Italian Agency for Communication) report 2013 about Italy accounts the Internet socio-demographic profile: regardless of location and of device examined, most of the Italian users are young people (over 93% of individuals aged between 11 and 34 years) and live in densely populated areas, i.e. with more than 100,000 inhabitants. Moreover, high concentration ratios are relevant between the most qualified profiles both in terms of education and employment status, but the Internet access is growing even among other socio-demographic profiles: the AGCOM survey detected a penetration rate of over 90% for graduates (97.9%), high school diploma (93.2%), employed in general (91.1%) and particularly managers, executives and academics (100% of respondents who hold one of these positions), entrepreneurs and professionals (97.8%) and employees and teachers (97.7%). College and University students have a very high penetration rate (99.7% of college students interviewed say they have internet access), while students in middle and high schools have a penetration rate of 96.6%. More than 40% of users are on the net to find information (42.1%), but there are other relevant goals like the opportunity to find goods or digital content only available on the Web (26.1%), a quick access to on-line public and private services (25.1%), to be informed in real time about news (23.5%).

These data show that students are a digital equipped target, however does not say anything about their skills and above all how we can translate the Internet access in an employment opportunity. This is one of the main topics we discussed during workshop activities.

3.1. Bologna as a smart city fostering prosperous communities

As mentioned above most of the students used the free Wi-Fi connection offered by the University of Bologna or the City Hall. The City of Bologna has a long time and peculiar history of citizens' engagement using civic networks and digital media. This story started in 1996 with a civic network based on the internet and the newborn WWW to last until today. In 1999, 14 years ago, Tambini described the first issues promoted by groups of digital citizens, empowered by the Internet:

[...] initiatives range from using city hall web pages as a more efficient means to make political information available to those who use the Internet, to experiments in electronic voting, to encouraging all citizens to use interactive media to organize interest groups and neighborhood alliances. Although national states have experimented with new media (for example the White House, which offers direct email to the President's office and extensive information on the government program), it is the local experiments – the so-called 'civic networks' – that are most advanced, and offer the clearest insights into emerging patterns of political communication.

Collaboration, digitalization and citizens' involvement are flagged as the main part of Bologna's brand. Putnam (1993) in the Prosperous communities said: "Some regions of Italy, such as Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany, have many active community organizations. Citizens in these regions are engaged by public issues, not by patronage. They trust one another to act fairly and obey the law. Leaders in these communities are relatively honest and committed to equality. Social and political networks are organized horizontally, not hierarchically. These 'civic communities' value solidarity, civic participation, and integrity. And here democracy works."

The general aims of the laboratorial activities of the University of Bologna for Public and Social Communication are planned to give students an opportunity as future professionals or entrepreneurs. The goal is to create a community able to use the web 2.0 as a debate arena exploiting some features of the city and the long tail of the investments the public bodies did in the Nineties, both in terms of infrastructure and in spreading the participative culture, involving students as citizens in the process and continually updating the relationships with public and private players. Moreover the metropolitan city of

Bologna is just one important node of a wider regional net that connects other interesting experiences like Modena, Reggio Emilia, Ferrara and all the other touristic cities in the East coast (Ravenna, Rimini, Forlì, etc.).

The role of this regional network mirrored partially on the web is everyday growing. A year ago, the Emilia Romagna region faced an earthquake emergency. Citizens had been invited by the authorities to use the Internet to raise actual problems or to ask questions as well as to upload information. Some students attending #Placevent workshop asked to be actively involved in this process too; they discussed and present an online community engagement, a communication plan and a program of collateral activities in collaboration with a project, called OpenRicostruzione, and promoted by an NGO, ActionAid. In this specific case transmediality is still used as a multiplier for the engagement actions not only for content production. Openricostruzione project aims to check the use of funds allocated or collected to rebuild infrastructure destroyed or damaged by the earthquake. University students are helping local communities, groups of journalist and middle school students to create a social, collaborative and multimedia storytelling interviewing the actors, following the traces of the activities, scouting similar experiences as well as collecting data and visualizing them. The quake highlighted also some problems in the communication flow due to bureaucracy and regulation; these difficulties affected mainly the step between the ongoing debate in citizens' arenas and the translation of the public debate in issues to negotiate actual solutions. This interference is visible in the ordinary debate about the digital agenda. Citizens and students are often called to express their opinion, but they are not able to influence the political decisions. Agreements between public bodies, academy and groups of interests present two main features: efforts are aimed to get a digital "smart" cities rather than empowering smart citizens and practical solutions proposed by people are not able to reach the attention of policymakers and administration (Bazzarin and Lalli 2012). #Placevent hacked this system and the public debate too. One of the secondary question and a goal of this research was to evaluate how much students represent themselves as citizens in Bologna and to promote the use of digital and communication skills they have or they are learning to improve city's public communication about grants, conferences, meetings, awards and job opportunities in the social media.

3.2. Placevent [HUB] as a prosperous community

The community of Placevent now is composed by two sub-communities: one composed by the students attending the second edition of the workshop and the other one around the civil society organization, Placevent [HUB], created by the

graduate students who attended the first edition. The new group of 20 students attending the second edition of the workshop, started in October 2013, are not engaged in the vision and in the mission as the students of the first edition were, so we are collecting data to understand why we are not able to intercept their needs or to succeed in creating a new team. Placevent [HUB] aims to continue to catalyze community-based micro innovation practices of a) high impact in a small scale – but with a scalable effect – engaging personal networks and online social media platforms; b) effectively bottom-up, i.e. arising from the idea of a small team able to reach policy makers as well as to improve the degree program with digital skills; c) innovative, using ICT as fuel to empower creativity and innovation in sectors like communication, journalism, education and civic activism. Moreover senior students are witnessing their passion and telling their project to the group of junior ones, but they are not able to bridge the different experiences and the interactions between the two groups results occasional in the online arenas the two communities share too.

According to what we highlighted in a previous paper in which we analyzed a similar workshop experience (Bazzarin and Lalli 2011) students have now the chance to explore “new boundaries or social ties; different opportunities to share, buy or to exchange goods; the option to participate actively in public debate; access to information; the opportunity to produce information. We suppose that ritual practices of the Internet and social media interaction are developing, although these have not been codified. In virtual communities we can observe a process supporting and enhancing shared social meanings and identities.” Observing the activity Placevent [HUB] is possible to confirm that individuals identify themselves with more than one community contemporaneously and serially, changing affiliations with great fluidity. For instance two of the members founded a start-up with another graduate student that is not involved in the association activity. However if the community’s focus pertains their actual interests (i.e. job search and personal visibility), a core of people remains engaged in the community especially they consider themselves founder of a group that reflects their values and has a positive impact on their personal reputation. The Internet represents a tool to exert personal and social influence, complicating the famous two-step flow of communication by Lazarsfeld. Bazzarin and Lalli (2012) suggest a “scattered-step flow of communication” where opinion leaders are spread in the network and they can quit or be dismissed from this role quickly and not regretfully, “in fact the main consideration we draw from a pilot ethnographic observation of these two case studies is the fluidity of membership. Consequently roles are transient too”. This lack of persistence probably explains why the rise and fall of social networks (paraphrasing the title of Hilgartner and Bosk’s 1988 paper) “is becoming so quick and weak on the long term period” (Bazzarin and Lalli 2011), even if we can add

that is possible to extend the life of these networks as long as you accept that roles of members, mission and vision would be updated or negotiated often.

Literature about community and online community counts many authors and definitions. First, there is community in a topographical sense. This refers to settlement based upon close geographical propinquity, but where there is no implication of the quality of the social relationships found in such settlements of intense co-presence. Second, there is the sense of community as the local social system in which there are localised, relatively bounded set of systemic interrelationships of social groups and local institutions. Third, there is communion, a human association that is characterised by close personal ties, belongingness and warmth between its members. According to Putnam (2000) these are what is conventionally meant by the idea of ‘community’ relationships. Moreover we will discuss if this phenomenon is new or innovative and what implies in terms of self representation. In fact, according to Jenkins: “In such a world, many will only dabble, some will dig deeper, and still others will master the skills that are most valued within the community. The community itself, however, provides strong incentives for creative expression and active participation. Historically, we have valued creative writing or art classes because they help to identify and train future writers and artists, but also because the creative process is valuable on its own; every child deserves the chance to express him – or herself through words, sounds, and images, even if most will never write, perform, or draw professionally. Having these experiences, we believe, changes the way youth think about themselves and alters the way they look at work created by others.” (Jenkins 2008, 7)

3.3. Translating fragmented identities in a collaborative storytelling

Corinne Weisgerber Assistant Professor of Communication St. Edward’s University has written³: “Stages merge and audiences become fluid. When I enter the Twittersphere, digital audiences aren’t as easy to define any longer. Yes, there’s my primary audience composed of the people who chose to follow me on Twitter. But to think that that’s my only audience might be a bit naïve. All it takes is one re-tweet for my message to leave the confines of my own Twitter network and to reach new audiences. Of course, my tweets also live on my Twitter profile, which if set to public, means that my potential audience has just grown to pretty much anyone with an Internet connection. And let’s not

³ The book is downloadable at: <http://academic.stedwards.edu/socialmedia/blog/2011/11/16/negotiating-multiple-identities-on-the-social-web-goffman-fragmentation-and-the-multiverse/#sthash.pbGP3iUb.dpuf> (last accessed February 2014).

to forget the Library of Congress, which in 2010 announced plans to acquire every publicly shared tweet since 2006. Let's think about this! One day, years from now, my great-grandkids – an audience that doesn't even exist yet – might be reading my tweets through the Library of Congress archive. With all these potential audiences, how are we supposed to know any longer who we will be performing for? To make matters even more complicated, thanks to cyberspace, I can also be present in multiple places at once. In Goffman's terms, I can now perform different plays to different audiences at the same time. Just think of a tweet: I can send it out via Twitter and simultaneously post it to Facebook and pull it into my blog, all of which have different audiences and serve different self presentational needs. That poses a problem though: Facebook Corinne and Twitter Corinne are not the same persona. And they're also slightly different from Corinne, the blogger. I'm a lot pickier about whom I let join my Facebook network and I rarely let mere acquaintances in. If you want to connect with me on Facebook, I have to know you fairly well. As a result, you'd probably get to see a much more unfiltered version of Corinne than you would on Twitter." Corinne is a professor and researcher and, despite the fact she calls her follower audiences, instead of active public, she tries to present a very professional image and to engage actors on multiple stages with multiple sometimes overlapping audiences using a social media. We used an horizontal approach to empower students' potential instead of replicating in the web based community the typical pyramidal structure of the academy. But we agree when Prof. Weisgerber highlights that our online identities are fragmented. "Partly because the web has become fragmented with walled communities popping up everywhere. As a social media professor, I feel pressured to keep up with these communities, so naturally I set up shop in them as soon as a new one arrives. In fact, I have created identities in so many of these services that I have no idea how many parts of me are floating around the Internet." Students participating in our workshop experienced the same frustration, however we decide to reduce the number of personal accounts they have and to aggregate information around two main channels, the blog placevent.wordpress.com and the class during workshop.

Moreover we assigned roles to account each student on a project, to do not waste the energy, and to give a reference easily accessible to our clients. In this way we hope to moderate both the fragmentation of the roles and the disengagement from the working group after students obtain the formal credits for the workshop.

Results show a good impact of the activity in students' digital skills portfolio (we reviewed participants' LinkedIn resumes before and after the workshop) and networking expertise, however risky assessment about privacy, personal data, cyber-bullism, accountability and copyrights has required a major effort to face a general lack of attention and interest. To face the selfish

attitude to not share the best opportunities with the group and to focus also on the less glamorous issues we decided to write some post on the blog, rotating the authors or by assigning tasks to those who tended to stay always in the second line.

As moderator of the community interactions (both online and offline) and as mediator with the academy requirements the main challenge was to balance the individual desire to exploit the blog and the network as a diving board into the world of work Vs the team-work implied in building a community starting from the blog. Intentions behind participation were different and 10 students after they accomplished the compulsory part of the program (until the event communi.Action) decided to leave the project during the first edition. Among the remaining 20 there were tensions for personal reasons or due to different opinion. The funders group that decided to carry on the community is composed of 15 people.

4. NOT A CONCLUSION BUT A STEP FORWARD

Jenkins highlighted that: “Rather than dealing with each technology in isolation, we would do better to take an ecological approach, thinking about the interrelationship among all of these different communication technologies, the cultural communities that grow up around them and the activities they support. Media systems consist of communication technologies and the social, cultural, legal, political, and economic institutions, practices, and protocols that shape and surround them. (Gitelman 1999) The same task can be performed with a range of different technologies, and the same technology can be deployed toward a variety of different ends. Some tasks may be easier with some technologies than with others, and thus the introduction of a new technology may inspire certain uses. Yet, these activities become widespread only if the culture also supports them, if they fill recurring needs at a particular historical juncture. It matters what tools are available to a culture, but it matters more what that culture chooses to do with those tools.” (2008, 8)

Despite the general problem to find a decent employment for people with a humanistic background showed by data provided, students participating in #placevent project felt empowered by witnessing their presence in the city of Bologna and in its public sphere, by belonging to a group promoting innovation through practices of communication, as well as by overlapping and matching networks of relationships and widening the community or engaging new shareholders. Social media spaces are open, organizable and organized as actual traditional arenas are. This fluidity of boundaries, rules and roles needs

to be described both maintaining the heritage of previous descriptions (McLuhan's 1962 or Castell's 1996) and by understanding the characteristics of interactive digital media, such as the rise of ritual fluid identities, the opportunity to create the content as well as to learn sharing knowledge with peers and the trend to translate the fluid membership or the fragmentation of identities in the web in an effective portfolio of skills and experiences.

As Aron Pilhofer said during Communi.Action: "Part of the goal, of the use of social media is that they're inherently interactive, it is a two-way conversation, a technology that allows you to truly interact with readers [...] believe it or not, anyone who uses social would say "*of course it does, that's silly!*", but there are a lot of editors that don't think that social has that. If they think about the social at all, they think as a way to deliver content, as a way to send links [...] but there's much much more than that". We witness this selective blindness in the Italian academy as well as in local policies daily and students decided to implement a micro-hacking civic activity from the place in which they felt more comfortable: a specific project aimed to help them to find a position in the society and to access the public sphere producing social and public communication. The answer is a blog, their blog, to use social network's wires and links to make the process visible and effective thought capillarity (and to get a job, we hope!).

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Korrika, a Transmedia View

Edorta Arana - Bea Narbaiza - Libe Mimenza

University of the Basque Country, Spain

edorta.arana@ehu.es – bea.narbaiza@ehu.eus – libe.mimenza@ehu.es

doi: 000000000000

ABSTRACT

Korrika is a popular relay race in favor of Euskara that traverses more than 2,500 kilometers of the seven Basque provinces every two years. It is a social and cultural event of the first order and its eighteenth edition was held last year. For this edition of the race, our research group worked on the development of the architecture of Korrika in order to expand its narrative through different media and formats. We defined a number of areas of special interest in this edition, working closely with undergraduate and master's students at the University of the Basque Country with a particular interest in audiovisual production (both fiction and documentary). The use of social networking, web resources and social mobilization elements (massive competitions, flashmobbing, implementation of social participation techniques and new communication technologies, etc.) were another area of focus in this eighteenth edition of the race. Korrika became a research project “in progress”, in which we went beyond the role of mere observers to participate in its daily activities thus contributing to its development. This involved a lot of experimentation, in which the university, the Basque radio and television station and a contemporary culture center worked together, implementing the transmedia view in a real case.

Keywords: transmedia; social participation; Korrika; Basque; race; community; project in progress.

1. INTRODUCTION

For eleven days in March 2013, Korrika passed through a very large number of towns and villages without pause, by day and night. A wooden baton containing a message of support for Euskara was passed from hand to hand. This message was read out in public when the race ended in Baiona (Northern Basque Country).

The people who carry the baton represent organizations, companies, social movements or institutions of every type, which sponsor each of the kilometers of the race and in this way raise funds for teaching Euskara to adults.

Together with its purely sporting and demonstrative character, a large number of cultural acts are organized round Korrika, ranging from concerts to exhibitions and including festivals of improvised poetry or cinematographic projects. As a whole this constitutes a festival that gives concrete expression throughout the territory to the Basque population's support for its identitarian elements, in particular its language.

Korrika has a high presence in the media – on the radio and television, in the daily press and local publications – and it is also becoming increasingly relevant in the new media with each further edition.

The Transmedia work group was formed at the end of 2011. This work group includes researchers from the University of the Basque Country (Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea – UPV/EHU), EITB-Basque Public Radio Television Station and Tabakalera-International Centre of Contemporary Culture, who came together to study the phenomenon of transmedia narrative and production and their potentials.

Besides the analytical perspective on transmedia, the work group has selected a series of events which it seeks to influence directly in order to develop and exploit their transmedia character. Korrika is one of these. Since mid-2012, the Transmedia group has been working with AEK, the body that organizes Korrika, in applying a transmedia perspective to widen the activities that take place before, during and after the sports race. For the 2013 edition, particular attention was paid to exploiting audiovisual creation (with both a fictional and a documentary character), the use of social networks, Internet resources, and the component of social mobilisation and festivity (massive competitions, implementation of techniques of social participation and new communications technologies, amongst other aspects).

In the present article the Transmedia research group presents an outline of the phases of designing and implementing the most novel transmedia resources in the recent edition of Korrika, and the results obtained once the race had concluded.

2. RACE IN FAVOR OF EUSKARA

2.1. Korrika 18: from Andoain to Baiona

The first edition of Korrika was held between the 29 November and 7 December 1980, and the following two editions every year and a half; but from the fourth edition onwards it has had a biannual character and has always been held in the months of March and April.

AEK-Alfabetatze eta Euskalduntze Koordinakundea (Coordinator for Teaching Euskara to Adults) is the organizer of Korrika and through the race it raises funds for teaching the Basque language to adults in all the Basque provinces.

The eighteenth edition set out on 14 March 2015 from Andoain (Gipuzkoa), thus beginning a race that would not stop for eleven days during which the baton was passed from hand to hand, day and night, until the final destination was reached. Step by step, it travelled 2,587 kilometres, going through all the Basque capitals, the different regions, a very significant number of towns and villages of all sizes, and overcoming orographic, climatic and organizational obstacles of every type.

The final event of Korrika 18 took place in Baiona (Northern Basque Country) and consisted of a big festival that attracted tens of thousands of people. The reading out of the text contained inside the baton by its author, the *bertsolari* (verse improviser) Amets Arzallus, was the culminating moment of the celebration.

The slogan chosen for the recent edition was “Eman euskara elkarri” (Share Euskara) and, this time, a tribute was given to the students of Euskara. The official song of Korrika edition number 18 was composed and recorded by “Esne beltza”, a popular music group.

2.2. Much more than a popular race

Thirty-three years have passed since the Korrika was born and in its 18 editions it has won unquestionable support in every sense and at every level. In essence it maintains its physical component as a demonstration of support for Euskara and as a mechanism of raising funds for teaching the language. But besides, through its consecutive editions it has managed to add another type of values such as participation (it is very difficult to calculate the number of people who take part in the race properly speaking, but a figure far in excess of 600,000 people would not be absurd), the sense of belonging, mobilizing capacity,

equality, the public and festive visualization of the support for Euskara in all the different territories where it is spoken, integration and social involvement at all levels – individual, collective and institutional – amongst others (Del Valle 1988).

Korrika is already a ritualized celebration, beyond whoever organizes it and whatever its primary aims might be. The social interweaving it performs, its projection at all levels (educational, media, institutional, political, cultural and social) and its festive component all make it into a reference around which positive experiences, shared individually and collectively, take place. With Korrika, Euskara traverses a territory that belongs to it – beyond geopolitical or administrative frontiers – and gives expression to the social support and public legitimation that would not otherwise crystallize so clearly in everyday life.

2.3. Participation

In the race properly speaking, one can take part as carrier of the baton – in this way financing the kilometres run by each sponsor, one can run behind the banner with the slogan of the edition, or, in a more anonymous fashion, one can form part of the pack of runners taking part in the relay race.

But in addition, as we noted above, AEK and other local support groups for the Korrika organize Korrika Kulturala, a very wide program of activities of every type: these range from events with a purely festive character (musical concerts in all styles, meals/dinners, humorous shows, monologues...) to those with a cultural character (exhibitions and conferences, narrative, photographic, video or painting competitions) or with a sporting character (mountain treks, races, competitions...).

In nearly all the towns and villages of the Basque Country, the public and private educational centres join the celebrations, organizing Korrika Txikiak (local and parallel versions of the general Korrika, in which young children run relay races in the locality, carrying an *ad hoc* baton and celebrating the arrival of Korrika).

Economic support for Korrika is also materialized in very different ways, ranging from bonds, the purchase of stickers or pins, some of the products from the Korrika catalogue (T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, bags, backpacks, key-rings...) or by funding some of the 2,587 kilometers of the race, either exclusively or jointly. In the latter case, besides support from groups and social movements in favor of Euskara and from companies and private bodies (advertisers, department stores, financial and insurance firms, brands from all productive sectors), Korrika usually receives funding from the local and provincial institutions and from those of the relevant administrative region.

2.4. Korrika in the traditional media

The mass media usually report on the different stages of Korrika and, in particular, those stages that take place in their area of influence. Korrika usually has a greater presence in the Basque-language media or in those whose editorial lines are closer to the defense of Basque identity.

The daily press, which has a high index of penetration in the Basque Country and Navarre, gives very uneven coverage to the events of the race in support of Euskara. In the media belonging to the Vocento group, Korrika was only front page news the day after it finished in the Northern Basque Country – although it did not even receive any prominent mention in *El Correo*. Something similar occurred with *Diario de Navarra*, a newspaper that is ideologically conservative and that denies the Basque character of the Navarre. Conversely, other newspapers like *Noticias de Navarra*, *Deia*, *Gara*, *el Periodico de Alavá* or *Berría*, the latter exclusively in Euskara, gave a lot of coverage to Korrika, on both their front and inside pages on the days between 14 and 25 March 2013.

The local magazines also covered Korrika in an uneven way. Coverage was almost nonexistent in the local media of the Rivera Navarra, but nonetheless it received significant coverage in the local Basque-language media, *Goiena*, *Barren*, *Ttipi-Ttapa* or *Aiurri*, amongst others.

The autonomous radio stations and television channels also gave Korrika the opportunity to broadcast information about its aims and activities and the social response through special programs, mentions in shows and news programs. Concretely, EITB, the Basque public radio television station, showed the inaugural events, the daily stages and the final festival with prominent programs. Radio stations like *Euskadi Irratia* and *Gaztea* or TV channels like *ETB1* and *ETB3* have a very audience.

The audiovisual media with a local character – radio stations and television channels whose coverage is thus more limited – broadcast special programs for the days when Korrika passed through their areas of coverage (*Goiena*, *Goiberri*, *Xaloa*, *Hamaika Bilbo*...) and, more generally, designed series of daily programs to provide a more general follow-up for all eleven stages of Korrika (the case of *Hamaika* or the radio broadcasts integrated in *Arrosa*).

3. TRANSMEDIA PROJECT: RESEARCH-ACTION

When the group of researchers from EITB, Tabakalera and UPV/EHU was formed at the end of 2011, we were well aware that this was not a typical research project.

Transmedia edukien sorrera, ekoizpena eta erabilera (Creation, production and uses of transmedia content) was formed with the idea of bringing together energies proceeding from different professional fields, specializations and even points of view. The presence in the same working group of professionals from a public radio television group, an international centre of contemporary culture and a university was an experiment that represented a significant challenge in itself (Transbideak 2013).

We sketched out three main aims for the project:

- To bring together the dispersed information and documentation existing on the transmedia approach, its production and consumption, and to examine the theoretical foundations of this narrative mode.
- To select and carry out an in-depth analysis of a series of case studies that would additionally serve us in designing a taxonomy of transmedia products and in identifying the most relevant elements present in the most successful of these.
- To lay the foundations for a collaborative and multidisciplinary system of working that would better exploit each of the three bodies involved, and to demolish the sometimes narrow walls of some research groups, thus providing a more outward looking perspective.
- It is thus not a research project that sought to present its conclusions at the end, but a work group that would show its advances along the way and that would be involved in developing concrete transmedia projects. One of the latter is what we are presenting here, the one articulated around Korrika 18. The clearest methodological references for this type of work can be found in so-called “action-research” (Lewis 1946 and Stenhouse 1975) and “participatory observation” (Martinez 2004), which substantially define a working system where researchers take part and interact with the rest of the agents, while carrying out an analytical follow-up of the processes underway.

4. KORRIKA WAS ALREADY A TRANSMEDIA PRODUCT

As we have noted, each edition of Korrika is articulated around a slogan and a person or group that receives a tribute. Each edition has its own visual and publicity treatment, and a song that distinguishes and accompanies it during the days when this popular race is taking place.

The slogans synthesize the aims of each edition, and models and conduct are objectified in the people who receive a tribute. In recent years some of the slogans have been concerned with the process of adult literacy in Euskara and the need to be active, the advantage of opening oneself up to the world

through Euskara, the importance of the spoken language, or the identification of Euskara with its territory.

At the same time, amongst the bodies and people who have received tributes in recent editions, we find writers, musicians, academics of the Basque language, *bertsolaris*, women as transmitters of the language, sculptors...

Around these central elements a participatory design has been constructed for Korrika, both in the physical race itself and in the rest of the activities that form part of it. Communicating the values on which each edition of Korrika is designed is usually done using traditional mass media and platforms, on paper and posters, and using a wide range of merchandising products. Recent editions, moreover, have integrated the new mass media and the different tools of mobile telephony and computers.

In short, Korrika is in essence a popular race that raises funds for teaching Euskara; it is designed around a slogan and a tribute is given to a person, group or institution that project a series of values related to the language, its revitalization and its relevance to the community.

The materialization of that discourse is achieved by physically participating in the race, in the different related activities or through the traditional or new mass media. That is, Korrika has been and is a transmedia project that is realized and channeled through different media, thus making possible its discursive (re)generation and the participation of users in its construction and socialization (Jenkins 2006).

5. LONG BEFORE STARTING TO RUN...

5.1. Laying the foundations

Applying the abovementioned line of “research-action” to Korrika offered every advantage. Not only because it enabled an accumulation of prior experience to be put to good use, but also because it opened up new possibilities and was flexible enough for these to be incorporated in a natural and positive way.

Thus began a process of work and collaboration between the members of the research group and AEK that was consolidated over the ten months from July 2012 to April 2013.

The first meeting of the group with the communications team of AEK took place before the summer of 2012. At this meeting our group explained the convenience of conceiving Korrika as a great transmedia universe, in which organizers and users converged and that involved a very imaginative devel-

opment of traditional and new media, for which purpose previous experiences and new proposals were channeled. This universe, which broad sectors of the Basque population identified with, was optimum for the interaction of different agents and enabled highly open and creative cross-media developments (Scolari 2013).

During the summer we prepared an initial project based on the essential discursive elements of Korrika 18 and the envisaged aims, slogan and person who was to receive a tribute (although all of these were still secret at that time). This project included a series of media and platforms on which to build the narrative discourse of the eighteenth edition of Korrika and the ways in which interaction with users and discursive (re)construction would be possible.

After the summer we took part in the first big meeting of the Korrika Commission (about 20 people) at which the foundations for the working system of the popular race were laid with the participation of the people from AEK responsible for finances, organization, communications and logistics. For us it was a first exploratory meeting at which we were able to gather feedback on the project drawn up in summer. The attitude of AEK was highly receptive and they were more than willing to include our proposals in their work dynamic and to collaborate with members of the research team and with as many students as were prepared to join in. With that idea of adding ideas and people to the project, we thought that it was necessary to open up the viewpoint and gain a deeper understanding of the values that crystalized socially around Korrika and of the perception held by different sectors of the population of how these values should be worked on.

Although not directly related to Korrika, we will briefly mention a transmedia workshop that served us as a type of apprenticeship. This workshop was organized by Tabakalera in September 2012 with the aim of experimenting in the collective creation of fiction. Over the course of ten days, the Tranxlan laboratory developed audiovisual products, a website, used social networks to spread the story, designed a videogame and put into practice gamification techniques during the festival of fantasy and horror films held annually in Donostia-San Sebastián. Our team was present in the workshop and learned from its experiences.

Following the line of what we have mentioned above, we organized the second edition of Tranxmedia in October (Tranxmedia 2012). This was a conference that sought to learn from novel experiences developed in different countries and, moreover, it included an afternoon workshop of transmedia creation applied thematically to Korrika. The first part of the conference, which consisted of presentations involving a great number of basically European examples, was attended by Tishna Molla of Power to the Pixel, one of the most solid references in the study and development of transmedia projects in Europe.

But it was the evening session, which took the form of a workshop, which served for advancing for the design of Korrika from a transmedia perspective.

The aims of that workshop were to identify a series of values on which a narrative world specific to Korrika could be built and to design systems of social participation that would invigorate it. The workshop was attended by about fifty participants who worked in groups of seven people with a moderator for each group. The latter were selected from amongst people from the Basque Country who were well-known because of their experience with audiovisual media, or in literary, artistic or practical creation involving the new information technologies.

The experience was very rewarding and served to provide further ideas for the project that we were to develop with AEK in the approaching Korrika 18. Proposals were made in the workshop that were directed towards:

- Widening the levels of participation by the citizenry through collaborative works (audiovisual follow-up of Korrika as it passed through each town or village), karaoke competitions, versions of the original Korrika 18 song or the collective creation of literary texts, amongst others.
- Making more extensive use of new communications technologies, especially social networks, in this way fomenting citizen participation.
- Utilizing applications for mobiles and tablets that would serve for visualizing the place and situation of Korrika at each point in time, in this way attracting generations of new technology users and young people taking part in the race.

In parallel, and in the framework of the UPV/EHU-EITB Master's Degree in Multimedia Communication and the degree course in Audiovisual Communication of the UPV/EHU, several subjects provided students with activities related to, and in tune with, the general activities of Korrika.

In particular, students on the Master's Degree adopted the initiative as their own and presented a series of models for the development of Korrika, several of which they themselves were to put into practice:

- Fictional and documentary audiovisual products for television.
- Micro-documentaries for the Net.
- A contest amongst educational centres that included the production of videos and tests of knowledge.
- A website that included the history of all the slogan-songs of Korrika and information on the groups that played them.

The start of the year 2013 definitively marked a change of rhythm and brought the pressing need to delimit activities and concentrate efforts on those that were thought to have more potential and that better characterized the transmedia approach required for Korrika 18.

5.2. Aims and development of the project

“Eman euskara elkarri” (Share Euskara) was the *leitmotif* of the Spring 2013 edition of Korrika and the people it paid tribute to were the students of Euskara. These were precisely the two elements on which we were laying the foundations of our transmedia project.

For this purpose, we had an even greater need of the mass media we wanted to work with, and of the synergy relations we wanted to create between them and both the participants of the more physical Korrika and those of the traditional and new media. We were able to count on the *ETB3* television channel, *Gaztea* (EITB’s radio station for young people), and the online resources of *eitb.com*. Moreover, we were by then working with the company that would make the Korrika 18 application and the organizers of the outdoor events, in particular the final stage and the festival that was to be held in Baiona.

One work group concentrated on producing a series with a factual character for the Net titled “Hamaika egun, 11 istorio” (Eleven Days, Eleven Stories) which recounted the testimonies on the experience of learning Euskara of eleven people with different ages, backgrounds and occupations from throughout the Basque Country. These micro-documentaries of 3-5 minutes duration would be presented on the Net on the same day that the Korrika went through the streets of their respective villages or towns. Besides, several of the episodes served as a basis for promotional teasers that were broadcast by Basque television on the days prior to Korrika.

Another group worked with AEK on organizing the official Korrika website. A clock giving a countdown to the day, hour and minute when the rocket marking the start of the race would be fired in Andoain (Gipuzkoa), and an interactive map containing photographs and videos of each of the places the race would go through, were some of the elements added to the renovated website. It is also worth stressing the general idea that the latter was to function as an umbrella for the different written and visual content and that, as a whole, it would transmit the enthusiasm, colour and open character of the more physical part of Korrika.

Simultaneously, EITB set up a website of its own that could be accessed through the website of the *Gaztea* youth radio station and that served as a meeting place for the social networks implemented by EITB, the audiovisual content produced during the race and the videos and photos contributed by the audience.

Another of the stronger initiatives taken in the eighteenth edition of Korrika was on the social networks. On the one hand, the use of social networks was strengthened as a resource for interaction and participation, in particular through a customized version of Twitter called Txioka and another

with a more documentary character. This latter made use of the same individuals as “*Hamaika egun, 11 istorio*” to recreate their experiences on Twitter. This was a way of spreading the webisodes to the social networks and creating communication amongst their users. It was a complex task and a team of community managers wrote and created the timelines of the different tweets, making them coincide with the days and times when these individuals went through their own localities.

Parallel to this, a group of four students became intensively involved in producing a daily 30 minute program that was broadcast by *EITB3* and some local stations. These daily programs had a double component: on the one hand, to make a first person chronicle of what happened during the day and, on the other, to cover all the previous content produced by the work team. Meanwhile, the other two channels of Basque TV, the channel in Euskara and *ETB2* in Spanish, included daily mentions of the activities of *Korrika* in their news programs.

Something similar happened with the radio stations, which in their hourly news programs and their magazines made periodical connections with the popular race and interviewed its protagonists. The latter might be anonymous or, in many cases, representatives of political parties, institutions or well-known figures from the cultural and social life of the Basque Country.

The application for mobiles and tablets launched that year by AEK was another of the novelties worth stressing. This answered to the need for having a direct and rapid information channel and service and for connecting with a youthful (and not so youthful) sector of the population, one that is increasingly broad and that uses new technologies on a daily bases.

Finally, and very briefly, we will mention another of the lines of work promoted in the 2013 edition of *Korrika*: gamification. During that edition, broadening previous experiences, a great qualifying contest was organized by towns and regions that culminated in the final stage of *Korrika* in Baiona, where several teams of finalists had to overcome a series of tests requiring the collaboration of the public that was present. These tests were a combination of trials of physical skill and the use of new technologies. It was both a success in terms of participation and a test bench for later editions.

6. DRAWING UP A BALANCE OF THE RACE

As we have noted, *Korrika* is made up of several interwoven aims. These range from more general ones like promoting the knowledge and use of Euskara, and, consequently, showing the territory it occupies and the uneven support

it receives from the institutions, to raising funds for teaching the language. Moreover, these aims include more transversal ones like the value of collective work, the sense of belonging, solidarity, interiorizing the territory physically and emotionally, transmission of culture inter-generationally and amongst people from very different backgrounds, or participation in public life. But, in addition, the intention was that Korrika, from the perspective of constructing a transmedia discourse, should encompass, widen, give meaning to, and enable a relation amongst very different media and their users. This is a field of work with tremendous potential, both now and in coming editions.

A quick review of the activities developed and the results obtained in this eighteenth edition makes clear its enormous worth and the broad terrain that is still to be consolidated. We will consider some of these:

- Korrika enables cross-media developments that are very interesting for the future. Firstly, because of the strength of a race that mobilizes so many people; secondly, because of the presence it obtains in the traditional mass media; and, finally, and above all, because of the potential it shows for combining new communications technologies, social participation and interaction amongst users.
- The eighteenth edition of Korrika has shown that combining the strengths of the mass media, particularly those with a public character and those that clearly support Euskara, produces extremely interesting results. Besides, articulating the mechanics of citizen participation and, in particular, those open to university students and secondary school children, enables highly enriching developments in terms of content.
- Future editions of Korrika must consolidate its general architecture and make an optimum combination of the media and platforms already used, the new technological equipment of communication and citizen participation in creating content. Such transmedia development will be all the more solid if simple mechanisms and instruments of individual and group participation are created (sending and receiving user generated audiovisual content, presence on social networks, applications that facilitate social visualization, etc.) and if preproduction timelines, realization and synergies amongst media are determined for all of them. Without any doubt, the Net will play a primordial role in future editions.

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Transmedia Design Framework. Design-Oriented Approach to Transmedia Research

Mariana Ciancia

Politecnico di Milano, Italy

doi: 00000000000000

mariana.ciancia@polimi.it

ABSTRACT

The contemporary mediascape is witnessing the emergence of crossmedia and transmedia structures: phenomena that foster the sharing of meaning-making processes between producers and audiences, shaping society and influencing media habits. There are also a whole industry and a newborn scientific community that want to go beyond the conceptual confusion that covers these terms, trying to find definitions and sharing practices to develop compelling stories. This paper defines the “design-oriented” approach used for my PhD research into the transmedia field. The description of methodology and methods becomes an opportunity to develop observations about the role of the researcher in studying this field, and the relationship between researching and teaching experience.

Keywords: transmedia practice; transmedia research; transmedia design; multi-channel communication; design culture; design practice; methodology.

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a society rich with a growing number of messages spread by multi-channel and multi-modal devices (Kress and Leeuwen 2001; Manovich 2002; Piredda 2008). What is emerging from a phenomenological approach to contemporary mediascape is the rising importance of multi-channel structures that completely change the role of the audience, allowing the development of widespread creativity through the collaborative creation and the collective consumption of narrative worlds. Focusing on the domains of media studies (Lévy 1996; Jenkins 2006; Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013) and design research

(Brown 2008; Ehn 2008; Moggridge 2010), the core topic of my research is those multi-channeled structures able to foster the sharing of meaning-making processes between producers and audiences, shaping society and influencing media habits: the transmedia phenomena.

The emerging issues from the literature review were a non-common definition of “what transmedia is” and a lack of sharing practices in transmedia project development. In fact, this research aims to identify the main features of transmedia projects to build a glossary that can be shared, and to contribute to the development of a useful tool for transmedia practice (Dena 2009). An instrument that I term “transmedia design framework” is intended to become a conceptual and operational tool for designing engaging narrative environments, not only for big Hollywood productions, but also for everyday scenarios. In doing this, I aim to derive tools and processes from design practices because, according to Friedman (1999):

Design research is unusual for several reasons. First among them is that design is both an intellectual discipline and an applied discipline. Design research operates on several levels, both theoretical and applied. The questions of design research methods therefore span a number of issues. The second important aspect of design is that it is an integrative discipline, frequently required to operate across disciplines and engage multiple research methods. Finally, the variety of fields involved in design is far larger than we find in most disciplines. (Friedman 1999, in Pizzocaro 2010, 92)

The aim of this paper is to highlight some reflections about methodologies and methods in the transmedia research field. Therefore, the first part of the work briefly describes the topic, the objectives and the expected results of the PhD research. After this, the paper focuses on research phases, methodology, and methods to show some considerations of the role of the researcher in studying the transmedia field.

2. TRANSMEDIA DESIGN FRAMEWORK: RESEARCHING THE TRANSMEDIA FIELD

Due to the rising number of multi-modal devices and the higher number of messages conveyed across several channels, the designer has a key role as mediator to bring the different social contexts together in a mutual understanding. Starting from these assumptions, and according to projects and thoughts developed over the years, the aim of my research is the understanding of a form of communication able to merge different languages, media, and technologies, and to rethink participatory processes.

I identified transmedia practice as a possible procedure to address the issue of contemporary complexity through a phenomenological approach to the coeval reality. This allowed me to concentrate on a real cultural paradigm that allows people to become aware of the prominent role played in the contemporary mediascape, focusing on the storyteller's ability to support multiple points-of-view. This is because "[a]s meaning-makers today, we, especially the youngest of us, increasingly live our lives across institutions and media, and we make meanings with all their resources that no single medium or institution can control". (Lemke 2011, 579)

Issues emerging from the literature review include conceptual confusion (Renira, Rampazzo, and Gambarato 2013) regarding the term "transmedia" and other interchangeably used words, and a lack of sharing practices in transmedia project development. In fact, what we are witnessing right now "is a whole industry which is trying to find coherent best practices to address the challenges and opportunities that this situation brings" (Staffans 2012, 14). This is an area of interest that intersects different research fields: "[e]veryone is looking at transmedia from their own angle. This is very natural and exactly as it should be, as everyone have [sic] their own area of expertise" (Staffans 2012, 26). Having a design education, I applied a designer's way of thinking (Cross 2001) with the purpose of generating:

[t]he frameworks of meaning where the continuous conversation between other actors of the system can innovate taking on new meanings. In other words, when the product is knowledge, the design research becomes one of the main drivers of innovation, and the centres in which it takes place assume the role of real "design Knowledge lab". (Manzini 2000, 15)

In response to the lack of common practices in the design of transmedia projects, the output will be a conceptual and operational tool for designing compelling narrative environments: what I call the transmedia design framework. That is, a kind of research of "semifinished research products" (Manzini 2000, 15), a type of knowledge that can be stored and employed in the future.

3. DESIGN-ORIENTED APPROACH TO TRANSMEDIA RESEARCH

In 2012, transmedia was described by Simon Staffans as "[t]he oldest of the old that at the same time is the newest of the new" (20). It is possible to acknowledge that the practice of telling stories across multiple channels has a long tradition (for example, the Bible is indicated as the first great transmedia project), at the same time highlighting its ongoing importance. It is a practice

made up of tacit knowledge, which people work with in an intuitive manner. This research is an attempt to identify the common elements in the different points-of-view in order to build a glossary that can be shared, contributing to the development of a useful tool for transmedia practice. The approach that led me to organize the research path in three phases was the model developed by Chow and Jonas (2008): analysis, synthesis and projection.

3.1. Generative Communication

The first phase of the design-oriented approach was devoted to the exploration of the multi-channel communication field and the definition of its theoretical foundations (*Analysis-Inductive Phase*, from Chow and Jonas 2008). It started from the assumption that the analysis phase is a key step for any design process, allowing for the discovery of data and concepts able to foster research development.

The aim of this phase was to understand different communication scenarios through a literature review and desktop research in the fields of media studies. What emerged from a phenomenological approach to contemporary mediascape was the rising importance of multi-channel structures that completely change people's media habits, leading the research to focus on transmedia practice. This was investigated through the analysis of state of the art and by attending conferences. Only in recent years has the field seen the development of scientific research on the topic, thus it was necessary to attend these meetings in order to grasp the ongoing changes.

There were three outputs of the first phase: two conceptual and one operational. The first was the investigation of multi-channel paradigms and the consequent building of a positioning matrix, according to the taxonomy highlighted by Christy Dena (2009). This output led me to discriminate between crossmedia and transmedia systems according to the story field. Therefore, it is possible to recognize structures in which the story is adapted in different channels (crossmedia), or if it is spread through them (intracompositional transmedia phenomena and intercompositional transmedia phenomena). The second was the identification of transmedia practice as a possible approach to overcome contemporary complexity, a scenario characterized by changes in audience behaviors, development in the technological field and the evolution of the participation processes. The last output was the definition of an analytical tool to deal with the second phase – an analysis form (*see Tab. 1*) – with the aim of understanding and highlighting the main features of transmedia projects. The form opens by listing a series of general information, and is structured in three sections that deal respectively with the narrative, the structure, and the production phase.

Table 1 – Detailed description of listed items in the analysis form.

ANALYSIS FORM		
TOPIC	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
GENERAL INFORMATION	Title	General information about project and obtained results.
	General Description	
	Statistics	
	Awards	
SECTION A STORYTELLING	1. Synopsis	Brief summary of the story.
	2. Story Elements	Identification of characters, context and spatial configuration of the story world and core themes.
	3. Action Flow	How the action is conveyed.
SECTION B STRUCTURE	4. Structure	Identification of the type of structure according to Dena's (2009) taxonomy: crossmedia, intracompositional transmedia phenomenon or intercompositional transmedia phenomenon.
	5. Platform and Channels	List of platforms and channels involved in the project.
	6. Engagement	How the audience interaction is designed.
SECTION C BUSINESS AND PRODUCTION	7. Team	Identification of roles, responsibilities, and skills.
	8. Business Model	Description of project workflow, business, and distribution model.
	9. R&D	Innovative elements of the analyzed project.

The first section, storytelling, requires a brief summary of the story (synopsis) and a description of the narrative elements. These include the specification of primary and secondary characters and the highlighting of the relationships between them, the description of the narrative world, and the identification of the main themes. The last item concerns the analysis of the actions (agency). Andrea Phillips (2012, 93) declared that “[i]f there is no action, then nothing is happening; if nothing happens, you don’t have a story. So one of the primary tasks of a storyteller is to effectively and compellingly convey action”, supporting the importance of action. Using her works and reflections, I have included the agency item with the aim of collecting useful information for the structure section. The aim is also to determine if the action is kept in one medium or if it is conveyed over multiple media (Phillips 2012, 93-97).

This entry marks the connection with Section B, Structure, in the analysis of the transmedia project. The first item is the identification of the phenomenon according to Dena’s (2009) classification. The second item is the description of platforms and channels involved in the structure. As mentioned, the role played by the audience is essential within these projects. Therefore, the last item relates to the mechanics of interaction. Specifically, it is related to the recognition of tools of interaction applied by the design team, which can be summarized in three categories: story archaeology, communication, and changing in the story world (Phillips 2012, 119-122). It also provides an analysis of types of challenges proposed, the description of the mechanics of interaction, and the highlighting of the prizes and rewards provided. I have taken the classification proposed by Phillips (2012) for the many types of challenges: puzzle-solving, contribution of content, real-world actions, social engineering challenges, story archaeology, recruitment, social media messaging, and formal games. According to Gambarato (2013) and Hayes (2011), it is useful to match this entire section with maps or diagrams to show the narrative structure, the scheduling, and the audience engagement system.

The last section, business and production, concerns the analysis of the business model and the production pipeline used for the project’s development. The first entry (teams) relates to the recognition of all involved figures, including the identification of roles and responsibilities. The second one requires the description of the production pipeline and the identification of the business model: that is, the existence of the “old model” (Pratten, 2011) and new production models that include the potential to enhance the role of the crowd. The last item (research and development, R&D) describes innovative aspects of the analyzed project.

3.2. Tracking Transmedia

The second phase (*Projection-Abductive Phase*, from Chow and Jonas 2008) attempts to establish a deep analysis of the transmedia field in order to go beyond the buzzwords through the literature review, desktop research and the case-study method.

The term transmedia was used for the first time in reference to the franchise entertainment super-system that works “to position consumers as powerful players while disavowing commercial manipulation” (Kinder 1991, 119-120). Jenkins went further, coining the term “transmedia storytelling” (2003), and later defined it as “Stories that unfold across multiple media platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the world, a more integrated approach to franchise development than models based on urtexts and ancillary products” (2006, 293). There are many attempts to define what transmedia really means. The frequent consequence has been a conceptual confusion of the term and misleading usage of it.

Output of this phase was the description of several case studies and the subsequent identification of the key features of transmedia projects: transmedia storytelling, distribution of content in different media, and audience engagement. I selected two types of case studies: the ongoing projects, and works that are recognized as best practices by the scientific community. In the first case, the choice was driven by the necessity to have a personal involvement with projects, thus create an empathic relationship with the object of study and its community. For this, I needed to move the point-of-view from the objectivity of the researcher, to the subjectivity of an involved user. In both cases, I decided to collect data and information by way of an online research community, a procedure applied by brands to gather qualitative information from discussion forums and social media. More and more often:

[n]ewcomers turn to the communities for social reciprocity and a sense of genuine participation, and they find far more interpretive assistance than comes from the producers. They do so just as the franchises are growing beyond the bounds of individual interpretive capacity, while still retaining, and perhaps even strengthening their appeal. (Lemke 2012, 590)

Therefore, the community becomes essential not only for information and data gathering, but also for contributions to the understanding of narrative worlds. The consequence is that “[i]ncreasingly scholars are joining these communities to learn from them, as well as to use their productions as data”. (Lemke 2011, 589)

In this work, I describe three of the approximately thirty multi-channel projects (crossmedia and transmedia) analyzed during my research. The first, “Cathy’s Book: If Found Call (650) 266-8233”, is a transmedia novel experi-

ment developed by Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman. Published in 2006 by Running Press, it was printed in Italy the next year by Mondadori. The book looks like the diary of Cathy, the seventeen-year-old main character of the story, who entrusts to her diary the story of the investigation to find her boyfriend, Victor, who suddenly left her. The audience can follow her adventures through the reading of the diary and an envelope full of clues, telephone numbers, pictures, and notes written by Cathy, allowing them to participate in the solving of the mystery. The rabbit hole of the transmedia experience is the telephone number printed on the book cover: by calling this number, it is possible to access a recorded message that will let the adventure begin. This is an experiment that allowed the authors to test “[h]ow far you could take the publishing model” (Lee 2010). The challenge was taken up by the Red Right Hand Publishing, a Toronto start-up that wanted to test a transmedia book publishing model with the horror project “The Black Chronicle”.

The second is “Iron Sky”, a comic/science-fiction film directed by Timo Vuorensola (2012), which is characterized by the use of an alternative production pipeline that fosters audience engagement through crowdfunding and crowdsourcing processes. Vuorensola and his team created an alternate reality in which Nazi Germans, taking refuge on the moon in 1945 after the Second World War, later return to conquer the planet Earth. This project was developed with the involvement of the community, which also backed the crowdfunding campaign for the sequel “Iron Sky-The Coming Race” (in development), raising 182,557 USD between May 15 2013 and July 10 2013. For “Iron Sky”, the crowdfunding campaign had the objective to raise money to conclude the movie, whereas for the sequel it was launched for crowdfunding during the pre-production phase to support its development. I am now waiting to receive the first draft of the movie’s script: one of the perks included in the “Support Trooper Kit” that I bought.

“The Cosmonaut” is a Spanish science-fiction film produced by Riot Cinema Collective in 2012, which tells the story of Stas and Andrei’s arrival at Star City in 1967, where the Soviet Union was training the first cosmonaut. The main feature is the rethinking of the industrial mindset thanks to the application of a new model of production and distribution. Production was characterized by the crowdfunding practice and the release of the film under creative commons licenses. I discovered the project at the “Remix Cinema” workshop (March 24-25 2011, University of Oxford), and I was able to follow the production process thanks to the updates received by the team for my participation in the crowdfunding campaign. I also went to the premiere in Italy organized by the cultural association Kinodromo in Bologna, according to the do-it-yourself (DIY) distribution model.

3.3. Tool for Transmedia Design

The third phase (*Synthesis-Deductive Phase*, from Chow and Jonas 2008), which is currently in progress, aims to contribute to the spreading of shared practices for the design of narrative environments. The output will be the development of a conceptual and operational tool for transmedia practice, the transmedia design framework. I identified classes that were woven together with the six elements of Aristotle's poetics, translated for the human-computer activity by Brenda Laurel (1991): action, character, thought, language, melody (pattern), and spectacle (enactment). This allowed me to identify three sub-classes, within which I am working to define the sets of procedures and tools that will complete the framework, and that reflect the main features highlighted during the first and the second phase: narrative context, media structure and business model.

In order to develop, test, and verify the framework's elements, I am intertwining my research work with the teaching experience at Politecnico di Milano within the course "Fuoricampo: Identities, new media and storytelling for social innovation". The aim of the course is the design of a transmedia strategy for a social TV (a television based on digital channels and social media) for a peripheral urban area in Milan (Bovisa and Dergano districts). During the analysis phase, the students activated a listening process of the urban area and conducted desktop research of transmedia case studies, which were analyzed according to a form (a synthesis of the analysis form that is described in section 3.1.). The product of this work was a copy strategy of the channel created (Plug Social TV) and the development of a document that describes a multiplatform web series for it. A document was developed to guide the students in the transmedia system's description (see Table 2). It was composed of entries that were identified by analyzing several documents, including the "Transmedia Project Reference Guide (Bible)" (Pratten 2011) and "How to write a Transmedia Production Bible" (Hayes 2011). The document assigned to students was intended to make them understand how the single web format they designed was part of a whole narrative world. That is, systems in which every single channel enhances the audience experience through its specific features provide a synergy between online and offline reality.

Students experimented with the provided tools to develop their own transmedia projects. In particular, the first part (narrative context, media structure and business model) had the objective of guiding the students in the development of the transmedia system, fostering them to think about the creation of a whole narrative world able to enhance the local individual cultures through storytelling. This has led to the design of nine web series whose promos are visible on the YouTube channel Plug Social TV: "Tu Vivi Qui", "Sordi&Baccani Investigation", "Civico X" (Figure 1), "La Bovisa di Giada", "Das De Man", "Caffè o Tè?", "La Traccia Nascosta", "Hiker", and "Percorsi Incrociati" (Figure 2).

Table 2 – Detailed description of listed items in the document assigned to students.

FORM FOR THE TRANSMEDIA DESIGN		
TOPIC	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
NARRATIVE CONTEXT	Tagline	A single-line description of the experience.
	Context	Description of the story world's environment.
	Synopsis	Brief summary of the story.
	Narrative lines and plot Points	Definition of narrative lines and identification of plot points.
	Characters	Description of primary and secondary characters, their backstories and the relationships between them.
MEDIA STRUCTURE	Multi-channels structure	Detailed list of the elements that build up the project (for example webisode, mobisode, community hub, game, social TV, social media storytelling, and websites).
	Platforms and channels	List of platforms, channels, and specification of the content for each of them.
	Service build overview	Scheme to identify what needs to be developed and what exists.
	Mechanic of interaction	Description of the mechanics of audience interactions.
	User journey	Diagram that demonstrates the possible paths through the project. It must give ideas of the relationships that link different contents.
	Key events	Narrative description of the contents listed in the User Journey. For each key event indicate: a) The call to action, specifying if it is a rabbit hole or a point-of-entry, b) What is the user's motivation, c) How it fits into the overall story.
	Scheduling	Timeline of the content distribution across the channels: transmedia roll out.
BUSINESS MODEL	Business model	Description of the business model (e.g., sponsorship, advertising, subscription, direct sales, pay per use, product placement, branding entertainment, or crowdfunding).
	Team	Identification of roles, responsibilities, and skills.

TOPIC	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
PAPER FORMAT	Idea, aim, target, target needs, story and plot, characters, location, tone of voice, mood-board, visual design, audience engagement, and production notes.	



Figure 1
Storyboard, User journey, Tagline from 'Civico X' – Eleonora Campanella, Federica Caserio, Giovanni Manzini, Sophia Marostica, Alberto Mora, Samuele Schiatti – Laboratorio di sintesi finale "Fuoricampo", 2° LM, School of Design, Politecnico di Milano. Lecturers: Marisa Galbiati, Francesca Piredda, Katia Goldoni, Marco Ronchi; tutor: Mariana Ciancia, Simona Venditti, Gabriele Carbone, a.a. 2013-14.



Figure 2
Storyboard, Frame, User journey from 'Percorsi Incrociati' – Giulia Barisone, Marialaura Gionfriddo, Valeria Guaragno, Valeria La Mantia, Federica Schirru, "Fuoricampo", 2° LM, School of Design, Politecnico di Milano. Lecturers: Marisa Galbiati, Francesca Piredda, Katia Goldoni, Marco Ronchi; tutor: Mariana Ciancia, Simona Venditti, Gabriele Carbone, a.a. 2013-14.

Due to the short duration of the course (October 2013-January 2014), we asked students to develop only one of the expected channels: the storyline developed by the web series. This has become the subject of the second part of the hybrid document provided by them (paper format), in which the students have designed in detail not only the story and the engagement paths, but also the production notes.

The experience with the students has been an essential part of fully understanding the underlying processes in the development of multi-channel projects. The observation, monitoring, and revision of their work has been fundamental to the further development and exploration of insights and hypotheses that I had about the construction of the transmedia design framework. Thanks to the feedback obtained from this experience, I am refining this conceptual and operational tool not only for those who already had experience in designing transmedia experiences, but also for those who approach this field for the first time.

4. CONCLUSION

As explained above, due to the lack of common practices and a shared glossary, I applied a design perspective to my research, because “design thinking goes beside complexity thinking” (Pizzocaro 2000) and also “[d]esign research creates a place to braid theory and practice to make the work stronger”. (Lunefeld 2003, 10) What I inferred from my experience is that for researching into the transmedia field it is necessary to activate the dual role of researcher and designer (see *Figure 3*), with a continuous displacement of the observation point between the outer (objective) and the internal space (subjective). This is why I think it is useful to sustain the research with a design-oriented approach.

The researcher needs to activate an empathic relationship with the object of study, and in some cases, lose some objectivity in favor of direct involvement. When we design for an audience, we need to have an idea of people’s feelings. In these cases, online communities and social networks are fundamental not only for information exchanges, but also “sites for experimentation with identities”. (Lemke 2011, 590) This results in something like “learning by engaging”. If the experience as an audience allows me to understand the dynamics of engagement and reception of content from an inside point-of-view, the teaching is helping me to understand the design processes of transmedia experiences through the transmission of tacit knowledge.

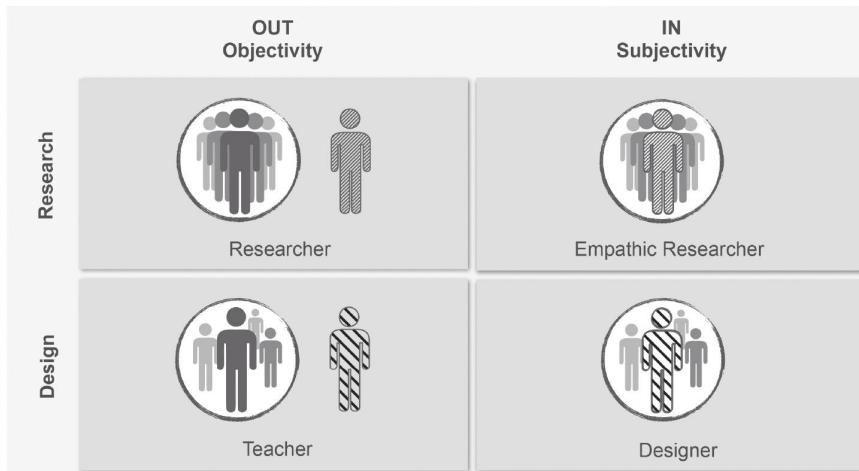


Figure 3 – The dual role of the researcher in the transmedia field.

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Friends, Partners & Co: A Sustainable Model for the Media?

Gabriela Pedranti

SemioticaStudio / IED Barcelona, Spain

doi: 0000000000000000

gabriela@semioticastudio.com

ABSTRACT

The emergence of active *prosumers* redefined what we used to understand in terms of media proposals. Through Eliseo Verón's concept of *reading contract*, Pierre Levy's idea of *collective intelligence* and different ideas around fan cultures (proposed by Henry Jenkins and Carlos Scolari), this paper would like to present the analysis of a case study that challenges the *old* concepts regarding publishing and media: *Orsai, nadie en el medio*. Originally a blog, *Orsai* became a high quality paper magazine with no advertising in 2011 and later, a publishing house. They launched new magazine in February 2014, *Bonsai*. The hypothesis proposes that they have understood how to establish a meaningful bond with these *new* audiences; it is such a strong bond that inspires loyalty beyond reason. The readers want to become part of the project, and they are willing to invest in it (both economically and emotionally). This is related to the other economies that Jenkins talks about in his recent book *Spreadable Media*. This research is going to reflect on an (alternative) model for media in the 21st century, based upon *Orsai's* experience, and also mention some other examples of flexible models, similar to this one.

Keywords: media; prosumers; models; economies; press; indy; crowdfunding.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many traditional print media are still struggling to fully understand how to engage the current audiences. The model that worked during the 20th century is not giving the same results nowadays in terms of readers and revenue. What is quite clear is that currently, publics want to be more involved, many of them want not only to be heard but also to be taken into account and participate.

Something that is also important to consider is that the new possibilities around sharing, transforming, communicating and exchanging ideas and

content deeply transform the perception and traditional roles of the followers of any media or brand, in digital and physical life-which are equally *real* nowadays –, so readers/followers/prosumers do not only want to participate and be heard, but they also want to do it in new ways.

As Carlos Scolari said in many of his talks and texts, people are gathered around content and stories, not in front of specific media or devices any more; their media diet is *tailor made*, in terms of contents, timetables and devices: “new audiences are not media centered, they are narrative-centered,” as he put it in his talk at Semiofest (Scolari 2013b). Traditional print media industries are not accepting this change easily, and there is still a long way to go for them.

What this paper will try to understand and explain is what can be picked up from other media that are getting this profound change quite quickly: those which we still call alternative or *Indy* media. Learning from their experience, this research will propose some key ideas for different media models, an area that is still and constantly being developed.

This paper analyzes a case study that is probably one of the *purest* experiments in the Spanish-speaking world: a print magazine with no advertising, which is a profitable business (in terms of living out of writing, editing and illustrating). The project is *Orsai, nadie en el medio* (*Orsai, no one in the middle*).

The hypothesis proposes that *Orsai* has understood how to establish a meaningful bond with these *new* audiences, and it is such a strong bond, that it inspires loyalty beyond reason, to such extent that it cannot be understood with the traditional industry models, techniques and explanations. And nevertheless, it is a valid business alternative in these times in which we gather around narratives and contents.

The apparently *recent* attitudes of the audiences – which have always been there, but are enormously seen, noticed and expanded since the arrival of Internet and social networks – are related to *the other economies* that Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green talk about in their recent book *Spreadable Media* and the complexities these economies represent (Jenkins et al. 2013). Nothing is ever free, and not everything is related to financial compensation or money exchange.

As mentioned before, this paper would like to reflect on an alternative model for media in the 21st century, based upon *Orsai*'s experience, and also mention some other examples of flexible proposals, similar to this one at least in some aspect (*Libero*, *Jot Down*, *elpuercoespin.com.ar*, *eldiario.es*) and how traditional media, such as *El Mundo* or *ABC* newspapers in Spain are learning – or at least, trying to – from it.

The aim is to establish the main findings from these proposals that can be organized as a first map for a useful model – and a stronger version of the *reading contract* (Verón 1985) – for (print) media in the 21st century.

2. LITERARY REVIEW

Some of the communication theories and concepts that appear in this paper are: the reading contract proposed by Eliseo Verón, which is defined as a bond in time between the medium and its followers (Verón 1985); the gift and value economies by Henry Jenkins, Joshua Green and Sam Ford, as proposed in their recent book *Spreadable Media* (Jenkins et al. 2013), which links with the idea of “collective intelligence” by Pierre Lèvy and applied by Henry Jenkins in the analysis of fan cultures he does in *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins 2006).

Ideas, reflections and strategies that appear in Carlos Scolari’s recent talks and books such as *Narrativas Transmedia* (Scolari 2013a) and *Lostología, estrategias para entrar y salir de la isla* (Scolari et al 2010) are also used for this research.

Many other books, talks, and digital content are included, which can be found in the List of References or footnotes.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper will explore the main case study mentioned before, as well as some other examples. It will do so by connecting Scolari, Verón and Jenkins’ theories to them, using concepts and tools from design thinking, semiotics and communication.

It focuses on the Spanish speaking world, because this is quite a big market for any online or print publication: according to Instituto Cervantes’ 2012 annual report “El español, una lengua viva” (Instituto Cervantes 2012), this language is spoken by more than 495 million people.

This paper will analyze – step by step – the evolution of the *Orsai* project (2004-2014), in order to understand and explain their model and proposal. It will also reflect on the mixed models the other mentioned media are working with nowadays, through examples and analyzing how they present themselves to the readers and how they keep the conversation flowing.

The conclusion will focus on proposing a map of key ideas and practices that can help to generate a flexible model for keeping the readers/followers/prosumers interested and to develop and sustain a profitable business (in terms of living out of writing, illustrating and publishing).

4. THE PROMISE AND THE CONTRACT

Based upon Emile Benveniste's theory of enunciation and with some echoes of Umberto Eco's *The Role of the reader. Explorations in the semiotics of texts*, Eliseo Verón reflects on the process/experience of reading to define his reading contract. He says that "linguistics has always privileged words over writing [...] an extra reason for not reflecting upon reading processes." (Verón 1985, 1) On the other hand, "In semiotics it has always been easier to work on the texts instead of asking about the way in which they are read [...] semiotics has not shown interest for the readers and even less, for those who do not read." (Verón 1985, 1) Although semiotics has evolved since then, in particular in the field of applied projects, and thanks to the contribution of British Cultural Studies, Verón's observation was quite true in 1985. He also made a comment on sociology: "Regarding sociologists, they have accumulated information about the readers, without asking for the social functioning of texts". (Verón 1985, 2) In this panorama of *disconnected* knowledge about readers and texts, the concept of the reading contract is one of the first clear attempts to understand the relationship between these two parties, "which is no other than the process of reading, that social practice that until now has been invisible." (Verón 1985, 2) According to this author, the relationship between a *reading device/medium* and its *reading process* lays upon the reading contract, which connects the discourse of the medium with its readers. It is a bond that has to be taken care of, in order to go on working in the long term.

Verón observed that the success of a print medium is measured through its capacity of proposing a contract that is correctly articulated with the expectations, motivations, interests and contents of the imaginary of the readers; its ability of keeping up the evolution of its reading contract in order to follow up to its readers' socio-cultural development, always preserving the contract; and its faculty of modifying the reading contract if the situation demands it, in a coherent way. (Verón 1985, 2-3)

We can infer the reading contract and its proposal through a systematic analysis of the signs we find in the style, design, contents, etc. of the analyzed media, which work as clues to make *visible* all the threads connecting the readers and the medium, the view on the world they share, their values and beliefs... The author says that there are three requirements that lead the analysis of the reading contract:

- The regularity of the described features;
- The differentiation that appears when we compare different media/writing devices;
- The systematicity of the properties shown by each medium.

This concept is an interesting starting point that explains what happened with print media until the Internet became massive: different proposals talked to

different audiences who shared a similar view on the world, that had a similar judgment about what facts had to become news and also, the *tone* in which these news were written. Most print media in Spanish followed the old tradition of telling the readers something they didn't know, a pedagogical model that went on at least until mid-seventies in Spain and mid-late eighties in Latin America, when most countries of the region recovered their democratic governments. *El País* in Spain, founded in 1976, and *Página/12* in Argentina, founded in 1987, are two good examples of new reading contracts and models, that modified the traditional proposal, and started to talk about current issues from a more democratic and open point of view, and also – at least in style and tone – engaged the readers in a certain *conversation*.

With the arrival of the Internet, and even more with the irruption of social media, this situation has exploded: readers and consumers become active participants of what is being said, giving constant opinions about how do they see the world, and looking for much more than a magazine or newspaper *letting them know* what is happening. This may seem obvious if we consider our daily experience with media; nevertheless, an industry that has worked practically in the same way for over 100 years, finds it quite difficult to re-invent itself, in particular because most print media do not want to accept the world has changed, as also has the relationship with the readers. What was a profitable business, in most cases with an important social function, has to do things differently if it wants to survive in the new century. And this is exactly what *Indy* media – currently with far more possibilities due to the technical and social changes the Internet has produced – got right from the start.

5. VALUE, WORTH AND GIFT: THE OTHER ECONOMIES

Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green build on the idea of a *moral economy*, as proposed by E.P. Thompson in 1971. He used this expression to “describe the social norms and mutual understandings that makes it possible for both parties to conduct business”. (Jenkins et al. 2013, 52) One of the main ideas they point out of this theory is that *all the participants have to feel everyone is behaving in a morally appropriate way*. Within this frame, they try to establish some participatory processes that emerged with Web 2.0, instead of simply thinking about spreading and sharing content as piracy, which is still one of the main official views on this matter. They try to understand and explain the complexity of a new situation, where an industry claims copyright on certain stories and contents, while many active prosumers do not only spread the word about those contents, but they also share, comment and even parody/modify

them. They observe there are some different views going around about fan labour, which ultimately leads to an increase of the sales of the companies (Is it free? Is it exploitation? Is it fair?), and some prosumers are already seeking compensation for the hours they spent working on a sort of co-creation.

The frictions, conflicts, and contestations in the negotiation of the moral economy surrounding such labor are ample evidence that audiences are often not blindly accepting the terms of Web 2.0; rather, they are increasingly asserting their own interests as they actively renegotiate the moral economy shaping future transactions. (Jenkins *et al.* 2013, 58)

In order to understand this complex situation, they point out it is crucial to acknowledge the *diverse kinds of value* that appear here, and that producers/industries and audiences tend to follow different reasoning or logics. The prosumers who create content (in a professional or amateur way) are not just looking for remuneration; in addition, they are looking for recognition, they are trying to influence their peers and even society; also, in many cases, they are trying to express personal meaning(s). In this kind of exchanges, “‘status’, ‘prestige’, ‘esteem’ and ‘relationship building’ take the place of cash remuneration as the primary drivers of cultural production and social transaction.” (Jenkins *et al.* 2013, 61)

So if we can start picturing many *economies* here, meaning “different systems of appraising and allocating value” (Jenkins *et al.* 2013, 63), we can easily get their point: there are other powerful drivers, that are not directly related to making a financial profit, which are getting more and more entangled in our constant relationship with the media, the industry and the content producers. New times, new frameworks: it should be crystal clear, but it is quite complicated for traditional print media.

As the authors indicate, the concept of gift economy – which originally comes from anthropology – has been used several times in theories and books about the digital world. It has become a useful expression for understanding some aspects of the virtual sphere, such as the informal exchanges. Nevertheless, they observe there is a sort of crash within the functioning of Web 2.0 as we know it, because *at a certain point it assumes everything has to become a commodity* (in other words, it will make profit for someone), so it contradicts the intention of some people who just want to share/give content as a gift.

Following Lewis Hyde, author of *The Gift* (1983), they say that “a commodity has ‘value’ while a gift has ‘worth’” (Jenkins *et al.* 2013, 67). Exchange value can be quantified, it is related to a rate, based upon recognized ways of determining this value; but worth is related to meaning, it has no price, and nobody can determine an agreed value for it. These are the main economies that are entangled in the complex relationships we have with media today. So

here comes THE question: “How might we negotiate the range of possible exchanges value-to-value, worth-to-worth, value-to-worth, worth-to-value-that such a vocabulary implies?”. (Jenkins et al. 2013, 69) They make some observations that are not only useful but vital for media companies trying to keep the conversation flowing with their audiences, in order to still have a business: at some point, *value has to be transformed into worth*, so the proposal/content/experience becomes priceless; the economic investment transforms itself in a sentimental/emotional one. Although it is a difficult process – “from commodity culture in which they are produced to informal social contexts through which they circulate and are appraised” (Jenkins et al. 2013, 72) –, it is absolutely essential.

The way each media company does it, it is up to them to decide; but it is really important to keep in mind that the audiences are playing a much more meaningful role than they had ever before; most of the prosumers media industries want to keep by their side in order to run their business will not take a *change of skin* as real commitment. Furthermore, regarding information, articles and written pieces, there is so much to choose from, so much more accessibility/affordability (even through *legal* access, in terms of the copy-right industry, such as online libraries)... Why would the readers choose one medium over the other? That’s the key point: by offering them *worth*, something money can’t buy.

5.1. Freebies or invisible investment?

Through the analysis of some cases of music bands publishing their work under a Creative Commons license such as Nine Inch Nails did with their album *The Slip* in 2008, Jenkins, Ford and Green add a very interesting observation: while the press was shouting about the economic cost of the album and considering that the band was *giving away* their work, the musicians – through his front man, Trent Reznor – had a very different view on this: it was a way of thanking their followers for their support; “rather than ‘giving the album away’, Reznor was giving *back* to the fans for what they had already given him – their previous support and purchases – with an unspoken request that they continued to support him.” (Jenkins et al. 2013, 73)

There is a similar example with singer and composer Amanda Palmer, and her incredibly successful Kickstarter project in 2012, which was the most supported music project on Kickstarter up to that date (also in terms of revenue: she asked for 100,000 dollars and she got almost 1.2 million). Through a direct appeal to the followers, in a straightforward way, she asked them to help her in developing her project because she didn’t want to do it

with a traditional record label. There were two phrases shown on the video that really gave hints about the reading contract/commitment she was offering and asking for: “This is the future of music” and “We are the media”. (Kickstarter 2012) In addition, the rewards for helping her with a certain amount of money were those that money can’t buy: limited edition of the album and book, vinyl records, signed art books and exclusive invitations to different launch parties around the world (Kickstarter 2012) In a TED talk she gave later, “The art of asking”, she made an interesting point about numbers in the view of traditional industries and the new and flexible models for running her business: for the record label, selling 25,000 copies of the record were a failure because sales were going down; the same number of followers gave Amanda their trust and 1.2 million dollars. (Palmer 2013)

In this situation, nothing is ever free: continuous exchanges of effort, interest, time and many other forms of *worth* are constantly carried out; the main problem is that many media industries still think only in terms of money exchange, of *value*. If they start to understand the new possibilities of connecting with followers that spend/invest their time and emotion in spreading the word about content they love and projects they believe in, they will have a possibility of thinking beyond copyright/piracy and moving into the more fertile lands of co-creating a joint project with their audiences, that can provide a profitable business. And it is not just about talking about it: followers/readers/prosumers are attentive and they want real and tangible proof of the promises/agreement. They are not only buying but investing, and they want to choose and decide where to get the best profit (in terms of *worth* and some times, *value*).

6. ORSAI: HACKING THE INDUSTRY RULES

It all started as a blog. It was 2003 and a young Hernán Casciari – who had gone to Paris from his native Argentina to receive a literary prize – fell in love with a Catalan girl and he moved to Spain with her. He was feeling alone in a foreign country and that’s why he started writing on a recently launched publishing platform: a blog. He thought it was a way of keeping in *direct* touch with his friends and family, who were an ocean apart. So by mid-2003, he started the adventure by writing short stories on a blog called *Diario de una Mujer Gorda* (*A fat woman’s diary*) which later changed to the definite name it has today, *¡Más respeto, que soy tu madre!* (*Show a little respect, I am your mother!*). Here, the writer was disguised as a middle-class housewife called Mirta Bertotti, who was writing about her daily life with her eldest son’s help,

who knew about computers. The experiment had such an interesting feedback by Spanish speaking people from different parts of the world (although it was written in very local Argentinean Spanish), that Casciari decided to start writing with his own voice. As he was still a bit lost and lonely, with a feeling of *not being allowed to play* in his new country, he gave this new blog a meaningful name: *Orsai*, which is the Argentinean football jargon for *off-side*.

6.1. Orsai's proposal and (business) model

On February 27th, 2004, he started this new adventure, writing a post called “El viejo folletín y las nuevas tecnologías” (something like “The old serialized novel and the new technologies”) in which he explained the previous experiment with Mirta Bertotti’s blog-novel and encouraged writers and journalists to “make incursions in this genre, which possesses the big advantages of literature and editorial column, and lacks it is evident disadvantages.” (Casciari 2004a)

He went on writing short texts and stories on *Orsai* for a long time, listening and paying attention to his followers, chatting with them through the comments, building a strong bond that is a great example of what Verón calls the reading contract, a bond in time between the addresser and the addressee; an agreement that needs attention, respect for the terms of the proposal and continuous agreement with the readers.

Due to the success of his blog, Casciari was asked to write columns for two important newspapers: *La Nación*, from Argentina and *El País*, from Spain. His short stories from the blog were also published as books by many publishing houses around the world: Plaza & Janés (Spain), Grijalbo (Mexico) and Sudamericana (Argentina), among others.

After three years of working with the publishing industry, he thought things could be done in a different way. He was already feeling uncomfortable due to last-minute advertising that kept changing the quantity of words he had to write for the newspapers; some ideological editorial lines did not represent his own points of view; he also found out that he could not control the sales of his books in any way, although he suspected – in some cases, due to informal talks with people who owned bookstores-that he sold more books than the publishing houses told (and paid) him. But that was how the industry worked... So he had no option: accepting or quitting. And he did so: he gave up everything in September 2010. He posted his decision on his blog, giving his reasons to the readers. And also being honest with himself in an exercise of transparency with his followers: “I learnt, above all, that I can only have fun in a medium with no advertising and that I can only sleep well on Fridays – a whole night’s sleep, with no interruptions-in a medium with no ideology.” (Casciari 2010)

So that was the moment in which he decided to start publishing an *impossible magazine*, in terms of the traditional media and publishing industries: it would be edited by himself, his best friend and his family, from his own home, in a small town in Catalonia, Spain. They would offer contents of great quality, both in writing and illustration, in a magazine with the best possible paper, with no advertising at all and long texts, to recover the pleasure of reading. In addition to this, as they believed culture should be accessible/affordable for everyone, they would offer a free PDF¹ after the publication of the paper magazine, so anyone who had access to the Internet could read it. Later, he said this was a way of encouraging people to get to know the magazine, to spread the word and ultimately, to buy it; he even advised other publishing houses to do so (Casciari 2011c). He started to explain his idea through posts on the blog and the feedback was amazing: 10,000 people pre-bought the magazine without really knowing what it was going to be about (Casciari 2011b). Moreover, the readers became the distributors: they could buy the magazines in packs of ten copies, so they would be able to sell and distribute the magazines in their area, something that extended the availability of the publication (and later, books) to some places in which the traditional publishing houses would not care to sell some editions because it was not profitable. Something deeper than the traditional reading contract was growing there: *a joint, associative project that would offer quality contents to anyone who could read Spanish*. During the first and second years, distributors could choose if they wanted to make a profit or not. Many of them didn't.

Three years later, the impossible idea proved to be an alternative work and business model: *Orsai* magazine published 16 issues until December 2013 (the second issue was immediately sold out), and also versions for tablets²; Orsai publishing house was born in late 2011 (they have launched around 10 books up to date)³; they had a pizzeria in Sant Celoni, Barcelona, Spain, in 2011⁴; a bar in Buenos Aires, Argentina until 2013, where they held many kinds of cultural activities, writing courses⁵ and served home made pizza⁶ – currently,

¹ All the magazines are still available at <http://editorialorsai.com/revista/>. Last access March 17, 2014.

² Orsai Pad site can be accessed here: <http://orsaipad.com/>. Last access March 17, 2014.

³ The first contract they signed with an author and their view on the matter can be checked here: http://editorialorsai.com/blog/post/adios_industria_editorial/; the books from “Colección Embudo” can be seen here http://editorialorsai.com/blog/post/proyecto_embudo and Casciari's own books, here: <http://editorialorsai.com/blog/secciones/?cat=2>. Last access March 17, 2014.

⁴ Some information about this pizzeria can be found here: http://editorialorsai.com/blog/post/las_pizzas_de_comequechu. Last access March 17, 2014.

⁵ The information about the last edition of the writing courses (called *Masters of Orsai University*) and its students can be checked here: <http://editorialorsai.com/masters/>. Last access March 17, 2014.

⁶ The Facebook profile of the bar is still online here: <https://es-es.facebook.com/OrsaiBar>. Last access March 17, 2014.

it has evolved to Orsai Club⁷, a sort of bookshop that offers private dinners. And in February 2014, a new magazine was born: *Bonsai*, a publication to be read by the whole family, edited by a fictional character and his *crew*: a father who is a widower, his three children, his cheeky brother and his father, a Basque immigrant in Argentina who always wears a poncho to look local and says he is a fortune teller (he was a former character of Casciari's writings). The first issue (4.000 copies) was completely sold to the distributors in packs of ten magazines, with a discount, so they can make some profit from it (OrsaiBonsai 2014).

6.2. *What Orsai understood*

When he started telling his community of readers about the *Orsai* project, Casciari made an effort of being *honest* in order to reconnect with his followers. He knew the key to the upcoming magazine was there. As he said in a TEDx talk, he knew later than he had made a mistake some years before: "I think I made a rather serious mistake. I went to work with the industry, I ended the direct communication with my readers, and I let them put intermediaries [...] All these people lined up between me and my readers." (Casciari 2011b)

Whether working with the traditional industry or not, this is a key finding for media in the 21st century: *listening and talking with the readers/followers/prosumers*. Direct connection, feeling the pulse of the audience and being attentive/answering to their reaction is essential to keep them by your side. Nowadays, the reading contract is not only changing, it is being put under close examination by a great number of people.

What he noticed and assumed at the end of 2010 was that his whole contract with the readers was not only based upon writing good content, but also in talking, listening and having a real conversation with them, as he had been doing for so many years on the blog. Moreover, this was not just a question of tone or style: he had built this community of readers – without asking them to become so – because of this attitude of sharing, learning, being part of the same project: it was not just *what* he said or *how* he said it, but also the fact of building a community of interests in which the participants shared *worth*, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green's definition (Jenkins et al. 2013). *Orsai* blog was originally a space for Spanish speakers around the world who did not only feel identified with the writer's views, but who felt they could share their concerns, ideas or thoughts, and were going to be heard and respected. The roles of enunciator and enunciatee, as proposed by Benveniste, were

⁷ Some of the experiences can be checked here: http://editorialorsai.com/club/post/primer_a_cena. Last access March 17, 2014.

completely and constantly exchangeable, between the author and the readers, but also among the readers themselves. Many of the most interesting conversations took place (and still do) in the comments section. And this gave them something more, something that could not be estimated in terms of money exchange, and also offered what could not be achieved by one individual: *collective intelligence in action*. Pierre Lèvy developed the ideas of collective intelligence and collective knowledge, in order to establish through sharing and gathering knowledge, ideas and experiences, this *union* of people can produce learning that is not possible to get separately.

The knowledge of a thinking community is no longer a shared knowledge for it is now impossible for a single human being, or even a group of people, to master all knowledge, all skills. It is fundamentally collective knowledge, impossible to gather together into a single creature. (Lèvy 1997, 20)

What happened with the first reactions to the *Orsai* project confirmed what Casciari knew, and also went much further: as mentioned, people from around the world started buying the magazine massively, *without knowing about its contents*, on a pre-sale. What happened here can be seen as a twist in the relationship of print media with their readers: *Orsai moved from the reading contract to an agreement based on trust*. And it was not just an Indy magazine, that you could find in your neighbourhood by chance: taking good advantage of new media and technologies, but also letting the conversation flow, *Orsai* was also a business, that allowed their creators to make a living out of it.

If the reading contract was still a proposal from the medium – although the readers had to accept it –, the *trust agreement* is based upon a much more democratic principle: we talk, we exchange ideas and at a certain point, and by mutual compromise, we decide we can trust each other. Moreover, this agreement has to be shown, seen and talked about; it has to express itself in real actions and attitudes (and not only in a book of style of a multimedia company, that in many cases worked just as a bunch of good intentions that were not taken into real action).

Orsai kept the agreement transparent and simple: they talked to readers, letting them know about the actions and ideas for the development of the magazine and the rest of the project. They did it in a very casual tone, close to the readers, and showing clearly they cared about their followers' views. What is also very important is that they asked the readers to *become an active part of the project*: by distributing magazine and books, suggesting ideas, even writing in the publication and of course, reading. The traditional idea of doing business with print media is completely changed here: an editor of a magazine with no advertising, listening constantly to the readers, talking with them, and also giving them a free digital version of the magazine for those ones who could not

afford it. This can be summed up in a sentence from Amanda Palmer's TED conference: "I think people have been obsessed with the wrong question, which is, 'How do we *make* people pay for music?' What if we started asking, 'How do we *let* people pay for music?'" (Palmer 2013) If the followers feel and see that they are *investors*, the lift from value to worth and worth to value (back and forward, really) easily comes by: *we know what this is about, we participate, big advertisers are not deciding on the content, we have enjoyed this space and its contents, we want it to go on, so we are willing to put our effort, enthusiasm and money into it.* Some of the best examples (among many others) that show this commitment in *Orsai* are: the *Pri* game (which started as soon as the comments were allowed in 2004/2005, and is a personal contest among the readers: the one who writes the first comment has to write *Pri*: the first three letters of *primero* (*the first one* in Spanish)⁸. This is such a meaningful experience for both author and readers that when the blog turned 10 years old in 2014, Casciari recognized this spontaneous and unspoken contest by setting the rules and giving rewards according to what he calls *The secret Pri game*: "The *Pri* game is about adding up points through making initial comments in the blog posts of a fat man, who does not know about the existence of the game and believes his readers are anxiously waiting for his stories". (Casciari 2014b) Another representative example of the *comradeship Orsai* has with its audience is the post that invited everyone in the world who was an *Orsai* reader or a follower to organize a global picnic for the launch of the second issue, in order to celebrate they were part of a different and enjoyable project. The headline of the post reinforces the promise and the agreement in the long term: "This time, we trust you". (Casciari 2011b) Plenty of illustrative examples are found throughout the blog: it is always talking in a tone and about subjects that include the reader; it is a never ending "inclusive us" as Benveniste called it. (Benveniste 2004)

One of the most important steps in term of commitment and giving proof of understanding the publishing business in a different way was the post "The end of piracy", when Casciari offered the readers the free PDF version of the first issue:

This is the most expensive text in *Orsai*. And the one I was really willing to publish [...] This PDF was not uploaded anonymously in Rapidshare, it not in the secrecy of the Internet. Every writer and artist got paid for his work. And now, the work is free. By this simple act, we close the matter of piracy on the Internet." (Casciari 2011c)

By keeping this promise in the long term and also giving proof of this attitude, through diverse actions and facts (for example, some of his books are also

⁸ A quick explanation of the game can be found here (comments 78 and 79): http://editorialorsai.com/blog/post/kodama_en_orsai. Last access March 17, 2014.

available for free in issue⁹), Casciari and *Orsai* showed that it was a different project, that really believed some things could be done differently. As the author put it:

I also had the objective of showing, and showing to myself, that the famous industry crisis that everyone is talking about it's not a financial crisis: it's a moral one, it's a greedy crisis [...] One night, with Chiri, my best friend, we wrote a decalogue, a sort of promise to the readers: [...] we promised that the magazine would neither have advertising [...] nor any private or public subsidy. We promise it would have the best graphic quality available in the market, [...] that it will avoid as many middlemen as possible, [...] and that it would have a free PDF version, so it could be read, even if people could not pay for it. (Casciari 2011c)

Another way of showing this was the contract they wrote for Horacio Altuna, the first author who published a book with them. Casciari and his best friend decided to give the author the online tools to check his sales, among many other benefits; the most important of all was possibly the royalties the author would be getting for his work: 50% of the sales, something that was far away from the traditional 7 to 10% of the traditional industry. The headline of the post in which he announced all this to the readers made its point: "Goodbye, publishing industry". (Casciari 2011a)

Regarding direct participation/inclusion of the followers, the students of the writing courses (that are called *Masters of the Orsai University*) have their own online space on *Orsai* blog¹⁰ with a link to their own sites. Some other actions under the same spirit were: the distributors were invited to write short recommendations in a couple of magazines, which they did enthusiastically¹¹; the *letters to the director* section was a great space for letting readers write about almost anything they considered interesting; there was an open contest on the blog in order to decide which kind of paper should be the remaining magazines published on the website¹². They kept on establishing networks, physically and virtually.

⁹ They can be accessed here: http://issuu.com/hernan_casciari. Last access March 17, 2014.

¹⁰ It can be checked here: http://editorialorsai.com/masters/1er_cuatrimestre/. Last access March 17, 2014.

¹¹ The section was called "Picadito" (which means a pick up game or a kick-about in Argentinian football jargon) and it was published in *Orsai* 11 (140/141) and 12 (142/143). Both issues can be checked online here: http://issuu.com/revista_orsai. Last access March 17, 2014.

¹² This was announced in the blog and in *Orsai* magazine no. 12, 138, under the headline "The role of the readers". It can be checked on the online version, here: http://issuu.com/revista_orsai/docs/orsai_n12. Last access March 17, 2014.

6.3. Readers, clients, followers and the rest

Some of the findings *Orsai* put into practice are related to another key aspect in the current media landscape: *the idea of a reader being a direct client does not necessarily work like this anymore*; nowadays, there can be followers who love the concept of the publication and spread the word about it, even if they do not buy or read it; some people who are initially attracted by some of the other proposals, and not directly by the magazine; others who try to apply the model to their own work and ask for advice... And a successful project has to take good care of them all. Building a strong trust agreement through different spaces and (social) media is vital to listen, integrate and answer to them all.

In relation to this, Carlos Scolari recently mentioned an important change in what Umberto Eco called the construction of possible worlds in *Lector in Fabula*: Eco talked about that process as an individual one – because the experience of reading and understanding was mostly *individual* back then (at least at the first moment) –; nowadays, that process is *collective* (Scolari 2013b), and not only for fiction. So, what about the skills and interests of the current prosumers that are *much more than readers*? How can many traditional print media still think of them as individuals who pay for and read a magazine or newspaper just looking for information, when prosumers constantly find it, exchange it, produce something more than the original piece and give their opinion on it online? Telling them that a journalist is a professional and a blogger will not do the trick; it is simply an assessment based upon the legal/illegal or piracy/not piracy pairings, which are not enough anymore. Understanding the new media landscape and the multiple roles of whom we used to call *readers*, is something the traditional print media are still finding difficult, although it is essential for their survival.

Every written media (print or online) needs a new proposal nowadays: a flexible model that *understands their prosumers in their daily situation, gives them added value* (respecting what it means for each medium's trust agreement) and *engages them in the long term due to a number of factors*, that is not anymore just good content based upon the rules of the reading contract.

Through a deep understanding of the current media landscape, the situation and expectations of the readers/prosumers/followers, *Orsai* got many things right: they developed a flexible model that is not based upon advertising (which fell an 18% in 2012 and has not stopped falling since 2008 according to Arcemedia¹³). It also goes beyond a sole product. Although the idea of expanding the *Orsai* universe can seem similar to what many multimedia did

¹³ Arcemedia, Control and Analysis for advertising efficiency. URL: http://www.arcemedia.es/noticia_informe_view.aspx?id=251. Last access March 17, 2014.

when they expanded the business, there is a key difference: *all the projects have the same spirit, which builds a strong trust agreement that is kept in the long run*, and it can be modified without so much trouble because readers/followers are not only informed about it (in terms of transparency and honesty) but also kept updated about a project *they feel as theirs*, because they believe in it and they invest in it (both in terms of *worth* and *value*).

7. OTHER CASES, OTHER VOICES

There are many other projects that started with a flexible model, that is not only based upon traditional advertising and sales, but combining these previous paradigms with other patterns. The most successful ones are those that try to build the trust agreement with their readers, based upon transparency, high content quality and not presenting themselves as the sole owners of the medium, but including the followers/readers/prosumers in a joint project. Some of the media mentioned here are also working together, in terms of offering special editions or combinations (publications+books+diaries, etc.) from the different companies. In one case, this has evolved to a new project, *FIVE MAGAZINE*, a *meta-magazine* that “gathers five of the small publications that are starting to be noticed among the big media” (Jot Down Magazine 2013). Its first two issues include editions of: *Yorokobu*, *Politicon*, *Diario Kafka*, *Naukas*, *Jot Down Magazine*, *Alternativas económicas*, *Periodismo Humano*, *Materia* and *Frontera D*. Moreover, on March 30th, 2014, many of these *emerging* (!) publications are going to publish together an issue of a symbol of resistance in Spanish journalism: *El Heraldo de Madrid*, one of the most important newspapers during the Second Spanish Republic¹⁴.

A quick review of six other examples will be added here – both from the traditional industry and alternative models –, in order to see that running a successful media project in the 21st century is not just a question of money.

7.1. *eldiario.es* (Spain). *Becoming a partner*

Under a very appealing tagline, *Periodismo a pesar de todo* (Journalism in spite of everything), *eldiario.es* was launched in September 2012, under a Creative

¹⁴ Jot Down Magazine. 2014. URL: <http://www.jotdown.es/2014/03/convocatoria-unica-del-heraldo-de-madrid/>. Last access March 21, 2014.

Commons BY-SA 3.0 license¹⁵. It is an informative online newspaper (its name, literally, means *the daily newspaper*), managed by

a group of journalists who still want to keep trying. We are motivated by the ambition of buying our own freedom, supporting and defending our profession, owning the newsroom we work at and guaranteeing therefore that our editorial line is independent and does not answer to hidden interests. (eldiario.es 2014)

Their business model is based upon a mixed system: advertising and subscription, but with a new view on the role of the reader: they become *partners*. This is the word they use to ask for contribution, instead of talking about subscribers.

Something that works in terms of reinforcing the trust agreement of *eldiario.es* is what most readers already know (and is clearly written in the FAQ section):

eldiario.es is a group of journalists who come from different media which are in crisis or were closed. We know there are colleagues that are unfortunately sharing this situation. We want to create alliances with those with whom we share social and professional principles. That's why *eldiario.es* has cooperation agreements with journalists in different autonomous communities such as Catalonia, Galicia or Valencia. (el diario.es 2014)

They reinforce the idea of partnership with the readers by explaining what they *do* with the money, because they recognize transparency as one of their main values (something that is deeply related to the original social function of journalism, and seems lost in *just doing business* today...) They publish it on the web and also send this information to their partners. They also talk about their meetings, objectives and ideas for the upcoming months.

This works well because we have already moved from the idea of *objectiveness* to *fairness*. Most 21st century readers/prosumers understand and know that informative journalism always gives a point of view, representing reality in a certain way. Those media which pretend to be telling the sole and only truth are unconvincing nowadays. So the active readers who want to be informed and recognize the value of fair journalism, want to become a part of the project. Every text has a final line: "This article is possible thanks to your contribution. Become a partner." (*eldiario.es* 2014)

They have issued 4 numbers of *Cuadernos*, a magazine in paper that is free for the partners/subscribers and can be bought in bookshops and newsagents for 5 euros. There is also a Kindle version. The current cost of being a partner is 5 euros per month. According to OJD, they had more than 7 million visits in February, 2014 (OJD interactiva 2014). Only 3% of their readers were

¹⁵ Creative commons. 2014. URL: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>. Last Access: March 21, 2014.

partners in 2013; nevertheless, after a little more than two years, they were quite close to turn into a completely self-sustained publication (Escolar 2013). In line with the idea of cooperation among media, Hernán Casciari is currently writing on *eldiario.es*. He is doing what he did long ago for *El País*: writing about TV series, in a linked blog named *Espoiler*¹⁶.

7.2. *Jot Down, contemporary culture mag (Spain).* *Calling things by their name*

This is an online publication that started in 2011, when a group of friends decided to launch the magazine they would love to read. With their minimal structure and a Wordpress template, this *contemporary culture mag* issued a high quality paper version with no advertising in June 2012, because they thought (and their readers too) there were some articles and material that should be published in paper. As they said in a recent interview: “Our intention is to keep free access to the web content. As we were telling you before, our business model, paradoxically, relies on paper.” (Flores 2013) Their *editorial* section on the online version shows their principles:

We believe it's possible to analyze serious things through humour, to deal with culture and leisure from another perspective and talk with their protagonists in a different way. Being able to say what we think, and not what we are told to think; entertaining without being superficial, informing without falling into an impersonal coldness, and of course, talking about sex! The 21st century is and will be the era of cultural chaos: quantity is replacing quality and the dictation of the news agencies replaces the cultivation of your own judgment. Jot Down magazine wants to run away from all this and call things by their name. There is a method in our craziness. (Jot Down Magazine 2014b)

They have some ads on the online version, all from brands or initiatives that fit their style and interests. For example, in March 2014 they have a banner from Camper shoes and a side button of Intermón Oxfam (*Jot Down Magazine* 2014a). For the print version, they work with the Soidem system, that allows to print on demand and also to issue a certain quantity of magazines, based upon a previous estimation. It also reduces the paperwork and gives the distributors the possibility of controlling the stock and sales online. (Soidem 2014)

They have chosen social media to keep the conversation flowing: they are very active on Twitter, keeping the style, contents and tone the magazine has.

¹⁶ Eldiario.es. 2014. URL: http://www.eldiario.es/redaccion/Casciari-viene-eldiarioes-hablar-series_6_224037616.html. Last access: March 21, 2014.

They also answer to followers quickly and in a friendly way. They always greet their followers in the morning and at night with nice photographs in black and white, which is a feature of the magazine in every format. The Facebook profile has the same style and content, and followers comment every post. They also have an interesting Flickr profile, in which they share many photos from the articles and interviews, and from different issues they care about. They offer music lists on Spotify and SoundCloud to listen while reading some of their articles.

They publish books and some very particular stationary, which makes their special offers more tempting for the readers. After offering packs that included some other alternative magazines (such as *Yorokobu*, *Presencia Humana*, *Mongolia*, *Alternativas Económicas*, among others), they took part in the launch of *FIVE MAGAZINE*, as mentioned before.

For 2014, they are offering a subscription system and also a membership card which includes many benefits. One of them is having access to *Filmin*, an online video club that offers auteur cinema (*Jot Down Magazine* 2013b), among others. Their business also expanded beyond books and magazines: they also sell some home-made liquors from Galicia, something that fits the spirit of the magazine, in concept, design and quality.

Here, the concept of decentralizing the business model flows quite *naturally*: building networks with similarly-spirited magazines, publishing houses and even enjoyable products *makes sense* for the readers: they all enjoy and participate in the *Jot Down* (expanded) universe.

They are doing well: according to the distribution data they publish on their web, and which is audited by OJD, the official organ in Spain for this, every edition of the print version has published 15,000 copies. Out of 6 issues, the first two are sold out and some copies of the remaining four are still available. Their online version (also audited) gets 798,617 visits per month, and they have 106K followers on Twitter, and 68K on Facebook. (*Jot Down Magazine* 2013a)

7.3. El Puercoespín (Argentina). Journalism with a twist

With a similar motivation to that of *eldiario.es*, journalists and writers Gabriel Pasquini and Graciela Mochofsky launched this online informative magazine on March 24th, 2010. The date is a statement itself: on March 24th, 1976 the last *coup d'état* took place in Argentina, and that date is remembered nowadays as the the *Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice*. *El puercoespín* (literally, *the porcupine*) defines itself in the *About* section as “an online magazine about politics, journalism and culture [...] which publishes those big stories in which an anthropologist or a historian of the future would be able to find some clues about our era”. (*El puercoespín* 2014)

They started with their own savings and after a while, due to the fact that what began as an experiment had 120,000 monthly visits from the world¹⁷, they decided to ask for help and turn to their own crowdfunding/subscriber system, under a very appealing name: “Yo apoyo” (“I support”). In order to connect with the followers and potential subscribers, many well known writers and cultural agents from Argentina, Spain, Mexico, USA and other countries recorded videos saying why they were supporting the project¹⁸. They launched the campaign in September 2013, letting the readers know through their site, social media and a long and clear letter on their site¹⁹ what were the main reasons for this change in their model. “Think about it: for the price of a cinema ticket in your area, you will become the owner of a medium that only answers to its community”²⁰. They offer a Club for the subscribers, with special benefits, based upon the interests of the community: an exclusive high quality magazine, free access to e books, online seminars and conferences, special discounts and the possibility of commenting the posts on the website. Here they make an interesting comment: “There are two reasons for this: because we want to abolish the era of the anonymous comments [...] and because we want that those who are committed with *el puercoespín*, its community, become more and more not only the ones *who are reading it but the ones who are making it*”²¹. They also explain their policy for the readers who are not subscribers, who will be able to read the free content of the magazine and participate through their Facebook profile.

They do not have advertising, and there is a section of similar sites from Latin America that is called “Aliados” (“Allies”). Some of them are *El Faro* from El Salvador, *La silla vacía* from Colombia, news agency Pública from Brazil, *Animal Político* from Mexico, among others.

Although this seems a more traditional approach than the other cases mentioned here, it is quite a new view for informative media in Argentina, still divided in big groups and highly influenced by political interests²². *El puer-*

¹⁷ Pasquini, Gabriel. 2013. “El futuro del *puercoespín* está en sus manos”. URL: <http://www.elpuercoespín.com.ar/2013/09/30/el-futuro-del-puercoespín-está-en-sus-manos-por-gabriel-pasquini/>. Last access March 17, 2014.

¹⁸ Most of the videos can be accessed through El puercoespín YouTube channel. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCis0cFB0P9Hc0zG1unSsi3A>. Las access: March 21, 2014.

¹⁹ Pasquini, Gabriel. 2013. “El futuro del *puercoespín* está en sus manos”. URL: <http://www.elpuercoespín.com.ar/2013/09/30/el-futuro-del-puercoespín-está-en-sus-manos-por-gabriel-pasquini/>. Last access March 17, 2014.

²⁰ *El Puercoespín*. 2013. “Porqué y cómo suscribirse”. URL: <http://www.elpuercoespín.com.ar/yoapoyo/>. Last access March 17, 2014.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² A quick panorama of the current situation of mass media in Argentina can be checked here: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Foundation. 2014. URL: <https://www.kas.de/argentinien/es/publications/34926/>

coespín is still being published, and supported by a group of followers who want to listen to other voices in the current complex informative panorama.

7.4. Líbero magazine (Spain). More than football

A seasonal magazine that uses *the excuse* of football to talk about many things related to nostalgia, culture, stories and style, *Líbero* was launched in the Summer of 2012. It is published under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 3.0 license and it has a paper version and a tablet one. It has some traditional advertising on the print version (not on the one for mobile devices), which allows this high quality paper publication to be sold for 5 euros. The approach they have is similar to some of the other publications mentioned here:

Football without shouts

Líbero is an independent project, it is not related to big publishing houses. It's a project designed by a group of journalists that one day had a dream: a football magazine that talks about the passion for this sport, without shouting, with good taste and in depth. (Revista *Líbero* 2014b)

They have always had a certain complicity relationship with their readers: one of the subscriptions they offer includes a table football doll, wearing the T shirt of *your* team (it's customizable). The name of the subscription – although it is the name of the company producing the dolls – is highly meaningful: “Alegría” (Happiness). In order to increase this relationship, in December 2012 they launched a video campaign (4 spots) under the concept of “If they explain it to you with football examples, you get it” (“Si te lo explican con fútbol, lo entiendes”)²³. These videos illustrate the spirit of the publication in a friendly and funny manner: football is the excuse to talk about many other interesting subjects.

Moreover, many of *Líbero's* contents can be read online, for free, at *eldiario.es*²⁴, and you can download a free preview of their first magazine (23 pages) in mobile devices. They also have an interesting blog, with full online access. There is also a special offer with Libros del KO, a small publishing house, which is sold on *Jot Down Magazine* online store²⁵ (here too, the comradeship exists among the readers and many similar projects, as mentioned before).

Last access March 17, 2014. A 2011 report on media ownership can be checked here: Argentina Indymedia. 2014. URL: <http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2011/07/786889.php>. Last access March 17, 2014.

²³ *Revista Líbero*. 2013. “Si te lo explican con fútbol, lo entiendes.” URL: <http://www.revistalibero.com/siteloexplicanconfutbol/>. Last access March 21, 2014.

²⁴ *Eldiario.es*. 2014. URL: <http://www.eldiario.es/libero/>. Last access March 21, 2014.

²⁵ *Jot Down Magazine*. 2014. URL: <http://www.jotdown.es/store/#!~/product/id=25462282>. Last access March 21, 2014.

7.5. *ABC (Spain) – Are you in?*

One of Spain's most traditional newspapers, both due to its right-wing ideological line and in terms of age (it was founded in 1903), *ABC* is trying new ways of connecting with the readers. Although its readership is quite faithful, they have noticed times are changing and something different is needed. In answer to this, they have recently launched a campaign that shows that some of the ideas of alternative media are not as wrong as the traditional industry would like to believe they are: in March, 2014, they launched a new proposal under the concept (and hashtag) #estasinvitado (you are invited)²⁶. The images displayed in the campaign (their journalists smiling, showing themselves in a close way, in their daily activities) shows that even big and traditional newspapers sense that something is happening and it has to be approached in a different way: sales will not go up if you go on offering your newspaper in traditional ways; readers/followers/prosumers want to be able to choose and to be addressed in such a way that they feel they are part of the project. Sharing a similar point of view is not enough nowadays. The text of the campaign is written in a very appealing tone:

At *ABC* we inform, we give opinions, we discover stories and lives that are worth being told. We produce real journalism, with authentic people. Like you. Brave people, who are committed, upright, rigorous... but also close, funny, optimistic. People – columnists –, such as Carlos Herrera, Ignacio Camacho or David Gistau, who everyday give us their point of view as a gift, on those issues that worry us, as well as they make us enjoy their own writing style. People – journalists –, such as Bieto Rubido, Luis Ventoso, Mayte Alcaraz or Montesratt Lluís, who help us to organize and sort the news and to take maximum advantage of time and life. People – special columnists with their own signature –, like Beatriz Cortázar, Rosa Belmonte, Emilia Landaluce or Hughes, who discover the most uninhibited and lustrous aspects of current reality, while they draw a smile on our faces. People like you. People who connect with you, who share your concerns, who feel and dream just like you do. People who live at your side.²⁷

They go on offering a 1 month free trial of their online proposal: “We invite you to know and enjoy *ABC* contents in the most modern format, through our online publication on Kiosco y Más”²⁸.

What is quite interesting here is that a business model that has been going on for longer than a century, based on the pedagogical model of telling the readers what had happened, and what's their (shared) view on it, is trying to get closer to the readership, at least in its form. Nevertheless, there are many questions that arise when the change is driven due to financial reasons, instead

²⁶ *ABC*. 2014. “#Estasinvitado.” URL: <http://estasinvitado.abc.es/>. Last access March 21, 2014.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

if being a core element of the proposal: Will the content answer to these new intentions? Moreover, will the 21st century readers connect with it in new ways? Talking about the “most modern” format does not show there is a deep understanding of what is a stake: it is not a question of formats, not even of just content: it is about a whole new relationship with the followers, which can lead to more sustainable business models, that are not based upon traditional mass markets or advertising as its main way of earning money. You have to count on your readers, but with a different model, new ideas and commitment.

According to OJD, the sales they obtained in the last controlled period (July 2012/June 2013) keep on going down if we compare them to the previous year. The number of sold copies has descended to 153,645 in the last period; quite a loss if we consider its sales two years before (July 2011/June 2012), when *ABC* sold 190,749 copies²⁹.

7.6. *El Mundo (Spain). (Just) A change of skin*

Another right-wing newspaper from Spain, *El Mundo* has been under a lot of changes lately. By the end of January, 2014, Pedro J. Ramirez (founder and News Director of the publication for 25 years) was fired³⁰. Official reasons talk about re-thinking the project, financial problems, etc., but the general feeling in society is that is related to the political-corruption case called “The Bárcenas papers”³¹, which affects the ruling political party.

Nevertheless, in terms of analyzing their strategies to attract readers, there was a big one during the former news director’s time: under the concept of “*El Mundo* changes its skin”³², they launched a video to talk about the good news: “In the sea of social media, information many times disappears to become false rumours, lies or hoaxes³³. All fake news.” The video goes on saying that not everything is valid, that one has to know how to choose in the big Internet noise.

They show that many other newspapers from the world, such as *The New York Times* or *Le Monde* did what *El Mundo* is doing: they changed their design for digital devices and offer exclusive content that has to be paid for.

²⁹ OJD, información y control de publicaciones. 2014. URL: <http://www.introl.es/buscador/>. Last access March 21, 2014.

³⁰ *Publico.es*. 2014. URL: <http://www.publico.es/498772/pedro-j-ramirez-deja-la-direccion-de-el-mundo>. Last access March 21, 2014.

³¹ *Elmundo.es*. 2014. URL: <http://www.elmundo.es/t/ca/caso-barcenas.html>. Last access March 21, 2014.

³² Antena3.com. 2013. “El mundo cambia de piel”. URL: http://www.antena3.com/videos-online/noticias/sociedad/mundo-cambia-piel_2013110500164.html. Last access March 21, 2014.

³³ Here, the video gives visual examples of social media with fake news, such as Justin Bieber being gay or the death of Fidel Castro.

They also say that the only way of guaranteeing the survival of *good journalism* is giving contents a value range. And of course, they reinforce the idea that only the main newspapers of the world are *credible* and *the reference* in journalism (versus social media and similar Internet contents).

Once again, we can see a certain lift in form and not in the core idea of the model: a newspaper is shown as the voice of the *final truth*, and it is clearly placed against the social media production of those who *El Mundo* is trying to attract, which is quite contradictory. Again, a patch on an old way of doing things, based on the former relationship newspapers had with the readership: an authorized word saying what is true and what is a lie; *we know, you don't*. This is not a very promising proposal for what should lead to a joint project.

There is another aspect – under the current News Director, Casimiro García-Abadillo – that also shows this newspaper thinks the changes are just a question of skin and looks, and is not understanding the new rules. They insist on charging Google for using their contents for free. Maybe the problem is not their idea of reaching a certain agreement with Google, but the way they put it:

[...] We are losing money because people ask for information for free. It's about reaching an agreement with these search-engines, so they can pay for the contents they are using but that are produced by us, through a number of journalists who get their salaries every month, whom we wouldn't be able to pay in case the company went bankrupt due to financial loss. Now it seems as if everything should be free, but if so, how can journalists be paid? If Google assumes that it is going to pay all the journalists' salaries, perfect then.³⁴

According to the mentioned concepts of worth and value (Jenkins et al. 2013), the whole *new* proposal from *El Mundo* is completely designed in terms of value. Not a single hint of worth when all they talk about is money and looks. The data from ODJ is not encouraging: from the 233,101 copies they sold in the period July 2012/June 2012 to the 187,517 they sold between July 2012/June 2013³⁵.

8. CONCLUSION: NOTES FOR BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE MODEL

As stated in the Introduction, this paper's aim was to observe and analyze the way in which *Orsai* understood how to establish a meaningful bond with the

³⁴ 233grados.com.2014. "Casimiro García-Abadillo: 'Pedro Jota y yo somos muy distintos. Yo soy más tranquilo'". URL: <http://233grados.lainformacion.com/blog/2014/03/casimiro-garc%C3%ADa-abadillo-pedro-jota-y-yo-somos-muy-distintos-yo-soy-m%C3%A1s-tranquilo.html>. Last access March 21, 2014.

³⁵ OJD, información y control de publicaciones. 2014. URL: <http://www.introl.es/buscador/>. Last access March 21, 2014.

new audiences, which inspires loyalty beyond reason and cannot be understood with the traditional industry models and explanations. Through the analysis of *Orsai* and also some observations about other media that are either proposing flexible models or trying to understand how publications work these days, we can infer that there is not a crisis in terms of interest in reading; we read (a lot), in many different ways. It is simply a crisis of the traditional industry, the 20th century way of doing things in this area. Whether they like it or not, publications and companies have to make the effort of understanding the new scenario and be creative in finding new and flexible ways of being attractive, meaningful and valuable for readers. Moreover, they have to propose a clear joint project, in order to – using the terms from *Spreadable Media* (Jenkins et al. 2013) – turn *value* into *worth* at some point of their proposal.

How they choose to do it, it is up to them to decide; still, there are some interesting aspects that have worked in *Orsai* and the rest of media mentioned here. As a (first) conclusion, this paper would like to propose a starting point, a sort of map of a few important features that should be considered when launching and maintaining a publication nowadays. It is a starting point because communication reality changes so fast that we cannot look for absolute answers or formulas anymore. That feeling of *safety* is gone forever. Nonetheless, there are some attitudes that will help any project to work in the current media landscape: it's key to keep an open mind about these processes, in order to adapt them constantly to the demands of the prosumers/partners, without betraying the trust agreement. In the digital era, it is essential to establish a powerful bond that keeps people choosing and following your project everyday, whatever medium or format it is offered in. We are not just facing some changes in techniques or means; we are facing *a new way of understanding communication and a revolution in the ways people can participate* in an ongoing discussion about what is meaningful for them and what is not. And this will lead them to invest (or not) in different projects. (*Figure 1*)

So, any print/written medium that wishes to develop its own sustainable model in the current media landscape should consider the following:

- Mass media and massive sales are longer gone; the goal is reaching meaningful and faithful niche markets from around the world;
- Thinking in terms of binary oppositions (legal/illegal; payment/piracy; professional/unprofessional) is no longer useful; the idea is to move towards a deep and flexible understanding of the complex communicative reality;
- The reader is not necessarily a client anymore; instead, there are readers/fan/prosumers who spread the word and relate to the project in different ways;
- An advertising-based model is not enough; media should work in the constant creation of different projects related to the publication and ways of financing them (crowdfunding, books, events, physical spaces, etc.);

- The company and the clients do not operate separately anymore; the aim is to generate flexible joint projects among them;
- The reading contract should evolve to a trust agreement;
- It is not only about value; media have to provide, generate, accept and share worth.

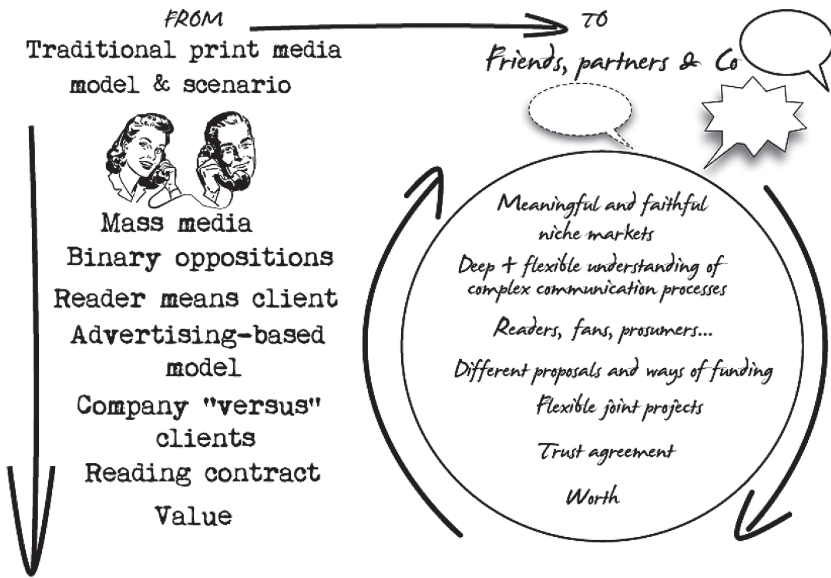


Figure 1 – Source: Own elaboration based upon research and conclusion.

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Paratextual Prometheus. Digital Paratexts on YouTube, Vimeo and Prometheus Transmedia Campaign

Sérgio Tavares

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

doi: 0000000000000000

sergio.tavares@ottoboni.fi

ABSTRACT

The object of this article is to map correspondences between the literacy of books and the literacy of online video platforms, in order to create common ground between both media and assist transmedia storytellers in the task of exploring video platforms with in-depth knowledge of each textual element surrounding video content. The article proposes a comprehensive categorization and typification of surrounding information in the standard video pages of YouTube and Vimeo, using Gerard Genette's theory of paratexts as a basic framework. The analysis found that the interplay between paratextual elements, the audience feedback and the absence of endorsement from authors to paratexts created by third parties constitutes a scenario of intense paratextual relevance in a culture radically different from print media. Furthermore, in the given scenario, the reader has an interesting new role: his/her activity log produces a new intertextuality, making the social media user himself/herself a new text that binds other texts together.

Keywords: transmedia literacy; transmedia storytelling; YouTube; Vimeo; paratexts; peritexts; Prometheus.

1. INTRODUCTION

We have once learned how to read books. Reading books, nowadays, is a trivial method of textual consumption – literature, poetry, crime fiction, theoretical works or cooking books. Internet and its plethora of possibilities have opened up the opportunity for authors to explore new ways of writing. For both writer and reader, transcending one medium to another requires new literacies: authors are invited to write on different platforms, and most of them are not

simply “a blank page”, as they have their own vocabulary, textual practices and social practices as well.

The object of this work is to map the correlations that the literacy of books shares with the literacy of online video platforms by analyzing textual surroundings (or “paratexts”). Paratexts are considered to be “liminal texts” or texts that constitute the thresholds that lead the reader to the text. They are the sum of epitexts (texts placed far from the text, such as newspaper reviews or interviews with the text’s author) and peritexts (texts placed near or around the text, such as a book cover or the text’s title) (Genette [1987] 1997, 1). The main focus of this article will be on the digital peritexts displayed in on YouTube and Vimeo.

It is, hopefully, a relevant contribution for the production of transmedia textualities, as it tackles how the surroundings of texts in video platforms operate in relation to the author, the text and the reader. After a rather detailed analysis of the information surrounding YouTube and Vimeo video pages, the article brings us to the role of the reader in the web 2.0: creating a history log of activity (videos watched, texts consumed), the reader becomes, to the machine, a third text: a transcendent, intertextual text that binds together other texts (affecting, for instance, what videos the machine will suggest to the user, or displaying users that share a connection with each other because of their similar activity in the network).

Digital texts are fluid: they may be replicated, shared, embedded and re-embedded around the Internet, from platform to platform, by a multitude of Internet users. When the users and their audiences are networked, the flow of texts and the way content is consumed adopts a form that is radically different from print media. Sharing and adding information to content produces different sets of paratexts. These paratexts gain relevance as they operate within each user’s social reach, without the consent or endorsement of the original publisher or author.

Since the early studies of paratexts in printed form, it has been debated whether paratexts represent “a means of lending the text authority, originally the very attribute of the author”. (Maclean 1991, 276) However, how does the authority attributable to paratexts may change now that anyone – not only authors or editors – can create paratexts?

Since paratexts are some of the most important aspects that help us to decide whether we will consume a text or not (Gray and Jenkins 2010), beyond textual analysis, it is important to identify, understand and research them in detail. Paratexts are at the very center of the discussion about new forms of participation and collaboration enabled by the “converging culture”. (Jenkins 2006, 245) Thus, how do these digital, user-generated paratexts written by multiple authors, and seemingly changing at every “share” or “Like” under the scrutiny of commentators, influence our decisions regarding which texts to consume?

1.1. Methodology

This article categorizes and typifies paratextual elements found on YouTube and Vimeo video pages. Both networks provide their users with a well-defined template; that is, textual and paratextuals “gaps” that are expected to be filled by the content author.

Using Gerard Genette’s approach to paratext theory as a framework, a structural analysis of this basic template – made available by YouTube and Vimeo to content creators and common to all their video pages – led to the identification of the main types of paratexts found in both these networks. Paratexts were split in three main categories. A typification has been made to identify subcategories of paratexts common to all YouTube and Vimeo video pages.

In addition to examining how paratexts are inscribed by authors in YouTube and Vimeo standard video pages, examples from published videos were found to illustrate how paratexts operate within each network. From YouTube, examples included video pages in which paratexts significantly influence textual reception, creation and spectatorship behavior, namely *Controversial Baby Dynamics Yoga* (BarcroftTV 2012), *The Evolution of Dance* (Laipply 2006), *Michael Jackson’s Ghost Caught on tape at neverland!! HQ* (ScottyBoiTV 2009) and *Ghost caught on tape* (Stevezur 2006).

For specifically transmedia cases, official posts to YouTube for the release campaign for Prometheus feature film (Prometheus YouTube Channel 2011) were taken in consideration, as well as videos posted to Vimeo from the studios that created some of the film’s special effects (Territory Studios 2012).

The main theoretical framework is based on Gerard Genette’s work as explained in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* ([1987] 1997). Additional ideas are adopted from scholars who debate the reception of digital information, such as Henry Jenkins, N. Katherine Hayles and Jonathan Gray. Ellen McCracken’s framework was also used to look at centripetal and centrifugal paratexts: the former bring the reader into the text and the latter take the reader away from it (McCracken 2013, 105).

2. DIGITAL PERITEXTS

Paratexts are divided into three main categories, which are then again divided into subtypes, based on the information they contain. The three main categories help us understand how paratextual information is organized online, while the subtypes identify the most common types in YouTube and Vimeo, although the same types can be found in a number of social media websites.

It is interesting, at this point, to observe how the reception of electronic texts differs from that of traditional media. As Hayles states, “reading [...] becomes a complex performance in which agency is distributed between the user, the interface, and the active cognitions of the networked and programmable machine”. (Hayles 2008, 153) Similarly, Vimeo staff debates videos as *video pages*, holistically, and not just as the video itself, as if the experience of a Vimeo site went further than simply streaming the video (Vimeo Staff 2012). The three main categories are:

- *Authorial peritexts* show the information written by the author. A simple example is the title and description of a video on YouTube.
- *Audience peritexts* are generated by other users of the network. They are mostly view counts, comments, reviews, discussions or lists which include the original text.
- *Network peritexts* refer to the information displayed around the text. Network paratexts do *not* necessarily relate to the text, or to any other texts inside the network. This category also includes paratexts generated by the network’s algorithm (related videos, promoted content, intelligent advertising).

2.1. Authorial peritexts

In Web 2.0, the possibility of publishing content without an editor represents a significant change in paratextual culture and conventions. Authorial peritexts – like the book cover, typeset, or title – used to be “written” by the publisher, editor and/or author, negotiating the content of these appendages (Genette [1987] 1997, 16). In user-generated content, the absence of an editor bestows the ownership of the peritext to the author, making most of the peritexts authorial paratexts. However, in order to compose the peritext on most Web 2.0 platforms, the author is restricted to “filling in the gaps” defined by the network. Still, the transaction between the author and the publisher differs radically from that in traditional publishing. In YouTube and Vimeo, authors are asked to attribute a title to their videos, to sign their work with their names and a picture, to write a description of the work, and to describe it with keywords, among other features.

Alternatively, a common practice among the Web 2.0 users is to upload content through a third-party: in such cases unauthorized publishers create their own peritexts without the endorsement or a transaction with the authors or editors of the original text. A user may, for example, include a music video from The Beatles as a part of a playlist entitled *The Best Songs Ever Made* and add his own personal textual notes on the video. These editors can therefore write prefaces, synopses, playlists or selections, and their audience will create

their own commentary surrounding the text. The peritext is multiplied and pluralized, and not necessarily connected to the original text, author or editor.

The most common authorial paratexts that can be found on YouTube and Vimeo video pages include:

- Credits: names of the author(s), contributors, cast and crew.
- Identification: titles, subtitles and description text.
- Categories and tags attributed by the author, matching preexisting categories determined by the network or popular tags by other authors.
- Release: details related to time and place, for instance.
- Technical specifications: runtime, resolution and video definition, filming equipment used, etc.
- Excerpts: taken from the text: previews, fragments, excerpts, scenes, quotes and other partial accesses to the text.
- Authorial filiation: the series and collections the text is a part of, depending on the input of the author.
- Authorial paraphrases: prefaces, descriptions, summaries and reviews written by the author or editors.
- Intertextuality: related texts based on tags and genre classification, texts cited within the text, texts that cite the text, soundtracks, related news, etc.

A few of these concepts are analyzed in more detail below.

2.1.1. Credits and identification

The position of the video title on a YouTube page has repeatedly changed (and will likely change yet again, since most social networks seem to constantly be adapting to the internet user culture). In the initial layout in 2005, the title was placed above the video window and later moved to beneath it, resembling the way Vimeo presents videos: the content is considered to be more important than the title, possibly because the user is likely to have already identified the content in links retrieved using search engines before landing on the page, an essential aspect of networked media.

The name of the author is a concept that Gerard Genette discusses thoroughly. As Genette notes, onymity (the use of the author's real name), anonymity or pseudonymity provide information about the author, such as nationality and gender, or identify a known author with whom the reader may relate ([1987] 1997, 37-54). The same phenomenon can be observed in Web 2.0; users initially had to create separate usernames for each network. In 2006, YouTube did not display the full names of either authors or commenters. Usernames could only contain a limited amount of characters and were displayed on the sidebar giving little (or condensed) information about the author (and commenter).

In the case of Prometheus campaign, several authors post both on Vimeo and YouTube. From YouTube, the "disguised" original posters is simply

“Prometheus”. Original content produced for web is intertwined with trailers from the film (Prometheus YouTube Channel 2012). On Vimeo, Ignition Studios released the videos compiled in one portfolio showcase, offering a review of the campaign for marketing and transmedia professionals (Ignition Creative 2013). Also on Vimeo, Territory Studios released clips revealing the intradiegetic user interfaces from the computers used by the characters of Prometheus, as well as scanner screens, medical tables and other content in far more detail, and thus revealing “unseen footage” and pieces that contribute to the story experience (Territory Vimeo Channel 2013). The three different authors released information for different purposes and audiences. The alias of Ignition on YouTube (the YouTube channel named “Prometheus”) kept content intradiegetic – a character making a speech in TED 2023, or the advertisement of a new android called David (which happens to be a character in the movie). Ignition studios on Vimeo released the campaign as a portfolio piece, enabling viewers to watch all marketing efforts, that were released in a decentralized manner (Ignition 2013). And Territory bordered extra and intradiegetic content: posting as part of a portfolio, the video clips were signed by an extra diegetic author (the Territory Studios), but presenting expanded and yet “untouched” content from the diegetic world of the film (the user interfaces from the film’s computers). This incidental transmedia case reveals that the territory of transmediality can be yet expanded: even after campaigns are over, and even after the “curtains are pulled down”, there is room for unfolding the story.

2.1.2. Categories and tags

When authors choose which network to upload their content to, they make a conscious choice about presentation, distribution and, ultimately, the paratexts displayed around the content. When authors assign a category to their video, or add a keyword to their text, they allocate the content to specific communities of texts, which resemble the function of genres in traditional publishing (Genette [1987] 1997, 94). A classificatory need ends up influencing, defining or attributing a certain value to the text.

On both Vimeo and YouTube, authors may choose preexisting categories to classify their texts. There is a potential tension between the user’s will to classify his or her text and the categories and collections available in a given network. This means that at times new genres or formats may fall inside certain known, preexisting categories. Likewise, the evolution of video culture and user-generated content is subjected to the networks’ will of identifying and creating new categories that will better describe the produced content.

In a similar manner keywords, called “tags” on YouTube and Vimeo, are often an author-community transaction. According to Kessler and Schäfer, tags on YouTube are “a number of keywords one can select freely according

to what one assumes to be appropriate labels for these images” (2009, 281). In addition, the authors conclude that tags and view counts influence search results in the network, and that “the success of searching moving-image files thus relies upon the different types of metadata provided by the person who uploads a clip as well as by other users”. (Kessler and Schäfer 2009, 281)

Authors may also consider which tags are popular and easily recognizable by users who search the web. For example, Territory tagged their video *Prometheus UI reel* with the keyterms “Prometheus”, “On-set”, “Screen graphics”, “Hologram”, “Ridley Scott” and “Territory”. In addition to the author’s tags, collections curated by users may provide more precise classifications for content – another difference between the YouTube and Vimeo approaches to video content.

2.1.3. Release and publication information

The need to situate a text in history is common to both new and traditional publishing. Genette observes that the date of publication is often inserted in the cover of the book ([1987] 1997, 24). On YouTube, however, the upload date is not the most relevant factor in determining the position of a video within the search results. The default algorithmic filter for a YouTube search tries to define the video’s “relevance.” If the user is looking for a specific video – a specific film trailer, a music video, a specific viral video, for instance – the upload date is most likely irrelevant. The view count, in a case like this, is an indication of credibility: millions of views mean, most probably, that the uploaded video corresponds to the search term. This is an initial sign that the relevant paratext is mostly produced by the community, rather than consisting of information provided by the author or publisher: it is the interplay of agents (community, author, publisher) and (various) paratexts that generates the paratextual relevance.

If the user is searching for Barack Obama’s *latest* appearance on David Letterman’s show, the upload date is relevant when differentiating the video from those uploaded five years ago, when Obama was first interviewed. The amount of views combined with the upload date and positive ratings may help the viewer choose among the search results.

Vimeo pages have a button that, when clicked, displays statistics on the video over time. The Stats button displays a relatively detailed graph with all-time, weekly and daily information of plays, Likes and even the URLs of the sites from which viewers have been directed to the video page. The complexity of *reception over time* is partially decrypted by Vimeo with the display of the video’s statistics. While YouTube shows the total amount of views, on Vimeo the views are shown in the form of a graph depicting the amount of views *over time*, thus giving the viewer a glimpse of the historical relevance and acuteness of the video.

2.1.4. *Excerpts*

“Indexed information” is a term used by Genette to refer to information taken from the text and displayed as paratexts. In traditional print publishing they were excerpts used in synopses, on back covers, in reviews, and in newspapers. A classical example of an excerpt in digital text is the first lines of a blog post followed by the indication “read more.”

In the context of Web 2.0, “indexed information” may refer to the meta-data, which is why the term “Excerpts” is a better choice when referring to the video material extracted from the original video and displayed as paratext.

On the video websites in question, a typical example of an excerpt is the “thumbnail” – a still image displayed on the screen before the video is played. The thumbnail is first generated randomly from a still image captured from the video – thus, an excerpt from the video. However, both YouTube and Vimeo users have the option of uploading an *external* image to be used as thumbnail (in which case, the external image is no longer an excerpt taken from the video).

The previews displayed when the cursor is moved over a point on the timeline of a YouTube video is another use of thumbnails. When the cursor slides over the timeline, thumbnails appear showing a picture of the content at a given point in the video, facilitating the identification of content. In the 2013 mobile version of YouTube, users can minimize the video window and search for more videos (Lardinois, 2013). This kind of navigation certainly indicates the nature of YouTube: providing users with the possibility to refine their searches while a video is played certainly means that the reception of videos in YouTube is not a passive experience, and the interference of paratexts over the text does not seem to be bothersome; on the contrary, it enhances the video experience proposed by the website. This “centrifugal” movement of YouTube will be explored later on.

2.1.5. *Authorial filiation*

When discussing filiation (that is, texts derived from the same source), it is important to make a distinction between authorial and attributed filiation. Authorial filiation should have a simple definition: texts produced by the same author. On YouTube and Vimeo, those can be videos, video channels, playlists or commentary. According to Genette, filiations can attribute value and context to a book ([1987] 1997, 22), and this idea is explored extensively in Web 2.0. In the right sidebar of a YouTube video page other videos uploaded by the author are displayed as “Related Videos.” Authorial filiation, however, is only one criterion and other videos are presented on the same sidebar: videos may have common metadata, similar titles or be chosen according to the user’s activity history. As Gourney notes about the YouTube’s Related Videos feature, “this box can be an entry point onto a body of work that is ever-changing, and

as such, can be a significant paratextual portal into a matrix of textuality”. (Gurney 2011, 38)

Authorial filiation in Vimeo stands out as privileging and emphasizing the author figure and the authorial production: the page displays links to other uploads from the author, to videos the author liked inside Vimeo, to other channels updated by the author, to groups the author belongs to and to other Vimeo users the author follows. The author is a central figure, and all activity performed by the author ends up creating relations, connections and paratexts: people the author follows, videos the authors Liked and, on the most basic level, the videos the author has created and the collections in which the author has placed his or her video(s).

When a user activates a keyword in a search engine, or a tag in the network (say, browsing YouTube videos categorized as ‘humor’), the filiation comes from a collaborative structure between the author (who tagged the texts) and the network (which displays the results within the given category). When tagging their own content, users are conscious that their videos will appear among other videos with similar tags. The videos featured in these categories may vary in quality and the influence of filiation may run thinner. With regard to Vimeo’s collections, however, the users’ videos may be featured among those of artists with similar interests, and being part of such community may lead to beneficial interaction and positively influence the reception of the videos.

Vimeo also contains a list of “Related collections,” where links to certain categories of videos are displayed. The Related collections feature also illustrates how Vimeo is built around authorial content. The term “collection” relates more closely to the vocabulary of editors and publishers than social media (Playlists, User lists, for instance). In Vimeo, *Collections* are divided into four different types of text arrangements, all of which attribute filiation to the text: a text may belong to different *categories* (created by the network), *channels*, *groups* or *albums* (the last three are created by users). Vimeo’s collections end up aggregating videos through refined concepts made up by users, such as “User Interface Motion Graphics” or “Visual Stimuli” – related collections attributed to the video *Prometheus UI reel* (Territory 2013). The detailed categorization is sophisticated, in opposition to YouTube’s broad categories like “People & Blogs” or “How-to & Style.” (YouTube Channels).

2.2. Audience peritexts: from public epitext to public peritext

Genette calls “public epitext” the commentary about the text or author that belongs to the public sphere, such as interviews, news stories or reviews ([1987] 1997, 344). The Web 2.0 user can create either public epitexts (writing

a blog post or creating a Facebook update about a certain text) or *public peritexts* (for instance by commenting on a YouTube video).

It is important to note that the public peritext is not solely the comment area. Audience statistics and ratings, for instance, are placed closer to the video window on YouTube than on Vimeo. In print media data, such as the number of copies of a book sold or the total box office revenue of a film, were part of an *epitext* published in newspapers. It is interesting to note that epitexts were often spread out in the media ecosystem – advertising, interviews, reviews, spectator statistics. Bad reviews could be contradicted with stronger media presence, for example. On YouTube, for instance, the total number of ratings (“Likes” or “Dislikes”) is displayed right next to the video screen. The total number of views (View count) is also displayed immediately next to it. It is essential to see these practices as part of “a number of crucial displacements in our modes of writing and reading” that “ultimately alters literary and social practices” (James 2011, 37). When all the statistics are displayed right there at the moment of consumption, reception is most certainly affected. Similarly, when an Internet user embeds a YouTube video into his or her Facebook profile and writes an introductory note for it, the text is recreated with new, user-generated *peritext* – since the video can also be consumed on the site, on the very same screen.

Some of the public epitexts and peritexts related to the audience, found on YouTube and Vimeo video pages, are listed below:

- Audience: name and identification: display name, picture, activity history, channel views, video uploads etc.
- Spectatorship computing: page counters, number of views, number of shares, indications of popularity and virality over the Internet.
- Commentary and responses: comments, responses, reviews, summaries, general feedback etc.
- Attributed Filiation: attributed to the text as playlists created by users, not authors.
- Attributed Paraphrases: introductions and prefaces created by Internet users while embedding or sharing a text.

Interesting questions are raised by the public epitext and peritext: Is the peritext just a matter of location? Or should it require endorsement from the official author or publisher of the original text? If I share someone’s video on my Facebook profile and write a prefatory introduction to it (thus enabling my friends to watch it on their Facebook newsfeeds), can my note be considered “as much of a peritext” as the preface written by the author on the original YouTube page? This discussion brings forth the question: Is the concept of a *peritext* still a matter of a geographical placement or, on the contrary, a matter of a connection to the text itself – or, can the peritext and the epitext coexist in Web 2.0?

2.2.1. Name and identification

As mentioned above, with regard to names, the rules are the same for authors and users on both Vimeo and YouTube. Here, the analysis focuses on the Web 2.0 user *as a commentator* or *the audience* of content.

YouTube would attribute images to a user's channel, differentiating viewers from content producers by their behavior. Vimeo, however, displayed avatars for the commentary long before YouTube. On Vimeo, the viewer can therefore have a visual glimpse of *who is commenting*, a feature that could stimulate identification between the author and the audience, and thus strengthen the sense of community within the network. Both networks display the user's activity history, and enables users to assess each other by seeing what previous comments or discussions have taken place. A user's YouTube list of "Liked" videos may indicate certain information regarding musical taste, artistic interests, religious and political views, etc. At this point, the Web 2.0 culture and practices already hint at what should be discussed in the final part of this article: users are not only authors – their uploads, comments and activity history certainly generate texts, intertextuality, filiation and a strong sense of authorship. As discussed earlier, these texts are used by users as a means of identifying each other within the network. However, in a quite complex web of texts and paratexts often shifting roles, would there be a point where the user is no longer the author, but *a text* itself?

2.2.2. Excerpts

One difference between Vimeo and YouTube is the Like system. If users want to comment on or Like a video, they are required to log in to the networks. While YouTube displays the total amount of Likes (or Dislikes) next to the video, Vimeo displays the avatars of the users who hit the Like button.

YouTube therefore seems to be more concerned with a general evaluation of popularity, as videos with a high number of Dislikes tend to have misleading titles or consist of offensive or uninteresting material. However, it is not the absolute amount of "Dislikes" that provides accurate information about the content. Popular videos tend to have a lot of both Likes and Dislikes. It is rather the balance between Likes and Dislikes that is meaningful. Bringing an example of popular YouTube videos, *The evolution of dance*, so far, has 226 million views (Laipply 2006). It has over 800 thousand Likes, and 78 thousand Dislikes, despite the fact that it is a highly popular video, and is even featured in *Time* magazine as one of the best 50 videos ever featured on YouTube (Friedman 2010). On the other hand, *Controversial Baby Dynamics Yoga* (BarcroftTV 2012) has over 2 million views, 2.2 thousand Likes and nearly 45 thousand Dislikes. The controversy is thus quite transparent.

On Vimeo, the network displays the profile pictures of users who Like

a video in a window on a sidebar on the right side of the page, below their sponsored ads. Unlike on YouTube, the Likes computation is not displayed right next to the video: that is the main difference between the two networks. Vimeo seems more concerned with the individual credibility of assessment whereas YouTube emphasizes the “collective voice” signified by the sum of all responses. Enhancing the transparency between the author and the responses seem to increase the sense of authorial community and the craft of authorial video-making, which is, as stated by network, “founded by a group of filmmakers who wanted to share their creative work and personal moments from their lives. As time went on, likeminded people discovered Vimeo” (Vimeo). The facilitated recognition of who are the “like-minded” people certainly strengthens the perception of Vimeo as an “arthouse,” “auteur” community, and so does the absence of a Dislike button – creativity may be rewarded but not punished by a push-button feedback.

Vimeo also offers statistics on the videos (view count and number of Likes, for instance), which are displayed to the audience only once the statistics tab is expanded by clicking the “Stats” button. By hiding the numbers behind a button, Vimeo stops the instant evaluation mechanism that takes place on YouTube. While the YouTube audience quickly reviews the content through paratextual information (“lots of people saw this, it might be interesting,” “lots of people dislike this, it might be bad”), the audience at Vimeo cannot see the view count nor the number of Likes around the video unless *proactively* expanding the Stats tab.

The influence of positive feedback on the audience has been widely studied, and in 2013 a thorough research has been conducted on a social news aggregation website, showing evidence that positive social influence increased the likelihood of positive ratings by 32% (Aral, Muchnik and Taylor 2013). Vimeo seems to propose a reception mode without immediate external interference or evaluations, so that users can form their own opinions before seeing what other users think.

2.2.3. *Commentary and responses*

Ellen McCracken considers peritexts in Kindles to have either a centripetal or centrifugal effect on the reader, taking them further into or outside the text (McCracken 2013, 105). The Web 2.0 commentary area is certainly capable of performing both functions. Commentary on YouTube or Vimeo seems to have an intrinsic role in the contextual meaning-making – comments may instruct the viewer on how to react, how to feel, which “side” of a discussion to pick or what to expect from the video.

Already in cinema and television, paratexts “can amplify and/or clarify many of a text’s meanings”. (Grey 2010, 38) In the case of audience-made

paratexts in cinema and television, such as fan fiction or forum debates, this paratextual production may influence how the text and its meaning end up shaped (Grey and Jenkins 2010). As happens with a YouTube display of view count, Likes and Dislikes, which provide the possibility of instant evaluation of a video by the interplay of these three coefficients, the commentary may take the dynamics of instant evaluation a step further.

It might be beneficial to start by describing a situation in which commentary influences interpretation *before* a video is viewed in its entirety. In this case, the viewer uses commentary and ratings to know *what to expect* from the video. A simple example is the “scare pop up” video: the user is presented with a video that builds up suspense and ends with a pop up image of a ghost-like figure accompanied by a loud sound. Common examples are *Ghost caught on tape* (Stevezur, 2006) and *Michael Jackson’s Ghost Caught on Tape* (ScottyBoiTV 2009), the latter displaying decontextualized footage from CNN’s news coverage “Inside Neverland.” The comments, right upfront, “spoil” the surprise by exposing the prank before the viewer has a chance to experience it. In Vimeo, the technical compliments to the special effects show expertise from the commentators, familiarity with the motion graphics industry and are overtly complimentary (Territory Studios 2012). On YouTube, most comments refer to building expectations to watch the feature film. The contrast is clear: the audience in Vimeo has a prominently centripetal behavior (focusing on what is on the screen), and the one in YouTube is centripetal, looking forward to see the feature film (Prometheus YouTube Channel 2011).

As is the case in print media, when the composition of the peritext was the editor’s privilege and, as such, an area of contracts and relationships between the author, editor and publisher (Stanizek 2005, 34), in Web 2.0, the author may moderate the commentary (but not the ratings) thus making the commentary in the peritext a transaction between the authors and the audience. YouTube users may disable the commentary function, remove comments or ban users from the discussion thread. *Management* might be a better word for what occurs as comments in the peritext are not exactly *moderated*, although they used to be (they do not *pend for approval*, they are not pre-selected but rather managed *after* publication).

If the video owner overrules a comment, the comment will be substituted with the “Removed by the user” label. Likewise, since users may vote comments up or down, comments may gain more visibility (being featured among the “Top comments” section) or removed from the conversation, being replaced by the label “This comment received too many negative votes.”

Thus, the YouTube conversation in the peritext gives viewers clues about the video content, even when the comments are “not quite” there: even erased, the commentary management leaves traces and “footprints” of controversy behind.

The frequency of removed comments may indicate the presence of controversy, a communal reaction to hateful comments or an autocratic video owner banning unflattering comments.

The area dedicated to “Top comments” is generally representative of the most common reactions to the video, written down in a particularly precise, witty, funny or inspired way.

The archiving process will display the latest comments first. Gurney argues against that: “while one might choose to look back through the archived comments, the very nature of the truncated text comment window means that only the most current will impact most users’/viewers’ experiences of a clip” (Gurney 2011, 40). The “latest first” logics of archiving the commentary certainly defies the logic of print media. The peritexts in books were bound in a strict sense to physical finitude, and often selected to merely complement the author or the work – in the limited space for commentary on the back cover, for instance (Genette [1987] 1997, 25) – but also tied to a specific time (the release date, the collection volume, the yearly collection). On Web 2.0 videos, dates are less relevant and content, if not always fresh, at least *refreshed* by the latest displayed comment.

2.2.4. *Attributed filiation: series and collections*

It is important to distinguish authorial filiation from attributed filiation. The first case, debated earlier in this article, refers to works created by the same author. It also refers to the lists and collections in which the video has been placed according to the author’s will. In this second case, filiation is attributed to the text by a third party, non-related to the author or editor. On YouTube, any user can include any YouTube video in new playlists, regardless of their social reach or influence, and without the knowledge or endorsement of the content owners.

On the Internet, it is important to remember the idea of text as a movable, portable object, with paratexts that are reconfigured every time a text is replicated. The Web 2.0 user who presents someone else’s text may add different paratexts to the text, such as notes of introduction or paratexts that create filiation: playlists, collections, or series, without the consent of authors, publishers or copyright owners.

2.2.5. *Attributed paraphrases*

Describing prefaces, forewords and notes, Genette refers to them as paraphrases. He identifies three main kinds of prefaces, namely autographic (attributed to the author), actorial (attributed, fictionally, to a character of the book) and allographic (attributed to a third person) ([1987] 1997, 178-179).

In social media, it is reasonable to consider that every time a text is

shared, embedded or uploaded, a new combination of paratexts is created by a third party who is not necessarily related to the original work or author. The text may remain the same, but the paratext changes, since new attributes of its surroundings are displayed. A YouTube or a Vimeo video displaying a certain amount of paratexts in its original video page will be displayed on Facebook, for example, with a few of its original paratexts and with a set of new ones generated by the Facebook user sharing the video. The Facebook update might contain a few excerpts from the original video (the thumbnail image, as a preview), the title of the video and the description written by the video author. However, new introductory notes are likely to appear, accompanied by the Facebook user's profile picture, name and feedback from his audience – Facebook Likes, shares and comments. Thus, the total number of counters – views, Likes or comments – is subjected to a new set of similar counters, this time from Facebook: a new layer of paratexts over the original paratexts. It seems relevant to evoke an aspect of the print media at this point. Genette has an interesting way of describing the transient role of a book's dust jacket, referring to them as “paratextual messages that [...] are meant to be transitory, to be forgotten after making their impression” (Genette [1987] 1997, 27-28). In Web 2.0, when sharing or embedding a text on Facebook, users also write their own transitory peritext, impacting their audiences within their social reach and leading them to the text (the YouTube video, or the YouTube video page). The question is how multiple, dynamic and transitory the digital media peritexts can be.

2.3. Network peritexts: from interface to the user's log

It is part of the very nature of networked media to have linked texts influence one another. The controls and buttons of the video players became an intrinsic part of the experience soon after it became possible to embed videos on digital pages. As Gurney observes, “while similar control has been widely possible with VCRs and DVD players in the recent past, these specific controls are novel in that they actually are a part of the image” (2011, 38). The question turns, thus, to the dialectic relation identified by Bolter and Grusin on immediacy, with surroundings made as “invisible” as possible, and hypermediacy, with surroundings being embraced and considered not as breakage of the experience of the text but as a part of it (Bolter and Grusin 1999). In addition, N. Katherine Hayles notes that new textualities “create an enriched sense of embodied play that complicates and extends the phenomenology of reading” (2008, 152). The question of networked peritext starts at this point, observing the influence of the interface over the experience of reception.

The digital peritext does not only act on user interface elements on Web 2.0 video sites. Rather, they function on the rich intertextuality generated by the centrifugal vectors ignited by the surrounding texts, the “related videos,” “popular videos” or “suggested videos” on YouTube or Vimeo.

Some of the paratexts identified with respect to the interface include:

- User interface displays general layout visuality, fonts, color schemes, logos, buttons, entry forms, player panels, video resolution, among others.
- Technical and legal information includes the terms of use, legal disclaimers, language settings, links to help pages, etc.
- Intertextual content, divided into three main subcategories:
- Advertising related to text through the network’s algorithm,
- Promoted texts sharing tags with the text,
- Related texts also displayed by the network’s algorithm.

2.3.1. User Interface

On Vimeo and YouTube, the user interface is what creates the overall atmosphere of the video to be watched. While YouTube follows Google’s perspective of cleanness, neutrality and lightness (an interface to be applied to virtually any kind of video, and loaded by any kind of computer or connection), Vimeo seems to be its opposite: big and bold typography, wide thumbnails, high-resolution videos are the norm. John Cayley states that the experience of digital text, since it is spatially organized, has a “special organization and navigation [...] to be read as paraphrase, gloss, elaboration, annotation, and so on, all coded into operations that produce a successively revealed interface text”. (Cayley 2006, 316) The idea of the interface creating the “coating,” the “material” of a “book cover” in digital text is accurate, as the look and feel of each interface determines, to an extent, the type of content that the viewer is about to consume.

2.3.2. Technical and legal information

Although placed within the peritext, these paratexts occupy a more peripheral space around the text. YouTube displays language settings, their own service description (About), content production (Press & Blogs), credits (Creators & Partners, Advertising Developers), legal disclaimers (Terms, Privacy, Policy & Safety, Copyright) (YouTube) and a link to beta versions of new services still under development (Discover Something New!). On Vimeo, information is categorized into four groups: information about Vimeo, help guides, special features and premium services. A short note, at the very bottom of the page, says “Made with (heart) in New York,” a paratext of origin or location.

Technical information forms centrifugal vectors that guide the viewer away from the text (McCracken 2013, 106). The centrifugal effect is, however,

minimized when these elements are placed in more peripheral areas (on page footers, for example).

Those practices are common in user interface design. John Maeda claims that unimportant information should be made small or hidden from the viewer in order to create clarity and simplicity (2006, 11-22). Although peripheral, this type of information is always close, in the peritext – if not for practical reasons, for legal ones, such as copyright disclaimers.

2.3.3. Intertextuality

On user-generated websites, intertextuality occurs in a wide range of forms; for example, when an author creates a video response to another video, when a category or collection of videos is browsed, when a user's favorite videos are viewed by another user, or when the machine's algorithm suggests videos based on metadata retrieved from the viewer's activity. Some other consistent examples include advertising, promoted material and sponsored content. These are components of a sophisticated network of peripheral information generating new forms of intertextuality, convergence and collaborative culture that are at the very core of Web 2.0.

2.3.4. Advertising and promoted texts

YouTube currently offers a wide variety of advertising. On YouTube, the advertisement surrounds the text on multiple layers: it may appear around the video window in the sidebar; it may be displayed in a pop-up box over the window (allowing the viewer to close it at will), or it can be displayed before the video (allowing the viewer to skip it after a few seconds).

There is no premium user account on YouTube with which to remove the ads – all of them must be tolerated by the user. In services like Spotify, tension is created by pushing the “noise” a free user can tolerate to the maximum, in order to allow the generation of a new premium subscription that removes the ads (Spotify).

YouTube ads, essentially centrifugal vectors, generate an interesting paradox: despite efforts to effectively deliver a video to the user, the network most likely *wants* the user to be distracted from the text and access the sponsored content.

From a textual point of view, YouTube ads can also be considered as intertextual in a rather complex web of textuality. Textual filiation of the advertisements appears according to the relation between the video metadata and YouTube's algorithm: videos about cars are likely to bring to the peritext ads about cars, for example. However, the user history is also taken into consideration by the machine's algorithm. Thus, any given cat video may be surrounded by car ads if the user has previously watched car videos. But to constitute intertextuality, what does the cat video share with the car video? They both have the same *viewer*.

The shift in the way of perceiving such intertextuality and relationship of filiation is clear: the central *text* is the *user*; and the user, for the network, *is* text; for the algorithm, the user is (among other sources of data) the collection of texts compiled in his or her browsing history. The user's activity log is, thus, a collection of texts and advertisements. All videos (and the ads that come with them) belong to the same list: the user history, the user preferences, his or her Likes, age, spatial location and so on. This shift in perception may signal the shift from authorial and textual culture to user and log culture.

2.3.5. *Related texts*

When the authors of videos upload their content to YouTube or Vimeo, they are asked to classify it using certain categories and to tag their videos with keywords. When videos are displayed on video pages as "related videos," the intertextual paratexts are used to display material that share metadata and other affiliations with the video being watched. These include the same author (uploader) and titles and descriptions with similar words or information based on the viewer's browsing history. To an extent, the user (and the sum of his or her activity) is the central text in the intertextual play.

The algorithm will therefore display an author's text in connection to others. Therefore, on YouTube, Vimeo and similar websites that display "related content," any text is the paratext of another. Concurrently, texts are also paratexts, and the roles shift whenever the user clicks the suggested video content on the sidebar, as happens on YouTube.

This basic structure – the text being viewed triggering other texts as suggestions to the viewer – matches Genette's description of book suggestions as a paratext ([1987] 1997, 25). Genette also states that these suggestions are always limited to the publisher's catalogue, for no publisher would recommend a book published by a rival company. This is repeated by the "inbred" recommendation system of YouTube, which only points to videos inside YouTube.

YouTube seems more concerned with the *centrifugal* peritext than the *centripetal* one – it seems more important to engage the user in watching the second, third and fourth video (like television), rather than have the user profoundly engaged with a single video.

This element already points out that the YouTube seems to be the ideal for transmedia cases – not only because of its wide audience, but rather because content posted in order to *relate* to other contents, not for a passive, calm absorption of it, but rather to an exploration of all content that possibly exists in the campaign. In the case of *Prometheus* campaign by Ignite studios for 20th Century Fox (Ignition Creative, 2012), the multiplicity of promotional videos of YouTube aimed at getting users to perform a centrifugal movement of consuming more material, from content designed only for web to official trailers.

The current layout of Vimeo attempts to minimize the intrusion of related content. Cast as a sliding menu that can be closed with a click, it is placed with a different background color than the video page. It is therefore possible to see the distinction between Vimeo and YouTube. While Vimeo performs a careful management of centrifugal Vectors, YouTube stimulates them.

YouTube features their recommendations much more abundantly, perhaps considering the nature of a YouTube video: it seems desirable that the viewer can never really *find* anything (there should always be more to see), and thus the viewer should keep *searching for it*. In the same manner, these centrifugal peritexts may be an effort to offer content that the users didn't know they wanted. All this relates to Google's notorious quest to optimize search experiences and "save time" (McCracken, 2013).

YouTube displays playlists of related content or featured videos, usually on top of the right sidebar, where the related videos are also located. Its algorithm rotates between playlists and featured content, both related to the video being currently watched. Featured content may come from commercial partners of YouTube or popular videos that the algorithm considers relevant to the viewer. If the algorithm is right, the user will hop from one video to another selecting either featured or related videos or activates the playlist and, ideally, never just "sits back." Similarly, paratexts on YouTube create a television-like effect for a radically different viewer: the television stimulates a perpetual state of sitting-and-watching, of non-choosing, placing paratexts in between shows (the usual "coming up," "watch next" insertions between television shows); YouTube, on the other hand, stimulates the always-choosing, always-switching user. For the transmedia reader, it is the centrifugal structure that stimulates the user to keep exploring the content, which, as in the Prometheus case, started with the *Official Prometheus Trainer* and ended a year later with *Prometheus Weyland Corp Archive* (Prometheus YouTube Channel, 2011).

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New Technologies On the Street. CINEMATIC

Lucía Amorós

University of Murcia, Spain

doi: 0000000000000000

lamoros@um.es

ABSTRACT

CINEMATC describes daily life using ICTs on the street (educational open environment) in order to promote education quality and equity through the analysis of the use and impact of ICTs. The city is seen as a classroom. CINEMATIC focuses on the creation of digital resources as learning's objects. For that reason, its aims are a) education, b) web development and c) television broadcasting. Then, as a result CINEMATIC is going to evolve as a film. The idea is to conceive and expose the process as a metaphor of Quantum Levitation. In this case, a professional relationship between mentor (superconductor) and student (magnet) is work in progress upon a holistic paradigm. Methods include collaborative work, and assessment and evaluation processes are based on the MEET model. CINEMATIC works in a flexible way. Therefore, it receives and assesses requests for support in an ongoing manner. Consequently, there is no deadline.

Keywords: assessment; cinema; educational technology; learning objects; Sciences's teaching; interpersonal communication; street education.

1. CINEMATIC¹

– Can you give me one euro? Where has he slept? Why did not you like the meal? What are they talking about? Who sleeps in that room? Is not this a beautiful place? Could you tell me where 6A bus goes? Who smoked this? Do you know if he is coming with? Could you tell me how are you? – Asking questions on the street it can happen that it is not unusual to invert both the subject and the meaning. It is common to ask 'echo questions' to show interest or emphasis in

¹ In Spanish language *Comunicación Interpersonal En Medio Abierto con Tecnologías de la Información y de la Comunicación.*

a positive sentences as well. In the line of Martínez (1998), who describes interpersonal communication for business, CINEMATIC is the first interpersonal communication I have ever had on the street, in this case as a street educator.

Nowadays professional experiences move further; in my case, focusing on educational technology sculpts the way to be a street educator. In this sense, whilst in the American countries it was researching and working upon higher education, in the European countries it made a free work as a nanny, as a lifelong learner or as a volunteer. I have specially force experienced it since 2007 becoming a user of social helps, unemployed benefits, free resources, free cultural activities even all and all a consumer of public and urban spaces.

Moreover, and for that reason, CINEMATIC is the work on the street like part of a job of educators and pedagogues. Other common terms such as educators on the street, urban pedagogy even outreach social work can be used. For further discussion about these terms see Sáez (1992), Giraldi and Boevé (2008), Iaving and Whitmore (2013).

Highlighting educational media, according with Blázquez (1984) and his classification of educational resources, CINEMATIC is working in an open environment as well as an educational resource such an open media in the line of educational technology.

In this sense as an educator, the daily life activities have taken part in different levels of split shifts, continuous days, working full-time or part-time, being dismissed, getting a new job, get to work and earning a salary.

These periods of professional growing have been offering a long experience to work on the street. In particular, in the line of new media, CINEMATIC is a crew, a script, a creation, a storyboard, learning and filming, from the street to CAMON Laboratory. In other words, people have the possibility of being part of the project (see *Figure 1*) according to his or her preferences, necessities and leisure time. CINEMATIC is a social intervention by social interactions on the street.

The role of street educator has been variously described. Giraldi and Boevé (2008) said that “Street educators have a general perspective, [...] what counts is how to listen to it, how one builds from it and formalizes it” (21). For that reason CINEMATIC is something which is always true or something that always happens as a result of someone else. Therefore CINEMATIC is just an idea, not a plan, and the script is neither a solid argument, nor a stable dialogue. But orality.

As McLuhan recognized (1964), the written word offers a sequence, a sort of act separated or specialized, where there is a little opportunity of participation. Nevertheless, orality means a reaction around of our situation, a reaction in tone and gesture on the act of talk. In addition, the word that we talk is a dramatic implication of all our senses.



Figure 1

We were enjoying an autumn Sunday in Murcia's mountains. Both ONGs Imperdible and Solidarios.org de Murcia organized a Sunday-morning with games and food. We played football, we chatted with each other. After an active morning, we ate handmade paella. We learned to play step by step.

Cars and drivers could pick up all participants and they were back to the city after the activities, including the dog which does not appear on this picture. Photo courtesy of Solidarios.org - Murcia.

The creation will be part of everybody if everybody loves that creation. A Street workers workshop in Spain (Giraldi and Boevé 2008) recognize that “the individual is the true meaning of the intervention, and it is he who must decide the pace, the theme and take the steps that are necessary to change his situation. Our help is only a support for people’s capacities to transform their reality and the world” (21). According to this idea, sources have to be used as tools to sustain volitive actions.

Finally, CINEMATIC is a construction of interactions for instance special answers according to specific questions. The human being, in himself or in herself is an all. An example of this idea was shown in the mid-1950s by the *Midcity Project*, operated in Boston (Decker et al. 2008): a project focused on community, family, and gang. The program succeeded in the line of maintain interactions. I will returned to this point later.

1.1. Context and Backgrounds

According to Giraldi and Boevé (2008) people for whom being on the street has become lifestyle is a global phenomenon. That reality is part of our contem-

porary era, and it is a characteristic of Europe too. Then if we resolve the term of social exclusion, we will understand better some aspects of CINEMATIC.

As a matter of fact, social exclusion is not just an economic poverty. Nowadays, the person considered in social exclusion is generally speaking an invisible person. In other words, the social category of analysis called social exclusion peak up other elements such as cultural, environmental, educational and/or political factors. Subsequently, people socially excluded are a hidden population whose social existence is denied and away from decision makers. Commonly, the point of view of governments and institutions are reduced to an “irregular doctrine” that included “abnormal or socially deviant” with a denied recognition as individuals with legal rights. This cannot be justified on the grounds of human rights after all.

In this sense, educational models do not help so much as well as social policy and institutional models Giraldi and Boevé (2008). Furthermore, social science has kept its distance because it is still going to talk about “homeless people” or “people in need”. In addition, research articles quote one each other but they are not supporting any kind growth with new knowledge and this doesn't help to understand the complexity of the phenomenon. Therefore, the contribution with new ideas in order to understand the street phenomenon embracing a broader vision in the speech of “street populations” will give us a new dimension. These paradigms favor the creation of an innovative thought process and a new social practice.

Moreover, CINEMATIC uses information and communication technology (ICT) on the street to observe the city as a classroom and people as pupils. Important works as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Freire (1970) have to be mentioned and cultural considerations by E.T. Hall (1959, 1977) have to be recognized. Simultaneously psychomotor intervention by Arnaiz (1987) and collaboration methods by Prendes (2000, 2003) have been used as well.

Kuskis and Logan (2012) suggest that two ways from McLuhan are considered in the field of media ecology and contemporary education. Firstly his point of view from the arrival of digital technology according to his writings from the 1950s until 1980. Secondly, his principaia related to the media ecology focused on his popular sentence ‘the medium is the message’. (McLuhan 1964)

1.2. *Interpersonal Communication*

Communication between people is part of our social characteristics as human beings on the ground of orality, dialogue and social interactions driving the description of interpersonal communication. Non-oral communication, such as interpersonal zones, was studied by Hall (1959).

Martínez (1998) offered a sum of questions, scripts, and tips to guarantee an interpersonal communication. In the field of media, Katz' research focused on the relation between mass and interpersonal communication, conversation (interpersonal networks), social psychology, sociology, and processes and effects (Birk-Urovitz and Birk-Urovitz 2012) too.

1.3. Interactivity

According to De Kerckhove (1997) interactivity is a relationship between people and environment. Simplifying, he talked about links in an artificial context, therefore the relationship between the person and the digital environment defined by the hardware that connects each other is the interactivity. For him *interactivity is touch* where networks are extensions of touch too. "Proper communications require feedback to confirm that the message has been received, even if it is just the return information on a data string – that is the truly "tactile" dimension of the relationship, and the essence of presence". (1997: XXVI prologue)

Subsequently, Palangi (2012) considered the term interactivity as a system of communication which offers answers, participation, or understanding information. This term has a link with educational technology and multimedia. Furthermore, interactivity, in human-to-human systems, involves a sense of collaboration. In other words, interlocutors will be interested in guarantee a successful outcome to the process of communication.

1.4. Social Intervention

Social intervention in the field of media and communication considers social interactions. And there are recently marks on it.

De Kerckhove (1997) showed that interactions are a capacity. Therefore, the capacity that guarantees our own autonomy can be called interaction which in CINEMATIC context is being guaranteed by a movie creation, a movie that offers playing as a sort of a comedy following the own interpretation, a full engagement of a deep contact among us.

Baudrillard, the French critic of contemporary society and culture, offered reflections on media and communication and they have been salient in various academic domains. In his Postmodern Social Theory, entertainment, information and communication technologies provide intense experiences. They evolve to banal everyday lives as well as codes and models structure social interaction (Kellner 2012). The "hyperreality" of new media land with the Ecstasy of Communication.

According to Tim Berners Lee's invention (Danesi 2012a), sites such as Facebook and You Tube reshape our human social interaction. As we could recognize, the context, that environment where people make social interactions, is both much bigger and different than years ago. But in essence, we keep a dialogue.

Danesi (2012b) recognized that Bakhtin encompasses social interaction with dialogue. It allows people to give voice to their consciousness. Then he recognizes three main forms of self-awareness and identity – 'I-for-myself' (unreliable source of identity), 'I-for-the-Other' (it develops a true sense who we are because of views of others), and 'Other-for-me' (the way in which others made their own self-identity). Therefore, identity is something that is never finished and the reason to understand people's changes. We never really fully reveal ourselves as we truly are.

2. HOW CINEMATIC WORKS

According to Decker et al. (2008) and suggestions from Iaving and Whitmore (2013), CINEMATIC serves two major functions. Whereas it is an essay to link at risk youth and adults to services across to prosocial activities looking for their prosocial behaviours. CINEMATIC offers activities which youth and adults are learning to play, with his or her own level of engagement. CINEMATIC tries to insure these youths and adults to gain a natural and free communication and disrupt violence behaviours, new thinking outside of drugs and/or new professional possibilities.

Subsequently, the star shows her work. She picks up any videos from You Tube for instance http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oijeUACFf0 where moomy gets out after her divorced (see *Figure 2*).



Figure 2

We were enjoying an autumn day in CAMON-Murcia's Laboratoty. Both star and filmmaker wish a modern hairstyle in the sequence 32. Therefore, it is the moment of a physical touch to guarantee trust, psychomotricity. Photo courtesy of José Antonio Quesada Sáez.

Spontaneously, advanced technologies are part of this natural and free communication. We demand them and we delight with them, for instance, mobile phone, tablet, video camera, computer as well as free space web as CAMON (see Figure 3) or Dropbox available in <https://www.dropbox.com>, Vimeo even You Tube or Google anyway.

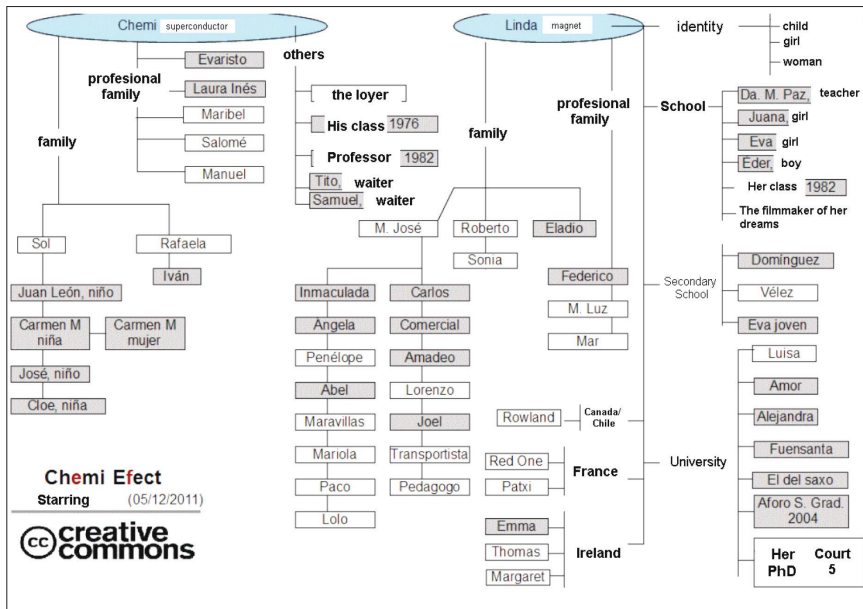


Figure 3

We were "The crew of actors must to be done before shooting". That is necessary to look for people and describe them their role. Figure hadded courtesy of CAMON-Murcia Laboratory. URL: <http://www.tucamon.es/conte ntenido/actores-y-actrices>.

According to sequences, the script offers schemes about the movie's rhythm (see Figure 4) and how every idea is developed (see Figure 5). Movie Montage's aim is to inform to the audience rather than to create feelings to them. In other words, montage gives knowledge to the audience.

'Storyboard 1' (see Figure 6) is not a common work in this film, neither it is Jaws (1975) by Steven Spielberg. However, storyboard draws actions, scenes, and sequences. Therefore, usually it helps to create the scenario and to visualize technical script as well. In this case, the storyboard used free software that was included in the mobile phone. CINEMATIC has 6 storyboards in magnet's part of the script and 0 storyboard in the superconductor's part of the script.

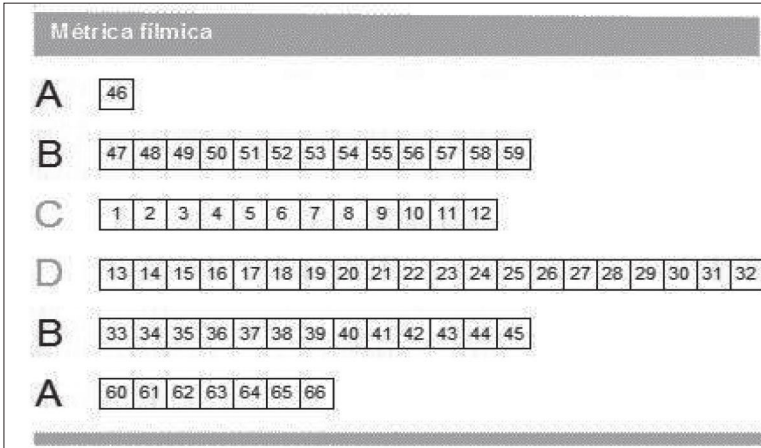


Figure 4

'Métrica filmica' shows the rhythm of the movie. It is just a shy representation by sequences that offers a quickly view. Chemi Effect has 66 sequences.



Figure 5

'MONTAJE. Orden de secuencias' as Movie Montage focuses on the film as a container. However, it keeps content in the line of the concept of Quantum levitation such as 'Electromagnetism' with 7 sequences, 'Learning teaching' with 26 sequences, '1975' as the background with 12 sequences and 'Little orange' called Naranjito with 20 sequences.

el efecto chemi | storyboard 1



Figure 6 – ‘Storyboard 1’ from sequence 1.

3. AIMS, METHODS AND ASSESSMENT

CINEMATIC describes daily life using ICTs on the street. ICTs will be analyzed as a socially accepted element upon the point of view of social interactions in order to promote quality education and equity through the analysis of the use and impact of ICTs on the street (educational open environment). The city is seen as a class.

CINEMATIC focuses on the creation of digital resources as learning’s objects. For that reason, we are talking about a) education, b) web development and c) television broadcasting.

CINEMATIC counts on support from social services, businesses, and citizens (crowdfunding) from which we use participant observation as an action research methodology in the line of cultural studies. For instance, active methods of teaching are necessary here, as Engstrøm et al (2007) described years ago. In this case CINEMATIC uses non-formal interviews, accompaniment, research diary, photography, and video as well. Giraldi and Boevé noted “there is no universal theoretical framework on the methodology of street work” (2008, 10).

The work process involves the design, development, and evaluation of educational digital content as I said before. Then, as a result CINEMATIC

will evolve as a film. It is shooted in studio. The idea is to conceive this process according to the concept of Quantum Levitation as a metaphor. In this case, a professional relationship between mentor (superconductor) and student (magnet) is a work in progress upon an holistic paradigm.

Paralelly, assessment and evaluation process apply the MEET model: a mixed method helpful for a traditional teaching-learning context. Concerning this method, the MEET model has already assessed and evaluated the activities of teaching Science in the context of Secondary School (Zamarro and Amorós 2011), in University (Amorós 2013) and in entertainment (Amorós and Díaz 2011).

CINEMATIC works in a flexible way. Therefore, it receives and assesses requests for support in an ongoing manner. Consequently, there is no deadline.

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Alice's Anima: The Obligation of a Transmedia Reading

Fernanda Bonacho

Escola Superior de Comunicação Social, Portugal

doi: 00000000000000

fbonacho@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper suggests an analysis of “Inanimate Alice” by Kate Pullinger as an example of a transmedia narrative that triggers a new reading experience whilst proposing a literary alterity between reading and performance. Narrative experiences that elect the visual plasticity, interchanging games and tactility as drivers of the creative process are not new. Yet, narrative experiences, which have been created in the gap between reality and fiction, have found on the digital realm the ideal environment to multiple hybrid experiences. A critical analysis of this digital fiction tries to illustrate how literary art finds its space and time in a metamorphosed continuum and crafts experience with a transmedia reading. All the multimedia hybrids with which this digital literary work engages, challenge readers to interpret different signals and poetic structures that also embed game rhetoric. Yet, among Alice’s playful world and cognitive dissonance, meaning is only found and reading happens when time, space and attention are available to configure the story and interpret significance. Transmedia literacies give life to this experience of online reading when they focus and draw attention not to a simple new behaviour or a single new practice, but to different objective and subjective value forms.

Keywords: transmedia reading; literary alterity; transmedia narrative; multimedia; digital fiction; narrative experience; *Intimate Alic*.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Inanimate Alice”¹ (IA) by Kate Pullinger, Chris Joseph and Ian Harper is an example of a transmedia narrative that triggers a new reading experience whilst proposing a literary alterity between reading and performance. Narra-

¹ <http://www.inanimatealice.com/>.

tive experiences, such as this one, which elect the visual plasticity, interchanging games and tactility as drivers of the creative process are not new. Yet, narrative experiences, which have been created in the gap between reality and fiction, have found on the digital realm the perfect environment to multiple hybrid experiences. Henry Jenkins describes this type of transmedia storytelling as a process where “integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience.” Furthermore, he adds that “ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story” (Jenkins 2011). In fact, Inanimate Alice is a transmedia project because personifies each one of these characteristics being designed over time and on multiple platforms (see *Figure 1*). Bearing in mind Walter Benjamin’s concept of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* this paper tries to demonstrate how literary art finds its space and time in a metamorphosed continuum only activated by an engaged reader, who must be able to transform a *moment of reading* into an *experience of reading* in Benjamin’s terms:

Historically, the various modes of communication have competed with one another. The replacement of the older narration by information, of information by sensation, reflects the increasing atrophy of experience. [...] This is the nature of something lived through (Erlebnis) to which the reader has [to give] the weight of an experience (Erfahrung). (Benjamin 1991, 190)

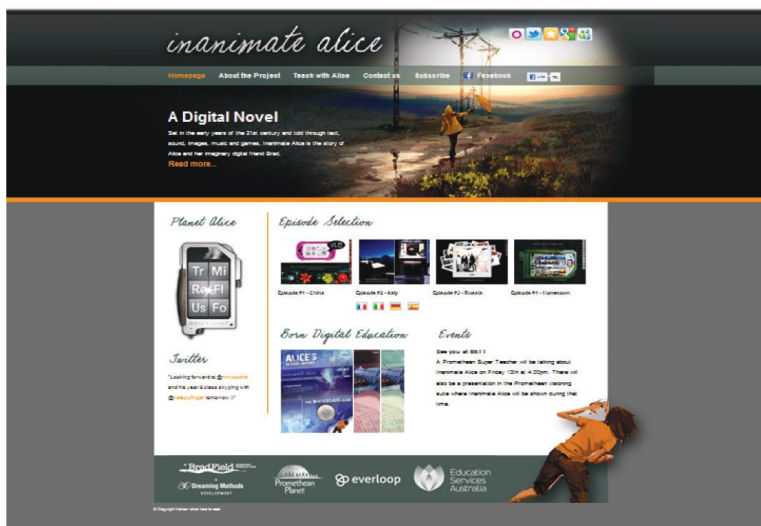


Figure 1 – Inanimate Alice (Homepage).

All the multimedia hybrids, which Alice presents, challenge readers to interpret different signals and poetic structures whilst facing a certain “atrophy of experience”. However among a cognitive dissonance, meaning can be found if a set of transmedia literacies, or transliteracies, are available: (narrative literacy, multi-modal literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, information literacy or game literacy). All literacies are constructive within this experience of online reading because as a transliterate practice they are able to focus and draw attention not to a simple new behaviour or a single new practice, but to different circumstances that invite different objective and subjective value forms.

Running with Flash Player, the 4 available episodes (set in China, Italy, Russia and England) connect technologies, languages, cultures and different generations. After Alice’s journey starts, there are always new storylines appearing elsewhere providing more details and insights, stirring the plot through surprising developments. Meanwhile, readers are also encouraged to collaborate and develop episodes of their own, either filling in the gaps or developing new strands. IA’s narrative is central to a story world whose multi-modal texts include sound, image, written text, video and gaming elements, and without experiencing all those components, we miss the whole story.

2. 2. PLAYING ALICE

Inanimate Alice’s environment of simulation reminds any computer game. Originally written for a computer and to be read in a computer, this is a digitally born piece with many game elements aligned with sound and music effects. They simulate a parallel world where games and enigmas are part of the narrative and engage directly in its progress. Yet, there is a significant difference between this digital fiction and those electronic games: whereas in games we need to previously know the rules to be able to play, in this electronic piece, we must play first to be able to continue reading and understand the story. (*Figure 2*)

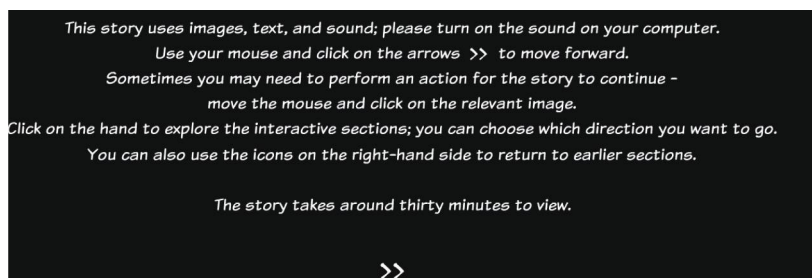


Figure 2 – Inanimate Alice (Episode 4: Hometown).

Katheryne Hayles said that “with games the user interprets in order to configure, whereas in works whose primary interest is narrative, the user configures in order to interpret” (Hayles 2008, 8). Actually, the game elements are added by Alice throughout the story and, if on the one hand, they coexist and contribute for the main character’s development; on the other, they also dispute the reader’s attention. To be able to read IA we need to fully grasp “a deep and hyper attention” that this game literacy of logical, strategic thinking and problem solving requires (Hayles 2008). There is the possibility to read with or without playing the game because, according to the authors, it was very clear that the public is always divided between those who enjoy playing as they read and those who do not (Pullinger 2011). However, the truth is that there are moments when readers have necessarily to play and participate in a “playful reading” because otherwise the narrative will not progress and Alice will not continue her adventure.

Being a putative game designer who creates and directs her electronic device, Alice personifies the engaged reader giving life and controlling (more intensively in each episode) the actions of characters and working as the animator and interpreter of Alice’s own adventures. The need for navigation, evaluation and creation of meaning using digital technologies is part of a digital literacy that this transmedia piece uninterruptedly claims.

We never see or listen to Alice nor anyone, except through their words displayed on the screen, and except for Brad’s voice – Alice’s virtual and imaginary best friend. The strong presence of electronic games in Alice’s life allows her to create Brad (her only friend until she turns 14) who lives inside her *baxi* – an electronic device which takes photographs, makes videos, plays music, makes phone calls, accesses the web, etc. In this multimedia electronic device have converged different applications that allow Alice to describe her adventures, to draw, to paint, to make drafts and to be informed. (Figure 3)



Figure 3 – Inanimate Alice, Episode 1: China (Allumer Console).

Yet, more interesting than all those digital activities, it is the strong influence that this *baxi* has over Alice and the symbolic meaning it assembles as an inherent part of her memory and identity. The *baxi* is a powerful driver when repeatedly triggers Alice's storytelling – the constant invitation to interact with the game prompts the narrative and obliges the reader to deal with a wide range of data to follow the gist, solve problems and make decisions. It is, actually, inside this *baxi* that Alice finds her favorite digital creation – Brad, who the one who supports her in the most difficult situations throughout the story. In some particular moments, the game designer's function is even substituted and it is the virtual Brad who controls Alice: "I heard Brad's voice in my head saying 'Go that way.' And so I say to my Mum, 'Go that way', and she does." (Inanimate Alice, Episode 1: China (Brad)). This virtual amplification escorts this girl's growth: like a puppet on the strings, Alice is influenced by her peers, directed by Brad and even by the reader.

3. ANIMA

The significance of Inanimate Alice is built across multiple media and modes of communication and there is a constant invitation to search meaning across different elements of the story. This multimodal literacy is necessary, for example in episode 3, when we confirm the importance of how sound, image and written text are defined and filtered through Alice's perspective (see *Figure 4*).

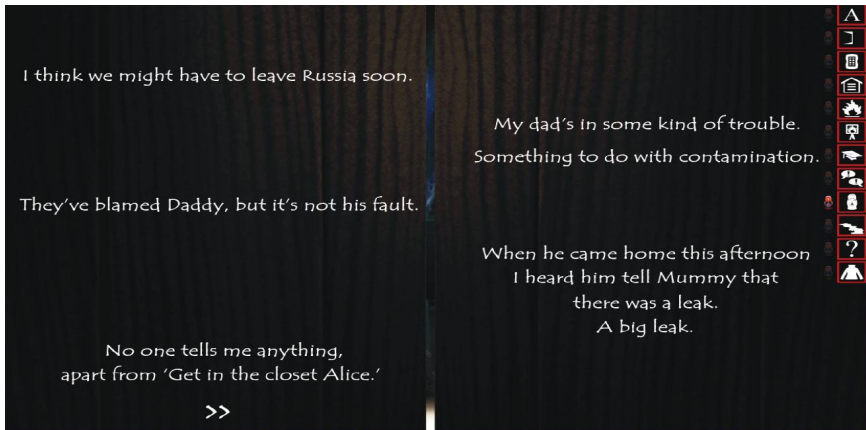


Figure 4 – Inanimate Alice, Episode 3: Russia (Trouble).

Alice is hidden inside a closet, listening to her father arguing with the Russians, and the words start showing on the screen, coming from a semi opened door as if they are hitting Alice. The effects of these strategies, that include different modal elements, support the unraveling the story in a rather cinematic style. The same happens when we see the words coming in and out of the scene to underline what is happening in episode 4. In the sequence “What happened”, there is a moment when Alice’s friends run away and leave her alone in danger hanging from some stairs for a while, until they come back again. The words leave the front scene to go behind a wall but not completely outside the photograph. Whilst demonstrating the direction they take, the movements of the words underline the importance of the open and empty space left on the photograph. Alice recognizes she is not alone and that her ANIMA comes actually from within. Her friends, who may not be always (publicly) present in the photo, are real and will arrive to support her in the last moment.

IA’s digital fiction has many moments like this where meaning is built from an engaged use of graphic, linguistic and behavioral texts. Sometimes, the use of a certain movement and format underlines the verbal context, but sometimes it goes further, as in the given examples. The value of transmedia literacies in this fiction is enormous yet always dependent on how we grasp such digital experience whilst reading these media presences or absences.

Now, will this graphic display have similarities with some *mise-en-page* techniques of traditional narratives? Actually, Inanimate Alice also presents a wide range of traditional poetic strategies to structure the story. Yet, the need for a transmedia literacy that enables the articulation of different levels of language – between verbal (written words) and non-verbal (image, video, sound, games) – is necessary to produce multimodal meaning-making in a multimedia experience.

Alice’s narrative complexity grows as the main character gets older and substitutes the attention she dedicates to her parents Ming and John (first episode being eight years old) to concentrate on school, her friends and on the games she creates with her *baxi*. The interactivity of the story becomes more complex in each episode and the quantity of verbal text diminishes, whilst Alice learns to produce more dynamic and interesting games. The level of interaction with the reader increases, the electronic device turns more complex and even the sound we hear is not a mere soundtrack but a proactive sound that complements and amplifies conflicts and the episode’s problem solving. Meanwhile, Alice improves her writing, art and design skills as the words selected, the type of letter, music and all the surroundings become gradually more sophisticated and adapted to her age (from being eight to being fourteen). In episode 4 (England), for example, the atmosphere is very tense, all images are rather dark and the music tunes a frenetic and yawning sound. Here, the feeling of

danger is lived in a different way: being fourteen, it is Alice's own actions that take her to problematic situations, which then she manages to solve without her parents' help.

Furthermore, it is also important to note the frequent interruption of the narrative sequence that feeds the complexity of this fictional work. In episode 4, but also in episode 2 and 3, there are several references to previous episodes and details of Alice's past among multiple modes of text that integrate and clarify details, but in a mixed and deeply diversified way with voices, maps, photographs, etc. The random interpellation of these elements is determining not only to characterize the main character but also to add up narrative diversity to the piece. Inanimate Alice's core world demands a critical narrative literacy able to "destructure" and "restructure" the text in order to develop a critical understanding of the plot.

4. READING ALTERITY

The final aspect that makes this literary piece an example of a transmedia experience is its self-referentiality in "iStories". (Figure 5)



Figure 5 – Inanimate Alice, Episode 4: Hometown (Hometown).

iStories is an electronic application that helps Alice's friends (fictional characters and us readers) to produce stories by choosing photographs and adding verbal text and sound to the plot. Since it has been created in 2005, Inanimate Alice has been explored as a digital work in a wide range of areas², namely as a pedagogical instrument with the project *Teach with Alice*. (Figure 6)

² Inanimate Alice written by Kate Pullinger, with the digital art of Chris Joseph and the production of Ian Harper has been exhibited as a digital piece in different countries, prize awarded in some movies festival and also integrated in the I and II Electronic Literature Collection: European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, <http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu> [English, Spanish, French, Italian and German versions of Inanimate Alice, episodes 1-3]; IBM Prize for New Media, 20th Stuttgarter Filmwinter, Estu-



Figure 6 – Teach with Alice Badge³.

This project has taken iStories seriously enough to become a successful free online application for many teenagers from all over the world, who have created brand new IA adventures. As part of this transmedia educational project, students are invited to read but also to collaborate in a multimedia production, developing creative writing pieces in their classrooms and imagining new adventures for Alice and Brad, by adding photographs, sound, games, drawings, etc. The New Media professor and researcher Jessica Laccetti, from Alberta University, underlines the importance of these projects for the young generation. She reminds that most students are already transliterate and familiar to multimodal environments of the online world, therefore, new media narratives like Inanimate Alice should be considered “prime pedagogical material” (Laccetti 2011).

In some way, iStories and the whole Inanimate Alice experiences use the same languages of the transmedia universe, which can only make sense if there is a competent reader to collaborate, select and articulate the available digital and non digital components in a meaningful way.

I show my friends stuff I've made on my player – stories and music mostly.
They kept asking me to make stories for them.
So I came up with a tool to help them make their own.
It's called iStories.
You choose a few of your favourite photos
You add some text:
[...]
And some music:

garda, Alemanha [Inanimate Alice, Episode 1: China]; 2008 CULTURAS Intercultural Dialogue Awards, Madrid, Espanha [Alicia Inanimada, Episodio 1: China]; http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/pullinger_babel_inanimate_alice_episode_1_china.html; http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/pullinger_inanimatealice4.html; Best Web Site for Teaching and Learning 2012 / AASL (American Association of School Libraries) <http://www.inanimatealice.edu.au/teach.html>.

³ <http://www.inanimatealice.com/share.html>.

And – boom! – you have a story!

Inanimate Alice. Episode 4: Hometown (My Project).

Inanimate Alice's transmedia novel may have this boom effect in the reader, with a narrative universe that may excite and overwhelm teenagers due to its semantic amplitude. Yet, reading will always be incomplete if it does not overcome superficial and immediate transmedia clamor. Only if we are able to simultaneously deal with those different literacies, may the reading experience transform, decipher and interpret the different messages and, preferably, find and create new ones.

Alice requires the constant presence and collaboration of the reader to a different reading experiment: not only to read, watch and play but to experiment an inclusive phenomenological practice. As a piece of electronic literature, this transmedia fiction works as an allegory to a wide range of complexities and ambiguities of today's digital world that end up being read and animated through the path of transmedia, or in the end, our other self.

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PART TWO
Transmedia Grassroots

Cinema as a Cultural Interface (1997)

Lev Manovich

We are glad to republish Lev Manovich's "Cinema as a Cultural Interface" (1997), which perfectly underlines some of the most important passages that have constituted the definition of a "Transmedia Literacy" moving from the recognition of cinema as a cultural interface. Here the original excerpt dated 1997 by Lev Manovich:

The following is an attempt at both a record and a theory - of the present. Just as film historians traced the development of film language during cinema's first decades, I want to describe and understand the logic driving the development of the language of computer media. It is tempting to extend this parallel a little further and to speculate whether today this new language is already getting closer to acquiring its final and stable form, just as film language acquired its "classical" form during the 1910's. Or are the 1990's more like the 1890's, because future computer media language will be entirely different than the one used today? In either case, by trying to understand which cultural forces are shaping the development of this language, we may be in a better position both to predict its future course as well as to offer different alternatives. For just as avant-garde filmmakers throughout cinema's existence offered alternatives to its particular narrative audio-visual regime, the task of an avant-garde computer artist today is to offer alternatives to the existing language of computer media. This can be better accomplished if we have a theory of how "mainstream" language is currently structured.

Does it make sense to theorize the present when it seems to be changing so fast? It is a gamble. If subsequent developments prove the theoretical projections of this text to be correct, I win. But, if the language of computer media develops in a different direction than the one suggested by the present analysis, this does not mean that I automatically lose. Rather, the analysis presented here will become a record of possibilities which were heretofore not realized, of the horizon which was visible to us today but later became unimaginable.

We no longer think of the history of cinema as a linear march towards only one possible language, or as a progression towards more and more accurate verisimilitude. Rather, we have come to see its history as a succession of distinct and equally expressive languages, each with its own aesthetic variables, each new language closing

off some of the possibilities of the previous one – a cultural logic not dissimilar to Kuhn’s analysis of scientific paradigms.

Similarly, every stage in the history of computer media offers its own aesthetic opportunities, as well as its own imagination of the future – in short, its own “research paradigm.” This paradigm is modified or even abandoned at the next stage. In this paper I want to record the “research paradigm” of new media during its first decade before it slips into invisibility.



Dr. Lev Manovich is the author and editor of eight books including *Data Drift* (RIXC, 2015), *Software Takes Command*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), *Soft Cinema: Navigating the Database* (The MIT Press, 2005), and *The Language of New Media* (The MIT Press, 2001) which was described as “the most suggestive and broad ranging media history since Marshall McLuhan.” Manovich is a Professor of Computer Science at The Graduate Center, CUNY, and a Director of the Software Studies Initiative that works on the analysis and visualization of big cultural data. In 2013 he appeared on the list of “25 People Shaping the Future of Design”. In 2014 he was included in the list of “50 Most Interesting People Building the Future”. His main research interests are cultural analytics, social computing, big data and society, data visualization, digital humanities, history and theory of media, software studies.

Original article



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CINEMA AS A CULTURAL INTERFACE

Lev Manovich

The Most Popular Moving Image Sequence of All Times

Don't you wish that somebody, in 1895, 1897 or at least in 1903, realized the fundamental significance of cinema's emergence and produced a comprehensive record of new medium's emergence?^[1] Interviews with the audiences; a systematic account of the narrative strategies, scenography and camera positions as they developed year by year; an analysis of the connections between the emerging language of cinema and different forms of popular entertainment which coexisted with it, would have been invaluable. But, of course, these records do not exist. Instead, we are left with newspaper reports, diaries of cinema's inventors, programs of film showings and other bits and pieces -- a set of random and unevenly distributed historical samples.

Today we are living in the midst of an emerging new medium - the metamedium of the digital computer. All information becomes encoded in one code; all cultural objects become computer programs, something which is not only seen, heard or read, but first of all stored and transmitted, compiled and executed. In contrast to a hundred years ago, when cinema was coming into being, we are fully aware of the significance of this new media revolution. And yet I am afraid that future theorists and historians of computer media will be left with not much more than the equivalents of newspaper reviews and random bits of evidence similar to cinema's first decades. They will find that the analytical texts from our era are fully aware of the significance of computer's takeover of culture yet, by and large, they mostly contain speculations about the future rather than a record and a theory of the present. Future researchers will wonder why the theoreticians, who already had plenty of experience analyzing older cultural forms, did not try to describe computer media's semiotic codes, modes of address, and audience reception patterns. If, for instance, they painstakingly reconstructed how cinema emerged out of preceding cultural forms (panorama, optical toys, peep shows), why didn't they attempt to construct a similar genealogy for the language of computer media at the moment

when it was just coming into being, while the elements of previous cultural forms going into its making are still clearly visible, still recognizable before melting into a new unity. Where were the theoreticians at the moment when the icons and the buttons of multimedia interfaces were like a wet paint on a just completed painting, before they became a universal convention and thus slipped into invisibility? Or, at the moment when the designers of Myst were debugging their code, converting graphics to 8-bit and massaging QuickTime clips? Or, at the historical moment when a young 20-something programmer at Netscape took the chewing gum out of his mouth, sipped warm Coke out of the can -- he was at a computer for 16 hours straight, trying to meet a marketing deadline -- and, finally satisfied with its small file size, saved a short animation of stars moving across the night sky, the animation which was to appear in the upper right corner of Netscape Navigator, thus becoming the most widely seen moving image sequence ever -- until the next release.

The following is an attempt at both a record and a theory -- of the present. Just as film historians traced the development of film language during cinema's first decades, I want to describe and understand the logic driving the development of the language of computer media. It is tempting to extend this parallel a little further and to speculate whether today this new language is already getting closer to acquiring its final and stable form, just as film language acquired its "classical" form during the 1910's. Or are the 1990's more like the 1890's, because future computer media language will be entirely different than the one used today?^[2] In either case, by trying to understand which cultural forces are shaping the development of this language, we may be in a better position both to predict its future course as well as to offer different alternatives. For just as avant-garde filmmakers throughout cinema's existence offered alternatives to its particular narrative audio-visual regime, the task of an avant-garde computer artist today is to offer alternatives to the existing language of computer media. This can be better accomplished if we have a theory of how "mainstream" language is currently structured.

Does it make sense to theorize the present when it seems to be changing so fast? It is a gamble. If subsequent developments prove the theoretical projections of this text to be

correct, I win. But, if the language of computer media develops in a different direction than the one suggested by the present analysis, this does not mean that I automatically lose. Rather, the analysis presented here will become a record of possibilities which were heretofore not realized, of the horizon which was visible to us today but later became unimaginable.

We no longer think of the history of cinema as a linear march towards only one possible language, or as a progression towards more and more accurate verisimilitude. Rather, we have come to see its history as a succession of distinct and equally expressive languages, each with its own aesthetic variables, each new language closing off some of the possibilities of the previous one -- a cultural logic not dissimilar to Kuhn's analysis of scientific paradigms.^[3] Similarly, every stage in the history of computer media offers its own aesthetic opportunities, as well as its own imagination of the future -- in short, its own "research paradigm." This paradigm is modified or even abandoned at the next stage. In this paper I want to record the "research paradigm" of new media during its first decade before it slips into invisibility.

Cultural Interfaces

During the 1990s, the cultural role of a digital computer has changed from a tool to a medium. In the beginning of the decade, a computer was still largely thought of as a simulation of a typewriter, a paintbrush or a drafting ruler -- in other words, as a tool used to produce cultural content which, once created, will be stored and distributed in its appropriate media: printed page, film, photographic print, electronic recording. By the end of the decade, the computer's public image has begun to shift to one of a universal machine, used not only to author, but also to store, distribute and access all media. All culture, past and present, is beginning to be filtered through a computer, with its particular human-computer interface.

The term human-computer interface (HCI) describes the ways in which the user interacts with a computer. HCI includes physical input and output devices such as a monitor, a keyboard, and a mouse. It also consists of metaphors used to conceptualize the organization of computer data. For instance, the Macintosh interface introduced by

Apple in 1984 uses the metaphor of files and folders arranged on a desktop. Finally, HCI also includes ways of manipulating this data, i.e. a grammar of meaningful actions which the user can perform on it. An example of this grammar are the commands used in a command-line interface such as DOS and UNIX: copy file, delete file, set date, open port, list directory, and so on.

As the role of a computer is shifting from being a tool to a universal media machine, we are increasingly "interfacing" to predominantly cultural data: texts, photographs, films, music, virtual environments. In short, we are no longer interfacing to a computer but to culture encoded in digital form. I would like to introduce the term "cultural interfaces" to describe evolving interfaces used by the designers of Web sites, CD-ROM and DVD-ROM titles, multimedia encyclopedias, online museums, computer games and other digital cultural objects.

If you need to remind yourself what a typical cultural interface looked like in 1997, go back in time and click to a random Web page. You are likely to see something which graphically resembles a magazine layout from the same decade. The page is dominated by text: headlines, hyperlinks, blocks of copy. Within this text are few media elements: graphics, photographs, perhaps a QuickTime movie and a VRML scene. The page also includes radio buttons and a pull-down menu which allows you to choose an item from the list. Finally there is a search engine: type a word or a phrase, hit the search button and the computer will scan through a file or a database trying to match your entry.

For another example of a prototypical cultural interface of the 1990s, you may load (assuming it would still run on your computer) the most well-known CD-ROM of the 1990s - Myst (Broderbund, 1993). Its opening clearly recalls a movie: credits slowly scroll across the screen, accompanied by a movie-like soundtrack to set the mood. Next, the computer screen shows a book open in the middle, waiting for your mouse click. Next, an element of a familiar Macintosh interface makes an appearance, reminding you that along with being a new movie/book hybrid, Myst is also a computer application: you can adjust sound volume and graphics quality by selecting from a usual Macintosh-style

menu in the upper top part of the screen. Finally, you are taken inside the game, where the interplay between the printed word and cinema continue. A virtual camera frames images of an island which dissolve between each other. At the same time, you keep encountering books and letters, which take over the screen, providing with you with clues on how to progress in the game.

Given that computer media is simply a set of characters and numbers stored in a computer, there are numerous ways in which it could be presented to a user. Yet, as it always happens with cultural languages, only a few of these possibilities actually appear viable in a given historical moment. Just as early fifteenth century Italian painters could only conceive of painting in a very particular way - quite different from, say, sixteenth century Dutch painters - today's digital designers and artists use a small set of action grammars and metaphors out of a much larger set of all possibilities.

Why do cultural interfaces - web pages, CD-ROM titles, computer games - look the way they do? Why do designers organize computer data in certain ways and not in others? Why do they employ some interface metaphors and not others?

My theory is that there are three key cultural forms which are shaping cultural interfaces in the 1990s. What are these forms? The answer to this puzzle can be found in the opening sequence of Myst which activates them before our eyes, one by one. The first form is cinema. The second form is the printed word. The third form is a general-purpose human-computer interface (HCI).

At the time of this writing (1997), it appears that out of the three, the influence of cinema is becoming more and more important. So, despite frequent pronouncements that cinema is dead, it is actually on its own way to becoming a general purpose cultural interface, a set of techniques and tools which can be used to interact with any cultural data. Accordingly, I will devote the largest section of this article to the discussion of the ways in which cinematic techniques structure cultural interfaces.

As it should become clear from the following, I use words "cinema" and "printed word" as shortcuts. They stand not for particular objects, such as a film or a novel, but rather

for larger cultural traditions (we can also use such words as cultural forms, mechanisms, languages or media). "Cinema" thus includes mobile camera, representation of space, editing techniques, narrative conventions, activity of a spectator -- in short, different elements of cinematic perception, language and reception. Their presence is not limited to the twentieth-century institution of fiction films, they can be already found in panoramas, magic lantern slides, theater and other nineteenth-century cultural forms; similarly, since the middle of the twentieth century, they are present not only in films but also in television and video programs. In the case of the "printed word" I am also referring to a set of conventions which have developed over many centuries (some even before the invention of print) and which today are shared by numerous forms of printed matter, from magazines to instruction manuals: a rectangular page containing one or more columns of text; illustrations or other graphics framed by the text; pages which follow each sequentially; a table of contents and index.

Modern human-computer interface has a much shorter history than the printed word or cinema -- but it is still a history. Its principles such as direct manipulation of objects on the screen, overlapping windows, iconic representation, and dynamic menus were gradually developed over a few decades, from the early 1950s to the early 1980s, when they finally appeared in commercial systems such as Xerox Star (1981), the Apple Lisa (1982), and most importantly the Apple Macintosh (1984).^[4] Since then, they have become an accepted convention for operating a computer, and a cultural language in their own right.

Cinema, the printed word and human-computer interface: each of these traditions has developed its own unique ways of how information is organized, how it is presented to the user, how space and time are correlated with each other, how human experience is being structured in the process of accessing information. Pages of text and a table of contents; 3-D spaces framed by a rectangular frame which can be navigated using a mobile point of view; hierarchical menus, variables, parameters, copy/paste and search/replace operations -- these and other elements of these three traditions are shaping cultural interfaces today. Cinema, the printed word and HCI: they are the three

main reservoirs of metaphors and strategies for organizing information which feed cultural interfaces.

Bringing cinema, the printed word and HCI interface together and treating them as occupying the same conceptual plane has an additional advantage -- a theoretical bonus. It is only natural to think of them as belonging to two different kind of cultural species, so to speak. If HCI is a general purpose tool which can be used to manipulate any kind of data, both the printed word and cinema are less general: they offer ways to organize particular types of data: text in the case of print, audio-visual narrative taking place in a 3-D space in the case of cinema. HCI is a system of controls to operate a machine; the printed word and cinema are cultural traditions, distinct ways to record human memory and human experience, mechanisms for cultural and social exchange of information. Bringing HCI, the printed word and cinema together allows us to see that the three have more in common than we may anticipate at first. On the one hand, being a part of our culture now for half a century, HCI already represents a powerful cultural tradition, a cultural language offering its own ways to represent human memory and human experience. This language speaks in the form of discrete objects organized in hierarchies (hierarchical file system), or as catalogs (databases), or as objects linked together through hyperlinks (hypermedia). On the other hand, we begin to see that the printed word and cinema also can be thought of as interfaces, even though historically they have been tied to particular kinds of data. Each has its own grammar of actions, each comes with its own metaphors, each offers a particular physical interface. A book or a magazine is a solid object consisting from separate pages; the actions include going from page to page linearly, marking individual pages and using table of contents. In the case of cinema, its physical interface is a particular architectural arrangement of a movie theater; its metaphor is a window opening up into a virtual 3-D space.

Today, as media is being "liberated" from its traditional physical storage media - paper, film, stone, glass, magnetic tape - the elements of printed word interface and cinema interface, which previously were hardwired to the content, become "liberated" as well. A digital designer can freely mix pages and virtual cameras, table of contents and screens, bookmarks and points of view. No longer embedded within particular texts and films,

these organizational strategies are now free floating in our culture, available for use in new contexts. In this respect, printed word and cinema have indeed become interfaces - rich sets of metaphors, ways of navigating through content, ways of accessing and storing data. For a user, both conceptually and psychologically, their elements exist on the same plane as radio buttons, pull-down menus, command line calls and other elements of standard human-computer interface.

Let us now discuss some of the elements of these three cultural traditions -- cinema, the printed word and HCI -- to see how they are shaping the language of cultural interfaces.

I. Printed Word

In the 1980's, as PC's and word processing software became commonplace, text became the first cultural media to be subjected to digitization in a massive way. But already in the 1960's, two and a half decades before the concept of digital media was born, researchers were thinking about having the sum total of human written production -- books, encyclopedias, technical articles, works of fiction and so on -- available online (Ted Nelson's Xanadu project^[5]).

Text is unique among other media types. It plays a privileged role in computer culture. On the one hand, it is one media type among others. But, on the other hand, it is a meta-language of digital media, a code in which all other media are represented: coordinates of 3-D objects, pixel values of digital images, the formatting of a page in HTML. It is also the primary means of communication between a computer and a user: one types single line commands or runs computer programs written in a subset of English; the other responds by displaying error codes or text messages.^[6]

If a computer uses text as its meta-language, cultural interfaces in their turn inherit the principles of text organization developed by human civilization throughout its existence. One of these is a page: a rectangular surface containing a limited amount of information, designed to be accessed in some order, and having a particular relationship to other pages. In its modern form, the page is born in the first centuries of the Christian era

when the clay tablets and papyrus rolls are replaced by a codex - the collection of written pages stitched together on one side.

Cultural interfaces rely on our familiarity with the "page interface" while also trying to stretch its definition to include new concepts made possible by a computer. In 1984, Apple introduced a graphical user interface which presented information in overlapping windows stacked behind one another -- essentially, a set of book pages. The user was given the ability to go back and forth between these pages, as well as to scroll through individual pages. In this way, a traditional page was redefined as a virtual page, a surface which can be much larger than the limited surface of a computer screen. In 1987, Apple shipped popular Hypercard program which extended the page concept in new ways. Now the users were able to include multimedia elements within the pages, as well as to establish links between pages regardless of their ordering. A few years later, designers of HTML stretched the concept of a page even more by enabling the creation of distributed documents, where different parts of a document are located on different computers connected through the network. With this development, a long process of gradual "virtualization" of the page reached a new stage. Messages written on clay tablets, which were almost indestructible, were replaced by ink on paper. Ink, in its turn, was replaced by bits of computer memory, making characters on an electronic screen. Finally, with HTML, which allows parts of a single page to be located on different computers, the page became even more fluid and unstable.

The conceptual development of the page in digital media can also be read in a different way - not as further development of a codex form, but as a return to earlier forms such as the papyrus roll of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Scrolling through the contents of a computer window or a World Wide Web page has more in common with unrolling than turning the pages of a modern book. In the case of the Web of the 1990s, the similarity with a roll is even stronger because the information is not available all at once, but arrives sequentially, top to bottom, as though the roll is being unrolled.

A good example of how cultural interfaces stretch the definition of a page while mixing together its different historical forms is the Web page designed in 1997 by the British

design collective antirom for HotWired RGB Gallery.[7] The designers have created a large surface containing rectangular blocks of texts in different font sizes, arranged without any apparent order. The user is invited to skip from one block to another moving in any direction. Here, the different directions of reading used in different cultures are combined together in a single page.

By the mid 1990's, Web pages included a variety of media types -- but they are still essentially pages. Different media elements -- graphics, photographs, digital video, sound and 3-D worlds -- were embedded within rectangular surfaces containing text. VRML evangelists wanted to overturn this hierarchy by imaging the future in which the World Wide Web is rendered as a giant 3-D space, with all the other media types, including text, existing within it.[8] Given that the history of a page stretches for thousands of years, I think it is unlikely that it would disappear so quickly.

While the 1990's cultural interfaces have retained the modern page format, they also have come to rely on a new way of organizing and accessing texts which has little precedent within book tradition -- hyperlinking. We may be tempted to trace hyperlinking to earlier forms and practices of non-sequential text organization, such as the Torah's interpretations and footnotes, but it is actually fundamentally different from them. Both the Torah's interpretations and footnotes imply a master-slave relationship between one text and another. But in the case of hyperlinking, no such relationship of hierarchy is assumed. The two sources connected through hyperlinking have equal weight; they exist on the same level of importance. Thus the acceptance of hyperlinking in the 1980's can be read as a perfect reflection of contemporary culture with its suspicion of all hierarchies, and its aesthetics of collage where radically different sources are brought together within the singular cultural object ("post-modernism").

Traditionally, texts encoded human knowledge and memory, instructed, inspired, and seduced their readers to adopt new ideas, new ways of interpreting the world, new ideologies. In short, the word was always linked to the art of rhetoric. While it is probably possible to invent a new rhetoric of hypermedia, which will use hyperlinking not to distract the reader from the argument (as it is often the case today), but instead to

further convince hir/her of argument's validity, the sheer existence and popularity of hyperlinking exemplifies the continuing decline of the field of rhetoric in the modern era. Ancient and Medieval scholars have classified hundreds of different rhetorical figures. In the middle of the twentieth century Roman Jakobson, under the influence of computer's binary logic, information theory and cybernetics to which he was exposed at MIT, radically reduced rhetoric to just two figures: metaphor and metonymy.[9] Finally, in the 1990's, the World Wide Web hyperlinking has privileged the single figure of metonymy at the expense of all others.[10] The hypertext of the World Wide Web leads the reader from one text to another, ad infinitum. Contrary to the popular image, in which digital media collapses all human culture into a single giant library (which implies the existence of some ordering system), or a single giant book (which implies a narrative progression), it maybe more accurate to think of the resulting object as an infinite flat surface composed from individual texts in no particular order -- the antirom design for HotWired. Expanding this comparison further, we can note that Random Access Memory, the concept behind the group's name, also implies the lack of any hierarchy: any RAM location can be accessed as quickly as any other. In contrast to the older storage media of book, film, and magnetic tape, where data is organized sequentially and linearly, thus suggesting the presence of a narrative or a rhetorical trajectory, RAM "flattens" the data. Rather than seducing the user through the careful arrangement of arguments and examples, points and counterpoints, changing rhythms of presentation (i.e., the rate of data streaming, to use contemporary language), simulated false paths and orchestrated breakthroughs, cultural interfaces, like RAM itself, bombards the users with all the data at once.[11]

In the 1980's many critics have described one of key's effects of "post-modernism" as that of spatialization: privileging space over time, flattening historical time, refusing grand narratives. Digital media, which has evolved during the same decade, accomplished this spatialization quite literally. It replaced sequential storage with random-access storage; hierarchical organization of information with a flattened hypertext; psychological movement of narrative in novel and cinema with physical movement through space, as witnessed by endless computer animated fly-throughs or computer games such as Myst and countless others. In short, time becomes a flat

image or a landscape, something to look at or navigate through. If there is a new rhetoric or aesthetic which is possible here, it may have less to do with the ordering of time by a writer or an orator, and more with spatial wandering. The hypertext reader is like Robinson Crusoe, walking through the sand and water, picking up a navigation journal, a rotten fruit, an instrument whose purpose he does not know; leaving imprints in the sand, which, like computer hyperlinks, follow from one found object to another.

II. Cinema

Printed word tradition which has initially dominated the language of cultural interfaces, is becoming less important, while the part played by cinematic elements is getting progressively stronger. This is consistent with a general trend in modern society towards presenting more and more information in the form of time-based audio-visual moving image sequences, rather than as text. As new generations of both computer users and computer designers are growing up in a media-rich environment dominated by television rather than by printed texts, it is not surprising that they favor cinematic language over the language of print.

A hundred years after cinema's birth, cinematic ways of seeing the world, of structuring time, of narrating a story, of linking one experience to the next, are being extended to become the basic ways in which computer users access and interact with all cultural data. In this way, the computer fulfills the promise of cinema as a visual Esperanto which pre-occupied many film artists and critics in the 1920s, from Griffith to Vertov. Indeed, millions of computer users communicate with each other through the same computer interface. And, in contrast to cinema where most of its "users" were able to "understand" cinematic language but not "speak" it (i.e., make films), all computer users can "speak" the language of the interface. They are active users of the interface, employing it to perform many tasks: send email, run basic applications, organize files and so on.

The original Esperanto never became truly popular. But cultural interfaces are widely used and are easily learned. We have an unprecedented situation in the history of cultural languages: something which is designed by a rather small group of people is

immediately adopted by millions of computer users. How is it possible that people around the world adopt today something which a 20-something programmer in Northern California has hacked together just the night before? Shall we conclude that we are somehow biologically "wired" to the interface language, the way we are "wired," according to the original hypothesis of Noam Chomsky, to different natural languages?

The answer is of course no. Users are able to "acquire" new cultural languages, be it cinema a hundred years ago, or cultural interfaces today, because these languages are based on previous and already familiar cultural forms. In the case of cinema, it was theater, magic lantern shows and other nineteenth century forms of public entertainment. Cultural interfaces in their turn draw on older cultural forms such as the printed word and cinema. I have already discussed some ways in which the printed word tradition structures interface language; now it is cinema's turn.

I will begin with probably the most important case of cinema's influence on cultural interfaces - the mobile camera. Originally developed as part of 3-D computer graphics technology for such applications as computer-aided design, flight simulators and computer movie making, during the 1980's and 1990's the camera model became as much of an interface convention as scrollable windows or cut and paste function. It became an accepted way for interacting with any data which is represented in three dimensions -- which, in a computer culture, means literally anything and everything: the results of a physical simulation, an architectural site, design of a new molecule, financial data, the structure of a computer network and so on. As computer culture is gradually spatializing all representations and experiences, they become subjected to the camera's particular grammar of data access. Zoom, tilt, pan and track: we now use these operations to interact with data spaces, models, objects and bodies.

Abstracted from its historical temporary "imprisonment" within the physical body of a movie camera directed at physical reality, a virtualized camera also becomes an interface to all types of media beside 3-D space. As an example, consider GUI (Graphical User Interface) of the leading computer animation software -- PowerAnimator from Alias/Wavefront.^[12] In this interface, each window, regardless of whether it

displays a 3-D model, a graph or even plain text, contains Dolly, Track and Zoom buttons. In this way, the model of a virtual camera is extended to apply to navigation through any kind of information, not only the one which was spatialized. It is particularly important that the user is expected to dolly and pan over text as if it was a 3-D scene. Cinematic vision triumphed over the print tradition, with the camera subsuming the page. The Gutenberg galaxy turned out to be just a subset of the Lumières' universe.

Another feature of cinematic perception which persists in cultural interfaces is a rectangular framing of represented reality.^[13] Cinema itself inherited this framing from Western painting. Since the Renaissance, the frame acted as a window onto a larger space which was assumed to extend beyond the frame. This space was cut by the frame's rectangle into two parts: "onscreen space," the part which is inside the frame, and the part which is outside. In the famous formulation of Leon-Battista Alberti, the frame acted as a window onto the world. Or, in a more recent formulation of Jacques Aumont and his co-authors, "The onscreen space is habitually perceived as included within a more vast scenographic space. Even though the onscreen space is the only visible part, this larger scenographic part is nonetheless considered to exist around it."^[14]

Just as a rectangular frame of painting and photography presents a part of a larger space outside it, a window in HCI presents a partial view of a larger document. But if in painting (and later in photography), the framing chosen by an artist was final, computer interface benefits from a new invention introduced by cinema: the mobility of the frame. As a kino-eye moves around the space revealing its different regions, so can a computer user scroll through a window's contents.

It is not surprising to see that screen-based interactive 3-D environments, such as VRML worlds, also use cinema's rectangular framing since they rely on other elements of cinematic vision, specifically a mobile virtual camera. It may be more surprising to realize that Virtual Reality (VR) interface, often promoted as the most "natural" interface of all, utilizes the same framing.^[15] As in cinema, the world presented to a VR user is cut by a rectangular frame. As in cinema, this frame presents a partial view of a larger

space.^[16] As in cinema, the virtual camera moves around to reveal different parts of this space.

Of course, the camera is now controlled by the user and in fact is identified with his/her own sight. Yet, it is crucial that in VR one is seeing the virtual world through a rectangular frame, and that this frame always presents only a part of a larger whole. This frame creates a distinct subjective experience which is much more close to cinematic perception than to unmediated sight.

Interactive virtual worlds, whether accessed through a screen-based or a VR interface, are often discussed as the logical successor to cinema, as potentially the key cultural form of the twenty-first century, just as cinema was the key cultural form of the twentieth century. These discussions usually focus on the issues of interaction and narrative. So, the typical scenario for twenty-first century cinema involves a user represented as an avatar existing literally "inside" the narrative space, rendered with photorealistic 3-D computer graphics, interacting with virtual characters and perhaps other users, and affecting the course of narrative events.

It is an open question whether this and similar scenarios commonly invoked in new media discussions of the 1990's, indeed represent an extension of cinema or if they rather should be thought of as a continuation of some theatrical traditions, such as improvisational or avant-garde theater. But what undoubtedly can be observed in the 1990's is how virtual technology's dependence on cinema's mode of seeing and language is becoming progressively stronger. This coincides with the move from proprietary and expensive VR systems to more widely available and standardized technologies, such as VRML (Virtual Reality Modeling Language).^[17]

The creator of a VRML world can define a number of viewpoints which are loaded with the world.^[18] These viewpoints automatically appear in a special menu in a VRML browser which allows the user to step through them, one by one. Just as in cinema, ontology is coupled with epistemology: the world is designed to be viewed from particular points of view. The designer of a virtual world is thus a cinematographer as well as an architect. The user can wander around the world or she can save time by

assuming the familiar position of a cinema viewer for whom the cinematographer has already chosen the best viewpoints.

Equally interesting is another option which controls how a VRML browser moves from one viewpoint to the next. By default, the virtual camera smoothly travels through space from the current viewpoint to the next as though on a dolly, its movement automatically calculated by the software. Selecting the "jump cuts" option makes it cut from one view to the next. Both modes are obviously derived from cinema. Both are more efficient than trying to explore the world on its own.

With a VRML interface, nature is firmly subsumed under culture. The eye is subordinated to the kino-eye. The body is subordinated to a virtual body of a virtual camera. While the user can investigate the world on her own, freely selecting trajectories and viewpoints, the interface privileges cinematic perception -- cuts, pre-computed dolly-like smooth motions of a virtual camera, and pre-selected viewpoints.

The area of computer culture where cinematic interface is being transformed into a cultural interface most aggressively is computer games. By the 1990's, game designers have moved from two to three dimensions and have begun to incorporate cinematic language in a increasingly systematic fashion. Games started featuring lavish opening cinematic sequences (called in the game business "cinematics") to set the mood, establish the setting and introduce the narrative. Frequently, the whole game would be structured as an oscillation between interactive fragments requiring user's input and non-interactive cinematic sequences, i.e. "cinematics".^[19] As the decade progressed, game designers were creating increasingly complex -- and increasingly cinematic -- interactive virtual worlds. Regardless of a game's genre -- action/adventure, fighting, flight simulator, first-person action, racing or simulation -- they came to rely on cinematography techniques borrowed from traditional cinema, including the expressive use of camera angles and depth of field, and dramatic lighting of 3-D sets to create mood and atmosphere. In the beginning of the decade, games used digital video of actors superimposed over 2-D or 3-D backgrounds, but by its end they switched to fully

synthetic characters.[20] This switch also made virtual words more cinematic, as the characters could be better visually integrated with their environments.[21]

A particularly important example of how computer games use -- and extend -- cinematic language, is their implementation of a dynamic point of view. In driving and flying simulators and in combat games, such as Tekken 2 (Namco, 1994 -), after a certain event takes place (car crashes, a fighter being knocked down), it is automatically replayed from a different point of view. Other games such as the Doom series (Id Software, 1993 -) and Dungeon Keeper (Bullfrog Productions, 1997) allow the user to switch between the point of view of the hero and a top down "bird's eye" view. Finally, Nintendo went even further by dedicating four buttons on their N64 joystick to controlling the view of the action. While playing Nintendo games such as Super Mario 64 (Nintendo, 1996) the user can continuously adjust the position of the camera. Some Sony Playstation games such as Tomb Rider (Eidos, 1996) also use the buttons on the Playstation joystick for changing point of view.

The incorporation of virtual camera controls into the very hardware of a game consoles is truly a historical event. Directing the virtual camera becomes as important as controlling the hero's actions. This is admitted by the game industry itself. For instance, a package for Dungeon Keeper lists four key features of the game, out of which the first two concern control over the camera: "switch your perspective," "rotate your view," "take on your friend," "unveil hidden levels." In games such as this one, cinematic perception functions as the subject in its own right.[22] Here, the computer games are returning to "The New Vision" movement of the 1920s (Moholy-Nagy, Rodchenko, Vertov and others), which foregrounded new mobility of a photo and film camera, and made unconventional points of view the key part of their poetics.

The fact that computer games continue to encode, step by step, the grammar of a kino-eye in software and in hardware is not an accident. This encoding is consistent with the overall trajectory driving the computerization of culture since the 1940's, that being the automation of all cultural operations. This automation gradually moves from basic to more complex operations: from image processing and spell checking to software-

generated characters, 3-D worlds, and Web Sites. The side effect of this automation is that once particular cultural codes are implemented in low-level software and hardware, they are no longer seen as choices but as unquestionable defaults. To take the automation of imaging as an example, in the early 1960's the newly emerging field of computer graphics incorporated a linear one-point perspective in 3-D software, and later directly in hardware.^[23] As a result, linear perspective became the default mode of vision in digital culture, be it computer animation, computer games, visualization or VRML worlds. Now we are witnessing the next stage of this process: the translation of cinematic grammar of points of view into software and hardware. As Hollywood cinematography is translated into algorithms and computer chips, its convention becomes the default method of interacting with any data subjected to spatialization, with a narrative, and with other human beings. (At SIGGRAPH '97 in Los Angeles, one of the presenters called for the incorporation of Hollywood-style editing in multi-user virtual worlds software. In such implementation, user interaction with other avatar(s) will be automatically rendered using classical Hollywood conventions for filming dialog.^[24]) Element by element, cinema is being poured into a computer: first one-point linear perspective; next the mobile camera and a rectangular window; next cinematography and editing conventions, and, of course, digital personas also based on acting conventions borrowed from cinema, to be followed by make-up, set design, and, of course, the narrative structures themselves. From one cultural language among others, cinema is becoming the cultural interface, a toolbox for all cultural communication, overtaking the printed word.

But, in one sense, all computer software already has been based on a particular cinematic logic. Consider the key feature shared by all modern human-computer interfaces - overlapping windows.^[25] All modern interfaces display information in overlapping and resizable windows arranged in a stack, similar to a pile of papers on a desk. As a result, the computer screen can present the user with practically an unlimited amount of information despite its limited surface.

Overlapping windows of HCI can be understood as a synthesis of two basic techniques of twentieth-century cinema: temporal montage and montage within a shot. In temporal

montage, images of different realities follow each other in time, while in montage within the shot, these different realities co-exist within the screen. The first technique defines the cinematic language as we know it; the second is used more rarely. An example of this technique is the dream sequence in The Life of an American Fireman by Edward Porter in 1903, in which an image of a dream appears over a man's sleeping head. Other examples include the split screens beginning in 1908 which show the different interlocutors of a telephone conversation; superimpositions of a few images and multiple screens used by the avant-garde filmmakers in the 1920's; and the use of deep focus and a particular compositional strategy (for instance, a character looking through a window, such as in Citizen Kane, Ivan the Terrible and Rear Window) to juxtapose close and far away scenes.[26]

As testified by its popularity, temporal montage works. However, it is not a very efficient method of communication: the display of each additional piece of information takes time to watch, thus slowing communication. It is not accidental that the European avant-garde of the 1920's inspired by the engineering ideal of efficiency, experiments with various alternatives, trying to load the screen with as much information at one time as possible.[27] In his 1927 Napoleon Abel Gance uses a multiscreen system which shows three images side by side. Two years later, in A Man with a Movie Camera (1929) we watch Dziga Vertov speeding up the temporal montage of individual shots, more and more, until he seems to realize: why not simply superimpose them in one frame? Vertov overlaps the shots together, achieving temporal efficiency -- but he also pushes the limits of a viewer's cognitive capacities. His superimposed images are hard to read -- information becomes noise. Here cinema reaches one of its limits imposed on it by human psychology; from that moment on, cinema retreats, relying on temporal montage or deep focus, and reserving superimpositions for infrequent cross-dissolves.

In window interface, the two opposites -- temporal montage and montage within the shot -- finally come together. The user is confronted with a montage within the shot -- a number of windows present at once, each window opening up into its own reality. This, however, does not lead to the cognitive confusion of Vertov's superimpositions because the windows are opaque rather than transparent, so the user is only dealing with one of

them at a time. In the process of working with a computer, the user repeatedly switches from one window to another, i.e. the user herself becomes the editor accomplishing montage between different shots. In this way, window interface synthesizes two different techniques of presenting information within a rectangular screen developed by cinema.

This last example shows once again the extent to which human-computer interfaces -- and, the cultural interfaces which follow them -- are cinematic, inheriting cinema's particular ways of organizing perception, attention and memory. Yet it also demonstrates the cognitive distance between cinema and the computer age. For the viewers of the 1920's, the temporal replacement of one image by another, as well as superimposition of two images together were an aesthetic and perceptual event, a truly modern and unfamiliar experience. The cut from one image to another was a meaningful, even stressful event, because audiences had to assimilate a sequence in a different fashion than they were previously used to in other cultural forms. [28] Film directors exploited the novelty of this strategy as an effective way of creating meaning. At the end of the century, however, anaesthetized first by cinema and then by television channel flipping, we feel at home with a number of overlapping windows on a computer screen. We switch back and forth between different applications, processes, tasks. Not only are we no longer shocked, but in fact we feel angry when a computer occasionally crashes because we opened too many windows at once.

Cinema, the major cultural form of the twentieth century, has found a new life as the toolbox of a computer user. Cinematic means of perception, of connecting space and time, of representing human memory, thinking, and emotions become a way of work and a way of life for millions in the computer age. Cinema's aesthetic strategies have become basic organizational principles of computer software. The window in a fictional world of a cinematic narrative has become a window in a datascape. In short, what was cinema has become human-computer interface.

I will conclude this section by discussing a few artistic projects which, in different ways, offer alternatives to this trajectory. To summarize it once again, the trajectory involves

gradual translation of elements and techniques of cinematic perception and language into a decontextualized set of tools to be used as an interface to any data. In the process of this translation, cinematic perception is divorced from its original material embodiment (camera, film stock), as well as from the historical contexts of its formation. If in cinema the camera functioned as a material object, co-existing, spatially and temporally, with the world it was showing us, it has now become a set of abstract operations. The art projects described below refuse this separation of cinematic vision from the material world. They reunite perception and material reality by making the camera and what it records a part of a virtual world's ontology. They also refuse the universalization of cinematic vision by computer culture, which (just as post-modern visual culture in general) treats cinema as a toolbox, a set of "filters" which can be used to process any input. In contrast, each of these projects employs a unique cinematic strategy which has a specific relation to the particular virtual world it reveals to the user.

In my own project Reality Generator (1996 -- ongoing) I directly make points of view a part of the ontology of a virtual world. The world is described as a set of objects and a set of viewpoints attached to different points in space. Some viewpoints are simply XYZ coordinates which do not correspond to anything in particular. Other viewpoints are attached to particular objects: a leaf, a bottle in a ground, a cloud. In this way, every object also becomes the subject, the focalizer of the narrative.[29] Everything can be seen from any position. Modernist techniques of switching between narrators in different parts of the story and re-telling the same events from different points of view are combined with computer's combinatory logic.

In The Invisible Shape of Things Past Joachim Sauter and Dirk Lüssenbrink of the Berlin-based Art+Com collective created a truly innovative cultural interface for accessing historical data about Berlin's history.[30] The interface de-virtualizes cinema, so to speak, by placing the records of cinematic vision back into their historical and material context. As the user navigates through a 3-D model of Berlin, he or she comes across elongated shapes lying on city streets. These shapes, which the authors call "filmobjects", correspond to documentary footage recorded at the corresponding points in the city. To create each shape the original footage is digitized and the frames are

stacked one after another in depth, with the original camera parameters determining the exact shape. The user can view the footage by clicking on the first frame. As the frames are displayed one after another, the shape is getting correspondingly thinner.

In following with the already noted general trend of computer culture towards spatialization of every cultural experience, this cultural interface spatializes time, representing it as a shape in a 3-D space. This shape can be thought of as a book, with individual frames stacked one after another as book pages. The trajectory through time and space taken by a camera becomes a book to be read, page by page. The records of camera's vision become material objects, sharing the space with the material reality which gave rise to this vision. Cinema is solidified. This project, then, can be also understood as a virtual monument to cinema. The (virtual) shapes situated around the (virtual) city, remind us about the era when cinema was the defining form of cultural expression -- as opposed to a toolbox for data retrieval and use, as it is becoming today in a computer.

Hungarian-born artist Tamás Waliczky openly refuses the default mode of vision imposed by computer software, that of the one-point linear perspective. Each of his computer animated films The Garden (1992), The Forest (1993) and The Way (1994) utilizes a particular perspectival system: a water-drop perspective in The Garden, a cylindrical perspective in The Forest and a reverse perspective in The Way. Working with computer programmers, the artist created custom-made 3-D software to implement these perspectival systems. Each of the systems has an inherent relationship to the subject of a film in which it is used. In The Garden, its subject is the perspective of a small child, for whom the world does not yet have an objective existence. In The Forest, the mental trauma of emigration is transformed into the endless roaming of a camera through the forest which is actually just a set of transparent cylinders. Finally, in the The Way, the self-sufficiency and isolation of a Western subject from his/her environment are conveyed by the use of a reverse perspective.

In Waliczky's films the camera and the world are made into a single whole, whereas in The Invisible Shape of Things Past the records of the camera are placed back into the

world. Rather than simply subjecting his virtual worlds to different types of perspectival projection, Waliczky modified the spatial structure of the worlds themselves. In The Garden, a child playing in a garden becomes the center of the world; as he moves around, the actual geometry of all the objects around him is transformed, with objects getting bigger as he gets close to him. To create The Forest, a number of cylinders were placed inside each other, each cylinder mapped with a picture of a tree, repeated a number of times. In the film, we see a camera moving through this endless static forest in a complex spatial trajectory -- but this is an illusion. In reality, the camera does move, but the architecture of the world is constantly changing as well, because each cylinder is rotating at its own speed. As a result, the world and its perception are fused together.

III. Human-Computer Interface

The development of human-computer interfaces, until recently, had little to do with cultural applications. Following some of the main applications from the 1940's until the early 1980's, when the current generation of GUI (Graphic User Interface) was developed and reached the mass market together with the rise of a PC (personal computer), we can list the most significant: real-time control of weapons and weapon systems; scientific simulation; computer-aided design; finally, office work with a secretary as a prototypical computer user, filing documents in a folder, emptying a trash can, creating and editing documents ("word processing"). Today, as the computer is starting to host very different applications for access and manipulation of cultural data and cultural experiences, their interfaces still rely on old metaphors and action grammars. Thus, cultural interfaces predictably use elements of a general-purpose HCI such as scrollable windows containing text and other data types, hierarchical menus, dialogue boxes, and command-line input. For instance, a typical "art collection" CD-ROM may try to recreate "the museum experience" by presenting a navigatable 3-D rendering of a museum space, while still resorting to hierarchical menus to allow the user to switch between different museum collections. Even in the case of The Invisible Shape of Things Past which uses a unique interface solution of "filmobjects" which is not directly traceable to either old cultural forms or general-purpose HCI, the designers

are still relying on HCI convention in one case -- the use of a pull-down menu to switch between different maps of Berlin.

In general, cultural interfaces of the 1990's try to walk an uneasy path between the richness of control provided in general-purpose HCI and an "immersive" experience of traditional cultural objects such as books and movies. Modern general-purpose HCI, be it MAC OS, Windows or Unix, allow their users to perform complex and detailed actions on the digital data: get information about an object, copy it, move it to another location, change the way data is displayed, etc. In contrast, a conventional book or a film positions the user inside the imaginary universe whose structure is fixed by the author. Cultural interfaces attempt to mediate between these two fundamentally different and ultimately non-compatible approaches.

As an example, consider how cultural interfaces conceptualize the computer screen. If a general-purpose HCI clearly identifies to the user that certain objects can be acted on while others cannot (icons of files but not the desktop itself), cultural interfaces typically hide the hyperlinks within a continuous representational field. (This technique was already so widely accepted by the 1990's that the designers of HTML offered it early on to their users by implementing the "imagemap" feature). The field can be a two-dimensional collage of different images, a mixture of representational elements and abstract textures, or a single image of a space such as a city street or a landscape. By trial and error, clicking all over the field, the user discovers that some parts of this field are links. This concept of a screen combines two distinct pictorial conventions: the older Western tradition of pictorial illusionism in which a screen functions as a window into a virtual space, something for the viewer to look into but not to act upon; and the more recent convention of graphical human-computer interfaces which, by dividing the computer screen into a set of controls with clearly delineated functions, essentially treats it as a virtual instrument panel. As a result, the computer screen becomes a battlefield for a number of incompatible definitions: depth and surface, opaqueness and transparency, image as an illusionary space and image as an instrument for action.[\[31\]](#)

Here is another example of how cultural interfaces try to find a middle ground between the conventions of general-purpose HCI and the conventions of traditional cultural forms. Again we encounter tension and struggle -- in this case, between standardization and originality. One of the main principles of modern HCI is consistency principle. It dictates that menus, icons, dialogue boxes and other interface elements should be the same in different applications. The user knows that every application will contain a "file" menu, or that if he/she encounters an icon which looks like a magnifying glass it can be used to zoom on documents. In contrast, modern culture (including its "post-modern" stage) stresses originality: every cultural object is supposed to be different from the rest, and if it is quoting other objects, these quotes have to be contextualized. Cultural interfaces try to accommodate both the demand for consistency and the demand for originality. Most of them contain the same set of interface elements with standard semantics, such as "home," "forward" and "backward" icons. But because every Web site and CD-ROM is striving to have its own distinct design, these elements are always designed differently from one product to the next. For instance, many games such as War Craft II (Blizzard Entertainment, 1996) and Dungeon Keeper give their icons a "historical" look consistent with the mood of an imaginary universe portrayed in the game.

The language of cultural interfaces is a hybrid. It is a strange, often awkward mix between the conventions of traditional artistic forms and the conventions of HCI -- between an immersive environment and a set of controls; between standardization and originality. Cultural interfaces try to balance the concept of a surface in painting, photography, cinema, and the printed page as something to be looked at, glanced at, read, but always from some distance, without interfering with it, with the concept of the surface in a computer interface as a virtual control panel, similar to the control panel on a car, plane or any other complex machine.^[32] Finally, on yet another level, the traditions of the printed word and of cinema also compete between themselves. One pulls the computer screen towards being dense and flat information surface, while another wants it to become a window into a virtual space.

To see that this hybrid language of the cultural interfaces of the 1990s represents only one historical possibility, consider a very different scenario. Potentially, cultural

interfaces could completely rely on already existing metaphors and action grammars of a standard HCI, or, at least, rely on them much more than they actually do. They don't have to "dress up" HCI with custom icons and buttons, or hide links within images, or organize the information as a series of pages or a 3-D environment. For instance, texts can be presented simply as files inside a directory, rather than as a set of pages connected by custom-designed icons. This strategy of using standard HCI to present cultural objects is encountered quite rarely. In fact, I am aware of only one project which uses it quite successfully: a CD-ROM by Gerald Van Der Kaap entitled [BlindRom V.0.9](#) (Netherlands, 1993). The CD-ROM includes a standard-looking folder named "Blind Letter." Inside the folder there are a large number of text files. You don't have to learn yet another cultural interface, search for hyperlinks hidden in images or navigate through a 3-D environment. Reading these files required simply opening them in standard Macintosh SimpleText, one by one. The effect of this simple technique is remarkable. Rather than distracting the user from experiencing the work, the computer interface becomes part and parcel of the work. Opening these files, I felt that I was in the presence of a new literary form for a new medium, perhaps the real medium of a computer -- its interface.

As the examples analyzed here illustrate, cultural interfaces try to create their own language rather than simply using general-purpose HCI. In doing so, these interfaces try to negotiate between metaphors and ways of controlling a computer developed in HCI, and the conventions of more traditional cultural forms. Indeed, neither extreme is ultimately satisfactory by itself. It is one thing to use a computer to control a weapon or to analyze statistical data, and it is another to use it to represent cultural memories, values and experiences. The interfaces developed for a computer in its functions of a calculator, control mechanism or a communication device are not necessarily suitable for a computer playing the role of a cultural machine. Conversely, if we simply mimic the existing conventions of older cultural forms such as the printed word and cinema, we will not take advantage of all the new capacities offered by a computer: its flexibility in displaying and manipulating data, interactive control by the user, and the ability to run simulations, etc.

Today the language of cultural interfaces is in its early stage, as was the language of cinema a hundred years ago. We don't know what the final result will be, or even if it will ever completely stabilize. Both the printed word and cinema eventually achieved stable forms which underwent little changes for long periods of time, in part because of the material investments in their means of production and distribution. Given that computer language is implemented in software, potentially it can keep on changing forever. But there is one thing we can be sure of. We are witnessing the emergence of a new cultural code, something which will be at least as significant as the printed word and cinema before it. We must try to understand its logic while we are in the midst of its natal stage.

[1] I am very grateful to Laura Nix for her help with editing this paper and many valuable suggestions.

[2] For an analysis of the parallels between the language of the nineteenth century moving image presentations and the language of computer multimedia during the first half of the 1990's, see my "What is Digital Cinema?", in The Digital Dialectics, edited by Peter Lunenfeld (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1988).

[3] Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (2nd. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

[4] Brad. A. Myers, "A Brief History of Human Computer Interaction Technology," technical report CMU-CS-96-163 and Human Computer Interaction Institute Technical Report CMU-HCII-96-103 (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Carnegie Mellon University, Human-Computer Interaction Institute, 1996).

[5] <http://www.xanadu.net/the.project>, accessed December 1, 1997.

[6] XML which is supposed to replace HTML on the World Wide Web will enable any user to create his/her customized markup language. Thus, the next stage in digital media culture will involve authoring not simply new documents but new languages. For more information on XML, see <http://www.ucc.ie/xml>., accessed December 1, 1997.

[7] <http://www.hotwired.com/rgb/antirom/index2.html>, accessed December 1, 1997.

[8] See, for instance, Mark Pesce, "Ontos, Eros, Noos, Logos," keynote address for International Symposium on Electronic Arts 1995, <http://www.xs4all.nl/~mpesce/iseakey.html>, accessed December 1, 1997.

[9] Roman Jakobson, "Deux aspects du langage et deux types d'aphasie", in Temps Modernes, no. 188 (January 1962).

[10] XLM promises to diversify types of links available to include bi-directional links, multi-way links and links to a span of text rather than a simple point. See <http://www.ucc.ie/xml>.

[11] This may imply that new digital rhetoric may have less to do with arranging information in a particular order and more to do simply with selecting what is included and what is not included in the total corpus being presented.

[12] See

http://www.aw.sgi.com/pages/home/pages/products/pages/poweranimator_film_sgi/indx.html, accessed December 1, 1997.

[13] In The Address of the Eye Vivian Sobchack discusses the three metaphors of frame, window and mirror which underlie modern film theory. The metaphor of a framecomrs from modern painting and is central to formalist theory which is concerned with signification;. The metaphor of window underlies realist film theory (Bazin) which stresses the act of perception. Realist theory follows Alberti in conceptualizing the cinema screen as a transparent window onto the world. Finally, the metaphor of a mirror is central to psychoanalytic film theory. In terms of these distinctions, my discussion here is concerned with the window metaphor. The distinctions themselves, however, open up a very productive space for thinking further about the relationships between cinema and computer media, in particular the cinema screen and the computer window. Vivian Sobchack, The Address of the Eye: a Phenomenology of Film Experience (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[14] Jacques Aumont et al., Aesthetics of Film (Austin: Texas University Press, 1992), 13.

[15] By VR interface I mean the common forms of a head-mounted or head-coupled directed display employed in VR systems. For a popular review of such displays written when the popularity of VR was at its peak, see Steve Aukstakalnis and David Blatner, Silicon Mirage: The Art and Science of Virtual Reality (Berkeley: CA: Peachpit Press, 1992), pp. 80-98. For a more technical treatment, see Dean Kocian and Lee Task, "Visually Coupled Systems Hardware and the Human Interface" in Virtual Environments and Advanced Interface Design, edited by Woodrow Barfield and Thomas Furness III (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 175-257.

[16] See Kocian and Task for details on field of view of various VR displays. Although it varies widely between different systems, the typical size of the field of view in commercial head-mounted displays (HMD) available in the first part of the 1990's was 30-50[o].

[17] The following examples refer to a particular VRML browser - WebSpace Navigator 1.1 from Silicon Graphics, Inc. Other browsers have similar features.

<http://webspace.sgi.com/WebSpace/Help/1.1/index.html>, accessed December 1, 1997.

[18] See John Hartman and Josie Wernecke, The VRML 2.0 Handbook: Building Moving Worlds on the Web (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1996), 363.

[19] For a more detailed analysis of this narrative structure, see my article, "The Aesthetics of Virtual Worlds: Report from Los Angeles," in CTHEORY (www.ctheory.com).

[20] Examples of an earlier trend are Return to Zork (Activision, 1993) and The 7th Guest (Trilobyte/Virgin Games, 1993). Examples of the later trend are Soulblade (Namco, 1997) and Tomb Raider (Eidos, 1996).

[21] Critical literature on computer games, and in particular on their language, remains very slim. Useful facts on history of computer games, description of different genres and the interviews with the designers can be found in Chris McGowan and Jim McCullaugh, Entertainment in the Cyber Zone (New York: Random House, 1995). Another useful source is J.C. Herz, Joystick Nation: How Videogames Ate Our Quarters, Won Our Hearts, and Rewired Our Minds (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1997).

[22] Dungeon Keeper, MS-DOS/Windows 95 CD-ROM (Bullfrog Productions, 1997).

[23] For a more detailed discussion of the history of computer imaging as gradual automation, see my articles "Mapping Space: Perspective, Radar and Computer Graphics," in SIGGRAPH '93 Visual Proceedings, edited by Thomas Linehan, 143-147 (New York: ACM, 1993); and "Automation of Sight from Photography to Computer Vision," in Electronic Culture: Technology and Visual Representation, edited by Timothy Druckery and Michael Sand (New York: Aperture, 1996).

[24] Moses Ma's presentation, panel on "Putting a Human Face on Cyberspace: Designing Avatars and the Virtual Worlds They Live In," SIGGRAPH '97, August 7, 1997.

[25] Overlapping windows were first proposed by Alan Kay in 1969.

[26] The examples of Citizen Kane and Ivan the Terrible are from Aumont et al., Aesthetics of Film, 41.

[27] On the ideal of engineering efficiency in relation to the avant-garde and digital media, see my article "The Engineering of Vision and the Aesthetics of Computer Art," Computer Graphics 28, no. 4 (November 1984): 259-263.

[28] The same novelty made possible surrealism.

[29] On the concept of focalization in narrative theory, see Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

[30] See http://www.artcom.de/projects/invisible_shape/welcome.en, accessed December 1, 1997.

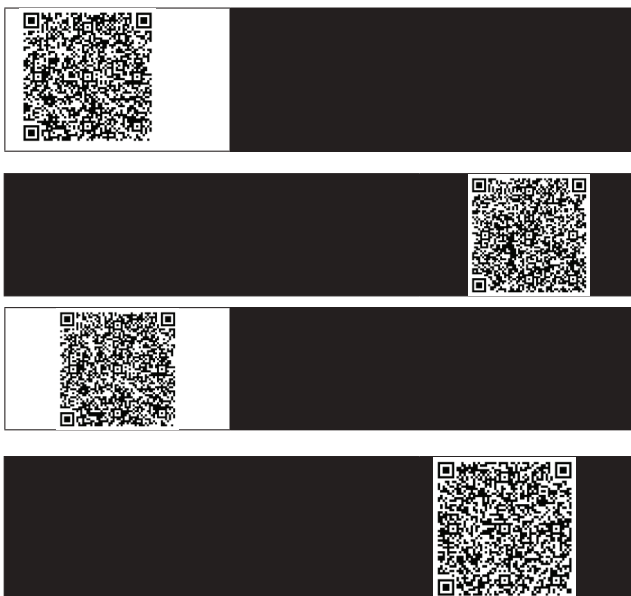
[31] The computer screen also functions both as a window into an illusionary space and as a flat surface carrying text labels and graphical icons. We can relate this to a similar understanding of a pictorial surface in the Dutch art of the seventeenth century, as analyzed by Svetlana Alpers in her The Art of Describing. In the chapter entitled "Mapping Impulse" she discusses how a Dutch painting of this period functioned as a combined map / picture, combining different kinds of information and knowledge of the world. See Svetlana Alpers, The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[32] This historical connection is illustrated by popular flight simulator games where the computer screen is used to simulate the control panel of a plane, i.e. the very type of object from which computer interfaces have developed. The conceptual origin of modern GUI in a traditional instrument panel can be seen even more clearly in the first graphical computer interfaces of the late 1960's and early 1970's which used tiled windows. The first tiled window interface was demonstrated by Douglas Engelbart in 1968.

Wandering Through the Labyrinth: An Interview with USC’s Marsha Kinder by Henry Jenkins (2015)

We are delighted to republish here *Wandering through the Labyrinth: An Interview with USC’s Marsha Kinder By Henry Jenkins*. This interview, originally published in four parts on Henry Jenkins’ weblog (<http://henryjenkins.org/>) in March 2015, enables readers to quickly reflect on the evolution of the digital arts and humanities and on the term “transmedia” itself, while it also proposes alternative ways of framing issues of medium specificity. Moreover, it draws on how the term transmedia has been reformulated, moving from transmedia to transmedia storytelling, to transmedia learning, transmedia branding, etc. In this, the interview demonstrates how reformulations of the term are possible.

Original resources of the interview:



Wandering Through the Labyrinth: An Interview with USC's Marsha Kinder by Henry Jenkins (2015)

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MARCH 5, 2015 – PART ONE

In 1999, the University of Southern California hosted the Interactive Frictions conference, organized by Steve Anderson, Marsha Kinder and Tara McPherson, with participants including some of the leading digital theorists, artists, and game designers of the period. Among those featured were: Edward Branigan, Justine Cassell, Anne-Marie Duguet, Katherine Hayles, Vilsoni Hereniko, Henry Jenkins (that's me!), Isaac Julien, Norman Klein, George Landow, Brenda Laurel, Erik Loyer, Peter Lunenfeld, Lev Manovich, Patricia Mellencamp, Pedro Meyer, Margaret Morse, Erika Muhammad, Janet Murray, Michael Nash, Marcos Novak, Randall Packer, Mark Pesce, Vivian Sobchack, Sandy Stone, Yuri Tsivian and many others. I speak at many conferences each year, but this remains in my memory a defining event in terms of my own thinking about digital media and a conference where I met a whole bunch of folks who I have ended up working with over the past decade and a half. For me, the conference brings back memories of the launch of the MIT Comparative Media Studies Program, which I was able to discuss in my remarks at the event, and also represents the first of a series of interactions with the USC faculty that led ultimately to my decision to move here almost six years ago.

Last year, Kinder and McPherson revisited this conference with a new book, *Transmedia Frictions: The Digital, The Arts, and the Humanities*, which brought together many of the original participants, who shared essays that built upon, but also artfully revisited, their original contributions at the event. The result is a great opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the digital arts and humanities across the intervening years, allowing us to test our original impressions and to reformulate them in response to so much that has happened since.

A key signal about what has changed is reflected in the title of the book – a movement from a focus on interactivity to an emphasis on transmedial

relations. Here, Marsha Kinder is reclaiming a term she introduced in her 1993 book, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Asked to write a blurb for this collection, here's what I had to say: "As someone who attended and participated in the 1999 Interactive Fictions conference, which in many ways consolidated more than a decade of theorizing about and experimenting with digital media, I was uncertain what to expect from Transmedia Frictions. What I found was a rich collection that looks both backward to reconstruct the paths not taken in digital theory and forward to imagine alternative ways of framing issues of medium specificity, digital identities, embodiment, and space/place. This collection is sure to transform how we theorize – and teach – the next phases of our profound and prolonged moment of media transition."

Few scholars are better situated to reflect on those shifts than Marsha Kinder, who was among the first in cinema studies to embrace digital tools for presenting her scholarship and who has overseen some remarkable collaborations with leading creative artists over the past decade through the Labyrinth project. She has been a friend and mentor across these years, someone who was always leading the charge and inspiring younger scholars to think about new ways of doing and presenting scholarship, and someone who has bridged between theory and practice in bold new ways. Our work has been complexly entangled through the years, given our shared interests in children's culture, transmedia, games, and digital humanities. What began as an interview about her new book has turned into an amazing retrospective on her body of work in the digital humanities, which, true to her vision, is presented here in a multimedia fashion.

I will be following up this interview with Marsha with a second interview with her co-editor Tara McPherson, who has also been a friend and collaborator of mine over the past two decades.

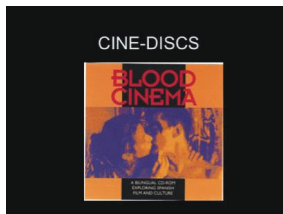
Tell us about the 1999 Interactive Fictions conference. What were its aims? What do you see now, looking backwards, as its historical importance in the development of digital art and theory? How did it inform your own subsequent works in this area?



In 1997, I was asked by USC's Annenberg Center to direct a research initiative that would explore the potentially productive relationship (rather than rivalry) between cinema and the then-emerging digital multimedia. I saw this transmedia focus as an opportunity to combine the immersive and emotive power of cinema with the interactive potential and database structure of new digital forms.



Although I had already developed my concept of database narrative, I was just beginning to engage in production myself, making companion works for my two most recent books. For *Blood Cinema*, my book on Spanish cinema, I collaborated with my doctoral student Charles Tashiro on making the first scholarly interactive CD-ROM in English language film studies, which led to a bilingual series called Cine-Discs.

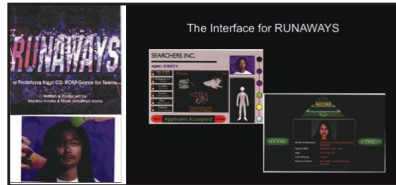


And, for *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games*, I collaborated with another grad student (Walter Morton) on a video documentary showing kids interacting with Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

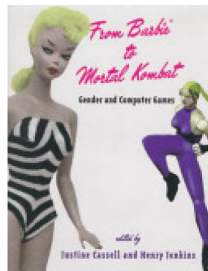


When I asked one of the kids in the arcade why they couldn't play as April O'Neil, he said, "That's the way the game is made!" Of course, he was right. And that made me want to make my own feminist game on gender.

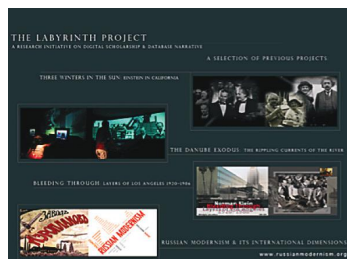
The next step was making a prototype for an experimental electronic game called *Runaways*...



which I co-wrote, co-produced and co-directed with documentary filmmaker Mark Jonathan Harris and which you, Henry, kindly featured at your conference on Gender and Computer Games at MIT and in your anthology, *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*.



Those projects enabled me to become the founding director of The Labyrinth Project, and to decide it would function both as a research initiative generating new theory and as an art collective making works that would advance the creative potential of the new digital media.





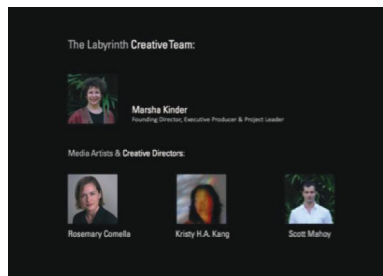
But to do this, I needed to quickly assess what had already been done and what was still emerging both in theory and practice. I also needed to find the most productive collaborators, and to discover which issues were driving the cultural debate and generating the most “friction.”

Being an academic, I decided the best way to perform that quick assessment was to host an international conference. Calling it “Interactive Frictions,” I knew it had to be very inclusive – with filmmakers, photographers, installation artists, animators, game designers, programmers, theorists, critics, cultural historians, curators, media scholars, and entrepreneurs. And because its scope was to be so expansive, I definitely needed innovative collaborators to help run the events. So I asked my colleague Tara McPherson and our graduate student Alison Trope to be my co-hosts at the conference, Holly Willis to co-curate the exhibition, and Steve Anderson to write the program. To emphasize the creative energy emerging from these new combinations as well as from their historical precursors, the conference was intentionally structured like a three-ring circus, featuring not only keynote speeches, live performances, and scads of panels but also a group exhibition in the Fisher Gallery including work from a wide range of artists – some well-known like Bill Viola, George Legrady, Vibeke Sorensen, and Norman Yonemoto, and others—including some of our students – just getting into the game. Amidst this array, we also showed three works-in-progress from The Labyrinth Project – collaborations with gay chicano novelist John Rechy (aka The Sexual Outlaw) and independent filmmakers Nina Menkes and Pat O’Neill. Here’s how I described the exhibition in the opening paragraph of our catalogue:

“Sparks. Heat. Conflict. This is what friction generates. Using friction as a catalyst, our exhibit features work produced at the pressure point between theory and practice. It brings together artists from different realms, at different stages of their careers, working both individually, and in collaboration in an array of different media: installations and assemblage art, independent film and video; traditional and computer animation; photography and graphic design; literature and music; computer science and interface design; websites, CD-ROMs, and other hybrid forms of multimedia. Coming from different domains, the pieces challenge and contradict each other. What unites them is the focus on interactive narrative.”



We received fabulous feedback on the conference, claiming it had energized all those who attended and broadened their conception of what digital multimedia could be. Despite this success, I decided not to make this conference a recurring event. Instead, I wanted to start producing experimental works in collaboration with others – works that could realize some of the possibilities that were discussed at the conference. So I put together a creative team of three media artists – Rosemary Comella, Kristy Kang, and Scott Mahoy– and that’s what we’ve been doing for the past seventeen years.



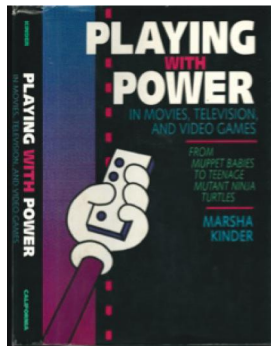
But, now that so much time has passed, that conference represents a valuable snapshot of what the discourse was like in the 90s. For, some of the essays in our anthology are even more revealing now than they were then – especially those that were foundational for the field (like Katherine Hayles’s “Print is Flat, Code Is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis”) and those that presented historical precursors (like the pieces by narrative theorist Edward Branigan and early cinema scholar Yuri Tsivian). And it’s important that, not just the artists and editors, but most of the contributors to our volume went on to produce multimedia projects. We hope our “Interactive Frictions” helped make them do it.

MARCH 9, 2015 – PART TWO

*Marsha, you coined the term “transmedia” in your 1991 book, *Playing with Power*, where you used it to describe an emerging entertainment supersystem. Your phrase has been widely picked up and applied to everything from transmedia storytelling to transmedia learning to transmedia branding to transmedia mobilization. You have chosen to use it as part of the title of this book. To what degree is this an effort to reclaim and redefine the term? Why did you find this an appropriate framework for thinking about the debates in this collection?*

Yes, in choosing to use “Transmedia” in the title of our anthology, I was reclaiming the term I had coined in 1991 in *Playing with Power*. But, in no way do I object to the way the meanings of transmedia have expanded – that’s the way language functions. In fact, Tara and I were also redefining the term “transmedia,” for it creates an opening for those new media that our anthology didn’t cover in depth – including smart phones – and those that haven’t yet been invented.

We were also using it as a substitute for the term “interactive,” whose definition and connotations are no longer hotly contested. Transmedia, on the other hand, evokes the issue of medium specificity (still very much in contention), without supporting one side or the other. Yet, as some of the essays in our anthology suggest, it also evokes the historic transformation we are now experiencing, in which all movies, videos, TV programs, and music are being redefined as software or data, a conversion with seismic financial and cultural consequences.



In *Playing with Power*, instead of using the popular buzz-word convergence, I coined the term transmedia because I saw it as a deliberate, dynamic move across media. This definition partly arose from my own transmedia experience – of having completed a doctoral degree in 18th century English literature

in 1967 and then publishing my first article two months later, not on Henry Fielding but on Antonioni's *Blow-up*. This move from literature to film led one of my literary colleagues to accuse me of having "betrayed the 18th century." Though flattered by the charge, I realized this move was not always freely chosen.

In *Playing with Power*, I linked this term "transmedia" to a new kind of postmodernist subjectivity that could be historicized. Priding itself on mobility rather than stability, this new protean subjectivity was embodied in those popular transformer toys and in the myth of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,



where all four words in their name emphasize this kind of movement – whether it was natural growth from childhood to adulthood; or a de-novo mutation caused by urban pollution; or a fluid transnational identity linked to Japanese ninjas, California surfers, and Italian Renaissance artists; or an evolutionary move by amphibians from sea to land. Given this hyper-plasticity, the only fixed aspect of their identity was their masculine gender that depended on having the right toys and gear, which meant kids could buy into the system.

The turtles acquired their own cultural capital by becoming (what I called) a "transmedia supersystem," whose fluid movement across many different media (from comic books, to games, to television, to movies, and to a slew of licensed products, all with substantial financial rewards) made them even more worthy of imitation. In fact, you could find this transformative subjectivity not only in children but also in transnational CEOs of the time – like Akio Morita, the founding chairman of Sony, who said shortly after his company's 1989 purchase of Columbia Pictures:

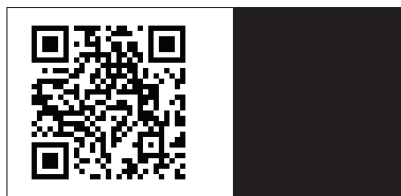


Interestingly, Morita's statement identified transmedia movement not only with transnational moves but also with play, which led me to explore its connection with a particular kind of developmental psychology. Specifically, I relied on L.S. Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development," an area of accelerated learning created through play where a child always behaves beyond his average age and beyond Piaget's fixed developmental model. According to Vygotsky, when play is guided by an adult or more capable peers, the interaction could function as an accelerant. I argued that interaction with popular media (like television, films and computer games) could also fulfill this function, which is a basic premise of Sesame Street. Thus instead of echoing the dire warnings of many psychologists about the harmful effects on youngsters of watching television, I claimed TV could serve as a developmental accelerant that taught youngsters a form of transmedia literacy, which enabled them to bridge the gap between domestic and public space. For, ever since television became pervasive in the American home [a position now challenged by computers, ipads, smart phones and other digital devices], this medium had accelerated children's acquisition of a fluid postmodernist subjectivity marked by constant change – a subjectivity that helped explain the popularity of transformer toys and transmedia heroes like Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Another key aspect of the original conference and to some degree this book was to broker a kind of conversation between experimental artists working with digital media and academic theorists seeking to imagine digital presents and futures. What do you see as the value of such interactions between artists and academics?

I have always been convinced that there's an important interplay between artistic experimentation and theoretical breakthroughs. This is true in older art forms – such as literature, as much as in film and digital media. For example, in the 18th century although Dr. Samuel Johnson realized that Shakespeare's mixture of comedy and tragedy violated Aristotle's rules, he concluded there must be something wrong with the rules, and he attributed his own theoretical insight to Shakespeare's artistic experimentation. We can find this same kind of interplay in those artists (such as, Joyce, Beckett, Borges, Duras, Marker, and Akerman) whose experimentation is so radical that it transforms any theory applied to it or inspires the creation of a new one – the way Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* inspired Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, or Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* and Peter Greenaway's avant-garde films helped shape Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media*. And we find a similar interplay in those figures who combine theory and artistic practice in their own work – such as, Eisenstein, Vertov, Pasolini, Deren, and Godard.

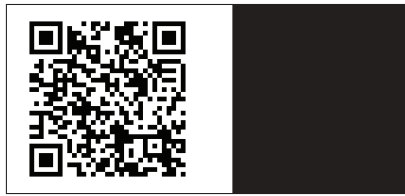
In the early days of The Labyrinth Project, I purposely sought out collaborators who were already experimenting with non-linear, open-ended narrative and associative structures – artists who (I thought) could bring a new level of sophistication to this new medium. Since we had no track record, I had to begin with artists I already knew and with whom there was mutual trust. Thus I chose my friend John Rechy, the gay, Chicano novelist whose *City of Night* mapped the gay cruising zones of the nation, whose *Numbers* focused on compulsive repetition in Griffith Park, and whose *Sexual Outlaw* was an edgy, non-linear fictional documentary.



I also chose independent filmmaker Pat O'Neill, whose brilliant multi-layered films I had been writing about since the 1970s.

Our first signature genre was the digital city symphony, an update of the modernist city symphony with its avant-garde associations. Focusing on contested urban space through layers of time, it deliberately eroded the line between documentary and fiction. In *Tracing the Decay of Fiction: Encounters with a Film by Pat O'Neill*, the exploratory space was the Ambassador Hotel on the Miracle Mile in midtown Los Angeles, where the downtown power-brokers and Hollywood moguls first mingled. It was also the site where Robert Kennedy was assassinated in 1968 and where other historical traumas, both personal and cultural, took place.

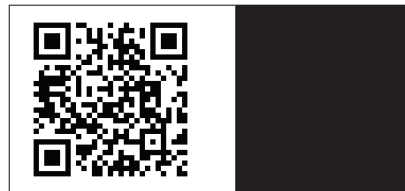
In *Bleeding Through Layers of Los Angeles, 1920-1986*, an adaptation of Norman Klein's cultural history, *The History of Forgetting: The Cultural Erasure of Los Angeles*, documentary and fiction vied for control over this multi-tiered narrative. The contested space was a three mile radius in downtown Los Angeles, a neighborhood known for both its real-life ethnic diversity and fictional on-screen violence.



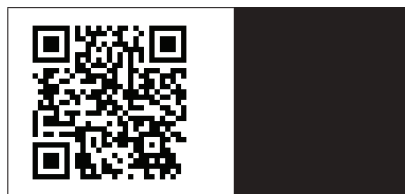
Bleeding Through: Layers of Los Angeles, 1920-1986 (2002) from Rosemary Comella
(<https://vimeo.com/rosemarycomella>) on Vimeo.

Another of our early signature genres was the interactive memoir, which preserves the unique web of memories and associations that an individual builds over a lifetime and that inevitably unravels with old age and death. These works encouraged users to interweave this personal material into a broader tapestry of historical narrative. Thus we chose vintage subjects who had complex relations with several different communities. As we've seen, *Mysteries and Desires: Searching the Worlds of John Rechy* features a gay Chicano novelist whose works purposely blur the line between autobiography and fiction.

The Dawn at My Back: Memoir of a Black Texas Upbringing was the interactive version of a print memoir by Carroll Parrott Blue, an African American photographer from an independent black community in Houston.



And we also did one on Albert Einstein, called *Three Winters in the Sun: Einstein in California...*



Presented as DVD-ROMs, websites, and installations, these database narratives from Labyrinth were featured at museums, film and new media festivals, and conferences worldwide. Three of our early works were included in Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film, a major exhibition co-curated by Jeffrey Show and Peter Weibel, which ran from 16 November 2002 – 30 March 2003 at ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany, and subsequently travelled to Helsinki and Tokyo.

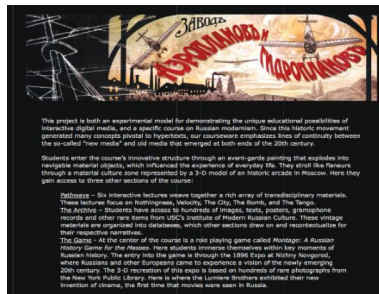
Despite many exhibitions (both on-line and in museums) of such works and those by others over the past twenty years, there are still very few critics, historians, or theorists who are writing about them – partly because the production process is opaque. I remember when Kevin Thomas, who was then Film Critic for the Los Angeles Times, came to our Labyrinth studio and was interested in writing about Mysteries and Desires. He said he was surprised that John Rechy could draw so well and was so good as a visual artist. When I started explaining who did what, he lost interest in writing about the project. Another time we were delighted to find that Bleeding Through Layers of Los Angeles was positively reviewed by David Ulm in the L.A. Times Weekly Book Review Section. Yet we were horrified that he wrongly assumed Klein's brief fictional pamphlet that accompanied the DVD-ROM was the primary source of our interactive project, which was merely a visual adaptation. Though several of the essays in our anthology address such experimental works, the history of projects like these still needs to be written. The pace of technological innovation and obsolescence is so rapid that it's difficult for academics and cultural historians to keep up – both with the specific works being produced and the digital futures they project. But we included some attempts in Transmedia Frictions.

MARCH 11, 2015 – PART THREE

I was struck in 1999 by your effort to also create a space where artists working in the museum and gallery space were engaging with game designers working in more commercial contexts. This dimension seems to have dropped out of the Transmedia Frictions book altogether. What does this suggest about the continued roles of cultural hierarchies in the realms of digital art and theory?

When we planned the Interactive Frictions conference, we wanted to be as broad and inclusive as possible, which meant including games. I had hoped someday to finish the Runaways game as a Labyrinth project, once we had sufficient grant support and more sophisticated programmers. It was not that we looked down on games as unworthy of critical and cultural attention, but rather that we simply didn't have the resources to do a first rate job.

We made a stab at it in our on-line courseware project, Russian Modernism and Its International Dimensions, an archival cultural history which unfortunately we never finished – even though we had the assistance of Jenova Chen, the most successful student to emerge from USC’s Interactive Media Division; a grant from NEH; and first-rate Slavic Studies scholars (Yuri Tsivian on film, from University of Chicago; Olga Matich on literature, from UC Berkeley; and John Bowlt on visual culture, from USC). Set at the 1896 Russian Expo in Nizhni Novgorod (where cinema was first screened for the Russian public and where the Tsar and his court were in attendance), this project provided students with three ways of engaging with these historical materials.



They could explore a virtual 3-D model of the Expo and its pavilions, where they could play a game called Montage: A Russian History Game of the Masses.



The game enabled them to engage with experimental art, subversive politics, or new technology – the three forces that made modernism so distinctive in the Russian context.

Or, they could visit GUM, (Glavnyi Universalnyi Magazin), the “main universal store” in Moscow’s red square from the 1920s, whose innovative glass-roof design was also featured at the 1898 Expo. Like consumerist flaneurs strolling through a modernist arcade, here students could stop at several

shops, each presenting an illustrated interactive lecture on a range of topics (e.g., nothingness, velocity, the bomb, the expo, St. Petersburg: the novel and the city, etc.) by leading scholars both from the U.S. and Russia.

Or, they could visit the archive in GUM's basement, an extensive database of artworks that students could use in their own projects. Since the courseware was not finished, students were invited to help build the rest of it, as if they were constructionists, learning by doing. The project was designed to show how aesthetic concepts from Russian modernism (such as, dialectic montage, constructionism, and synaesthesia) are still useful in developing our own era of digital multimedia. The basic conception is still sound and challenging, but we don't have the resources to produce it.

By the time we published *Transmedia Frictions*, the academic world of game studies had already developed its own trajectories. Of course, there were exceptions like Bill Viola (who attended the original *Interactive Frictions* conference and had an installation in our IF exhibition). Later, in collaboration with specialists in our Interactive Media Division, he developed a game about a journey of Buddhist enlightenment. Although he originally proposed a collaboration with *Labyrinth*, we didn't have the resources to develop it at the time. We were moving in the opposite direction toward museum installations, particularly because we had had such a difficult experience with the *Montage* game at the heart of Russian Modernism.

There's a recurring interest throughout the essays, in both parts of the book, in issues of cultural memory, the archival, and the documentary. What new models have emerged over the past decade for thinking about the relationship between the digital and our collective understandings of history?

One of the new models that has emerged over the past decade is the genealogical search for family and cultural roots. We can find it in the growing popularity of a website like *ancestry.com* and in the television shows hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *African American Lives* (2006) and *Finding Your Roots* (2012), where he helps celebrities discover the truth about their roots. We can also see it in the current fascination with *Selfies* and with the impulse to upload your own home movie fragments on YouTube. And one can also find it in new works on home movies – in a marvellous book like Patricia Zimmerman's *Mining the Home Movie*, and in the extraordinary films of Hungarian media artist Péter Forgács.

In 2000, *Labyrinth* embarked on a collaboration with Forgács to turn his sixty-minute, single-channel film, *The Danube Exodus*, into a large scale, multiscreen, immersive installation, which opened at the Getty Center in 2002 and continued to travel worldwide until 2012. It was one of our three projects in the "Future Cinema" show, and is discussed by Stephen Mamber in the anthology. Largely as a result of this exhibition, Forgács received the presti-

gious Erasmus Award, for an artist in any medium who has made an exceptional contribution to culture in Europe and beyond.

Having been aired on European television in 1997, Forgács's film provided intriguing narrative material: a network of compelling stories, a mysterious river captain whose movies remain unknown, a Central European setting full of rich historical associations, and a hypnotic musical score that created a mesmerizing tone. Now that we had 40 hours of footage to draw on, there was an intense struggle for narrative space: between the European Jews who were fleeing the Third Reich in 1939, attempting to get a ship in the Black Sea to take them to Palestine; and the German farmers who were returning home to Germany in 1940 after the Soviets had confiscated their lands in Bessarabia; and the Hungarian river captain who ferried both groups into history by documenting their journeys on film.



As in Forgács's other films, the home movies enriched or contradicted what we thought we already knew about history. Sometimes the home movie footage was juxtaposed with excerpts from official newsreels, but it always introduced an alternative vision. To see the fragile home movie footage displayed on television is one thing, but to see it projected in a museum on five large screens (each 6ft x 8 ft) is something else. This is the way superheroes or villains (like Napoleon or Hitler) are usually displayed, not domestic home movies with their humble characters and banal events.

This collaboration was the first time Labyrinth had actually designed an installation from the get-go – as opposed to making a DVD-ROM that was later included in a museum exhibition. Of course, there were several DVD-ROMs included in the show, plus a related website (produced by a group in Europe), and a related exhibition of maps and artifacts from the Getty Collection. We began to think of this work as a “transmedia network,” one that linked several spaces and many collaborators together.

Intrigued by the use of vintage home movies and the richness of what could be gleaned from their visuals and physical gestures, we were inspired to do another transmedia network for our next project. Titled “Jewish Homegrown History: Immigration, Identity and Inter marriage,” it consisted of a

museum installation which premiered at USC in October 2011 as a Vision and Voices event



and then ran for several months in 2012 at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles. The exhibition featured three large screens, even larger than those we used in *The Danube Exodus*, on which we projected home movies of Jews living in Los Angeles.



There was also a bank of computers with the website, which enabled users to upload their own family stories and photos and to hear histories of others. The home movies displayed on the large screens and the website all addressed the subthemes of immigration, identity, and intermarriage, which were also emphasized in quotations that were posted on the walls. Mainly derived from 8mm and Super 8 footage, the home movies were collected in a series of “home movie collection days,” which enabled us to form productive collaborative relations with those contributing the footage.



After interviewing members of the family, we edited the footage and added sound. In the exhibition space we also screened a series of short documentaries about Jews in Los Angeles, a display that evoked a comparison between these two forms of non-fiction.



Both of these installations made me think of Patricia Zimmerman’s inspiring statement, which was prominently displayed on the walls of the exhibition: “Amateur films urge us all – scholars, filmmakers, archivists, curators – to re-imagine the archive and film historiography. They suggest the impossibility of separating the visual from the historical and the amateur from the professional.... We need to imagine the archive as an engine of difference and plurality, always expanding, always open.”

MARCH 14, 2015 – PART FOUR

Since the conference, you and your co-editor Tara McPherson have gotten deeper into work around the digital humanities. I'd love to hear you talk about the visions underlying these projects and the somewhat different agendas for digital humanities they each embody.

One of the goals shared by Labyrinth, Scaler and Vectors, is to make the digital humanities embrace visual and audio culture as equally important to the word. We all are involved in making multisensory works that are as intellectually rich, rigorous, and subtle as any traditional essay or book.

Another shared goal is to encourage and validate collaboration both among humanities scholars and with artists, scholars and scientists from other fields. Although we have different models for the scope and range of such collaborations (partly based on issues of scale, funding and who is involved), we all recognize its importance and realize that it’s always a touchy subject. While most academics and administrators are usually willing to support collaboration verbally, the

problem arises when it's time to make decisions on promotion and tenure. Suddenly issues of credit (who's doing what) become insurmountable problems.

Labyrinth's collaborations usually involve a small team of theorists, scholars, artists, programmers and designers who (with the help of student assistants from Cinema) make a specific database narrative that provides a new model of digital scholarship. Each work requires a different collaborative team and individual funding. Sometimes we include interns from other nations and cultures, or volunteers from other departments or schools. The team is tailored to the specific project. These goals are narrower than those of Vectors and Scaler, which, through the development of unique user-friendly software, enable humanities scholars from across the nation to produce their own individual digital projects.



In developing different signature genres (e.g., digital city symphonies, interactive memoirs, archival cultural histories, health-science education), Labyrinth engages in an on-going process of reframing. For example, although its first science education project, *Three Winters in the Sun: Einstein in California*, was an installation in the Skirball Cultural Center's major exhibition on the famous scientist, it combined an interactive memoir (Einstein's complex relations with six different communities) with a digital city symphony (Los Angeles in the early 1930s).



Though it told us more about the contradictions in his life than about his scientific discoveries (which were covered by other installations in the Skirball exhibition), it led the way to Labyrinth's next signature genre – the health-science-education project.

Produced in collaboration with molecular scientist Dr. Jean Chen Shih from USC's School of Pharmacy, *A Tale of Two MAO Genes: Exploring the Biology and Culture of Aggression and Anxiety*, was another translational work in science, but this time designed for use in the classroom. The project used live action video and 3-D animation to cover basic molecular biology and to explain Dr. Shih's pioneering research on MAO A and B. The project's strongest elements were 3-D animations (by USC animation student Debra Isaac) of protein folding and other biological processes, visualizations that were both extremely beautiful and rigorously accurate.

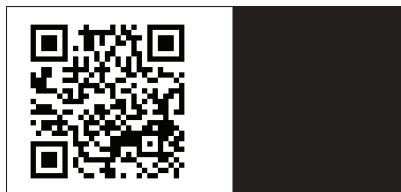


To fulfill its secondary goal of encouraging youngsters to become scientists, it includes a brief biography of Dr. Shih and interviews with several scientists explaining how they entered the field. The project was translated into Mandarin and is being used as a model both in China and Taiwan.

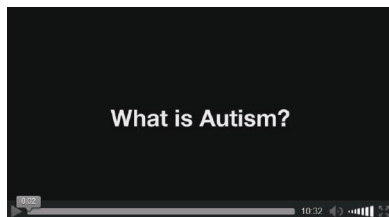
Both of these earlier science-education projects laid the groundwork for a video-based website called "Interacting with Autism," a collaboration with documentary filmmaker Mark Jonathan Harris that drew on an impressive list of scientific consultants who are specialists in this expanding field.



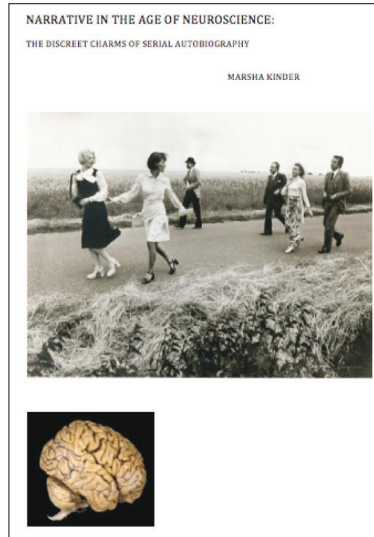
Funded by grants from AHRQ (the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality), it was launched on-line in September 2013. This bilingual website (in English and Spanish) is now being translated into Mandarin so that it can be used more productively in China. It is also being tested by an evaluative group at the Rand Corporation, who seek to use it as a model for comparable websites on other health disorders. We've had particularly good response to the brief animated film that shows what sensory overload feels like to some individuals on the spectrum.



While working on this website, I became very interested in neurodiversity, a key issue in the cultural debates between autism activists on the spectrum and those who see it autism simply as a disorder to be cured. We were determined to include the points of view from those on the spectrum – on both sides of the camera.



While working on these science translation projects, I realized it was possible to reframe many of the issues I had dealt with in previous works within a new conceptual framework. That's the book I'm working on now, which is titled *Narrative in the Age of Neuroscience: The Discreet Charms of Serial Autobiography*.



* * *

Marsha Kinder began her career in the 1960s as a scholar of eighteenth century English Literature before moving to the study of transmedial relations among narrative forms. In 1980 she joined USC's School of Cinematic Arts where she continued to be an academic nomad, with narrative as her through-line. Having published over one hundred essays and ten books (both monographs and anthologies), she is best known for her work on Spanish film, specifically *Blood Cinema* (1993); children's media, especially *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games* (1991); and digital culture (including her new anthology *Transmedia Frictions: The Digital, The Arts and the Humanities* (2014), co-edited with Tara McPherson. She was founding editor of innovative journals, such as *Dreamworks* (1980-87), winner of a Pushcart Award, USC's *Spectator* (1982-present) and since 1977 served on the editorial board of *Film Quarterly*. In 1995 she received the USC Associates Award for Creativity in Scholarship, and in 2001 was named a University Professor for her innovative transdisciplinary research.

In 1997 she founded The Labyrinth Project, a USC research initiative on database narrative, producing award-winning database documentaries and new models of digital scholarship. In collaboration with media artists Rosemary Comella, Kristy Kang and Scott Mahoy, and with filmmakers, scientists

and cultural institutions, Labyrinth produced 12 multimedia projects (DVD-ROMs, websites, installations and on-line courseware) that were featured at museums, film and new media festivals, and conferences worldwide. Kinder's latest work, *Interacting with Autism*, is a video-based website produced in collaboration with Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker Mark Jonathan Harris and Scott Mahoy. Since retiring from teaching in Summer 2013, Kinder is now writing a new book titled *Narrative in the Era of Neuroscience: The Discreet Charms of Serial Autobiography*.

From Storytelling to Intercreativity in the Era of Distributed Authorship

December 2015, Issue 1.1 - Hydrogen

Forms of fiction and literature underwent a process of disembodiment and cross-fertilization during the revolution from the Gutenberg Galaxy (printed paper, mass distribution) to the McLuhan Galaxy (new media, hypertext, cooperative writing). The dimension of literacy has moved from a semiotically-measured geometry to a dislocation and a deconstruction of contents and channels that give expression to new products. The impact of social media on narratology has redefined the meaning of readership and authorship. The author not only loses his/her traditional role, but becomes an icon of himself/herself, a collective-minded producer that is self-perceived through the extroflexed eye of the amniotic network in which he/she defines his/her narrative experience. Transmedia culture defines a new cross-networked and amniotic literacy, considering that we are not facing a simple adaptation of different narrative forms from one media to another: different media and languages participate and contribute to the construction of a transmedia environment.

The first issue of the IJTL seeks to shed light on transmedia literacy according to the epistemological crisis of authorship and the new dimension of participation and relationship offered by both the Web and New Media. Moving from the state of the art, the aim is to investigate the interdisciplinary relations in the field of transmedia literacy, in order to favour a pattern recognition about theories, technologies, and social dimensions of the phenomena to offer a critical toolkit to understand and map out the emerging knowledge and practices created by this new field.

Matteo Ciastellardi, PhD in Communication Design, is a Professor of Sociology of Media at the Politecnico di Milano, Italy. He is the co-founder of two start-up companies for social and technological innovation. He was previously a researcher at the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute directed by Manuel Castells in Barcelona; his research interests focus on media culture, swarm intelligence, and transmedia literacy.

Giovanna Di Rosario, PhD in Digital Culture, is a researcher (Marie Curie Actions) at the Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium. She is the Associate Director of Hermeneia Research Group (Spain). She has worked and taught in Denmark, Finland, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. Her research interests include digital literature, new narratives, digital rhetoric and hermeneutics, and transmedia literacy.

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