

Contemporary Storytelling Methods Across New Media and Disciplines



Lorena Clara Mihăeș, Raluca Andreescu, and Anda Dimitriu



Handbook of Research on Contemporary Storytelling Methods Across New Media and Disciplines

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Sociologists have become “storytellers.” This chapter aims to explore the importance of writing in the ways of telling about society. Departing from two iconic books – *The Sociological Imagination* (Mills, 1959) and *Storytelling Sociology* (Berger and Quinney, 2004), issues related to “words,” “voice,” and “audience” emerge as key elements of the story writing/storytelling sociology craft’s toolbox. At present, the pressures imposed by fast science and writing in highly competitive teaching and research environments, the growing technological development applied to research, and the expansion of hyper and social media represent new challenges for storytelling sociology. At the end, the chapter argues for the enduring importance of writing in the ways of telling about society, while recognizing the value of time in research: time to listen, write, and tell.

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The aim of this chapter is to explore personal narratives and conversational stories of self-declared victims of abuse in the comments section of a knowledge-sharing platform, such as YouTube. The aim is to analyze the resemblance between the interaction and exchange of narratives in comments sections, on the one hand, and narrative group psychotherapy and self-help support groups, on the other. While previous research on storytelling mostly addresses professionally guided or produced narratives, this approach extends the production of these narratives to online communicative contexts. Firstly, the chapter looks at the theoretical tenets of storytelling. Secondly, a sociolinguistic, narratology-oriented approach is used to exemplify this practice. This part of the chapter discusses how the interaction among commentators and the exchange of personal narratives meet the core principles of self-help support groups and group psychotherapy.

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Storytelling and the Rhetoric of Rumor in Social Media 40

Md. Sayeed Al-Zaman, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

Prithula Prosun Puja, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

Social media rumor is becoming a prominent spectacle thanks to the rapid surge of internet usage worldwide. However, little research has been done so far that takes social media rumor into account. This chapter attempts to understand the nature and narrative of social media rumor. The discussion revolves around three important and interlaced concepts: social media storytelling, social media rhetoric, and social media rumor. The chapter attempts to show that a story requires rhetoric to be successful and most of the rumours are successful stories because they contain rhetorical elements. To understand the storytelling and rhetorical aspects of social media rumors, remarks based on three prominent cases of social media rumors are presented. The conclusion is that social media rumors are more literary, have more emotional elements than logical proofs, and the structure is meticulously designed to have specific impacts. These features echo disinformation, an important mode of rumor.

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Jolita Horbacauskiene, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

A close linguistic analysis of media discourse might provoke and provide useful information regarding the power of media itself and the way people construct meanings. The present study seeks to explore how social problems are reflected in media texts. The representation of social problems—crime, poverty, migrant crisis, as well as minority groups—contains linguistic elements which are aimed at constructing certain images of these issues. Figurative linguistic elements are used to enhance the reliability of the story, to appeal to the readers' emotions, and to manage the story and the sequence of the events which are being represented. A proper use of language in the representations social problems could be considered as an effective tool to keep readers interested in the story and transform it into one that is engaging and reliable at the same time.

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Communicate the Identity of Cities and Regions 79

Sara Clara, University of Aveiro, Portugal

Belem Barbosa, University of Aveiro, Portugal

The main objective of this chapter is to explore how cities and regions can use digital storytelling strategies to reach and engage with their target audiences. Despite the growing body of literature regarding digital storytelling, the contributions and examples about regions and cities are still scarce. This chapter analyses the storytelling strategies of promotional campaigns regarding three cities and two regions around the world. Using a theory-driven framework, each storytelling example is dissected and interpreted. This study demonstrates that digital storytelling is worth consideration, as it offers a relevant set of advantages for marketing and communication managers, and enables the development of the place image and a consistent communication of its identity that can be co-created with various stakeholders, including

the target audiences. It also shows that there are a diversity of approaches that can be adapted by place branding strategies, namely in terms of narrative, perspectives, and medium components.

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Pitch This: Storytelling as a Means to Enhance Your Personal Brand 100

Sandra Vieira Vasconcelos, School of Hospitality and Tourism, Polytechnic Institute of

Porto, Portugal

Ana Balula, ESTGA, University of Aveiro, Portugal

The following chapter describes the design and implementation of a teaching and learning strategy that aimed to explore the affordances of storytelling when it comes to the management of students' personal branding skills. Designed to help students craft their online professional persona and produce video-based pitches, this strategy was developed taking into account the concepts of personal branding and digital storytelling, as well as a preliminary questionnaire focusing on participants' perceptions. Having been implemented within English for Specific Purposes classes, this strategy was successful in promoting students' engagement and making them aware of the importance of having a strong personal brand, something that can be enhanced through contemporary storytelling methods.

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Sara Santos, University of Aveiro, Portugal

Pedro Espírito Santo, Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Portugal

Storytelling in advertising allows consumers to recall the narrative, characters, and brands related to the story. This consolidates the consumer's idea of a brand as unique and distinct from others and can also be the basis for brand distinctiveness. As such, the present chapter will firstly take into consideration the existing theoretical framework related to the use of storytelling in the creation of narrative ads, and then it will present the creation, unfolding and results of an investigation involving 326 individuals. The data collected from this study demonstrates that the structure of the narrative of a storytelling ad positively influences the distinctiveness of the brand. Moreover, this study shows the mediating role between narrative structure and the perception of brand distinctiveness. This chapter enhances knowledge on advertising, narrative, and brand distinctiveness and supports new researches in this field.

Chapter 8

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Anil Dal Canbazoglu, Mersin University, Turkey

The present chapter discusses a particular advertisement aired for a bank in Turkey from a semiotic perspective. Advertising as film is visual storytelling. A film has language and form, and is made up of parts that relate to one another in specific ways that affect the audience. Film techniques take on a semiotic function in the process of meaning construction. As a cultural phenomenon, advertisements can reveal hidden meanings, such as gender issues and patriarchal discourse in the case of the analysed advertisement.

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Luis-Alberto Casado-Aranda, University of Granada, Spain

Juan Sánchez-Fernández, University of Granada, Spain

Arminda Paço, Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal

From a marketing perspective, storytelling involves creating, through advertising and communication strategies, an image of the company, brand, and products that makes it different from the competition. Advertising literature has shown that good stories have a way of inspiring, entertaining, explaining, and convincing, and can engage the emotional, attentional, and cognitive schemes of the customers. This is the first research that defines and makes an overview of the evolution of eye-tracking systems in the field of advertising which employs storytelling techniques. Particularly, the current chapter identifies the evolution of topics and relations between them, within the field of advertising research. The current study, therefore, advances an agenda for future research and constitutes a starting point for academics and professionals working in the field of advertising who intend to resort to eye-tracking techniques.

Section 3

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Food and Mediations: Tales of Culinary Cultures and Punjabi Media Representation 181

Rupali Sehgal, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

The chapter attempts to look at food and its representation in media with a special focus on Punjab and its cuisine. The work locates important symbols pertaining to the food culture of Punjab in sites such as cookbooks and cinema, which interestingly mix traditional with contemporary representations of material life. The first section looks at the cultural expressions of Punjabi cuisine in cookbooks against the backdrop of the history of Punjab, its ancient ties, and cultural affiliations of the past. Questions of caste, gastro-ethnicity, and stereotyping are also examined. The second section attempts to review select Bollywood films in order to cast light onto the contemporary socio-cultural conceptions of Punjabi culture. The study concludes by observing the ways in which food emerges as a commodity spectacle through stories and ideas on the food of Punjab. The work is carried out in order to exemplify the role of food in the creation of a cultural imaginary and explore the subtle connection that food and food culture share with the multiple intersections of an individual's identity.

Chapter 11

From Overlay to Interplay: Subverting the Message and Creating the Surreal With Augmented Reality 200

Nina Lyons, Technological University Dublin, Ireland

Matt Smith, Technological University Dublin, Ireland

This chapter explores the unique characteristics of AR as a visual communication medium while also considering the diverse and potentially powerful meanings that can be created by using it in conjunction with established visual communication devices such as posters. The chapter evaluates a number of current projects that have utilised this type of digital narrative. It also explores the theories of visual communication to understand how posters communicate in order to leverage the same techniques for AR. Using three case studies, the authors examine how AR, when used in conjunction with a printed poster,

can subvert the original meaning of the poster to create a new meaning for the viewer and ultimately create the surreal.

Chapter 12

Gif as a Narrative Tool..... 224

Wayner Tristão Gonçalves, UNIVASF, Brazil

This chapter centres around a new type of creative and artistic expression, namely the gif. Positioned somewhere between an image and a video, the gif provides an interesting sense of narrative, since it presents itself on a never-ending loop. Although this type of moving image is currently associated with contemporary social media and the internet, its roots go back to the beginning of cinematic history, when the first recorded moving images were displayed repeatedly in front of the viewer. As such, starting from these cinematic roots, the present chapter will deal with the intricacies of the gif's narrative pattern and the status of art on the internet, before delving into the analysis of a series of gifs which were part of an art exhibition.

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Storytelling in Film and Literature: Old and New Narratives

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The Viewer-Participant Performing Morality in Interactive Storytelling in Bandersnatch 241

Karina Pătrășcanu, University of Bucharest, Romania

The present chapter wishes to interrogate the capability of interactive cinema to test, unveil, exercise, and challenge the viewer-participant's moral layout. Looking at Netflix's Black Mirror: Bandersnatch, the chapter mainly explores the implications and outcomes of performing morality in a digital space mediated by a new mode of telling and receiving stories. The analysis looks at possible obstacles in exercising—in a genuine manner—moral imperatives and looks at the nature of the story as well as the format as catalyst for self-reflection and moral awareness. The chapter then explores the possibility that moral conduits are the product of active practice, and that interactive cinema embodies such practice.

Chapter 14

“Nothing Spreads Like Fear”: Narrative Immersion in Soderbergh's Contagion..... 258

Lorena Clara Mihăeș, University of Bucharest, Romania

Anda Dimitriu, University of Bucharest, Romania

The present chapter looks at the way fear is depicted in Soderbergh's 2011 thriller Contagion and how the onlooker is dragged along into feeling the fear. Without using a studio to shoot the scenes, without insisting much on characters, employing hyperlink narrative (scenes change quickly, playing with geographical distant places and interweaving storylines between multiple characters) and using few words, the movie's main character is not the invisible virus but the fear it spreads into the characters, growing and turning into mass hysteria. The aim of this chapter is to analyse how narrative immersion works in Contagion through visual, auditory, and emotional elements, which are used by the director as vehicles for instilling fear in the audience.

Chapter 15

No More Drama: Genres and Subgenres of TV Series..... 274

Álvaro J. Rojas-Lamorena, University of Granada, Spain

Salvador Del Barrio-García, University of Granada, Spain

Juan Miguel Alcántara-Pilar, University of Granada, Spain

The undeniable development of the television series sector in recent years has resulted in viewers having access to a large amount of television content, thanks largely to the development of technologies such as the internet and the emergence of video on demand. Given the scarcity of academic works that categorise these television contents, this chapter comes to conceptually delimit the television drama genre, as well as its different sub-genres. With this, the authors seek to centralise in a single academic work the main characteristics of each dramatic sub-genre that causes a series to be ascribed to a certain category, serving as a guide for potential academic works related to this growing sector.

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Sushma Nagesh Nayak, Symbiosis School of Economics, Symbiosis International University

(Deemed), India

This chapter aims to examine new perspectives on the annals of R. K. Narayan, with specific emphasis on *Malgudi Days*. It primarily attempts to examine how modern television/media has changed dramatically ever since *Malgudi Days* was first aired on Indian television during the eighties, what the viewers' expectations from television entertainment are today, how television viewers perceive the difference in television broadcasts since the 1980s until the present date. To this end, the author employs online reviews to assess the impact on viewers' choices through a number of paradigms, such as star ratings, the nature of the review content, the number of reviews, and the source of review.

Chapter 17

The Story of the Unborn: Fetal Narrators in Pascal Bruckner, Chinghiz Aitmatov, and Ian

McEwan's Novels..... 314

Marta Teodora Boboc, University of Bucharest, Romania

This chapter focuses on a relatively new kind of narrative, concerning storytelling from inside the womb as it offers an inner perspective on both outside social matters and on the first stage of life as well. The author of the given chapter aims to explore the specific features of such a narrative, by comparing the novels of three writers, Pascal Bruckner, Chinghiz Aitmatov, and Ian McEwan, that belong to three different cultural spaces, French, Kyrgyz, and English. The basic elements of a story (plot, setting, characters, point of view, theme, symbolism, conflict, and resolution) are taken into account and their contrastive analysis is meant to reveal some key concepts that define an innovative way to approach literature.

Section 5
Education: Storytelling-Based Applications

Chapter 18

Medical Sociology and Storytelling in a Decolonial Context: Exploring Photovoice as a Critical Pedagogical Tool..... 342

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The use of photovoice for storytelling and as a critical pedagogical tool is still exploratory. Despite calls to rethink, re-imagine, and rework curriculums, many challenges remain in designing assessments that utilize creative storytelling formats that demonstrate an awareness of the social context, history, and lived realities of students. This chapter addresses the outcomes of a classroom-based study that explored whether a photovoice essay, used in a medical sociology undergraduate assessment, facilitated a critical analysis of the social determinants of health by students, and oriented them towards taking action. Existing research on critical pedagogy tends to focus on investigating the feasibility or extent of dialogical exploration of societal hegemonies, and prospects of future transformations between teachers and students in the classroom. This chapter provides an overview of how photovoice and reflective writing are used to create new stories by students in a South African university and how it can be supported.

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Chemistry Edutainment: A Storytelling Activity for Middle-School Children..... 364

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Creating a fun, interactive, and useful science activity for teaching purposes can be a real challenge, especially if it is addressed to middle-school children. More and more science communicators are employing novel communication techniques to better reach out to their audience. In science communication, storytelling is valuable to sparking interest in science. Given that there are many episodes in the history of science that can serve as inspiration, the authors of this chapter share how they used storytelling, based on a real-life event, to create a science communication activity for middle-school children. Focused on chemistry and ethics, these topics were introduced through hands-on laboratory activities with ethical questions embedded in the story line. This task challenges the students to come up with answers by themselves, through a problem-based learning model. By adding game logic elements to this activity, the authors created a unique form of communicating science, both educational and entertaining, which children appreciated.

Chapter 20

Transmedia Storytelling Edutainment and the New Testament Lesson 392

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Storytelling is the most ancient form of teaching that can enhance the learning experience, and transmedia is a technique where elements of a story get dispersed across multiple media with each story creating a cohesive entertainment experience. The storytelling framework is a viable solution to engage a universal audience, and the socio-cultural theory of learning presented underpins how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact instruction and learning. The study explores how the pre-historic practice of transmedia storytelling can be used and practiced by educators. Narratives transverse across media

and can be traced back to the presentation of Biblical stories. The Bible story has been told across many different forms of media, from print to icons to stained glass windows. Jesus, the master teacher, used storytelling methods of instruction to convey his message to his learners across different platforms. The chapter explores the parallels between Biblical transmedia and contemporary transmedia and considers transmedia edutainment as a pedagogical practice in higher education.

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Preface

Stories are everywhere around us, from the ads on TV or music video clips, to the more sophisticated stories told by books or movies. Everything comes wrapped in a story, and stories seem to endlessly intertwine.

If you go to the cinema today to watch an entertaining blockbuster, don't expect to sit through a two-hour story and then simply forget or remember it, depending on how impactful you have found it or how engaging the characters were. In today's world, a story is almost never a stand-alone experience. If you watch a superhero movie, for sure you will discover new stories either in the source materials, usually comic books, or in the countless fanfiction posts on specialized blogs. Your favorite character's arc or pivotal traits will be replicated on mugs, T-shirts or school bags, since the same story drives a whole industry of ancillary products. You can follow the meta-narrative of how the story was put on film, or you can participate in the creation of a new story when the actor playing your favorite character engages with fans about the initial story on social media.

We could unmistakably say that we live in a story-based society. If we equate story with fiction, or non-true, or make-believe, why would the rational modern man of today crave stories so desperately, not only for entertainment but also for serious matters? Most probably because they tap into primordial human needs—for harmony, shelter, salvation. With the uncertainty of modern times, the need for storytelling becomes increasingly dire, as stories now represent the promise of comfort, and even the hope of controlling or changing one's own narrative.

This volume brings together twenty diverse case-studies focusing on modern-day stories and on the way they are conveyed to us through various channels, including those non-linguistic. Given the multitude of media nowadays, from the traditional ones (literature, film, audio, graphic novels) to the digital media, we feel that this book fills in a gap in applied narratology, by bringing to attention contemporary storytelling and the way stories have been changed by our post-modern, post-humanist, post-everything minds—as they are told in different media, stories that migrate from one medium to another, changing shape, mutating and still illustrating McLuhan's five-decade-old statement “The medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1964).

The book covers storytelling in several domains and is generally addressed to professionals, researchers and students. As an important number of chapters in the book deal with storytelling in the new media (see Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, and 12), we believe that the present volume may benefit a number of academics from various fields, given the current expansion of “media,” “new media,” and “comparative media” studies at many universities throughout the world. It could also be of use to savvy business owners or entrepreneurs who wish to improve their marketing strategy using a good story (see Chapters 5, 7, 8 and 9), or to teachers and educators who are faced with unique challenges, from the demands of an

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ESP class in the twenty-first century (see Chapter 6) to the needs of middle schoolers who expect to be entertained into learning (see Chapter 19) and those of students enrolled in higher education (Chapters 18 and 19). Last but not least, the book is addressed to researchers in the field of film and literature (see Chapters 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17).

The volume is divided into five parts, with chapters clustered around social sciences, marketing, visual storytelling, film and literature, and education. All chapters are bound by one common denominator: contemporary storytelling and the way it is employed in various media across disciplines.

SECTION 1

The centrality of storytelling to human cognition and communication has been long recognized (Gelman & Basbøll, 2014, p. 547). In the social sciences, the ‘narrative turn’ of the last decades illustrates a profound interest in the personal and collective (hi)stories of people the world over and advocates a better understanding of social phenomena and human experience through insightful narratives as a reaction to the presumably objective and unprejudiced stance of positivism. This approach brings to the fore previously more muted individual and collective voices and allows for a more in-depth exploration of the power systems and social dynamics at play locally or on the global scale.

Steeped into narrative sociology, which holds that we construct meaning through the stories we tell about daily events, from personal accounts to cultural myths and everything in-between, Rosalina Pisco Costa’s “‘All the World’s a Stage’ and Sociologists Its Storytellers? Contemporary Sociology and the Art of Telling a Good Story” underlines the role of narratives as exercises in sociological imagination. Dwelling on two iconic books separated by almost fifty years of scientific progress—Mills’ *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) and Berger and Quinney’s *Storytelling Sociology* (2004)—the author emphasizes the enduring importance of writing as a way of knowing and as a method of discovery and analysis in sociology. Stories in their written form, though time-consuming and challenged by the emerging technologies, have passed the test of time and have remained an effective way of organizing experience into meaningful patterns.

Ester Iyanga-Mambo’s “Online Personal Narratives: Comments Sections as Support Groups in Knowledge-Sharing Platforms” analyzes the impact of storytelling in relation to narrative therapy for self-identified victims of abuse in such contemporary contexts as knowledge-sharing platforms. By using a sociolinguistic, narratology-based approach, she shows how the exchange and the interaction of personal narratives in the comments sections of such popular media platforms meet the requirements of organized narrative group psychotherapy, albeit in a less guided and attentively curated manner, driven instead by the spontaneous production of shared personal stories.

While rhetoric is the art of telling good and persuasive stories, rumor is unsubstantiated information, rooted in controversy, speculation, misinformation, and disinformation. Yet, Sayeed Al-Zaman and Prithula Prosun Puja bring the two concepts together in a chapter that attempts to show that rumors as a type of storytelling circulating in social media are successful precisely because they resort to the old art of rhetoric, in its updated and digitized form. “Storytelling and the Rhetoric of Rumor in Social Media” provides illustrative examples of how well-wrought rumors spread in social media can lead to violence or can induce panic in the audience. The paper concludes that the unique communication features of social media have changed the traditional patterns of storytelling, which has become more dialogic and interactive. Digital rhetoric has added superficiality (social media stories are more social-relational than

informational and educational), stronger engagement with the text (emotional elements are injected in the stories), while the identity of the content creator and content consumers usually bear no resemblance to their real-life identities, anonymity being a prominent (and sometimes perilous) feature of social media platforms.

In the same vein as the previous chapter, Jolita Horbacauskiene's contribution, "Linguistic Elements as Tools for the Analysis of Media Narratives", takes a close look at media narratives, this time through the lens of discourse analysis. The chapter explores how social issues (poverty, crime, migrants, minority groups) are depicted in media texts, bringing to the fore questions related to the layout and structural organization of the text, the language, grammar and rhetorical elements employed, the discursive strategies and the ideological standpoints. By purposefully using certain linguistic strategies such as active/passive voices, nominalization, direct/indirect speech and a plethora of rhetorical devices, media texts shape our perceptions of socially sensitive issues.

SECTION 2

If one wants to make any kind of information more memorable, then they should organize it as a story. This realization was a turning point in marketing, winning for storytelling a "decisive foothold on how brands of the future will be shaped" (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2005, p. 15). No wonder that huge amounts of money are invested in ads that tell a few-second story, or in three-word logos that manage to instantaneously conjure a storyworld in its own right. Stories also enhance the emotional and personal connections with brands, creating brand loyalty and, ultimately, triggering the desire to purchase.

Sara Clara and Belem Barbosa's chapter "People Make Places, What Do Stories Do?: Applying Digital Storytelling Strategies to Communicate the Identity of Cities and Regions" underlines the effectiveness of digital storytelling in the development of marketing strategies designed to construct place identity. By building on a gap in the current literature, the two authors reflect on the application of digital storytelling in the service of (good) place branding and advocate the use of digital communication in creating and promoting unique place identities in today's global market.

In their "Pitch This: Storytelling as a Means to Enhance Your Personal Brand", Sandra Vieira Vasconcelos and Ana Balula start off a discussion on storytelling from the real need of the students they teach in their ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes. Their chapter postulates that in a world in which a person's digital profile is an important criterion for professional success, university students should be taught to curate their own personal brand via personal stories. In an ongoing project which they describe in this chapter, the authors explain how different versions of storytelling can be used in order to push the boundaries of both pedagogical endeavors and the art of marketing one's online persona.

Sara Santos and Pedro Espírito Santo propose a dual focus in their "Brands and Stories in Ads: The Relationship between Storytelling and Brand Distinctiveness". The authors swell on the importance of an engaging storyline in advertisements and of narrative transportation for the construction of brand distinctiveness in the eyes of customers, advancing four interrelated hypotheses. They then support these hypotheses with the findings of a case study analyzed via the PLS-PM model: the commercial for a Portuguese alcoholic beverage, Licor Beirão, which tells the unique story of a man who now suffers the consequences of a youthful mishap.

Anil Dal Canbazoglu's chapter is a cultural case-study which analyses an advertisement for a Turkish bank. As illustrated in the title, "Gender and Patriarchy in Turkish Advertising: A Semiotic Analysis",

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the paper takes a gender studies perspective and reveals hidden meanings in an advertisement which is apparently politically correct. The author makes use of semiotics and film techniques to unveil, frame by frame, the patriarchal discourse that lies at the core of the ad.

Advances in technology have made possible the measurement of the viewer's attention span when watching an advertisement. Armed with quantitative data, Luis-Alberto Casado-Aranda, Juan Sánchez-Fernández and Arminda Paço's chapter, "Exploring the Effectiveness of Storytelling in Advertising Through Eye-Tracking", dwells on the benefits of using eye-tracking systems in marketing. Eye-trackers are devices that allow the recording of the movements of the eyes when exposed to an object, a text, an image or other visual material. In other words, these tracking devices can tell how interesting and captivating a story may be for the audience, using scientific data.

SECTION 3

If the first section deals with storytelling in the social sciences and the second one brings attention to the effectiveness of narratives in the realm of marketing, the third section of this book shifts focus and proposes a different type of story—one which is primarily reliant on the visual, rather than on the spoken or written. After all, an image can speak a thousand words. And in a world dominated by images, narratives which rely heavily on the visual make their way in our everyday life, especially since "meanings circulate visually, in addition to orally and textually" (Rogoff, 2007, p. 25).

All three chapters brought together in this section start from the visual element, but each of them explores it in a different fashion. Rupali Sehgal's chapter, "Food and Mediations: Tales of Culinary Cultures and Punjabi Media Representation", starts off this section with a unique illustration of how Punjabi identity is represented in the visual representation of food in cookbooks and Bollywood films. Recipes and images of food tell stories of history, identity and caste associations. The images associated with food and dining find their way onto the screen and then travel the world, enforcing in the mind of the international viewer the culinary story of an entire cultural community.

The following two chapters deal with images in conjunction with modern-day technology. In their "From Overlay to Interplay: Subverting the Message and Creating the Surreal with Augmented Reality", Nina Lyons and Matt Smith provide a sturdy theoretical framework for the conveyance of meaning through design and ponder on the 'interplay' between the visual, the textual and the digital. Starting from a humble poster, the authors present three case studies explaining how a digital AR (Augmented Reality) overlay can modify the 2D or even contradict the original design by introducing an alternative narrative.

Wayner Tristão Goncalves's "Gif as a Narrative Tool" provides another perspective on how narratives have changed in the age of digital technology. By taking the example of the gif, a short moving image, the author argues that this popular form of artistic expression brings the contemporary understanding of narrative back to early-cinematic times, when short recorded clips were played continuously before audiences eager for curios. In his work, the author associates the gif with a looping narrative and examines the implications of a type of narrative which can no longer be described as "irreducibly durative" (Bruner, 2003, p. 45).

SECTION 4

Old media will never die—once they have established themselves as valid channels, they continue to exist as part of the larger system of communication. Literature, for instance, has not been replaced by movies, they both exist independently, to the point that sometimes one wonders which is better, the book or the cinematic adaptation. The fourth section of this book proposes a selection of five chapters which deal with filmic and/or literary narratives and seeks to bring to the fore a deeper understanding of the new stories which are told on screen or on paper.

Karina Pătrășcanu's chapter explores the manner in which the digital space created by Netflix's interactive, choose-your-own-adventure sci-fi *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* exercises and challenges the viewer-participant's moral imperatives. She provides an ample analysis on how this new type of movie experience and storytelling engagement, rooted in performance arts, interactive texts and video games, allows for the audience's performance of morality and how the viewer-participant's moral journey is guided (or impeded) by the architectonics of interactive digital storytelling.

In their chapter, "‘Nothing Spreads like Fear’: Narrative Immersion in Soderbergh's *Contagion*", Lorena Clara Mihăeș and Anda Dimitriu set out to revisit the allowances of a film which, despite modest success at the time of its release, has become a cult classic. With narrative immersion the main focus of the chapter, the authors investigate the auditory, visual and emotional mechanisms which make this film an engrossing and terrifying view for 2020 audiences.

Given the emergence and expansion of video-on-demand platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+, a chapter on TV series could not have missed from the present volume. "No More Drama: Genres and Subgenres of TV Series" is an attempt at categorizing TV drama, the most popular TV genre nowadays. Álvaro J. Rojas-Lamorenna, Salvador Del Barrio-García and Juan Miguel Alcántara-Pilar identify several sub-genres based on the type of plot. From tearjerkers to medical or fantasy series, TV drama is the craze of the day, building hugely loyal fanbases and giving rise to the phenomenon of binge-watching.

Sushma Nagesh Nayak's chapter, "New Perspectives on the Annals of R.K. Narayan: Reflections and Ruminations" compares *Malgudi Days*, a collection of short stories by a mainstream Indian writer, R.K. Narayan, to its movie adaptation. *Malgudi Days*, aired on Indian television during the eighties, has remained a beloved classic thanks to its simple and unambiguous style of narrative. The author contrasts the adaptation of the book to the current state of Indian TV series characterized by glamour and sensationalism.

Teodora Boboc's chapter, "The Story of the Unborn: Fetal Narrators in Pascal Bruckner, Chinghiz Aitmatov and Ian McEwan's Novels", brings to the fore the mechanisms through which socio-politico-economic circumstances are translated into three different novels through the intuitive voices of fetuses. A meticulously structured analysis of characters, plot and symbolism, the chapter is centered on the concept of the cassyndro-embryo, which was introduced and fully explored by Russian writer of Kyrgyz origin Chinghiz Aitmatov.

SECTION 5

Stories have always been the foundation of educational experience and are part of any educator's toolbox. Before we remember theories, definitions, and complex concepts, we remember narratives. Some stories have taught generations and still prove relevant today. But old stories can be told in new ways, using the affordances of the electronic media, which have opened up novel pedagogical avenues.

PhotoVoice is a participatory research method entrenched in empowerment education, critical feminist theory, and documentary photography. It enables underprivileged people to communicate strong messages through suggestive pictures. In her "Medical Sociology and Storytelling in a Decolonial Context: Exploring Photovoice as a Critical Pedagogical Tool," Chinwe Obuaku-Igwe engages the strengths of storytelling used as an exploratory tool in the field of critical pedagogy and puts forth a compelling analysis on the resources of photovoice (a combination of photography and reflective writing) in the study of health/medical sociology. She does so against the background of the democratization of knowledge in decolonized South Africa, arguing in favor of visual storytelling practices as instrumental to empowerment education in our contemporary, multicultural world.

Although learning is a serious matter, it need not be dry. Entertainment has entered many areas—we speak nowadays of infotainment or technotainment, for instance—and education has been no exception. Edutainment, a clipping from education and entertainment, is a relatively new teaching method which "relies heavily on visual material, on narrative or game-like formats [...] and on more informal, less didactic styles of address" (Buckingham & Scanlon, 2005, p. 45). Two chapters reflect on the relation between storytelling and edutainment, one from the perspective of middle-school education, the other from the standpoint of higher education, proving that edutainment is an effective pedagogical tool regardless of the age of students.

José Ferraz-Caetano and Dora Dias's chapter "Chemistry Edutainment: A Storytelling Activity for Middle-School Children" starts from a pilot study meant to capitalize on the educational benefits of creating or adapting stories for science education purposes. Their detailed analysis adds to the literature on the use of storytelling, both in science communication and as an educational tool meant to trigger a more active engagement and interactivity in a classroom environment.

Stavroula Kalogeras's contribution and the last chapter of this volume takes us back in time to the very roots of storytelling, reminding us that, even if technology is a contrivance of the modern man, ancient people too looked for ways to record, multiply and spread their stories across various channels. For what can be more emblematic of storytelling in the Judeo-Christian tradition than the parables told by Jesus to his followers? "Transmedia Storytelling Edutainment and the New Testament Lesson" casts a fresh light on Jesus' teachings, considered by the author to be the earliest instance of transmedia narratives—the Bible stories have been told across many different forms of media, from print to icons and to stained glass windows. Jesus himself is regarded as the first transmedia educator who used storytelling as a method of instruction to convey his messages to his learners across different platforms. The paper explores the parallels between Biblical transmedia and contemporary transmedia and considers transmedia edutainment as a pedagogical practice in higher education.

This volume sets out to exemplify the breadth and flexibility of stories nowadays under the influence of a multitude of transmission channels. Although each chapter explores storytelling from a different angle and may be read individually, the space delineated by their shared interest in and exploration of contemporary narrative forms generates a rich dialogue on how stories are constructed, circulated and recycled in various media.

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Introduction

In his seminal *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Peter Brooks (1984) observes that people's lives are "ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell and hear told, those we dream or imagine or would like to tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves in an episodic, sometimes semiconscious, but virtually uninterrupted monologue" (p. 3). According to him, we humans lead our lives "at the intersection of several stories not yet completed" (Brooks, 1984, p. 3), stories still waiting to be made sense of or highly anticipated in our not-so-distant future. Storytelling is a universal impulse, culturally-bound and highly dependent on the medium chosen for the creation and transmission of stories, nonetheless central to humanity since preliterate times. Vladimir Nabokov (1962) noted that "we are absurdly accustomed to the miracle of a few written signs being able to contain immortal imagery, involutions of thought, new worlds with live people, speaking, weeping, laughing" (p. 271), which illustrates the narrative multiverse we are allowed access to through the shared power of storytelling.

Along the same lines, Graham Swift (1983) defined the human being as "the storytelling animal", who brings order into chaos through "the comforting marker buoys and trail signs of stories", which one "has to keep on making" because "as long as there's a story, it's all right" (p. 63). Regarded as a marvel of storytelling itself, Tim O'Brien's novel about the Vietnam War, *The Things They Carried* (1990), lyricizes that stories "are for an eternity, when memory is erased, when there is nothing to remember except the story" (p. 36), thus speaking both to their immortality and to our innate storytelling imperative. According to anthropologist Michael Jackson (2002), storytelling is ultimately a coping mechanism and a "vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances" (p. 15), which allows us to rise above passivity and actively refashion the workings of history "both in dialogue with others and within one's own imagination" (p. 15). As an "energy field in which social and extrasocial dimensions of reality are brought together" (Jackson, 2002, p. 29), storytelling enables individuals to both remedy "a bias toward autonomy when it has been lost" and assert "collective ideals in the face of disparate experiences" (Jackson, 2002, p. 18). In the space of this narrative imaginary, we can create and recreate reality, especially during challenging times, as "the cure for the horror is story" (Storr, 2020).

Across places, times and societies, and even across media, stories have always been an integral part of the human experience. That is perhaps because stories are also an integral part of our biology, an indispensable mechanism in our neurological physiology. They are written within us, as it were, since our brains and neurological pathways function on patterns that facilitate the creation, recreation and dissolution of stories (Armstrong, 2020, p. 12; Bickle, 2003) to the extent that American evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould contended that "we are storytelling creatures and should have been named

Homo Narrator” (as cited in Jarman, 1995, p. 161). Under this biological imperative, the link between stories and the various aspects of human endeavor has been a constant and prolific line of inquiry for researchers in fields as diverse as literature and the performative arts, philosophy, anthropology, communication theory, neuroscience and even artificial intelligence and robotics (Palmer, 2004; Fireman, McVay, & Flanagan, 2003; Herman, 2013; Ogata & Akimoto, 2016; Lwin, 2020).

With roots going as far back as Aristotle, the birth of modern narratology is directly linked to the emergence of structuralist literary theory as a systematic reflection on the way stories are constructed and perceived by their audiences. Reflecting the diversity of the storytelling process itself, narratology has in time grown into a “transtextual project unconstrained by the particularities of media or culture” (Page & Thomas, 2011, p. 4), whose breadth of interpretation has allowed for rich interdisciplinary research. Traditionally, narratology encompasses issues pertaining to the study of plot and characters, the reliability of and distinction between author and narrator, the narrative timeline and the in-text or contextual events which mark the story (Schmid, 2010). In light of its functions, one may distinguish between a contextual approach to narratology, which embeds the story in social, historic or cultural contexts, and a cognitive approach, which relates stories to the manner in which and the mechanisms by which humans understand narratives (Thon, 2016). Further reflecting the variety of genres and media in which narratives have developed, transgeneric and intermedial approaches to narratology “include not only research on the transmedial dimensions of narrative but also a variety of intermedial and intramedial narratological approaches concerned with a single medium or genre such as poetry, drama, painting, music, film, comics, or video games” (Thon, 2016, p. 2).

Following the spirit of the times, this field of study has undergone different shifts in perspective as well, moving from a structuralist approach, which was promoted by such thinkers as Roland Barthes in the 1970s and which is now sometimes called the “classical” period of narratology, to a postclassical expansion which currently integrates new media and innovative forms of telling stories (Punday, 2019; Fludernik, 2005). The methods of inquiry have also shifted since the structuralist predilection for identifying, labeling or categorizing phenomena (Fludernik, 2005, pp. 38-39). With the ‘narrative turn’, researchers in the field are increasingly focused on the nonliterary and nonlinguistic, making narratology a ‘master discipline’ which supports explorations in a variety of other fields (Fludernik, 2005, pp. 46-47). It should come as no surprise that, besides linguistics and literary studies, both of which have long made stories an object of study, other fields of human activity have incorporated or adapted narratives for their own purposes.

In the field of psychology, for instance, the narrative turn was marked by Theodore Sarbin’s 1986 edited volume on *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*. Here, he promotes an alternative view to the mainstream psychology of the time, namely one based on narrative plots and on narrative as the “root metaphor” and the organizing principle of human conduct, in opposition to the abstract or schematic “heuristics, integrating hypotheses, macrostructures” of the old mechanistic paradigm (p. 9). Since then, the established field of narrative psychology has become more complex and a lot of research has been carried out at the intersection of narrative theory and psychology (Vassilieva, 2016, p. 2). But even as early as the mid-1950s, social psychologist Erving Goffman made major strides in this direction with his ‘dramaturgical analysis’, first in his classic *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) and then in a number of other successful books published throughout the sixties and the seventies. As for the related discipline of sociology and the narrative turn in the social sciences of the last decades, this collective volume features an entire section of chapters dedicated to explorations in the field.

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In similar fashion and as early as the end of the previous century, Peter Brooks and Paul Gewirtz (1996) interrogate the rising contemporary concern with narrative and rhetoric applied to the field of law and find that the turn to narrative in legal study is primarily politically reformist in its intention, seeking to respond to the interests of the previously disenfranchised. The emphasis on storytelling in the legal field is but the most recent offshoot of the intersectional academic movement of law and literature which has been gaining momentum since the 1980s and serves as a “vehicle of dissent from traditional forms of legal reasoning and argumentation”, as a “countermajoritarian argument” meant to put across meanings previously excluded or marginalized by mainstream legal thinking and rhetoric (Brooks & Gewirtz, 1996, p. 16).

Within the same margin of increasingly stepping away from abstractions and relying more on attention to human behavior, Nobel Prize-winning economist and *New York Times* bestselling author Robert Shiller (2019) has recently put forth a new theory of economic change based on the (viral) proliferation of narratives. In what he calls “narrative economics”, he explores the manner in which (popular) stories have the power to drive major economic events, most recently in conjunction with the growth of advances in information technology and the uses of social media. He finds traditional economics wanting, with its failure to take into account the role played by public beliefs (narratives) in economic events and instead advances the idea that “popular stories change through time to affect economic outcomes”, not solely market contractions or recessions, but other economic phenomena as well (Shiller, 2019, p. xii).

In politics, especially nowadays, people seem no longer convinced by appeal to arguments and facts, but by stories, which may bear no resemblance to the truth whatsoever, but are persuasive, nonetheless. The explanation arguably resides in the sheer fact that “the political brain is an emotional brain” and not a “dispassionate calculating machine, objectively searching for the right facts, figures, and policies to make a reasoned decision” (Westen, 2008, p. xv). More recently and to the same effect, Philip Seargeant (2020) observes that “almost all notable political figures and movements down through history are associated as much with a particular narrative as they are with a set of ideas, policies or actions” (p. 17). And while the creation, fabrication and spinning of stories have always been instrumental to politics, “today’s combination of digital media, populism and partisanship is making it an evermore important part of the persuasive process – so much so that even when the current cast of characters get written out of the script, the storylines they’ve instigated will continue to resonate throughout the culture” (Seargeant, 2020, p. 19).

One need only look at the proliferation of conspiracy narratives today to begin to grasp the extent to which digital platforms have enabled a “growing phenomenon of widespread dissemination ... and acceptance as fact of stories of uncertain provenance or accuracy” (Seargeant, 2020, p. 144). Professor of the Public Understanding of Technology John Naughton believes that what we call conspiracy theories represent “a way of trying to make sense of a complex and confusing world for an ordinary citizen” (cited in Seargeant, 2020, p. 165). As stories, they have the same basic functions as many other types of narratives, but they are distinguished by their social and political impact, by their ability to motivate individuals to rally up and act collectively towards political ends. Zack Stanton (2020) of *Politico* observes that “to be an American in 2020 is to live in a petri dish ideal for growing conspiracy theories”. He refers, by all means and among others, to the most recent QAnon narratives which speak about cabals of paedophiles who are corrupting the federal government and are planning to take on President Trump and which are propelled by “an unlikely coalition of spirituality and wellness groups, vigilante ‘paedophile hunter’ networks, pre-existing conspiracy forums, local news pages, pro-Brexit campaigners and the far right” (McIntyre, 2020). To this latest concoction one can similarly add the birther conspiracy regarding first

President Barack Obama and now vice-presidential hopeful Kamala Harris or the spate of torchings of 5G masts in the UK as a result of wild theories that the spread of the novel coronavirus across Europe is related to the implementation of 5G technology.

With the advent of social media and the democratization of portable technological devices, the world we live in has changed to an almost unrecognizable extent. Events seem to unravel faster all around us. And, consequently, the stories we tell and the means we have at our disposal in order to first create and then analyze them seem to have changed as well. What was once a single, unitary and authoritative telling of the story seems to have now dispersed, leaving behind a slew of sources. This proliferation of stories supporting each other as well as of sources adding corroboration to other sources often gives narratives a sheen of credibility. Sometimes, this works to undermine the primacy of traditional sources, such as mainstream media. For instance, we don't seem to find out about the death of a cultural icon from the BBC or CNN, but rather we become aware of it when we come across a post on somebody's Facebook feed reading "Rest in power, RBG", perhaps followed by an emoji commentary containing the contributor's feelings on the matter. In this fast-paced online environment, fact entwines with fiction and personal beliefs.

The question of fictionality is nothing new in the field of narratology, but, being constantly surrounded by both official and personal—and sometimes contradictory—accounts of all globally significant events, we have come to doubt the veracity of our sources. Reality and fiction interweave to form elaborate stories which spread online, as well as offline, and which seem to Hoover up all aspects of modern life. We are constantly told that we are now living in a terrifying post-truth era, surrounded by "fake-news", lies and all kinds of fictions. Yet, there is nothing new under the sun and what has been will be again: humans have always been a post-truth species (Harari, 2018), outsmarting all the other species due to their unique capacity of creating, spreading and convincing others to believe in these "lies".

Make-believe or real, grounded in the reality of the day or founded in fantasy, stories undoubtedly constitute the very bedrock of the self, of community and of civilization. They help us communicate, understand life, assign meaning and, thus, mediate our relation with the world around us. They serve didactic and ethical purposes and have been historically used to educate and enculturate children and adults alike. Stories are potent conveyors of cultural values and norms, with an enormous role in socializing and congregating, having community-building or community-strengthening functions, promoting consensus or, on the contrary, challenging the received wisdom (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414). Furthermore, they ground us and help us make sense of our existence and of all the informational noise surrounding us, while also taking us away from it and offering escape from everyday reality. They organize knowledge into patterns which feed the appetite of our "cognitive niche" (Tooby & DeVore, 1987), as they are more easily recognized and processed by our brains and also more readily passed on to others. The stories that we generate and exchange are not just cognitive play (Boyd, 2009; Gottschall, 2012), but also a means of entertainment and a sheer source of joy for which we are evolutionarily wired.

In our present, highly interconnected world, the shape, quality and diversity of human relationships is now defined by technological innovation. So much so that we tend to use virtually each new means of communication technology we invent to tell stories (Alexander, 2011, p. 5), and a far greater proportion of people than ever before can now access storytelling media "for both story production and consumption, united by myriad networks of critique, support, examples, and experimentation" (Alexander, 2011, p. 14). From nuclear physicist Willy Higinbotham's first interactive video game developed at the Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York in 1958 (Handler Miller, 2004, p. 22) to current online social networks, cross-media productions, virtual reality and immersive environments, digital

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technology advances have allowed for the rather rapid shift from a “lean back”, passive form of engagement to a “lean forward”, interactive approach to it.

This development has been doubled by an increased accessibility of digital media for people coming from all walks of life and industries. Given its prevalence across the world in increasingly diverse contexts, digital communication and storytelling is nowadays akin to a social movement (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009, p. 5) and has already given rise to digital storytelling communities across the globe (the Center for Digital Storytelling or Bubbe’s Back Porch, to name just a couple of examples). Joe Lambert (2013) of the Center for Digital Storytelling believes that this phenomenon of particularly the last decade enables more and more individuals and communities to wake up “to the power of their own voice in the media” (p. 4) and thus to find novel ways to share stories born out of a cornucopia of experiences. Paradoxically, it seems to be the momentum of digital storytelling that leads us back to the campfire (Lambert, 2013, p. 5).

But be it around a campfire or in front of a screen, storytelling seems to remain a human constant, dependent only upon the ingenuity of the tools which generations use to bring their narratives to the fore. Traditional and new media storytelling are not really independent but borrow elements from one another, giving rise to a new set of modalities—different ways in which information is stored for presentation. Spontaneous, edited or formal, stories involve a plurality which has always gone beyond mere words (Lwin, 2020). Multimodality entails the application of multiple literacies (text, image, audio recording, video, etc.) within one single medium, adding new layers of content to a traditional media form (Punday, 2011, p. 20). The multimodal novel, for instance, has broken up the traditional coherence and discursive linearity of the written word and has turned it into a hypertextual collection of various semiotic modes. Reading has become a “multi-literate act” (Hallet, 2014, p. 168) thereby the reader is invited to combine “different codes, discursive conventions, channels, sensory and cognitive modes” (Mitchell, 1994, p. 95). A story may begin in one medium and finish in another (Dena, 2007, p. 2)—transmedia narratives exist simultaneously not only across multiple media, but they also form relationships to other texts in a wider system of stories and are still able of standing alone (Newman & Simons, 2011, p. 242). This gives rise to a kaleidoscopic media landscape in which “creators and fans alike constantly expand, revise, and even parody” (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 1) the fictional universe.

The speech-act approach to narrative, endorsed by Prince, Genette and Chatman, which postulates a narrator engaged in the speech act of telling a story to a narratee, leaves out many narrative manifestations, such as visual or musical forms. Digital storytelling, too, has challenged well-established narrative concepts, such as plot, characters, point of view, event structure, temporality, etc., in the new contexts of interactivity, immersion and agency. Ryan (2006) contends that while certain narrative concepts are valid across several media (notions of characters, events, fictional worlds), others are medium-specific. She also regards stories from a cognitive perspective rather than considering them language-dependent: “Story is a mental image, a cognitive construct that concerns certain types of entities and relations between these entities” (p. 7).

Interactivity—often cited as the main feature of digital media, setting them apart from the traditional channels of communication (Ryan, 2004; Aarseth, 1997)—has blown new life into the communicative interplay between the storyteller, his/her story and the audiences. Digital narratology no longer views the text as a static construct, but as dynamic processes, while readers and audiences are no longer passive recipients, but active participants in the process of meaning creation, sometimes even co-authors in the production of the story. High culture in which only the intellectual elites produced cultural objects of aesthetic value is now being partially replaced by “participatory culture” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3), in which

consumers create their own content. The internet has also allowed for collective authorship, with the contributors' involvement ranging from conscious participation (contributors are aware of the nature of the project and the imposed constraints) to contributory participation (contributors do not know all the details of the project but they take conscious steps to be part of it) and even to unwitting participation (the text machine gathers materials without the contributors' awareness) (Rettberg, 2011). It is now a common practice on the internet to have collectively authored hypertexts, of which Wikipedia is an illustrative example. The day may not be far when, following the example of Wikipedia, a writing community will commit itself to producing a novel that will be "many novels with interchangeable parts, written according to sets of specific constraints to ensure a degree of formal unity, and tagged with metadata that would make it possible to easily remix novels in thousands of structured configurations. Such a project would be performance, game, and literature" (Rettberg, 2011, p. 202). And, most probably, a challenge to theoretical approaches.

Meanwhile, however, the story told by modern-day narratives at times loses its former solidity and sense of closure, branching out into numberless pathways—a technique taken over from the postmodern novel and soap operas and further perfected—, while the ending seems to be deferred forever. Hence the proliferation of prequels, sequels, and spin-offs, and all kinds of modern contrivances (like fan fiction, personal blogs or knowledge-sharing platforms) that invite us to step into a familiar already-in-place universe we have visited before so many times. As Ryan and Thon (2014) remark, this is due to the ease with which the recipients of the story are immersed in the fictional world, since this universe and all its inhabitants are already familiar. In this sense, the sultan's dream in the *Arabian Nights* seems to have come true—the never-ending story is now with us to stay.

Given the fast pace of technological changes and the subsequent proliferation of new forms of narratives, narratology seems to "have not yet developed a language to describe these strange new objects" (Manovich, n.d.). Ryan (2014) acknowledges the importance of the channel of transmission of narratives and pleads for a media-conscious narratology which goes beyond traditional literary narrative. She describes narrative affordances and limitations of media along three coordinates: a semiotic dimension (how signs—expressed in terms of natural language, image, sound, movement, face-to-face interaction, and various combinations of them—can tell a story), a technical dimension (all media need a mode of production and a material support which affect dissemination, storage, and cognition as well as the relationship between sender and receiver) and a cultural dimension (the cultural role played by media) (p. 30).

As Daniel Punday (2019) observes, "digital media forms have evolved in a world inundated with narrative contexts", a "messy fact" (p. 2) which needs to be contented with when talking about twenty-first century narratives. Until narratology develops fully-fledged theoretical frameworks to map this still-in-the-making territory (though they may be born already obsolete due to the unprecedentedly quick changes in the narrative forms), digital storytelling continues to put forth a whole range of narrative possibilities and to challenge researchers to find the best language to conceptualize them. After all, any medium through which a story is conveyed to the public is successful if it becomes transparent: "we lose consciousness of the medium and see neither print nor film but only the power of the story itself. If digital art reaches the same level of expressiveness as these old media, we will no longer concern ourselves with how we are receiving the information. We will only think about what truth it has told us about our lives" (Murray, 1997, p. 26).

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Section 1

Storytelling and the Social Sciences: New Practices

Chapter 1

“All the World’s a Stage” and Sociologists Its Storytellers: Contemporary Sociology and the Art of Telling a Good Story

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ABSTRACT

*Sociologists have become “storytellers.” This chapter aims to explore the importance of writing in the ways of telling about society. Departing from two iconic books – *The Sociological Imagination* (Mills, 1959) and *Storytelling Sociology* (Berger and Quinney, 2004), issues related to “words,” “voice,” and “audience” emerge as key elements of the story writing/storytelling sociology craft’s toolbox. At present, the pressures imposed by fast science and writing in highly competitive teaching and research environments, the growing technological development applied to research, and the expansion of hyper and social media represent new challenges for storytelling sociology. At the end, the chapter argues for the enduring importance of writing in the ways of telling about society, while recognizing the value of time in research: time to listen, write, and tell.*

INTRODUCTION

All the world’s a stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts,

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William Shakespeare (As You Like It, 1623)

It is not by chance that Jaques’ words in William Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* are so often quoted, nor is it a coincidence that in a scientific article focusing on sociology, Shakespeare’s words are an inspirational motto. As a matter of fact, literature was at the basis of the changes leading to the so called “narrative turn” (Hyvärinen, 2016), which could explain the current interest in storytelling and story-related concepts.

In recent years, there has been an amazing range of initiatives under the umbrella of “storytelling”. Informed mainly by media communication, marketing and branding fields, the word is all around us, crossing disciplines, professions and practices. Small and large companies, travelers and tourists, Chefs and artists, “vulnerable” and “successful” people, but also politicians, policymakers and scientists, many use stories and related metaphors. Sociology is no exception from this trend. As Berger and Quinney (2004) advocate, professional storytellers have become more visible and “sociologists have become storytellers” (p. 8).

In a 1984 *New York Times*’ article titled “Why Scholars Become Storytellers”, Frederika Randall noted an increasing interest of scholars working in the social sciences, namely anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and historians, in an expanding literary dimension. By that time, it was said that “the enthusiasm for a literary model of social inquiry is less evident among sociologists and psychologists than it is among historians and anthropologists” (Randall, 1984, §13). However, recently, such an interest has become more and more visible. At the beginning of 2019, “Storytelling: Sociological Methods, Motives, and Mantras” was the title of the Annual Meeting of the North Central Sociological Association, held on March 29 & 30, Hyatt Regency, Cincinnati, OH. The program heralded that “A consistent theme throughout the program is the power of stories” (NCSA, 2019, p. 4). What is, after all, the power of stories and storytelling?

Across different fields, stories offer a way of presenting and understanding the complexity of social life while using familiar conventions. A story “is a form of knowledge that is readily retained and recalled” and it “goes beyond the medium in which it is delivered, recognisable in written, spoken, sung, acted, danced and pictorial representations” (Bradby, 2017, p. 8). Using macro-structures with beginnings, middles, and ends, and micro-structures entailing specific characters, scenarios and plots, stories include a universal language, which is easily recognised and reproduced (Polletta, Chen, Gardner & Motes, 2011). Stories somehow “assign order where there seems to be chaos and confusion” (Erasga, 2010, p. 22). Through stories, what seems to be a personal daily experience is perceived as a social problem or it allows exercising the sociological imagination, i.e., understanding “the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals” (Mills, 1959, p. 5). The relationship between storytelling and the sociological imagination is obvious and has already been recognized by authors working in related fields. According to Erasga, “[s]ociological imagination is an open invitation to theorize via the stories we tell ourselves and others” (Erasga, 2010, p. 21). Bradby (2017) says that “[t]aking story seriously as a method and a medium for representing aspects of human experience in social context responds to the call to exercise sociological imagination (Mills, 1959)” (p. 14).

In 2009, Ronald Berger and Richard Quinney edited *Storytelling Sociology* (2004). Separated by almost 50 years, these two books are closer than apart. While Mills dedicates important pages to writing, Berger and Quinney focus on the power of telling stories. Both books may make one think about the inextricable relations between writing and telling in sociology. According to the International Sociological Association’s (ISA) Code of Ethics, “sociologists work to develop a reliable and valid body of scientific knowledge based on research” (ISA, 2001) and the use of storytelling, besides being “a fashionable

catchword” (Hyvärinen, 2016, p. 44), might seem contradictory with such a goal. In this regard, Polletta, Chen, Gardner and Motes (2011) emphasize the fact that stories are not always envisaged as “credible” matters. For instance, saying that something is “just a story” is often a way to refer to the weakness of the argument, the lack of credibility, a one-sided or subjective perspective.

This chapter argues that the widespread use of storytelling in sociology requires a greater reflection on sociologists’ writing and telling activities. Although there is much work on the longstanding importance and influence of *The Sociological Imagination* (Brewer, 2004; Martindale, 1976; Scanlan & Grauerholz, 2009; Treviño, 2012), and on the advice of Wright Mills regarding writing (Mannon & Camfield, 2019; Roberts, 1993), the novelty of this paper lies in the fact that such advice will be purposely and specifically analysed through the direct relationship and power value with storytelling. Departing from these two iconic books, this chapter ultimately aims to explore the importance of writing in contemporary sociology. In what follows, this question will be delved into, by first questioning the contemporary fascination with stories. The second part of the paper summarizes certain major steps towards a Narrative Sociology and, afterwards, key features of sociologists as storytellers will be examined. The last part of the paper deals with the craft of story writing/storytelling sociology, and highlights “words”, “voice” and “audience” as its key elements. The paper finishes with summing up key ideas while advancing further challenges related to the pressures posed by fast science and writing in highly competitive teaching and research environments, the growing technological development applied to research, and the expansion of hyper, social and transmedia.

BACKGROUND

Increasingly, researchers working in many fields of inquiry, coming from different traditions and backgrounds are using the concepts of stories and storytelling to think about their subjects. This happens not only in arts, humanities and social sciences, which can be considered more “self-evidently storied” (Moezzia, Jandab, & Rotmann, 2017, p. 3), but also in natural sciences. As the National Geographic Society (2020) reminds us, “Storytelling is universal and is as ancient as humankind. Before there was writing, there was storytelling”. And, in fact, for centuries, foundational stories, lullabies and ordinary stories have been part of the life of individuals across time, space and cultures. Stories are not new; however, there is, undoubtedly, a certain “contemporary fascination with stories” (Polletta, Chen, Gardner & Motes, 2011, p. 110).

According to Polletta et al. (2011), one must look into popular beliefs about storytelling, i.e., “how stories work, what they are good for, and whether they should be trusted” (p. 110), to understand the power of stories from a sociological point of view. In doing so, they advance different aspects behind contemporary fascination with stories, including the fact that they report to “the local and textured character of experience against the simplifying abstractions of behaviorist theorizing” (Polletta et al., 2011, p. 110), an extension of Freudian self-psychology and self-help, according to which personal storytelling is a performance of the self, leading to happiness and success. Additionally, according to these authors, in a postmodernist vein, people find in stories the verisimilitude and particularism that seem to be absent from the increasingly contested broad and abstract narratives of modern progress, faith, and rationality. Moreover, in the sense that “everyone has a story” (Polletta et al., 2011, p. 110), stories achieve easy adherence, as they seem democratic, rather than monopolized by elites.

In order to understand fully the fascination of which Polletta et al. (2011) speak, one must go back to the second half of the 20th century to the so-called *narrative turn*. Hyvärinen (2010) suggests that there have been at least four different narrative turns, all of them having distinct agendas and attitudes toward narrative. Thus, there was a first turn in literary theory in the 1960s, then in historiography, in social sciences from the 1980s onwards and, recently, a more broadly cultural and societal turn to narration (Hyvärinen, 2010).

The narrative turn is a broad interdisciplinary intellectual movement, and it is so called because scholars started advocating a turn in the “legitimate” ways of knowing and establishing scientific authority, based on quantification, logic and mathematics-based language. Although writing is still a recognized way of claiming for legitimacy and authority in science, new modes of writing emerged, claiming for the right to hear other voices beyond the quantitative or grounded data-gathering and “objective” reporting. Jerome Bruner’s distinction (1986) between narrative and logic and scientific modes of thought deepens such a distinction. According to this author, while the first mode of thought is rooted in verifiable facts, connected by formal rules of inquiry following the scientific method, the narrative mode of thought uses stories and the story structure to produce ‘believable stories’. In fact, the narrative approach does not herald the end of the “scientific” mode of thought, but, rather, believes that both the “scientific” and “narrative” modes of thought are equally valid. According to Richardson (1990), they are both “‘rational’ ways of making meaning” (p. 118), yet they differ in the ways “those processes are formatted” (Maines, 1993, p. 28).

Following this turn, “narratives” and “stories” have become widespread in science and research vocabulary, but they often remain unclearly conceptualized. Sometimes the meaning of *story* is taken for granted (Bradby, 2017); other times, the terms *narrative* and *story* are used interchangeably (Polletta et al., 2011). Frank (2000) explains the popularity of “stories” as a result of the fact that even tough sociologists look for narratives—stories are “what people talk about”. He states that, in everyday life, “people do not tell narratives, they tell stories”, and contends that it would sound strange if somebody said “let me tell you a narrative” (Frank, 2000, p. 354).

Over time, narratives and stories have been approached differently in scientific research. Moezzia, Jandab and Rotmann (2017) establish an interesting review that can be applied beyond energy studies. According to them, narratives and stories, used interchangeably, have been employed in scientific research as a way of collecting, analysing and disseminating, communicating or engaging people or communities. Firstly, participant observation, interviews, autobiographies, diverse written public and private documents, newspapers, field notes, photos and distinct images, Internet sources, etc., are used as units of analysis to research and understand the way people give meaning to their lives through narratives. In this sense, stories constitute lived experiences, able to be collected in many forms, including written, audio and visual documents, as well as artifacts. Herein, the focus is put on narratives and stories as raw data, which can be further analysed. Analytical methods used upon narratives comprise distinct types of analysis, namely discourse analysis, text analysis, structural analysis, among others. Therein, the focus is on the set of techniques of analysis of data and the detailed procedures to explore their shape, nature, and meaning. Finally, stories have been used as performative, group dynamics, proxemics/dramaturgical actions. This approach considers stories as a process, exploring its role in the engagement of communities in participatory modes of research or data dissemination inside and outside academia.

Towards a Narrative Sociology

It is relatively consensual among scholars that the story of narrative sociology began in the mid-1980s. The landmark in the process must have been the moment when Elliot Mishler introduced narrative terminology into sociological research. Until then, the term “narrative” was not yet “a generalized, abstract, and theoretically dense concept” (Hyvärinen, 2016, p. 39). The narrative turn had a key role in clarifying the term both in literature and sociology studies. According to Hyvärinen, “[b]efore the 1960s, literary theorists studied novels, folk tales, and autobiographies; sociologists studied diaries and biographies.” (Hyvärinen, 2016, p. 39).

Narrative sociology did not appear in the void. As shown, it emerged in a specific intellectual milieu and borrowed heavily from interdisciplinary contributions, and from the discipline’s own theoretical longstanding heritage. Thomas and Znaniecki’s *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918-20), first published between 1918 and 1920, is often given as a prominent example of the existing narrative tradition in sociology. The authors used immigrants’ letters and a longish life story as source material for analysis. Despite the importance of this seminal work included in the Chicago school for the biographical tradition and life stories, Hyvärinen (2016) advocates that it belongs to the “pre-history of narrative sociology” (p. 40), inasmuch as the theoretical concept of narrative was not yet formed.

In fact, despite the important contribution of Thomas and Znaniecki, by the 1930s, and specifically after World War II, sociology progressively adopted a way of writing that was grounded chiefly in quantitative methods. This happened at the same time as the discipline tried to assert itself as a social science, approaching the natural sciences, similarly to when it first emerged, in the first half of the 19th century. Although Polletta et al. (2011) point to important narrative-related sociological work before the 1980s, conducted within symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodological studies, Hyvärinen advocates that a “relatively silent period” (Hyvärinen, 2016, p. 40) then settled in sociology between the 1930s until the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In 1981, Bertaux published the anthology *Biography and Society*, the same year with Mitchell’s famous collection, *On Narrative* (1981). The work of Bertaux was revolutionary, as he suggested that sociologists should adopt

a different form of discourse, namely ‘le recit’ (narration). This is the form novelists but also historians and some anthropologists use... We should tell stories; not only the life stories of various people, but also the story of such and such a pattern of social relations, the story of a culture, of an institution, of a social group; and also, our own story as research workers. (Bertaux, 1981, p. 43-44).

According to Polletta et al. (2011), the narrative turn of the ‘80s led to consequences regarding narrative sociology in both the theoretical and the methodological dimension. Differently from the past, the 1980s saw a wave of theorizing about narrative (Polletta et al., 2011). Then, scholars were interested in understanding the centrality of stories for the self and community. It was assented that the stories that people told offered insights into their identities and culture and, similarly, the same happened with the stories told by groups, communities, and nations. Scholars believed that shared stories create bonds of belonging, leaving those without coherent stories vulnerable to fragmentation. Polletta identifies three main themes, variable depending on the context: “stories as central to self and collectivity, stories as the basis for disciplinary authority, and stories as a critical and even liberatory discursive form” (Polletta et al., 2011, p. 113).

Broadly speaking, from a methodological point of view, narrative sociological approaches are often presented as overlapping with qualitative inquiry as a whole, their assumptions being close to data, authenticity, and openness for multi-layered meanings contrasting with the idea of a single, universal, positivist truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Polletta et al., 2011; Orbach, 1997). As a result of the application of such “novel and compelling” (Polletta et al., 2011, p. 113) principles, sociological work has emerged, more recently also in the context of the creative research methodologies (Kara, 2015).

Sociologists, Storytellers?

Frank’s 1995 *The wounded storyteller: Body, illness, and ethics* is often presented as a landmark in storytelling sociology (Bradby, 2017), a term coined by Berger and Quinney in 2004 when they edited *Storytelling sociology: Narrative as social inquiry*.

Following Denzin and Lincoln (2000), there are two general orientations toward narrative inquiry: the analytic and the storied approaches, both contrasting each other. While the first is theoretically oriented and focuses mainly on form and structure, the storied approach is theoretically minimalist and seeks meaning in the stories themselves. Assuming the writer’s voice, the storied approach distinguishes itself from the analytical neutral stance of the first and encourages the listener/reader’s active engagement in the story that is being told (Berger & Quinney, 2004). Hyvärinen (2016) expands such a distinction and suggests that the current sociological approaches to narrative studies in sociology unveils three different orientations: the narrative analysis or study of various texts (including images and other collected semiotic objects), storytelling sociology, and the sociological analysis of narrative realities.

As can be intuited from the above orientations, besides storytelling sociology, Hyvärinen (2016) establishes a distinction between narrative analysis and the sociological analysis of narrative realities. Considering the first, it consists in the analysis of purposefully collected narrative texts. According to Riessman (1993), the object of investigation is the story itself. For instance, when analysing interviews, the purpose is to see how respondents “impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (Riessman, 1993, p. 1–2). The primary interest of the researcher is not to find a subjective meaning, but rather, the patterns behind stories. The ways of reaching such patterns vary, as Riessman (2008) divides narrative analysis into several types, namely the thematic analysis (the what), structural analysis (the how), and dialogic/performance analysis.

The term “narrative reality” was suggested by Gubrium and Holstein (2009). In addition to this, the authors advanced important concepts for the study of narrative realities, namely “narrative environment”, “narrative practices”, “mechanisms of narrative controls” and “narrative ethnography”. The basic assumption of this research orientation is that various narratives already exist in the socio-cultural world, and narrative scholars should investigate them in order to understand the role such narratives play in constituting the worlds we live in (Hyvärinen, 2016).

Finally, storytelling sociology refers primarily to the ways’ sociologists write their own work, specifically when using the narrative form (Hyvärinen, 2016). Its recognition has been a long and somehow contested journey. In the already cited 1984 *New York Times*’ article, the discussion revolved around the distinction between social life, fiction and text. Regarding that specific point, a caution made by Richard Geertz was emphasised: “To say that social science is moving from a model based on physics to one based nearer on literature is not to say it has abandoned the distinction between social description and fiction” (Randall, 1984, §19). Doubts persist, with some critics of narrative methods arguing that sociologists should be story analysts rather than storytellers (Atkinson, 1997; Gough, 2008).

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In the rationalization of Western culture, stories belong to a past, non-rational world. Broadly speaking, they were delegitimized, and often “viewed as imprecise, ambiguous, evocative, and metaphorical” (Maines, 1993, p. 19). For the common sense, “stories” are the opposite of “science”, just as “fiction” opposes “reality”, “subjectivity” opposes “objectivity”, and “false” opposes “truth”. In the words of Bradby, “[...] a good story has more elements than the minimally defined narrative clause, including; metaphor, aphorism, simile, irony, sarcasm, over-exaggeration for comic effect - all the tricks of an entertaining storyteller’s toolbox. And it is these elements of a story that disqualify such accounts from being reliable, valid sources of sociological evidence [...]” (Bradby, 2017, p.8). Storytelling sociology comes to redefine such a “toolbox” in the framework of the scientific qualitative sociological work. *Writing*, thus, assumes a prominent role in *telling*. In bringing this question to the fore, storytelling sociology comes to be inextricably linked to classic reflections expressed “On Intellectual Craftsmanship”, the appendix of C. Wright Mills’s *The Sociological Imagination* (1959).

Sociology and the Craft of Story Writing/Storytelling

“To overcome the academic *prose* you have first to overcome the academic *pose*.” (Mills, 1959, p. 219). This quote sets the tone of the section five of the appendix “On Intellectual Craftsmanship”, written by C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination*. Therein, the author deals specifically with questions of writing in sociology. Wright Mills is peremptory when referring to the importance of presenting sociological work in a clear and simple language while establishing an important relation between the writer and the audience. He says: “To write is to raise a claim for the attention of readers. That is part of *any* style.” (Mills, 1959, p. 218). In developing his argument, Mills underlines the importance of clarifying answers to three specific questions: “(1) How difficult and complex after all is my subject?; (2) When I write, what status am I claiming for myself?; (3) For whom am I trying to write?” (Mills, 1959, p. 219).

In what follows, each one of these questions will be further expanded, by relating them with storytelling sociology. Over 60 years since *The Sociological Imagination*’s first edition, it is somehow surprising to see how, when exploring those questions, Mills always uses metaphors related to the context of the traditional storyteller. Although he never uses the exact word “story”, nor even the figure of the storyteller, Mills (1959) speaks of interlocking “circles” (p. 220) of communication, the writer being “a center of experience and reasoning” (p. 220) and, finally, of an “empty hall” (p. 221) that sociologists might face if using the wrong language. By expanding such metaphors, it is expected that, at the end of this paper, both the importance and power of stories, as well as that of their tellers, become clearer for sociology and sociologists.

Words

When answering the first question, “How difficult and complex after all is my subject?” (Mills, 1959, p. 219), Mills says it is “[n]ot so difficult and complex as the way in which you are writing about it.” (Mills, 1959, p. 219). As explained, “‘technical’ does not necessarily mean difficult, and certainly it does not mean jargon.” (Mills, 1959, p. 219). If technical terms are necessary, he argues, they should be introduced to the reader.

In anticipating questions related with the fact that “ordinary words of common usage are often loaded’ with feelings and values” (Mills, 1959, p. 219), Mills agrees that both ordinary words and technical terms are “loaded” in common use in social science. To write clearly is to write in such a manner that

the meaning will be understood by others. It is interesting that when clarifying this idea, Mills calls upon the metaphor of circles, which remembers the figure of someone who tells something to someone else. He says:

Assume that your intended meaning is circumscribed by a six-foot circle, in which you are standing; assume that the meaning understood by your reader is another such circle, in which he is standing. The circles, let us hope, do overlap. The extent of that overlap is the extent of your communication. In the reader’s circle the part that does not overlap—that is one area of uncontrolled meaning: he has made it up. In your circle the part that does not overlap—that is another token of your failure: you have not got it across. The skill of writing is to get the reader’s circle of meaning to coincide exactly with yours, to write in such a way that both of you stand in the same circle of controlled meaning. (Mills, 1959, p. 220)

Mills concludes this topic by stating that “socspeak” —a way of using language by some sociologists (Cowley, 1956)—seems to be unnecessary, as it “is unrelated to any complexity of subject matter or thought” and used almost entirely “to establish academic claims for one’s self” (Mills, 1959, p. 220).

Storytelling sociology shares with Mills the centrality given to writing. Writing is not only a task performed at the end of the research project to present data results. Rather, it is at the centre of the meaning making process. Richardson (1994) is probably the most radical in this sense, as she argues that “writing is also a way of ‘knowing’—a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it” (Richardson, 1994, p. 516).

In a post-positivist, qualitative research-oriented paradigm, the quality of writing (Ellis & Bochner, 1996) is a key when elaborating scientific argumentation. As Berger and Quinney (2004) put it, writing “[i]t is not merely a “report” of one’s observations, but an integral part of the process of creating meaning.” (Berger & Quinney, 2004, p. 10).

Voice

“When I write, what status am I claiming for myself?” (Mills, 1959, p. 219). In answering the second question, Wright Mills calls for the importance of having in mind that the writer “is always there” and, as well, “is a center of experience and reasoning” (Mills, 1959, p. 221). Contrary to presenting a work without using a voice or using an impersonal tone or “autonomous sound”, such as in government bulletins and business letters, the “best expositions”, he says, result from the contexts in which the writer “has found out something, and he is telling us about it, and how he found it out” (Mills, 1959, p. 221). He concludes by saying that “[a]ny writing—perhaps apart from that of certain truly great stylists—that is not imaginable as human speech is bad writing.” (Mills, 1959, p. 221).

He distinguishes two voices in writing: one that “is always there” (Mills, 1959, p. 220) and another that is “not a ‘voice’ at all. It is an autonomous sound. It is a prose manufactured by a machine” (Mills, 1959, p. 221). Mills clearly encourages the sociologist to adopt the former. In doing so, he claims, writing is endowed with both a personality and a sense of authorship.

The narrative tradition recognizes that the author is not only behind the text; also, the author is inside the text. Accordingly, storytelling sociology advocates that sociologists are not simply reporting data, they are telling stories

Also, in relation to voice, Mills meets Berger and Quinney, and the sociological imagination intersects storytelling. Mills says that the author “is always there”, and the latter reminds us that “the author is part

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of the story”. While some analysts make a distinction between narrative and story, Berger and Quinney refuse it. In storytelling sociology, they claim, “[t]here is no separation of the observer and the observed. The writer’s voice is always present. The author is part of the story.” (Berger & Quinney, 2004, p. 7).

Audience

“For whom am I trying to write?” (Mills, 1959, p. 219). This is the last question posed by Wright Mills in the sub-section of the appendix in analysis. In this specific point, Mills uses a colleague’s answer to this question, which he reproduces:

You are to assume that you have been asked to give a lecture on some subject you know well, before an audience of teachers and students from all departments of a leading university, as well as an assortment of interested people from a near-by city. Assume that such an audience is before you and that they have a right to know; assume that you want to let them know. Now write. (Mills, 1959, p. 221)

For Mills, “it is very important for any writer to have in mind just what kinds of people he is trying to speak to—and also what he really thinks of them” (Mills, 1959, p. 221). He says that there are many possibilities available to the social scientists as a writer yet, if assuming the public described above is in his/her mind, so efforts will be made “to write readable prose” (Mills, 1959, p. 221). As such, sociologists should avoid using “a standardized prose” as they do not wish to be in front of “a great empty hall” (Mills, 1959, p. 221).

A final point regarding the audience has to do with what Mills designates as “an interplay of writing and thinking” (Mills, 1959, p. 222). According to him, making things clearer implies working in “the context of presentation”:

To make whatever you think more objective, you must work in the context of presentation. At first, you ‘present your thought to yourself, which is often called ‘thinking clearly.’ Then when you feel that you have it straight, you present it to others—and often find that you have not made it clear. Now you are in the ‘context of presentation.’ Sometimes you will notice that as you try to present your thinking, you will modify it—not only in its form of statement but often in its content as well. You will get new ideas as you work in the context of presentation. In short, it will become a new context of discovery, different from the original one, on a higher level I think, because more socially objective. Here again, you cannot divorce how you think from how you write. You have to move back and forth between these two contexts, and whenever you move it is well to know where you might be going. (Mills, 1959, p. 222).

Again, the relations between Mills’ work and storytelling are self-evident. Firstly, the idea of having in mind the audience is particularly heuristic for storytelling sociology, as it highlights diverse aspects of the relations as interaction and communication, be it verbal, aural, visual, or otherwise broadly bodily or performative. This idea is particularly developed by Frank (2000), who does not accept the dichotomy between a storyteller and a story analyst. In his words, “[...] stories as acts of telling are relationships.” (Frank, 2000, p. 354). He adds: “[o]ne person may be speaking, but stories are told with—not only to—listeners who are part of the storytelling.” (Frank, 2000, p. 354).

Secondly, strategies to bring the audience into the act of storytelling are diverse insofar as storytelling sociology overlaps with the autoethnography style. In this regard, Richardson’s suggests employing

many, different genres in writing, and she especially talks about “evocative writing” and “the narrative of the self.” Such a narrative is “a highly personalized, revealing text in which the author tells stories about his or her own lived experience” (Richardson, 1994, p. 521). Ellis and Bochner have explored such a project of personal, evocative writing under the umbrella term of “autoethnography” (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, 2000). The project of these authors, deeply rooted in postmodern thought, is to overcome the distinction between the academic researcher and the analyzed stories and storytellers. This can be achieved, they advocate, “by situating the researcher bodily, emotionally, and culturally in contact with the studied themes and persons with the help of personal and ideally co-composed narratives on the topic” (Hyvärinen, 2016, p. 48). In addition, Spry (2001) introduces the concept of “effective autoethnography.” According to her, besides the quality of writing, the text should be “emotionally engaging” and “critically self-reflexive” Spry (2001, p. 713). A good autoethnography, she says, “strives to use relational language” in order to invite “dialogue between the reader and the author” (Spry, 2001, p. 713).

In *Storytelling Sociology*, Berger and Quinney encourage a type of writing “that experiments with different forms of representation and that seeks engagement with the world beyond academe” (Berger & Quinney, 2004, p. 10). Accordingly, the narrative style preferred by Berger and Quinney is the personal essay. This kind of essay “is a writing that reveals the process by which the writer has arrived at her thoughts, lets readers in on his doubts, makes the writer vulnerable in the text, reflects on roads taken and not taken.” (Berger & Quinney, 2004, p. 11). In short, the writing style of the personal essay “is friendly, even conversational, but also literary.” (Berger & Quinney, 2004, p. 11).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Sparked by recent developments in digital technology, top executives, technologists and creative talents all over the world are addressing storytelling beyond traditional screens. Hosted annually since 2013, *The Future of StoryTelling (FoST) Summit* is a two-day invitation-only gathering of thinkers and practitioners from diverse fields, including business, technology, communication, media, and the arts. Unlike a traditional conference, the Summit features intimate, speaker-led roundtables, hands-on workshops, curated exhibitions and immersive experiences. The goal of the summit is to document how storytelling is evolving with cutting-edge technology and creating new ways to elaborate, share and experience story in the digital age. In addition to the Summit, FoST also produces a wide range of year-round content and programming, including, among other, a monthly newsletter and popular social media channels aimed at FoST’s network followers (FoST, 2020). Talks from the summit are inspirational while broadly explore many topics related to the transformational power of stories aiming cultural wisdom in the age of information. For the last years, one of such a topic has to do with the growing importance of interactive narrative and storytelling (FoST, 2020). Interactive storytelling includes two, interrelated, key dimensions. From the teller perspective, it means a strong focus in the audience engagement, making the stories more “authentic”. In this regard, the use of immersive and virtual reality, as well as visualisation techniques, are presented and explored as fruitful and insightful tools in telling “real” narratives. For instance, 3D technologies, including physical effects—panoramic vision, surround sound, a sense of depth perception, vertigo—are used to create full-body and first-person documentary experiences that stimulate different senses and evoke deeply emotional reactions. From the listener point of view, interactive storytelling means that the audience is in the middle of the action, having the power to decide the course of the action, therefore, the end of the story. This happens because people want – and are driven – to explore,

through play, different themes and experiences. Individuals look for environments that feel alive, that are responsive and emotionally meaningful. For instance, in the development of games, interactive films, participatory installations, and speculative interfaces, art is being merged with engineering science, and storytelling with software development, so that technology-enabled experiences might connect deeply with human culture, thus creating meaning.

In an era of complex, multiple and big data, along with a visually compelling society, sociologists also look for new ways of turning the narrative engaging. Increasing interest in narrative visualization represents a new challenge, as visual elements to be included when telling stories are not limited to transcript quotes, photographs or visual graphics. Such as in media, interactive elements allow for zoom details, hover highlight, and link to external articles; scientific text faces the growing challenge, regardless the format, of including interactive extra texts, captions, annotations, and external links to multi-format documents, including text, audio and video-based, about specific related events (Kirk, 2019; Schwabish, 2020).

Regarding data collection methods, recent developments in social creative and arts-based methods (Kara, 2015; Mannay, 2015) come to signal a shift from passive to more active, more physically interactive, and more multisensory methodologies. Similarly to media, companies and creators, in social inquiry, more frequently, participants are being invited to drive their own stories, both regarding the when’s and how’s. As the stories’ individuals tell are less linear and predetermined by the questions and prompts of the researcher, so further research is needed to understand the effects of the “player-driven experience” in the way’s sociologists keep listening and telling stories.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling could be simply defined as the ability to tell stories. Because it refers to an ability, the definition is usually put on its maximum. Therefore, storytelling is not about telling stories yet about telling a good, engaging and convincing story. Regarding sociology, in *Telling about Society*, Howard Becker (2007) aptly says, “I’m convinced that there is no best way to tell a story about society. Many genres, many methods, many formats – they can all do the trick. Instead of ideal ways to do it, the world gives us possibilities among which we can choose.” (p. 285).

In face of the widespread use of storytelling in sociology, this paper has sought to explore the importance of writing in the ways of telling about society. Departing from two iconic books – *The Sociological Imagination* (Mills, 1959) and *Storytelling Sociology* (Berger and Quinney, 2004), effort was put on a purpose and in-depth analysis of the relations between both. By specifically looking at the section five of the appendix “On Intellectual Craftsmanship”, written by C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination*, issues related to “words”, “voice” and “audience” emerged as key elements of the craft’s toolbox employed by story writing/storytelling sociology.

At present, the craft of story writing/storytelling sociology faces new challenges. Firstly, the centrality given to writing as a way of knowing and a method of discovery and analysis strongly faces the pressure of fast science-related effects in the everyday life of researchers and higher-education institutions. In highly competitive teaching and research environments, technology-based, writing is a very consuming task, and time remains a scarce resource. Secondly, nowadays researchers have at their disposal a large number and great variety of instruments allowing for a fast and large-scale data collection. Aided by the generalized growing technological development materialized in high-performance computers and

advanced software, researchers can easily write and tell apparently good, self-evidenced and convincing stories. Thirdly, beyond the books and traditional lectures, storytelling sociology also faces the challenges posed by the expansion of hyper, social and transmedia when struggling to hold the attention of the audience. The development of information and communication technology for personal use, namely smartphones, equipped with high-quality audio recorder, high-resolution cameras and instant text, photo and video sharing social networking services, turn every person into a potential fieldwork researcher able to magnetize physical and online audiences.

Can anyone be a good storyteller without being a good listener? John Berger once told “If I’m a storyteller it’s because I listen” (as cited in Kellaway, 2016). Good research takes time; telling good stories, too. As this paper argues for the enduring importance of writing in the ways of telling about society, it also follows *The Slow Science Manifesto* (The Slow Science Academy, 2010), and recognizes the value of time in research. Time to listen, time to write and time to tell. Certainly, this is not “the end of the story”. As the play that inspired the beginning insightfully says, “all the world’s a stage”, and sociologists (continue to be) (one of) its storytellers.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Crossmedia Storytelling: The replication of the story and its dissemination, either simultaneously or sequentially, in different media (e.g., television, newspaper, and Internet), attending to their specificities.

Interactive Storytelling: The act of telling stories enhanced with technological features, giving the user control over the story that is being told. The user can either change the course of the narrative or choose specific parts of the story to see, not-necessarily in a linear sequence.

Qualitative Inquiry: A research design embracing specific data collection and data analysis procedures aiming to achieve a deep and holistic understanding on why and how things happen, rather than to provide a quantitative description or explanation of social reality.

Sensory Methods: A specific form of social inquiry, which assumes that the senses mediate one’s engagement with everyday life. It favours the use of visual, aural, olfactory, taste, material, and performance methods as a way of gaining knowledge about the social world.

Sociology: It studies individuals’ interaction at the crossroads between structure and agency. It is interested in understanding how society determines human behavior and how this impacts the course of societies.

Timeline: A way to display visually a list of events in chronological order. Its visualization usually uses a long bar delimited by key dates, within a time period. Specific dates are marked out at regular intervals, and events are positioned on certain points, where they would have happened.

Transmedia Storytelling: A multitude of multi-format stories, spread through many channels, yet belonging to the same storyworld. Stories have an autonomous structure, yet when all the stories are put together, they enhance the understanding of a larger and more complex story.

Virtual Reality: The computer-generated simulation of a three-dimensional image or environment that can be experienced by a person using special electronic equipment providing sensory stimuli (e.g., sights and sounds). Broadly, the term is used when referring to an artificial environment or experience that does not exist physically or in the “real world.”

Chapter 2

Online Personal Narratives: Comments Sections as Support Groups in Knowledge-Sharing Platforms

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to explore personal narratives and conversational stories of self-declared victims of abuse in the comments section of a knowledge-sharing platform, such as YouTube. The aim is to analyze the resemblance between the interaction and exchange of narratives in comments sections, on the one hand, and narrative group psychotherapy and self-help support groups, on the other. While previous research on storytelling mostly addresses professionally guided or produced narratives, this approach extends the production of these narratives to online communicative contexts. Firstly, the chapter looks at the theoretical tenets of storytelling. Secondly, a sociolinguistic, narratology-oriented approach is used to exemplify this practice. This part of the chapter discusses how the interaction among commentators and the exchange of personal narratives meet the core principles of self-help support groups and group psychotherapy.

INTRODUCTION

Sharing personal experiences and stories online stands out as a conversational outcome in the comments sections of *knowledge-sharing platforms* (KSPs) such as YouTube (Iyanga-Mambo, 2020). People tend to turn to KSPs to acquire information on an issue of interest or for entertainment. Unintentionally, the integration of the comments section in KSPs does not allow only to post one's personal reaction, but also leads to multi-party conversations (Marruccia, 2004; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010; Lorenzo-Dus, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, & Bou-Franch, 2011), to the extent of producing online *communities of practice* (Pihlaja, 2012; Iyanga-Mambo, 2020). These communities are created by means of various communicative strategies, as for example interpersonal self-disclosure through *storytelling* or *experience-sharing* (Iyanga-Mambo, 2020). The practice of storytelling has always been part of humankind, in multiple co-

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existing and continuously adaptive formats. The format of stories can depend on situated, cultural criteria along with historical periods and media. Society is constantly exposed to narratives via books, films, series, music clips or songs, advertisements, images, videogames, etc. In essence, telling stories – (non) fictional, personal or of others – becomes a natural element which appears imperceptibly in everyday life. In the same way, storytelling can be incorporated deliberately in professional contexts, for instance in the fields of education, politics or psychology. The use of storytelling in the field of psychology constitutes the main research object of this chapter. Narrating one's personal experience(s) of traumatic episodes or sensitive conditions and situations can serve as a therapeutic activity which, professionally speaking, is referred to as *narrative therapy*. In combination with the approach of individuals collectively working on a shared aim or concern, as support groups (SGs) do, narrative therapy has evolved into *narrative group psychotherapy*. Even though this term denotes a professionally-monitored practice, this chapter aspires to show how, in online settings such as the comments sections, the voluntary sharing of personal narratives (PNs) and the development of multi-party interaction partially mirror self-help support groups which perform narrative therapy and group psychotherapy. Despite the extensive literature regarding storytelling, as well as new media, there is still a need for literature which reveals its most avant-garde trends in social media. Likewise, there is in fact a lack of research related to the addition of spontaneous narratives in conversations in these settings. Therefore, considering the research paucity of this topic, this chapter is developed with a view to answer three main questions which are the foci here:

Question One: How do online narrators characterize their (conversational) personal narratives?

Question Two: What functions do these narratives play in response to knowledge-sharing videos and to other comments? How and for what purpose do the comment responses to these narratives arise?

Question Three: How do narrators engage in interaction with other commentators? And how does this interaction in the comments section of the KSP inadvertently resemble the functioning of self-help support groups and narrative group psychotherapy?

To respond to these questions, this chapter firstly pursues the exploration of naturally-produced narratives by online commentators who openly declare themselves victims of abuse and share their personal experience on a KSP such as YouTube. In this interactional environment, reciprocity arises without prior planning, which makes this platform an ideal candidate for research on naturally-occurring communicative data and for the analysis of conversational phenomena. For the exploration of the narrations, the objectives are:

Objective One: Identifying and understanding the structure, content and components of narratives and how events and feelings are presented

Objective Two: Identifying and understanding the function of these narratives and why and how they are shared in online conversation

Objective Three: Exploring the interaction among commentators and the development of the distinctive features of communication in relation to self-help support groups and narrative group psychotherapy

This chapter then elaborates on (conversational) personal narratives by adopting an interactional sociolinguistic approach with insights into how *self-help support groups* function in conjunction with *narrative group psychotherapy*. Furthermore, the chapter consists of five subsequent parts: a *background*, which deals with storytelling, support groups and narrative therapy and knowledge-sharing platforms;

an exploration of the *central foci* and *objectives*; a detailed *discussion*, *future directions* of research and a *conclusions* section.

BACKGROUND

This chapter addresses three principal dimensions. Firstly, it is necessary to understand what storytelling stands for and, to this effect, its definition, description, features, types and functions are explained. Subsequently, I focus on the depiction and functionality of support groups and narrative theory. The act of storytelling in association with narrative therapy and group therapy is also approached, moving from a functional angle of storytelling to the presentation of a setting where storytelling occurs naturally. To conclude this theoretical frame, a presentation and an overview of online knowledge-sharing platforms are developed, with special attention given to how comments sections are developed.

Storytelling implies more than narrating stories. As a matter of fact, producing narratives is attached to a series of other functions according to the situational scenario. First and foremost, storytelling signifies a social activity (Bietti, Tilston, & Bangerter, 2019), that is, an interactional performance centered on the creation and sharing of a narrative discourse (Mandelbaum, 2013). Strictly speaking, stories are determined by a compilation of a sequence of described events (Bruner, 1990; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Notwithstanding the multiple features applied to its definition, some theorists agree that it is the most intrinsic feature of human beings and one of the most distinguishing and communicative activities carried out innately on a daily basis (Linde, 1993). This is known as *everyday storytelling* (Ochs & Capps, 2002). The presence of storytelling has coexisted with humankind even before the development of the ability to write. Without being aware of it, individuals frequently resort to in-talk narrations to render an event or experiences (Sacks, 1974). Despite the fact that narrating happens nearly by instinct, what shapes its connotation relies on the context framework, where and when it occurs, and the meaning the narrator and the hearer can assign to it. Although the level of awareness varies in light of the intentions and premeditation of narrator, narratives can serve a wide list of purposes. Bietti, Tilston and Bangerter (2019, referring to Scalise Sugiyama, 1996; Boyd, 2017; Dunbar, 1996) narrow them down to three main functions: (a) manipulating the behavior of the hearer(s); (b) transmitting information; and, (c) maintaining social bonds or group-level cooperation. The (un)intentional choice of one function or functions over other(s) can vary according to sociocultural, communal, contextual, medium, etc. criteria. In the same vein, these criteria likewise affect the communicative characterization of narratives. Given this malleability, the use of stories can have an instructional role too (Davidson, 2004; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer & Lowrance, 2004; Andrews & Hull, 2009). In addition to their functions, a varied number of constituents participate in the construction of narratives, the worthiest of attention among them being: the nature of the *events*, the *setting* and *characters* – which can be real or fictional; the *relational components* –narrator and reader or hearer; and, last but not least, its *prose*.

Prose as a communicative mechanism represents the natural production of conversational discourse (Bauman, 1992). In the array of prose narratives, the one of interest in this chapter is that of *personal narratives* (PNs). They are employed to relate and disclose individuals' personal experiences. Therefore, personal narratives refer to one's life or life experiences. Similarly, Labov and Waletzky view personal narratives as "one verbal technique for recapitulating experience, in particular a technique of constructing narrative units which match the temporal sequence of that event" (1997). From the standpoint of Linde on *life stories* (1993) applied to autobiographies, one can learn that these narratives can be arranged by

coherence on the basis of two principles: *causality* and *continuity*. The former implies the relationship between cause and effect of events, whereas the latter alludes to the progression of the story in the long run. Particularly, a cause-effect narration can play a significant role in the recapitulation and evaluation of the narrative of an episode or event, and this evaluation can be crucial for one's self-development and self-growth (Langellier, 1989). On this account, storytelling can acquire a significant role in both informal and professionally-driven contexts for diverse purposes.

Support Groups and Narrative Therapy

Professionally or informally, storytelling implies designing and sharing narrations and their consequent interpretation by a communicative receiver. As a result, from early times to the most innovative adaptations, it is implemented as a learning or instrumental tool in many contexts (Isbell, *et al.*, 2004; Davidson, 2004; Andrews & Hull 2009) as the one presented here: *support groups*. Support groups (SGs) correspond to a community of individuals that supplies mutual social support by engaging in interactional practices of solidarity, peer-support and peer-enhancement concerning a common issue or circumstance (Cline, 1999). Despite the core traits of support groups, there are many types, which can vary in conformity with their purpose and range from the provision of “emotional and instrumental support” to self-control, emotion-management or self-regulation (Guthrie & Kunkel, 2016). Within the diversity of support groups, the type of interest here is that which is “peer-led and self-directed” (Guthrie & Kunkel, 2016), that is, *self-help support groups*. These groups differ slightly from those professionally controlled by a psychotherapist. What defines self-help support groups is that members join them voluntarily and consciously. In so doing, Guthrie and Kunkel (2016) think of these groups that “there are no formally prescribed solutions or [behavioral] outcomes, the desired goals are determined by the group, participants help each other as they are helped, there are no time constraints, and participation in the group is voluntary” (p. 2). Historically, they have served different objectives, such as “survival needs, pursuit of common goals and provision of mutual aid” (Katz & Bender, 1976a, 1976b cited in Guthrie & Kunkel, 2016). Nonetheless, all in all, following the classification of Cutrona and Suhr (1992), one can distinguish five types of support: *informational* – providing information or advice regarding the stressful issue; *tangible* – providing material help or services; *emotional* – expressing empathy and concern; *network* – expressing a sense of belonging and commonality; and *esteem* – expressing worth, respect, and confidence in abilities. Aside from the fundamental description of support groups, contemporary changes have affected the proliferation of these groups along with their functioning. At present, a wide spread of support groups emerges caused by “a decreased sense of family and community support” from individuals in view of industrialization and mobility (Guthrie & Kunkel, 2016, p. 1). Also, in the face of the digitalization of real world communicative practices due to information technologies (ITs), online support groups have arisen as a suitable alternative for our modern lifestyle. Indeed, as the defining attribute of Internet-supported communication, *anonymity* might help members further in the process of sharing their personal circumstances, particularly when dealing with sensitive issues (Guthrie & Kunkel, 2016).

Regardless of whether support groups are online or offline, the exchange of information and the narrating of experience determine this interpersonal therapy. Therefore, as previously stated, it is relevant to mention the role of storytelling as a therapeutic tool. There is a large set of uses of storytelling for professional purposes and that is what theorists classify as *serious storytelling* (Lugmayr, *et al.*, 2016). Storytelling with this connotation is usually found in therapeutic contexts, and consequently named *therapeutic storytelling*. This implies narrating one's story in order to more fully understand oneself as

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well as a situation, an issue, a traumatic event or experience (Harter & Bochner, 2009). Through narrations, one can examine and interpret past events or performance so as to improve future similar situations with the grasp of the past. From the viewpoint of narrative psychology, according to Lawless (2001), narrating one's experience(s) is a way to bring to the table past events. This activity enhances the story nature of human behavior (Sarbin, 1986), idea which is linked to the *narrative paradigm* (Fisher, 1984). This approach defends the thought that human knowledge is built from the past experiences and situations lived together with cognitive processes and competence to revolve around them and scrutinize them (Schank & Abelson, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; McKeough, *et al.*, 2008). With these theoretical foundations in mind, narrative therapy becomes a psychological approach to storytelling and a therapeutic tool which aims at assisting patients in detecting and assessing their values and the skills associated with them. This allows the individual to learn from it and gain the knowledge and the competence(s) to live and overcome future similar issues or problematic episodes successfully. Professionally speaking, the therapist guides the patient to “co-author” a new psychological narrative about themselves in the experienced narration, that is, their own identity. In other words, either socially or professionally the narrative identity of the teller(s) or declared patient(s) might be versatile by dint of diverse informational strategies. Information input and exchange tend to be a source for redesigning one's world view, as well as narrating can have different functions (Brown, 1991; Bietti, Tilston, & Bangerter, 2019).

Whether or not support groups are peer- or therapist-led, they represent an interpersonal interaction with therapeutic purposes, where communication and the exchange information act as the substantial factor. Not only communication, but some therapeutic narrative needs must be met so as to achieve the goals of this practice. Therefore, McAdams and McLean (2013, p. 234) posit the aspects which should be considered in the narrative identity:

- *Agency* - The extent to which narrators can change their lives or influence others via “demonstrations of self-mastery, empowerment, achievement, or status.”
- *Communion* - The extent to which narrators experience interpersonal connection through emotions – intimacy, caring, and belongingness – to a group.
- *Redemption* - Episodes in which an emotionally negative event leads to an emotionally positive outcome.
- *Contamination* - Scenes in which a positive episode becomes negative, due to the impact of the latter on the former.
- *Meaning-making* - The extent to which the narrator learns from an event.
- *Exploratory narrative processing* - The extent of self-exploration in the narration.
- *Coherent positive resolution* - The extent to which the narrative is solved with a positive result.

Apart from delving into the aspects addressed, the structure of narratives reveals information about the cognitive and emotional relation to the object to be therapeutically treated. Amidst the types of coherence, narratives structure can be *temporal*, *causal*, *thematic* and *cultural* (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Yet, aside from the production of narrations, a successful *group psychotherapy* must include some requirements (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005): universality, altruism, instillation, imparting information, corrective recapitulation of primary family experience, development of socializing techniques, imitative behavior, cohesiveness, existential factors, catharsis, interpersonal learning-input and output and self-understanding (See *Appendix* for further definitions).

Knowledge-Sharing Platforms and Their Comments Section

The reception of information can have a range of communicative sources. In fact, information can be acquired from informal situations, as for instance in encounters with friends or during family events, in professional settings, through art or by means of varied media. One such contemporary context for it is *knowledge-sharing platforms* (KSPs). Knowledge-sharing platforms are online sites where users can produce and share content with the purpose of making knowledge – information, skills or expertise – public. On the other hand, other users resort to them to learn, to socialize or simply for entertainment. Thus, scholars such as Herring (2015) refer to them as *interactive multimodal platforms* (IMPs), that is, “web-based platforms that incorporate user-generated content and social interaction” (p. 399) through different communicative modes. The complex nature of these sites, however, motivates others to conceptualize it as a *convergence of media* (Jenkins, 2006). Herring (2015) conceives interactive multimodal platforms as the result of the convergence of diverse media and their strengths, which minimize the distancing effect or ambiguity possibly found in other online media (Bourlai & Herring, 2014) or in the old media. Owing to their interactional layout and use, these information-sharing services (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.) are also types of *presentational* (Marshall, 2010) and *participatory media* (Burgess & Green, 2009). This is because in these environments individuals are allowed to express themselves and contribute to the creation and distribution of information, as well as to engage in social activities. Hence, their audience ranges from loved ones to students or professionals in search of either informal and personal information or theoretical and professional content.

As a way to promote interaction, these online platforms comprise two sections. The *information section* entails professional or informal written and/or video-based user-generated content (UGC). The *comments section* is where viewers or readers can exhibit their reaction and is indicative of the social dimension of this type of interaction. As informal social interaction and the YouTube platform constitute the study objects of this chapter, one can see there is extensive literature on the link between both. On the one hand, research has covered the usability and the effectiveness of YouTube videos as both knowledge-sharing and learning material (Chou, *et al.*, 2011; Raun, 2018). In similar manner, academics from different fields have examined its videos by discussing emotional issues, content and discourse in the comments section (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2014; Lorenzo-Dus, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich & Bou-Franch, 2011). Because of the configuration of interactive multimodal platforms, users in the comments section can continue the interaction with the video producer or other commentators now that the design of the platform helps foster this conversation (Burgess & Green, 2008). The comments section permits viewers or readers to display their reactions on or opinion about the content. Independently of their format, online comments involve evaluative pieces of the content (Marwick, 2015; Riboni, 2017a, 2017b; Spyer, 2013). This section has nevertheless evolved to become an online environment for discussion among commentators. In some cases, these multi-party conversations or *polylogues* (Lorenzo-Dus, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, & Bou-Franch, 2011; Marcoccia, 2014) reach the point of leaving the content section in the background and adopt a *chatroom effect* (Iyanga-Mambo, 2020). It is here where the varied types of commentators play distinctive communicative and subsequent performative roles (Iyanga-Mambo, 2019, 2020) which include: online friends, advisors, critics, peers, fans or haters, among others. Thereby, these roles might go in line with the communicative performance of the interactional user.

In computer-mediated communication settings, as observed by Suler (2004), online identities are supported by what is identified as a *phenomenon* in interaction: the *online disinhibition effect*. This effect

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often causes conflicted episodes in online interaction (Herring, 1996; Kiesler, Siegel & McGuire, 1984) as well as in the comments section (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010). Namely, interactive participants may perform in different ways than they would do in in-person interaction on account of the anonymity these sites enable. Notwithstanding, those communicative roles are temporary considering their adaptation as specified by their discursive performance in each comment and thanks to the brief length of conversations here. As viewed by Stets and Burke (2000), in role identity theory, an identity can adopt distinct contextual relational roles. By means of the exchange of information between videobloggers and their followership and the variability of roles of commentators, YouTube videobloggers and their commentators arrange themselves interactionally and act as communities (Iyanga-Mambo, 2020). In some types of YouTube channels this connotation might be accepted as a Wenger's *community of practice* (1998), that is as a group of individuals who continuously interact and exchange personal information. In this way, knowledge-sharing videos might eventually function as a source of experience-sharing and exchange in the comments section.

Considering these three theoretical dimensions, the ensuing section discusses the three focal objectives of this chapter. This explanation is provided by examining a sample collection¹ of comment narratives by self-declared victims of abuse in the YouTube comments section of an openly self-declared life coach and video producer on YouTube². In the video, the life coach covers different mechanisms to detect an abusive relationship as well as to leave one. In order to study the comment narratives, an interactional sociolinguistic narratology-oriented approach is taken. Similarly, the description has a focus on the main narratology constituents together with narrative identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013), group psychotherapy (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), coherence (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Linde, 1993) and types of support (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992).

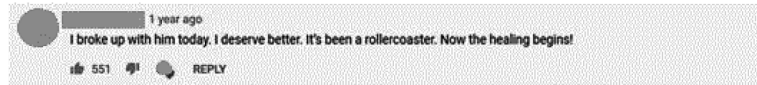
ONLINE PERSONAL NARRATIVES IN YOUTUBE COMMENTS SECTION

Structure and Arrangement

In this chapter, two narratives of self-declared victims of abuse are presented to explain the construction of personal experiences. In Figures 1 and 2 one can observe the two comment narratives, *A* and *B*, respectively. Approaching these comments comparatively, there is a notable difference concerning length. *Narrative A* is considerably shorter than the one showed in Figure 2. In reality, *narrative A* is prominently simplified in a four-statement text with a concise and simple description of the events. This narrative starts with the claim of the performance of the narrator-protagonist: "I broke up with him today". Straightaway, the narrator adds a supportive statement with an evaluation and opinion towards this action by affirming: "I deserve better". Interestingly, for the acknowledgment of his/her performance, the narrator employs I-sentences so as to assert the braveness of taking that step and the making of this decision. Later on, as a mode of justification of that decision, the user abstractly depicts what the dilemma and experience have been by uttering: "It's been a rollercoaster".

Figure 1. Narrative A

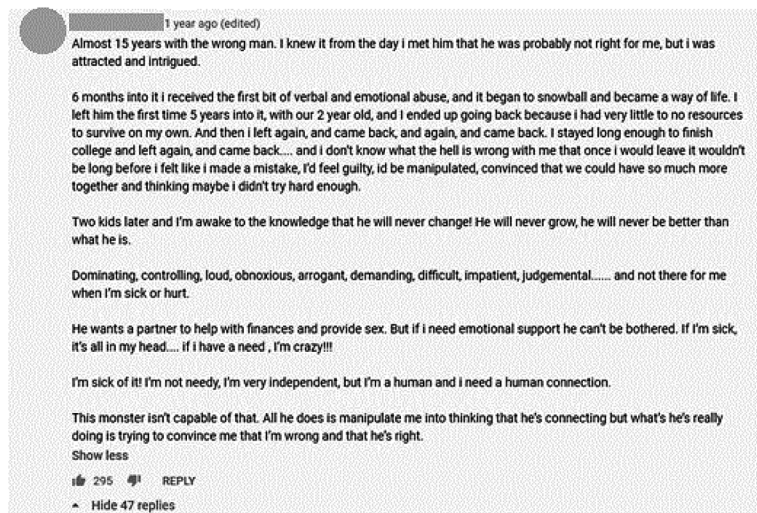
Source: YouTube



With this evaluative and emotional metaphor, from what the victim defines as “rollercoaster”, the reader can already interpret that the narrator experimented positive emotions in pleasant situations, but also negative feelings during the relationship. This “rollercoaster” encompasses all which has been undergone during the relationship. To conclude the personal narrative, the narrator states: “Now the healing begins!” The final utterance describes the new phase which comes after the decision of leaving behind all that has been previously experienced. Indeed, the user talks about the present looking towards a better future. With the inclusion of the term “healing”, as well as of the exclamation mark (!) at the end, the storyteller does want to share the positive emotions he/she is feeling publicly.

Figure 2. Narrative B

Source: YouTube



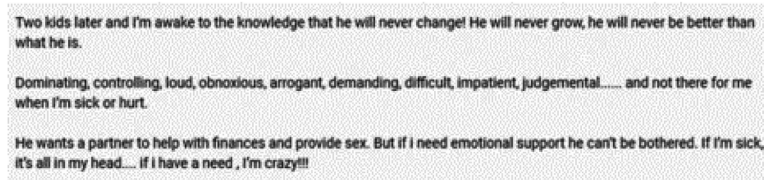
In opposition to this previous four-statement narration, *narrative B* presents a more extensive comment (304 words), in which the user shares in great detail his/her abusive relationship. This narrator employs a rather elaborated narration to tell the experience. Structurally speaking, despite the presence of seven sections, the storyteller introduces the narration by presenting the situation: “Almost 15 years with the wrong man. I knew it from the day i met him that he was probably not right for me, but i was attracted and intrigued.” In this introductory information, one can learn information regarding the duration of the relationship, the abuser and his/her own profiling as a victim with the integration of the argumentation of his/her past performance. Throughout the following four sections, the author of this narration provides a set of descriptive information regarding: the *abusive episodes* and events by saying “6 months into it i

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received the first bit of verbal and emotional abuse”; his/her *own performance* in those events and *reactions* together with justifications: “I left him the first time 5 years into it, with our 2 year old, and I ended up going back because i had very little to no resources to survive on my own”; and *self-criticism* on his/her performance in the narrative: “and i don’t know what the hell is wrong with me that once i would leave it wouldn’t be long before i felt like i made a mistake, I’d feel guilty.” From this, one can read a real recapitulation of the experience. Nevertheless, throughout the third, fourth and fifth parts – see Figure 3 below – the storyteller affords a group of *negative criticism* by explaining his/her personal situation. The victim focuses the comment on describing the personality of his/her partner by depicting him as “[d]ominating, controlling, loud, obnoxious, arrogant, demanding, difficult, impatient, judgemental”. On the other hand, the narrator evaluates his performance negatively given his lack of emotional and supportive personality as a partner: “and not there for me when I’m sick or hurt.”

Figure 3. Narrative B – Parts 3, 4 and 5

Source: (YouTube, 2020)



Two kids later and i'm awake to the knowledge that he will never change! He will never grow, he will never be better than what he is.

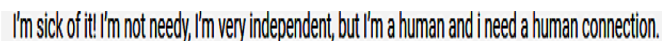
Dominating, controlling, loud, obnoxious, arrogant, demanding, difficult, impatient, judgemental..... and not there for me when i'm sick or hurt.

He wants a partner to help with finances and provide sex. But if i need emotional support he can't be bothered. If i'm sick, it's all in my head... If i have a need, i'm crazy!!!

After the description of events and of the performance of his/her partner, in the next sections the commentator starts studying progressively the attitude of his/her partner towards him/herself as a character in the story. As shown in Figure 4, the following section is however characterized by a discursive turn when the narrator concentrates the text on his/her own feelings, by producing self-centered and emotional narrations. In them, the narrator expresses his/her personal tiredness of the situation and claims human and social rights.

Figure 4. Narrative B – Part 6

Source: YouTube



I'm sick of it! I'm not needy, I'm very independent, but I'm a human and i need a human connection.

In the last paragraph, more features about the behavior of the accused partner of the commentator are detailed: “This monster isn’t capable of that. All he does is manipulate me into thinking that he’s connecting but what’s he’s really doing is trying to convince me that I’m wrong and that he’s right”. In bringing the narrative to a close by means of firm statements, the comment user reaffirms and justifies why he/she cannot stay with an individual with those personality traits. And, what deserves attention here is how the user ends the narration by defining him as a “monster” and as a manipulator.

Although both narratives use different discursive mechanisms to narrate their stories – length or narrative components – one can identify a structure in both narrations. Despite its shortness, *narrative A* has a linear description of the phases, which are chronologically presented. That is, it follows a temporal coherence with a cause-effect outline. In contrast, *narrative B* is notably characterized by an analytical and meaning-making approach and cause-effect description. In this case, the narrative has a meaning-making coherence of the relationship. Accepting the approach of narrative identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013), *narrative A* follows a clear and linear redemption via the storyline, where the conclusion goes from the result of abandoning the abusive relationship to a positive psychological outcome for the narrator, that is, a possible coherent positive outcome. Keeping in mind the reduced length of the story, the narrator can difficultly reflect in the narrative any other dimensions. Even then, there is an evident recovery through the expression “I broke up with him today” and “Now the healing begins!” Although these might be mere assumptions, one can read between the lines some agency on the part of the commentator. Still, more details may be required for a firmer categorization. Meanwhile, *narrative B* is characterized by its deep meaning-making with the inclusion of justifications of the behavior of both partners in the relationship. The narrator places his/her performance and that of his/her partner side by side and puts forth subsequent self-reflections on thoughts and feelings. The storyteller includes components of performance, meaning-making of that performance, exploratory narrative processing, agency and redemption.

The Components of Comment Narratives

In spite of being a non-traditional and non-fictional type of narrative, other components which are part of comment narratives are *characters*, *setting*, *plot(s)*, and *narrator* (perspective). In *narrative A*, for example, there is an absence of explicit components. Yet the information on the character, plot and narrator is indirectly rendered. Firstly, the story is a first-person narrative which explains the perspective of the narrator. Then, the plot and setting are somewhat stated when the narrator tells the story, as one can deduce the development of the events. Likewise, the narrator in this story centers on his/her performance and events. Distinctly, with the first statement the reader already knows that the narrator was in an undesired sentimental relationship with a man. In regard to the longer *narrative B*, the situation is mostly similar to the one outlined in *narrative A*. Nonetheless, more information is explicitly provided about the setting, time, performance, events and other characters. Nevertheless, the length of the narrative comment is supported by a wider exploration of him-/herself as an individual in a relationship and the examination of the personality and the actions carried out by his/her partner as a character of the narrative. The narrator lists actions, details of his personality as examples to elaborate on her/his personal experience. Both storytellers in narratives *A* and *B* have in common their presence in the stories as in-narrative characters. In addition, narrators include literary techniques in their texts. The author of *narrative B* resorts to literary techniques when describing his/her partner as a “monster”. Oddly, the storyteller in *narrative A*, who concentrates on the performance or situations experienced, calls it “rollercoaster”. What this remarkably reveals is that literary techniques are mostly employed to allude to the traumatic object of any nature.

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Figure 5. Narrative A: First Reply Comments

Source: YouTube

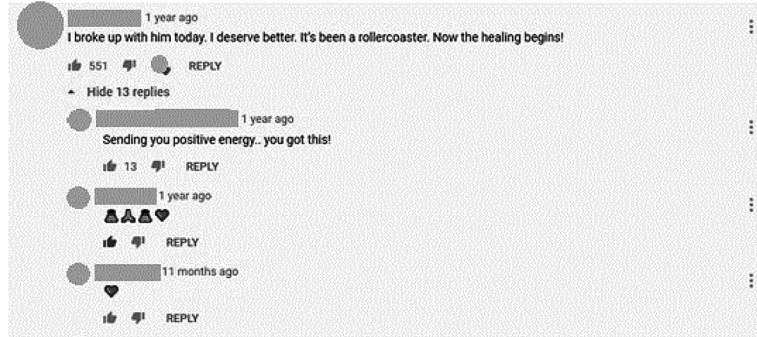


Figure 6. Narrative A: Examples of Reply Comments

Source: YouTube

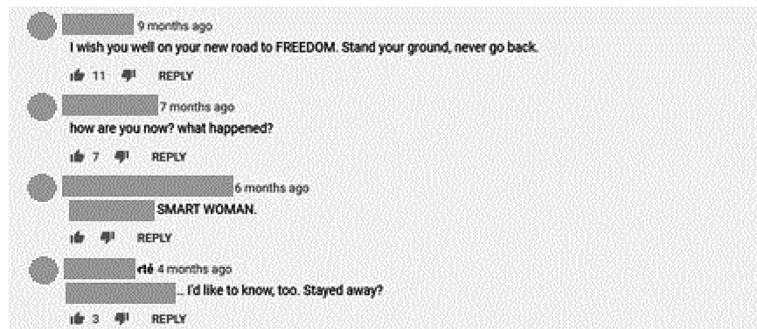
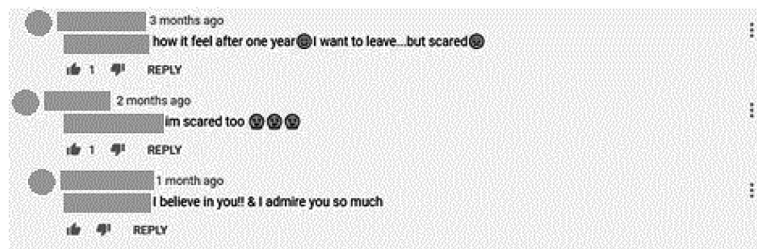


Figure 7. Narrative A: Examples of Reply Comments 2

Source: YouTube



Comments Sections as Self-Help Support Groups

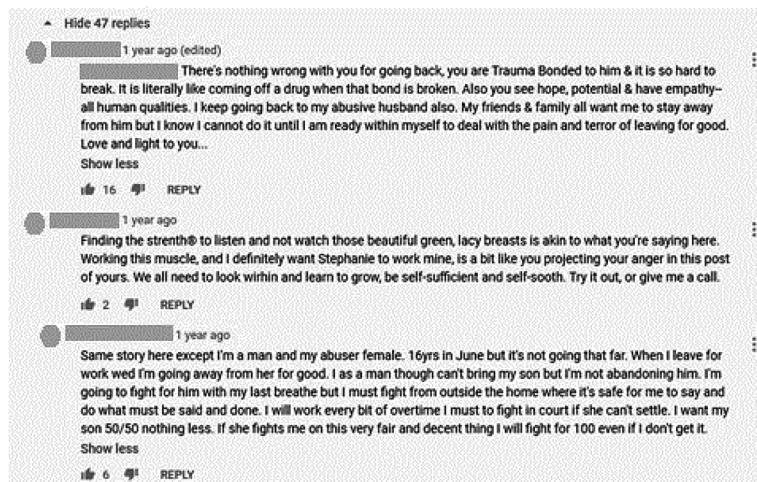
Types of Interactional Commentators

After delving into narrative comments which have a similar effect to self-help group therapy, in this section the aim is to dig into the interpersonal dimension in the comments section, with a focus on the

interaction among commentators and the emergence of conversational narratives. As illustrated in Figure 5 below, *narrative A*, acquiring 551 likes from other viewers and commentators, obtains thirteen written visible replies. In this case, the first one belongs to the video producer and publicly self-declared life coach. The video producer is the first commentator who supports the narrator by saying “you got this!” right after the narrator shares his/her story.

By the same token, the succeeding commentators simply post emoticons linked to positive emotions, such as *hearts*. After a while, indeed one year later after the publication of the comment, this comment still receives reply comments (RCs) and feedback from other readers – See Figures 6 and 7:

Figure 8. Narrative B: First Reply Comments
Source: YouTube



In these comments one can identify interactional acts such as: *questions* – “how are you now? what happened?” or “I’d like to know too. Stayed away?”; *information on intentions and feelings* – “I want to leave...but scared”; *expressive positive reactions* and *praising* “SMART WOMAN” and *complimenting* as supportive content – “I believe in you!! & I admire you so much”. In spite of the absence of reply from the teller in *narrative A* so far, the meaningful information here is the need, from other commentators, to receive updated information about the narrator. It is worth emphasizing that such interest about the present situation of the self-declared victim of abuse still exists. This enhances the group support and also relationality. In fact, those reply comments provide additional personal information about other group peers as well. With the aid of statements such as “I want to leave” and the emotional utterance “I’m scared”, users disclose the parallelism of their personal situation with *narrative A*. In this way, commentators reveal that they are in a similar position to the one explained by the narrator. Indirectly, these commentators inform others about the similarities between their situation and the core issue presented on the platform. This might account for the reasons why these commentators are on this specific knowledge-sharing webpage, that is, these individuals look for an online community whose members share or are in the same circumstances as they are. Expressed differently, they might look for informal and naturally-produced self-help support group online in an anonymous, easily accessible setting.

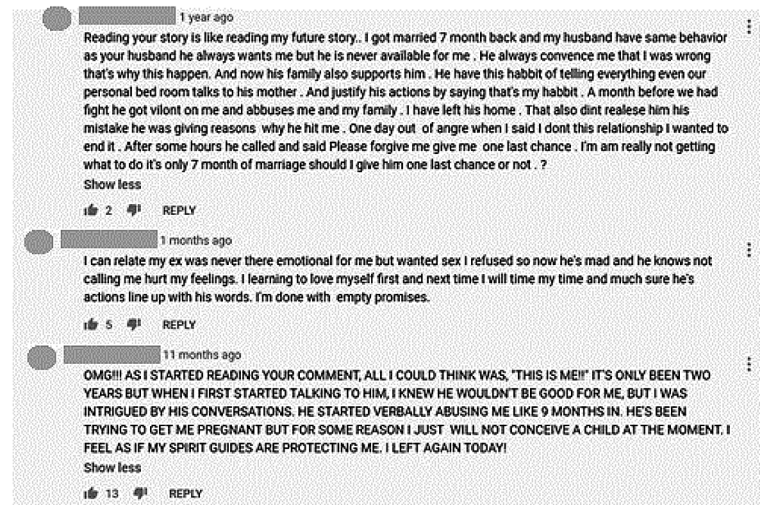
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Concerning *narrative B*, when observing Figure 8 one could think that the length of reply comment relies on the number of words of the first narrative comment. Unlike the reactions posted after *narration A* and in response to *narration B*, the ensuing users compose rather long and elaborated commentaries. In the first reply comment (RC-2.1), the commentator addresses *narrative B* directly by supporting the storyteller. Additionally, the user provides emotional arguments towards the situated performance of the storytelling so as to help in the process of self-exploration and meaning-making.

Later on, by showing his/her values, RC-2.1 focuses on the positive performative traits and enhances and praises the positive personality features of the self-declared victim. Different to the first part of the comment, RC-2.1 becomes a narrator of his/her own story. RC-2.1 concentrates on the sharedness between his/her personal story and *narration B*. Further on, the commentator adds some personal features such as the involvement of the family and distinctive personal reflections. In opposition to the previous comment, the next comment (RC-2.2) shares opinionative and argumentative messages with respect to the characterization of *narration B* as a means to assess the narration of the storyteller and the potential inappropriate direction the group peer might be taking. From reply RC-2.3, comments begin with the display of likeness, however afterwards commentators address their personal experience. RC-2.3 continues with a personal conversation narrative with the purpose of enhancing and exemplifying togetherness and unity in this.

Figure 9. Narrative B: Other Reply Comments

Source: YouTube



As Figure 9 shows other comments to *narration B*, which follow the same structure of RC-2.3 above. These comments start with statements such as: “Reading your story is like reading my future story”; “I can relate my ex was never there emotional for me” or “OMG!!! AS I STARTED READING YOUR COMMENT, ALL I COULD THINK WAS, “THIS IS ME!!!””. So as to introduce the in-talk personal narrative, these commentators first emphasize the similitude between their personal situation and *narrative B*.

Relational Roles and Interactionality

Given the diverseness of comments, it is possible to recognize the various roles commentators can assume in this context. As for this chapter, the examples analyzed emerge from the primary narrative comments, and one can perceive these narrators as the starters and ice-breakers of a polylogue with no expectation of reply. Yet, other commentators participate by adopting diverse discourses: giving advice, complimenting, supporting, exemplifying, evaluating, criticizing, informing and reacting. These assorted communicative and relational performances uncover the distinct roles commentators can play on the basis of a role identity approach (Stets & Burke, 2000). Some roles are permanent through the comment, whereas others vary throughout their writings. This diversity is linked to the purposes of the comments and their progressive adaptation.

To cover this interactional sociolinguistic approach, this section addresses the synchronicity, response and the role of other conversation personal narratives. After the initiation of the polylogue, commentators who leave replies might be viewers who found the content only recently. Yet, despite this, reply commentators follow the conversation as if the narrator was expected to read it. This is visible through the characterization of the comment with synchronous speech features. Because of that, some commentators resort to addressing the narrator directly and even mentioning his/her username. Strategically, commentators compare their situations in order to keep and intensify the conversational aspect. Nonetheless, this might be only an apparent mechanism to fight against the asynchronous facet of the interaction. Leaving aside those commentators who posted their narrations and content right after the posting of the initial narrative comment, the truth is that most narratives were not posted synchronously.

Group Psychotherapy in Online Comments Sections

Embracing the criteria of Yalom and Leszcz (2005) which define *group psychotherapy* and its successful functioning, this chapter demonstrates the resemblance of online comments sections to self-help support groups. First of all, *universality* and *cohesiveness* are the most prominent factors, given that the commentators explicitly share their personal narratives publicly and overtly indicate that they are the main characters of those first-person stories. As it has been shown, subsequent reply commentators reaffirm their togetherness when stating their personal experience and enhancing their similarity and unity in the situation and the resemblance of their life experiences. Related to *universality*, *altruism* is equally found in the comments section, and as it has been pointed out, these active users engage in online social relations by praising, complimenting, and giving advice on the topic. Users often resort to peer-enhancement, which eventually denotes group-enhancement given that all commentators are in the same boat. *Altruism* is highly associated with the *installation of hope* and both are notably present in the publication of positive messages of encouragement and hope for a positive outcome. Linked to this idea it is the fact that other group members provide *informational* criticism. Some commentators *impart information* or knowledge in the form of expertise to guide them during the process of self-exploration and to re-author their narrative. This practice shows some similarities with *corrective recapitulation* of the narration and experience. In this way, although with difficulty, some group members additionally pursue to *develop socializing techniques*. Group members employ conversational mechanisms to boost interaction or an interactional effect, particularly when addressing other peer members directly, requesting updated information on the situation or by making direct reference to another member in the group. In regard to *existential factors*, as it has been presented in the description of *narratives A* and *B*,

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storytellers frequently recognize their behavioral patterns, the fear to leave the situation or their partner and the function of their behavior and *performance* in the situation. Beyond *performance*, when it comes to *catharsis* they publicly disclose their feelings and attachment to the past events and to the present. In brief, there is a possibility of interpersonal learning caused by these similar experiences. This can strongly show that the comments section might have acquired a role beyond that expected by adopting a function of self-help support group. Owing to the easy access to online knowledge-sharing platforms, users can find other individuals with the same common nexus and concerns based on their searches. Considering all these dimensions, these commentators provide mostly all possible types the support: informational, emotional, network and esteem. Only the tangible type of support is hardly offered due to the fact that communication takes places in an online setting.

DISCUSSION

Taking into consideration all the considerations above, one can identify some performative and narrative patterns in the interaction between these commentators and their personal narratives. It may be early to talk about a genre, yet these narrative comments could be considered a type of comment in the public discourse or in the discourse of knowledge-sharing sites, which has been also approached in other studies (Iyanga-Mambo, 2020). From a more narrowed viewpoint, these brief online comments firstly perform as personal micro-narrations with functional purposes, despite the notable differences in length or in time production. Comments can be also widely distinguished according to the complexity of their content, structure and components, ranging from very simple to very complex. This justifies the fact that, even though the disinhibition effect contributes to the communicative performance of online users (Suler, 2004), narrators are still cautious when sharing personal details.

From the interactional perspective of narrative comments, the chapter has enabled us to take a closer look at the production of casual storytelling, but also at the function of personal conversational narrations as reply comments. On the whole, although there was some possibility of negative feedback (Suler, 2004) by reason of the anonymity and the absence of common ground, here commentators participate voluntarily with positive evaluations and complimenting in spite of being online strangers. Indeed, users opt for working collaboratively and showing solidarity, as previous research has also shown (Iyanga-Mambo, 2019, 2020; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Placencia & Lower, 2013). Particularly, the chapter has allowed us to see the way in which reply comments mimic narrative therapy and contribute to the co-authoring of the narrative identity of the storyteller by publicly evaluating and supporting them emotionally. Likewise, these social settings act as a space where these victims can find individuals in the same situation. By participating in this “community of equals”, these online encounters prevent people from falling into complete social isolation (Høybye, Johansen, & Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2005). From a conversational point of view, these polylogues tend to be slightly unconventional on the strength of lack of synchronicity and the duration of the support group. Yet, it is interesting to what extent the relational attitude of the commentators is defined by the relational and emotional principles of self-help support groups and the parameters of group psychotherapy. This could serve as an example of informal learning in a knowledge-sharing platform, not only the visualization of the content but also the reading of the comments. This would support the idea of the juxtaposition of experience-sharing and learning in a knowledge-sharing platform.

With respect to the first narrative comment and the subsequent reply comments, it draws one's attention to that all viewers center on their common nexus and can somewhat be viewed as a community with shared circumstances. Even if commentators do not perform as an organized community of practice, following the approach of Wenger (1998), in a sense they function as a sort of temporary community whose members are related to a shared nexus in these momentary conversational episodes. Surprisingly, commentators find the ways to portray the character of real group therapy members and even the group therapist by helping to reconstruct and co-author their narrative perspective. Thus, one is capable of perceiving that indirectly the production of these casual narratives could have some indirect therapeutic effects. As such, narrative therapy boosts the reduction of psychological distress and improvement of the well-being (Khodayarifard & Sohrabpour, 2018). For this, although interaction takes place in the comments section, they might perform as those "low-threshold" services (Stommel & Koole, 2010) which online self-support groups embody. In consequence, in this chapter these online commentators have proven their ability to mirror, in an informal and casual way, offline practices by creating short-term *semi-organized self-help support communities* online through temporary therapeutic conversations.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

With the purpose of showcasing alternative productions of conversational storytelling on online platforms, this chapter has addressed personal narratives in the comments section of a knowledge-sharing platform such as YouTube. The particularity of this approach relies on the output of in-talk personal narratives in an online environment where a therapy-oriented self-help support group is unintentionally developed. Even considering this contribution, other dimensions are still in need of further investigation. To date, there has been limited research on knowledge-sharing platforms where storytelling plays a relevant role in videos and comments section. In the same way, in contrast to the extensive literature on (online) support groups, there is not a large number of studies which discuss the service of new media as potential supportive sources for individuals who have experienced or undergo sensitive or stigmatized situations or other personal dilemmas.

Based upon the explanations provided throughout the chapter, future research could assume directions such as the ongoing evolution and adaptation of personal experiences in naturally-occurring conversations on other online platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook or Twitter. On account of its great contribution to other correlated fields, more research is still required from different discursive perspectives so as to theoretically formalize the field of online public discourse together with conversational storytelling. To deal with these lacks, I propose that the literary techniques in narratives should be studied more in-depth, together with other features which define this type of discourse. Additionally, more case studies which follow a narratology-oriented approach would be convenient to create a stronger theoretical framework for the study of online discourse in relation to knowledge-sharing platforms. Moreover, prospective studies should not center solely on the storytelling and communicative performance of content creators, but also on commentators. Besides that, informal learning in knowledge-sharing platforms is an attractive subject matter in academia. And, thereupon, storytelling coupled with informal learning should be jointly studied since it defines the contemporary culture. Lastly, to better comprehend narratives for both professional and informal interactions and different aims, this chapter suggests other research angles, such as comparative studies or statistical corpus linguistics.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed how personal narratives have found a modern online communicative setting to be shared. This does not only provoke their public distribution, but also their exchange among diverse commentators who are under the same or similar circumstances or face a shared dilemma. Therefore, this chapter has presented online commenting in knowledge-sharing platforms with an emphasis on its interpersonal and social supportive function. With the example of narratives of self-declared victims of abuse, one can better understand the publication of narratives and interaction in the comments section as transient, informal and therapeutic informational input and output. Consequently, it has been explained how commentators structure, compose and characterize their personal narratives in this unintentional and asynchronous talk. And, lastly, it has been illustrated to what extent and how interactional and personal narratives casually and partially mirror the performance and functioning adopted in both narrative group psychotherapy and self-help support groups. These online commentators have demonstrated their ability to replicate, in an informal manner, offline practices by acquiring the condition of *online semi-organized self-help support communities*. Through online storytelling, solidarity and the accentuation of belonging, these temporary interactional communities represent the idea of knowledge-sharing platforms. Also, in this way, with these temporary therapeutic social interactions, it has been unveiled to what extent real world practices can be unintentionally transferred to online environments.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Conversational Narrative (CN): A story or narration which is told within a conversation.

Knowledge-Sharing Platform (KSP): Online content-hosting sites where users can create and share information of any nature.

Personal Narrative (PN): A story based on one's life experience(s) or event(s) and habitually related in the first-person.

Polylogues: A conversation in which there are more than two participants, particularly online.

Self-Help Support Group: A self-regulated community of individuals who are regularly in contact or gather together to overcome shared issues or to achieve mutual goals in cooperation.

Therapeutic Storytelling: The use of narratives with psychological and therapeutic purposes.

Therapy Group: A community of individuals who are regularly in contact or gather together to overcome shared issues in cooperation and with the help of a therapist.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For the explanation, it was found convenient to deploy only a selection of representative comments which directly exemplify the practice presented in this chapter. Both their length and content were carefully examined in the selection process. The selection was obtained from the data collection used in an ongoing study on which the author of the chapter is currently working. In other words, in order to choose this sample, the author had already carried out previously an exhaustive study of all comments attached to the video on abusive relationships and leaving them.
- ² To avoid any advertising and copyright issues with the video producer and to respect the privacy of the users, their online performance and personal situation, the usernames of the commentators along with the information related to the video and video producer are intentionally unmentioned in this chapter. Equally, any content which might help in the identification of these users has been also omitted.

APPENDIX

Table 1. The Therapeutic Factors

Therapeutic Factors	Definition
<i>Universality</i>	Members recognize that other members share similar feelings, thoughts and problems
<i>Altruism</i>	Members boost self-esteem by extending help to other group members
<i>Instillation of hope</i>	Members recognize other members' improvement and they develop optimism for their own improvement
<i>Imparting information</i>	Education or advice provided by the therapist or group members
<i>Corrective recapitulation of primary family experience</i>	Opportunity to re-enact critical family dynamics with group members but in a corrective manner
<i>Development of socializing techniques</i>	The group provides members with an environment that fosters adaptive and effective communication
<i>Imitative behavior</i>	Members expand their personal knowledge and skills through the observation of group members' self-exploration, working through and personal development
<i>Cohesiveness</i>	Feelings of trust, belonging and togetherness experienced by the group members
<i>Existential factors</i>	Members accept responsibility for life decisions
<i>Catharsis</i>	Members' release of strong feelings about past or present experiences
<i>Interpersonal learning- input</i>	Members gain personal insight into their interpersonal impact through feedback provided by other members
<i>Interpersonal learning- output</i>	Members provide an environment that allows members to interact in a more adaptive manner and practice new skills
<i>Self-understanding</i>	Members gain insight into psychological motivation underlying behavior and emotional reactions

Source: (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005)

Chapter 3

Storytelling and the Rhetoric of Rumor in Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Social media rumor is becoming a prominent spectacle thanks to the rapid surge of internet usage world-wide. However, little research has been done so far that takes social media rumor into account. This chapter attempts to understand the nature and narrative of social media rumor. The discussion revolves around three important and interlaced concepts: social media storytelling, social media rhetoric, and social media rumor. The chapter attempts to show that a story requires rhetoric to be successful and most of the rumours are successful stories because they contain rhetorical elements. To understand the storytelling and rhetorical aspects of social media rumors, remarks based on three prominent cases of social media rumors are presented. The conclusion is that social media rumors are more literary, have more emotional elements than logical proofs, and the structure is meticulously designed to have specific impacts. These features echo disinformation, an important mode of rumor.

INTRODUCTION

What changes do social media bring about? It is hard to answer in a few sentences as social media not only makes a few changes, but also transforms our lives and societies to a great degree. Social media touches almost every part of our lives. That is why it is one of the central areas of scientific and social research nowadays. Unlike traditional media audiences, social media users are exclusive in several respects. First, notice that we usually associate the words *audience* and *user* with traditional and social media, respectively. But why is that? The reason is that traditional media is based on linear communication, where one party produces and delivers the communication contents and another party passively receives and consumes them. However, in social media, everyone is a producer and consumer of communication

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contents. Gurel and Tigli (2014) sketch a few more tentative features of social media users: participant, migratory, unpredictable, difficult to manipulate, integrated and interactive, visible. Aichner and Jacob (2015) identify 13 types of social media. They are blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks, forums, microblogs, photo sharing, products review, social bookmarking, social gaming, social networks, video sharing, and virtual worlds (Aichner & Jacob, 2015, p. 259). Each of the platforms serves different purposes to its users with different communication facilities and experiences. Numerous researches have been done to date, exploring the communicative nature and tools of social media platforms (Boonstra, 2011; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Gurel & Tigli, 2014). Researches also deal with the negative outcomes of social media communication, such as rumor (Goh et al., 2017; Hashimoto, Kuboyama, & Shiota, 2011; Kwon, Cha, Jung, Chen, & Wang, 2013; Ozturk, Li, & Sakamoto, 2015). However, we do not have enough understanding of how social media rumors are told persuasively. In this context, the present study aims to explore the junction of social media storytelling, social media rhetoric, and social media rumor.

This chapter bridges a few specific gaps. First, no particular study draws a tripartite relationship between storytelling, rhetoric, and rumor. Is a successful rumor a successful story also that should have rhetorical elements? No study answers this question. Second, the state of these three variables is studied separately on many occasions, such as digital/social media storytelling and digital/social media rhetoric. Most of these studies only focus on digital media in general, not on social media in particular. Also, the combined state of storytelling, rhetoric, and rumor in social media has not been discussed in any study. Third, the storytelling pattern and rhetorical use of social media rumor are yet to be discussed. Therefore, the present chapter covers a wide area to fill the knowledge gaps. However, it does not provide a concrete conceptual framework, but rather a brief overview of the storytelling and rhetoric of social media rumor.

The following discussions are divided into five sections. In the first section, a brief overview of storytelling and the specialties of social media storytelling are discussed. The second section attempts to connect rhetoric with storytelling and sketch the area of social media rhetoric. The third section deals with the features of rumor and propensities of social media rumor. In the fourth section, a holistic discussion on storytelling and rhetoric of social media rumor is presented based on three example cases. Finally, some concluding remarks are presented in the conclusion.

BACKGROUND

Before discussing the nature of storytelling in social media in the digital age, at first, we need to understand what stories and storytelling are, and the stages of their historical development. A story is simply a narrative (Page, 2018). The definitions of “story” can be divided into two broader categories: from the core communication perspective and from the literary perspective. Conversational stories are every meaningful expression of human communication. Lambert (2012) states that stories are the communication elements through which we make sense of the world: from a three-word sentence to a novel. Fisher (1987) also views human communication from a narrative point of view. According to him, humans communicate through stories, human communication is nothing but the exchange of stories, the world is full of stories, and humans understand life through a series of stories. Fina (2016) thinks storytelling is one of the most common forms of discourse in human communication. Human interaction can often be mistakenly considered as the only type of information exchange. Scattered information without a structured body of narrative is not conducive to communication. So, individuals put contextualized

information into narratives to make it meaningful. We may call it storytelling. Therefore, in one way or another, we all are storytellers. Storytelling is not all about stories, but also about the participants and their interrelationships, social contexts and actions (Fina, 2016). Thus, storytelling is the string that has been binding human society for ages (Harari, 2015).

In literature, a story has a specific meaning. A story indicates a real or fictional narration of events mainly to educate or entertain the audience. A story usually includes a central theme, characters, plot and setting, conflict, and conflict resolution. Fictional stories include folklore, mythology, drama, adventure, etc., while non-fictional stories include history, news, etc. Unlike the conversational story, the literary story requires creativity and performance. This chapter presents a balanced discussion of both types of stories.

We are now living in an age of digital communication and social networking, and are becoming more accustomed to social media storytelling than traditional storytelling. To differentiate the former practices from the modern practices, we will be using the terms *traditional* and *digital* or *traditional media* and *digital/social media*, respectively. Nevertheless, the social media we are using now was something else in its infancy. The primary social media sites in the 1990s were mainly dating sites, such as *kiss.com* and *match.com*. The development of featured social networking sites (SNSs) from 1997 has changed the landscape of the internet and so has social interaction. Existing cultural components and cultural expressions usually change with technological inventions and innovations and their diffusions (Benjamin, 1969; Rogers, 1983). Thus, the arrival of modern social media has also changed the previous mode of human communication. Also, traditional storytelling has been transformed into what we now call digital storytelling (Lambert, 2012). But what is social media storytelling and why it is becoming more popular nowadays?

Social Media Storytelling

Social media storytelling is simply telling stories in/through different social media platforms. It is a sub-category of digital storytelling. Telling stories using digital technologies is digital storytelling. Alexander (2011) states that digital stories are narratives based on the components of cyberculture. However, digital media is something broader than social media: *digital* is an entire anatomy of advanced technology and social media dwells in it. Persuasive and crafted contents as stories are commonplace in social media promoting an informal but interactive authorship-readership relation. Social media stories include trivial and everyday happenings, such as Facebook and Twitter posts, along with canonical narratives, such as personal blogs (Fina, 2016). Popescu (2019) observes that regular storytelling in social media inspires more users' interest to generate more stories. She further argues that social media stories increase the users' interest in the cultural contents more than the other types of content. However, she fails to recognize that all communication contents are cultural contents that convey culture: we call them *social artifacts*. Thus, social media stories are important transmitters of cultural elements that cause cultural transformation (Al-Zaman, 2018).

We can analyze the role of social media in human communication from two perspectives: (a) social media as a communication channel; (b) social media as a discursive space. Social media act as a bridge between its users. The most basic use of social media is to build and maintain communication networks among netizens. As a mediator, social media help to manage relationships among diverse communities, such as writers, critics, gamers, entrepreneurs, entertainers, and businessmen, through different types of social media sites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Youtube (Aichner & Jacob, 2015). On the other hand,

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social media are an effective discursive ground where interactions in the form of stories take place. It is a public sphere where users assemble, share their thoughts, and conflict and reconcile, repeatedly (Valtysson, 2012). This space allows users not only to engage in networking, but also to utilize a parallel public sphere, more democratically and freely (Effing, van Hillegersberg, & Huibers, 2011). Even the digital natives sometimes consider the virtual space more real than the physical space (Madej, 2016; Prensky, 2001).

The communicative nature of social media is unique in many aspects. Page (2013, 2015) observes that social media interaction is collaborative, dialogic, episodic, and personalized. First, it integrates various participants within a huge network. Second, the communication is based on (direct) dialogues. Third, the stories produced and distributed on social media do not have a linear continuity and usually revolve around specific and real-time events. Fourth, identities and contents in social media are personalized: users reconstruct their online identities and produce content according to their wishes. Thanks to its unique interactive features, social media storytelling is used for different purposes, such as business and education. Corporate companies use the social media space to promote their brand values, compete with other brands, and persuade their potential consumers through stories (Aichner & Jacob, 2015). For example, professional sports organizations use social media storytelling as a part of their marketing efforts (Laurell & Söderman, 2018). Yilmaz (2016) shows that telling stories about travel experiences in social media plays a major role in travelers' psychological fulfillment. They usually tell stories in social media about the spots they visit (Lund, Cohen, & Scarles, 2018; 2015). These stories shape the views of other tourists and influence them to choose their destinations, which often pose a challenge for destination management organizations (DOMs).

In education, the use of social media stories is growing, though researches are still limited in this area (Tess, 2013). The integration of Youtube in the classroom and Facebook for online academic interaction show how digital education is relying on social media usage (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011). In various fields of education, such as medical education, nursing education, and management education, social media storytelling is playing an important role (Schmitt, Sims-Giddens, & Booth, 2012; Wankel, 2009). Moreover, social media storytelling serves education marketing and bridges the formal and informal education (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016).

Social media storytelling is also important to publicize and popularize ideas and organize social movements. Many national and international social gatherings and mass movements are the outcomes of shared social media stories. The so-called Arab Spring in 2011 was probably the most renowned social media-led mass movements to date (AR, 2015; Howard et al., 2011; Khondker, 2011). Amid the surveillance and shutdown of major media outlets during that time, social media served as a platform to share stories of revolutions and mobilize people. It made the series of mass movements possible. Thus, social media opens a threshold for further social movements and mass mobilization across the world, as traditional media fails to serve the public interests properly. In Bangladesh, for example, Shahbag movement in 2013, No-vat on Education movement in 2015, Quota Reform movement and Road Safety movement in 2018, are major social media-led movements. National media outlets hardly presented or supported the *just* causes of these movements. Therefore, the last hope of the activists was various social media platforms. The fuel of these movements was mainly political stories and storytelling (AR, 2015; Rahman, 2018).

Besides, hashtag activism is getting popular among netizens. It is widely recognized as *hashtivism*, a type of social media storytelling that connects millions of likeminded people. Although mainly based on Twitter, *hashtivism* is now popular on other social media platforms as well. Often, netizens across the

globe express their solidarity and share their stories regarding particular social issues using hashtags. Some well-known hashtag movements from the recent history are #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #YesAllWomen, #BringBackOurGirls, and #Ferguson (Anderson, Toor, Rainie, & Smith, 2018; Crandall & Cunningham, 2016; Hitchings-Hales & Calderwood, 2017). In these movements, *hashtivists* formed conformity through telling their stories and supporting others' stories. Notably, most of these stories are from the perspective of marginalized groups. Social media storytelling lets the unheard be heard and provides a voice to the voiceless. Social media storytelling also serves the purposes of politicians. It provides a voice to the populist actors to spread populist stories. The populists articulate their ideologies and tell stories to their audiences (Engesser, Ernst, Esser, & Büchel, 2017). However, Postill (2018) is reluctant to glorify the power of populist storytelling in social media. Rather, he suggests that social media is not alien from the whole media system, and it continuously interacts with other media outlets, while together they play a role to promote populism.

To further understand social media storytelling, it is important to take into account its spatial and temporal features. Social media stories are virtual, occupying a *non*-physical space, unlike the traditional stories. This spatial difference changes the essence and experience of storytelling. In real-settings, engaged participants communicate face-to-face (F2F), which is not possible in the virtual space. Rather, social media participants have online profiles that represent their online identities. Each profile as identity needs (re)construction. This process includes selecting a profile picture and cover photo (we call it *avatar*), writing short biography, etc. This is called "social media builds", i.e., rebuilding a parallel identity (Johnson, 2018). Such identity fluidity reshapes the response patterns of the participants on the Web 2.0 platforms.

An important feature of social media storytelling, unlike other mediated communications, is its participatory nature (as cited in Fina, 2016). Every user tends to play a dual role in social media: as an author and as a reader. An author is a storyteller, and a reader is the story-receiver. A social media author must have the *know-how* of digital media to be a successful storyteller. To access the stories told by authors, readers must possess digital literacy. The *author* and the *reader* are two terms for storyteller and story-receiver, respectively. In multimedia and transmedia storytelling, storyteller and story-receiver have different names according to the produced content types. If the story is in written form, the storyteller is a writer. If it is a speech, the storyteller is a speaker, and, if visual, then maker/creator. Thus, we can also see that storytelling is not associated with only verbal narration: it has a much broader meaning. Similarly, the roles of readers are different based on the types of story-content: a receiver can be a reader, listener, and spectator when the stories are written, audio, and audio-visual, respectively.

In terms of response, both authors and readers seem to have more control over their contents and preferences. For example, readers can choose their preferred author according to their psychological filters. Authors can customize and control their readership and story privacy on social media platforms. Both authors and readers can enhance their writing and reading skills thanks to the uniqueness of the digital texts (e.g., hypertext). Also, thanks to the intense interactivity among the storytelling participants, social media story has another exclusiveness in terms of production, i.e., sharing (Page, 2018). The shared stories are told thousands of times by thousands of users across social media platforms. Social media also provide convenient sharing options (e.g., *share* button on Facebook) that help to reproduce a story many times. Shared stories can build a collective identity and likeness, and can bring people together. Page (2018) considers that shared stories in social media are important due to their wide impact. A social media story has the potential to involve even millions of users as stories are "collectively produced, consumed, and reproduced."

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Social media stories are affected by recency. It means that social media stories usually revolve around contemporary issues rather than retrospections (Page, 2015). For example, the prime issue of social media stories around the world in 2020 is the COVID-19 pandemic, not the Second World War. Retrospection occurs mainly to present the analogy of a recent event. In this case, major pandemics are discussed to compare with COVID-19, such as the Spanish Flu in 1918 and the Asian Flue in 1957.

If we consider a story as an organized narrative body from a literary and rhetorical perspective, traditional and social media storytelling do not have major differences. Generally, storytelling has four common major elements: message, conflict, characters, and plot (Fog, Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). The *message* is the kernel of a story. Most of the story messages are ideological and moral statements. A story usually conveys one specific message. The *conflict* is a driving force of a story that fuels the public interest. Conflict in a story can be both positive or negative. It includes change, anxiety, crisis, and resolution in a story. The *characters* are the performers who engage in different actions. They carry the central message in a story. The *plot* is the ground on which the previous three elements are placed, interact, and progress. It is also called the context on which the whole story is structured. The unique nature of social media allows for hyper-storytelling in social media. Alexander (2011) maintains that social media is a heavily intermixed space, as one site is connected with others: Youtube link is embedded in Facebook and Twitter, Facebook and Twitter links are shared on Youtube and blogs. Also, storytelling features are different on different social media platforms (Aichner & Jacob, 2015). For example, Youtube as a video sharing platform is suitable only for visual storytelling. Similarly, as a microblog, Twitter stories are limited to 200 characters, whereas Flickr, a photo-sharing platform, allows only images. Therefore, storytelling techniques and efficiency must be different for each of these platforms. Moreover, hypertext, extensive cross-referencing among related websites/sections, allows participants to have new experiences in social media storytelling.

The dimensions of social media storytelling can be divided into five analytical parts (as cited in Page, 2015). First, *tellership* indicates the number of storytellers, whether single or many. Second, *tellability* indicates the value of the story and storytelling, whether it is worth telling or irrelevant. Third, *embeddedness* indicates whether the story is embedded in or detached from its context. Fourth, *linearity* indicates the structural quality of the story. Fifth, *moral stance* indicates the storyteller's attitude towards the narrated incident/moment/issue, whether it is certain or fluctuating. Every story should have another important virtue that makes the story prominent and persuasive: we call it *rhetoric*. What makes a story successful? Engagement and communicativeness should be two prime requirements of a story to be successful. If the readers are unable to engage in a story and communicate through it, the story is a failure. Both requirements depend on the effective use of rhetoric. Thus, rhetoric is an inseparable part of storytelling. However, unlike traditional rhetoric, a new kind of rhetoric has emerged in the age of digital communication, i.e., *digital rhetoric*. The broader sphere of digital rhetoric also includes social media rhetoric.

RHETORIC, RUMOR AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Human communication is based on stories, and stories are the career of rhetoric. Conversely, rhetoric is present in almost all forms of communication and so are stories. Therefore, the reciprocity between storytelling and rhetoric is profound. Rhetoric is one of the three ancient arts of discourse (McLuhan & Gordon, 2006). We are rhetorical beings, so our relationships are influenced by the use of rhetoric

(Crosswhite, 2013). In our everyday performances in dealings, negotiations, bargaining, and exchanging information, rhetoric is important. Intention to persuade others is also a common instinct of human beings. In Classical Greece, rhetoric was limited to literary works, political discourses, natural and social sciences, religions, and fine arts. Rhetoricians could speak convincingly on any topic, regardless of their experience in that field. Hence, beyond political discourse, rhetoric was also increasingly implemented in other discourses. Then, it was popularized by the Sophists who taught the art of speaking and persuasion techniques through speech. They charged money for their teachings too (Crosswhite, 2013). After the Sophists, rhetoric was recognized as an important discipline by Plato and Aristotle. Although rhetoric is a pre-Aristotelian phenomenon, Aristotle conceptualized it for the first time. He often quoted the Iliad and other poetries and speeches from Greek tragedies to illustrate rhetorical practices (Aristotle & Kennedy, 2007). Schiappa (1999) also warned against depending on the pre-Aristotelian philosophy to understand rhetoric, because the concept of rhetoric was not developed until Plato coined the term and Aristotle refined the concept. He identified three stages in the early development of rhetorical theory. First, the older Sophists were concerned with logic. Second, Plato focused on the art of logic or speech. Third, Aristotle divided philosophy and rhetoric (as cited in Crosswhite, 2013). According to him, the available means of persuasion through communication can be of two types: artistic and inartistic (Griffin, 2011). *Inartistic* or external proof includes the elements that are not created by the speaker, such as documents. Conversely, *artistic* or internal proofs are created by the speaker. Artistic proofs consist of three types: ethos (the character and credibility of the speaker), pathos (the dispositions of the audiences), and logos (the demonstrative nature of the speech itself). He mentioned invention, arrangement, and style as the three departments of rhetoric. Based on this, Cicero codified the *five canons* of rhetoric.

The rise of Christianity in medieval Europe led to the devaluation of rhetoric: it was seen as pagan and antithetical to the church (Eyman, 2015). The trend continued until Augustine recognized that the persuasive modes of rhetoric could be very useful for the church. However, the focus of rhetoric during this period was primarily on the development of rules for preaching and legal letter writing. Rhetoric enjoyed resurgence during the Renaissance, although the focus was primarily on style. During the Enlightenment, rhetoric faced threefold reformation that connected it with science, more specifically with psychology. It paved the way to contemporary approaches to rhetoric. In the age of computer-mediated communication (CMC), digital rhetoric is perhaps the most prominent face of rhetoric.

Social Media Rhetoric

Before discussing social media rhetoric thoroughly, a brief description of digital rhetoric is imperative. Digital rhetoric is a modification of traditional rhetoric within the digitalized communication system. Traditional rhetoric is concerned with F2F communication including other analog media. Similarly, digital rhetoric is an inseparable component of digital stories that are produced and distributed to audiences in the form of digitalized content and through digital media. The concept of digital rhetoric is exciting and troublesome simultaneously. It opens up a new threshold for rhetorical studies. In contrast, it also poses a challenge to the rhetorical tradition of more than 2000 years (Zappen, 2005). The term *digital rhetoric* was coined by rhetorician Lanham (1998). According to Hocks (2003), digital rhetoric is “a system of ongoing dialogue and negotiations among writers, audiences, and institutional contexts, but it focuses on the multiple modalities available for making meaning using new communication and information technologies” (p. 632). The broader area of digital rhetoric incorporates rhetoric of technology and network, social media rhetoric, online rhetoric, and the study of new media (Eyman, 2015).

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Boyle, Brown, and Ceraso (2018) argue that the demarcation line between traditional and digital rhetoric will be diminishing with the ubiquity of digital communication technologies. The rhetorical tools, such as the five canons (invention, arrangements, style, memory, and delivery), are reconfigured to work in new contextual forms like the database, the hypertext, the cybertext, and other digital texts (“Cicero’s Classical,” 2008). In digital rhetoric, for example, *delivery* refers to the Internet-based communication media (Porter, 2009). The nature of digital rhetoric is, however, interdisciplinary (Eyman, 2015). As social media is a dialogic platform, it is inextricably related to rhetoric. When rhetorical practices meet social media platforms, we can call it *social media rhetoric*. However, social media rhetoric does not completely divorce traditional rhetoric but embraces its’ tools and features through necessary modifications. Traditional rhetoric is primarily concerned with real-life communication. Thus, it influences public lives only. But social media rhetoric has its influence on both physical and virtual spheres. Also, it has its distinctive artistic elements: identity, engagement, and superficiality.

Identity is similar to the notion of ethos. On social media platforms, the (re)constructed virtual profiles of the users represent the identities of the users. Many virtual identities are without reference to real-life identities. The pictures chosen as *avatars* and the information provided, for example, often do not match properly with the real person. Users randomly get connected with people they do not or hardly know in real-life. Besides, identity disguise or pretending to be someone else, along with identity theft are commonplace in social media. Anonymity is a unique feature of social media platforms. More interestingly, hyper-interaction among the networked (anonymous) publics frequently erases the identities of contents’ sources. Therefore, it often becomes hard to trace back the source of social media content (Warnick & Heineman, 2007). To make the reading less complex and more lucid, we use the term *author* and *reader* instead of *speaker* and *attendants* or *listener* or *audience* throughout this section. Another reason is to make the idea of social media rhetoric consistent with the social media storytelling where a similar term is used.

In real life, ethos consists of the author’s personality traits and social identities. The identity in the context of social media usually takes several other factors into account, such as the produced and re-produced contents and their prominence, the engaging events, quality, and frequency of response. The more compact and trustworthy a netizen’s identity is, the more s/he can persuade others through their (re)produced contents. Netizens build cyber-communities, which is a collection of their virtual identities. Different ideas and issues align them in different small groups. A shared idea among a group member often defines the group identity. For example, the netizens who are convinced by the rhetoric of *waaz* on Youtube and Facebook and proselytize other netizens are addressed as *virtual pious*.

The term *engagement* in social media rhetoric denotes the potential of a story to appeal to its readers and engage them. The authors intentionally inject emotional elements in a story. The idea of engagement is similar to the pathos of traditional rhetoric. For Aristotle, pathos is “awakening emotion in the audience so as to induce them to make the judgment desired” (Aristotle & Kennedy, 2007, p. 119). The readers’ engagement with a story is based on five contending emotional expressions: mildness vs. anger, love vs. hatred, confidence vs. fear, pity vs. indignation, and admiration vs. envy (Griffin, 2011). The first five expressions count as positive expressions and the second five are negative. Unless the stories in social media are weaved with appropriate emotional expression, they will fail to engage the readers. From the perspective of the readers, borrowing from Braet (1992), we can explain the idea of engagement in social media stories from three perspectives: the conditions of the readers, for whom they feel the emotion, and the motive of the emotion.

Communication in social media is affected by *superficiality*, that is, most of the stories contain only phatic expressions. To be more precise, the functions of social media stories are more social-relational than informational and educational. Therefore, social media rhetoric is more applicable to relationship maintenance than knowledge production, so the role of logic is minimal. The enthymeme of social media rhetoric is based on widely-accepted but untested information. Entertaining information in social media can be viral at a glance and often functions as the basis of an enthymeme: the sources of such information hardly matters to the readers. It is noteworthy that the effectiveness of social media rhetoric sometimes depends on the readers and their psychological predispositions.

We can take a look at the condition of the traditional five canons of rhetoric in social media. The rhetorical *invention* is about finding and developing suitable arguments to form a body of logic. The presence of logic in social media stories are minimal. Therefore, invention plays little role in social media rhetoric. The notion of *arrangement* is somewhat inappropriate in social media due to its dialogic nature. It requires definite parts: introduction, body, and conclusion, to complete the structure of a story. Most social media stories are unstructured and direct reducing the necessity or altering the application of the arrangement. It is said that the effectiveness of rhetoric is mostly concerned with *style*. In social media rhetoric, style incorporates the tone of the content, and its design (color, font choice, appropriate use of multimedia and graphics). Keeping stories short and to the point are also two requirements of style. The use of emoji serves as an important style of rhetoric (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 2005). *Memory* includes natural memory and artificial memory. Natural memory denotes the users' memorizing capacity of information and events whereas artificial memory is concerned with storing and retrieving information from storage (Eyman, 2015). Finally, the *delivery* of a story in social media indicates the preparation and distribution of digital content. Story contents can take four types of forms mentioned earlier that can be delivered in several ways, such as posting, sharing, tagging, and hypertext-ing. Brooke (2009) argues that we need to see delivery not only as transitive or transactional but also as "intransitive, constitutive performance."

Rumor has always been a popular agent of human communication through ages. In the digital age, it takes a new form in social media. But what is the central idea of rumor? What is the conducive environment for rumor to spring up and spread? What is special about social media rumor?

Rumor and Social Media

Rumor is considered as unsubstantiated information, which means the veracity of the information is not confirmed. Difonzo and Bordia (2006) define rumor as the unverified but relevant information. It usually arises in "the context of ambiguity, danger and potential threat and that functions to help people make sense and manage risk." (Difonzo & Bordia, 2006, p. 13). Watson and Hill (2006) further add that rumor can be barely traced back to its origin, spreads rapidly during its momentum, transmits along informal channels by word of mouth, and thrives in close-knit communities due to lack of effective communication channels. However, rumor is transmitted not only through informal channels but also through formal channels., Blake (1974) and Herriman (2010) reveal that rumor often spreads through legal agents of communication or formal channels, including press and broadcast media. After all, a rumor lives only if there is enough public interest regarding the issue, and if people discuss the rumor story among themselves (Peterson & Gist, 1951).

Rumor has four categories: controversy, speculation, misinformation, and disinformation. The last two categories are more emphasized in communication researches due to their frequency and impact

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(Derczynski et al., 2015). Misinformation is the *unintentional* spread of false information while disinformation is the *intentional* construction and dissemination of false information to deceive others (Fallis, 2011, 2015). Disinformation is dependent on the source's intention, and the intention is usually known after its source is revealed. Therefore, the source of rumor can often be traced back, which is a violation of Watson and Hill's (2006) assumption. Furthermore, rumor is not mere information as Difonzo and Bordia (2006), Watson and Hill (2006) and Allport and Postman (1947) consider. Rather, rumor is information with context and narrative body: rumor is nothing but a story (Becket, 1988). The success of rumor is similar to the success of any story and it depends on how perfectly the story of rumor is weaved and delivered. It implies that a rumor story must have rhetorical elements to make others engage and believe in it. Once one believes in a rumor story, s/he could be a potential transmitter of it as well. The transmission of rumor is mainly of two types: chain transmission, i.e. one-to-one transmission, and network transmission, i.e. one-to-many transmission (Buckner, 1965). There is a subtle difference between the rumoring and rumor-mongering, as Dentith (2013) argues. The former is natural while the latter produces social discontent. A large number of users use social media as a primary source of information (Lazer et al., 2009). Moreover, social media is free from intermediaries, such as news organizations and traditional gatekeepers (Cornog, 2015). Therefore, the production and dissemination of rumor become easier. Social media rumors are the rumors distributed on and by social media platforms. Such rumor contents can be either produced in social media or brought to social media from other external sources. Rumors house in social media due to its growing popularity and wider reach. The popularity of Twitter and Facebook as an information source is increasing (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017). Also, every user is a potential producer of information in social media, thus information becomes profuse. It leads to a crisis of information reliability. Albeit this issue, major media outlets are being dependent on social media, either to collect information or to promote their information (Hong, 2012; Lysak, Cremedas, & Wolf, 2012; Stassen, 2010). As a result, Paulussen and Harder (2014) reveal that references to social media platforms are common in mainstream news outlets. When we rely on others for information, there is always a chance to be mis/disinformed. In this case, the social media as an ocean of unverified information often deceiving the users.

Social media rumor is a proliferating issue with limited concerns and research outputs to date. More researches in this area are concerned with rumor detection and other computational aspects of social media rumor. Kwon, Cha, Jung, Chen, and Wang (2013), for example, analyzed social media rumor with a periodic time series model and found that rumor fluctuates over time. Hashimoto et al. (2011) propose a framework to detect rumor. The framework clarifies the social media topics, visualizes topic structures in time series, and determines the reliability of doubtful information comparing it with other reliable information sources, such as television and newspaper. Some relevant studies deal with the spread of rumor in social media. These studies express optimism about the rumor-detection capacity of the social media users. Goh et al. (2017) reveal in their analysis of rumor contents that the counter-rumor contents are more prevalent in social media than the rumor contents. This means that social media users are more concerned about rumors and less likely to be deceived. In another study, Ozturk et al. (2015) maintain that warnings about rumor reduce the spread of social media rumor. In such a situation, users can self-correct and inactivate the potential rumors.

Rumor most often takes the camouflage of news: we address it as *fake news* or *false stories*. Fake news as a widely recognized form of rumor has a political agenda Hossain (2018). Social media allows fake news pandemic to become a reality. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) in their prominent study of the social media fake news in the USA Presidential Elections of 2016 reveal that fake news favored Donald

Trump more than Hillary Clinton. Interestingly, more users who encounter fake news in social media believe the information, and they tend to believe stories that are associated with their preferred candidates. Meel and Vishwakarma (2019) show that social media platforms are used to produce and deliver fake news having malicious intentions against a person, a group, or other collective bodies. They argue that real-time information in social media could be dangerous if the authenticity of the information is unchecked: it requires verified information source and cross-checking.

Credible sources improve the information quality in social media and reduce the spread of rumor during the time of anxiety and information uncertainty (Oh, Kwon, & Rao, 2010). Information with no clear source is the top rumor-causing factor during crises (Oh, Agrawal, & Rao, 2013). In critical situations, such as disaster and tension, the demand for verified information is high. Social media plays a crucial role in such circumstances. Therefore, the reduction of rumor alone may not work properly, as Liu et al. (2014) argue. The parallel circulation of verified information is necessary to balance the information flow amid the situation. The spread of social media rumor is different from the spread of traditional rumor. Traditional rumor mainly spread through word of mouth and direct communication among people (Watson & Hill, 2006). It depends heavily on chain transmission; therefore, the transmission is much slower. On the other hand, the rumor spread in social media is based on both direct and indirect communication among a large number of people that hints about a network transmission. Moreover, social media is designed to make communication easier. As a result, the rumor transmission rate in social media is much higher.

Good storytelling is inseparably related to the effective use of rhetoric, and rumors are nothing but rhetorical stories that succeed through efficient storytelling. Now, these analogies pose a question: what is the nature of storytelling and rhetoric of social media rumors?

Storytelling and the Rhetoric of Social Media Rumor

Social media rumor is an ideal example of a rhetorical story and an example of how people believe and act on persuasive stories. Having specific intentions, the story contents of social media rumors are often meticulously prepared and delivered on social media platforms. For instance, social media rumor related to blasphemy in the guise of a convincing story led to communal violence (Al-Zaman, 2019, 2020a). Three cases of well-known and recent social media rumors in Bangladesh will be analyzed next. The focus will mainly be on the story contents and patterns, and partially on the backgrounds. We try to understand the patterns of storytelling and the use of rhetoric in social media rumors. Firstly, a brief background of each rumor is presented. Secondly, the storytelling of each rumor is discussed from different aspects. Finally, we attempt to understand how rhetoric is used in each rumor. A brief overview of the analyses is also presented at the end of this section. Note that the rumor texts presented in the following discussion are translated from Bangla to English for a better understanding.

Human Heads for the Padma Bridge

The Indian subcontinent fosters many myths and legends for thousands of years like elsewhere in the world. These myths and legends are transmitted from generation to generation in the form of persuasive stories. One of the well-known myths is that the accomplishment of a significant endeavor requires sacrifice: the greater the endeavor, the bigger the sacrifice. Hence, if the endeavor is gigantic, it needs human sacrifice (Bahar, 2019). Before starting the construction work of the much-debated Padma Bridge

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in Bangladesh, Chinese workers sacrificed a few animals on the river. This incident from 2015 was broadcast by some national media outlets. In the second half of 2019, a new hype emerged. A digital text along with numerous videos and previously published photos were circulated on Facebook and Youtube by few interest groups. The main theme of the rumor was: the Padma Bridge requires human sacrifice to complete the construction, and it would be better to sacrifice one hundred thousand heads of human children. The rumor along with latent superstition stirred up mass hysteria that entailed mob lynching of at least eight people nationwide (France-Presse, 2019). The rumor based on the following text flooded social media in June and July 2019.

BREAKING NEWS

Total 41 groups of criminals are operating their mission across the country to collect the human heads. They have toxic spray which is being used to faint their targets. This spray is workable from a distance of approximately 12-17 feet. When the targets become senseless, the criminals chop their heads off. Please, share this awareness message with your acquaintances. You know the danger, now it is your responsibility to protect your friends. (Source: <https://bit.ly/2LbFg6o>; <https://bit.ly/35RYyHL>)

The source or storyteller of this rumor is unknown. The story has definite characters: groups of criminals and potential victims. They have adverse relationships as one set of characters tries to kill another: it produces conflict (Fog et al., 2010). The message of this rumor is intense and related to the most central human instinct: survival. The rumor urges that to survive, the reader must pay attention to the rumor and do as it says. It suggests not only to protect oneself but also to protect your friends by sending the message to them. The plot of this rumor story revolves around the tension of survival and fear of the criminals. The fear-mongering description of how criminals would harm their prey systematically is arranged within the story framework as well. The narrative and elements of the story is set on a relevant backdrop. The story was produced and distributed on Facebook and Youtube.

Influenced by the main rumor text, many videos, and photos with graphic illustrations were also made by many enthusiastic netizens to alert other fellow netizens. This is the second phase of rumorizing. At this stage, uncritical netizens are mainly responsible for spreading the rumor story at a mass level. As a result, the rumor started to achieve its success. It became more successful when fearful and mis/disinformed netizens unknowingly tried to spread the “awareness” messages to others and reproduced the rumor contents by sharing them. Shifted from its original version, the rumor later took a different turn by replacing the word “human head” with “children’s head”. It eventually fueled among the public to a greater extent, which caused real-life mobs. Therefore, the real extent of the rumor is impossible to measure accurately (Page, 2015).

The title of the story is *Breaking News*, which immediately catches the attraction of the readers. The syntagm “total 41 groups of criminals” is an indication of certainty that attempts to certify the veracity of the news. The news further narrates the descriptions of crime conducted by the criminal groups. A covert emotional appeal is evident along with the use of fear: it aims to engage netizens in the story. The storyteller requests them to share it with the acquaintances to make them aware. The purpose is to engage more people with the rumor and convince them to be the so-called protectors of their acquaintances. Naturally, the high emotional appeal suppresses the demand for proper logic and concrete evidence, e.g., instances of actual murders, a trustworthy source of news.

Sheikh Hasina as a Noble Prize Candidate

Bangladesh is allegedly becoming an authoritarian/hybrid regime under the three consecutive terms of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (Riaz, 2019). She is also the President of Awami League (AL), the ruling party of Bangladesh since 2009. The unpleasant condition of democratic practices and institutions has given birth to sycophancy and politics of appeasement among the government officials and political publics. Most of the media outlets except a handful of them serve the government's interest. Also, the political sycophants tend to use their social media profiles to promote every policy and statement of the PM. Such servile political culture and media systems often produce rumors that overestimate and cajole the PM and party. The following fake news was produced and distributed in 2017 by Bangla Insider, a pro-AL online portal, along with few other national media outlets, such as The Asian Age and Daily Kaler Kantho. The rumor was also shared vehemently by the political sycophants across the social media platforms.

SHEIKH HASINA IS ON THE NOBLE PEACE PRIZE SHORTLIST

Sheikh Hasina is shortlisted among the top 10 candidates of the Noble Peace Prize this year. The Norwegian Noble Prize Committee will award the prize on October 6. On that day, the Committee will finalize and declare the name of the awardee after a closed-door meeting.

This year, 318 names were proposed for the prize, which is the second-highest in the history of the Noble Prize. Last year, the number was 376. The Noble Prize Committee accepts proposals only from certain persons through a rigorous procedure. Those persons submitted their proposals by the 1st of February 2017. For this year, the primary list included 215 individuals and 103 institutions. This list was assessed in March and sent for further evaluation to the advisory board. Afterward, a shortlist was made and presented to the Committee. The Noble Committee never publish their list officially. But some names come out by many sources.

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is on the shortlist this year. Through her efforts for establishing global peace, zero-tolerance against terrorism, and housing Rohingya refugees, she sets an example. Angela Merkel is also on the list due to welcoming the Syrian refugees. White Helmet group is also on the list who works to rescue Syrian refugees.

The leader of the American Civil Liberties Union, Susan N. Herman, is on the list as well, along with the American peace group Pink and Medea Benjamin, the co-founder of the humanitarian group Global Exchange.

Also, Norwegian educationalist Johan Galtung is positioned on the list who is the champion of reconstructing a peaceful youth society. A peace society known as One Billion Act of Peace and Pope Francis are on the list too, several sources confirmed that. (Source: <https://bit.ly/2SMK9ad>; <https://bit.ly/2A2a7zY>)

This political story is an ideal example of carefully weaved social media rumor in the guise of fake news. The protagonist of this rumor is Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Her political and humanitarian achievements were exaggerated by his followers who helped this social media rumor

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to come about. In this case, the source of the rumor is known, that is, an online portal, but the rumor went viral through social media. This rumor has real-life and visible characters, such as Sheikh Hasina and Angela Merkel, organizations, such as the American Civil Union, professional groups, such as Noble Prize Committee, and course of actions, such as Noble laureate selection. A combination of these factors increases the credibility of the rumor. The absence of proper conflict in the story was somewhat filled up with the optimism and coherent flow of the narration and inferences. The message hints that the PM is qualified enough to be a candidate for the Noble Peace Prize and she might even get the prize. It is efficiently grounded on real-life chronicles. Political activists were championing similar message in 2017 when PM was tackling the critical situations like terrorism and the Rohingya influx.

The story was broadcast by several national media so it is undoubtedly a successful rumor. Effective rhetorical elements are present in the story. First, similar to the previous one, the title of this story is attractive. The title itself is a kind of declaration that may arouse nationalistic sentiment and sense of prestige among the public. Second, the story has a source(s) that is an established and credible media outlet. Third, the development of the story maintains a seemingly logical description and includes trustworthy information, such as the selection process of the Noble laureate. The sufficient information, including the references of some popular names and specific numbers, is also convincing. Fourth, it has emotional appeal, such as the PM's anti-terrorist stand and humanitarianism that aims to engage more people.

Death Line of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Amid the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, the world's most developed countries failed to protect their citizens properly from infection and death. In some countries including the USA, Italy, Spain, and the UK, the death toll is much higher. The whole world is submerged with grief and is trying to recover the damages. Most interestingly, rumors regarding the pandemic surge widely based on social media. Many of these rumors are global, found in the USA, the UK, India, Bangladesh, Europe, and many African countries. The following rumor was propagated and circulated in social media during the last week of March 2020 amid the mushrooming fear of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FROM 29 MARCH TO 7 APRIL IS THE DEATH LINE

From tomorrow, the worst day is going to start. The ovulation period of 2 to 1114 days is now almost over. Many people are already infected, more are in the queue. If you go outside, you can encounter one of the carriers easily. Therefore, staying alert is essential for now as days after tomorrow will be critical.

We will be taking care of ourselves till April 7. The main spread of Coronavirus is about two weeks. After that, the virus becomes stable and gets weaker. Italy did not care about the virus during its peak time. As a result, the death rate is higher there. So, we should not go out till April 7, and stop meeting even family members.

This would bring good fortune to everyone. Stay safe and let others know this issue by sharing this message... [praying in Arabic]. (Source: <https://bit.ly/2YHE82s>)

The story predicts an upcoming danger related to the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. This false story capitalizes the public fear amid the outbreak of viral infection. The source of the rumor story is any-

mous as the message was circulated digitally from peer-to-peer. The main characters in this story are the potential carriers of the virus and the virus itself. Conflict between the virus and its carriers is also evident. The proposals for conflict resolution are also the central messages of this rumor: *stay alert* and *do not go outside*. They sound like orders or directions. The rumor prohibits physical contact that could be contagious. In this case, the storyteller(s) took the benefits of a real-life situation and crafted the social media rumor with a definite message. The plot of the story is arranged with necessary elements adequately with a coherent narrative and concluding remarks.

A couple of fearful words on the headline, i.e., *Death Line*, would immediately catch public attention. The first line of the story intensifies the feeling of fear. It sounds like a threat that compels the public to engage more in the story. Scientific reference in the second sentence onward works like a piece of concrete evidence that backups the logic of fear. The mention of the deadline is a key point of the story that makes it more credible. However, the assumption of the virus's strength is not tested so that such a statement has no ground at all. This apparent weakness is filled up by the reference to Italy's worsening situation. This emotional appeal (fear and sympathy) eradicates the confusion of the story and works as a positive catalyst for public engagement. The story also asserts that obeying the instructions would "bring good fortune to everyone". It may deepen the emotion of the public, which makes the story more persuasive. Interestingly, the mention of Arabic prayer at the end of the story is just to catch the attention of the Muslims.

The three episodes suggest a few characteristics of social media rumor. First, rumor stories in social media are more literary and well-constructed than dialogic and dispersed. Most of them prognosticate future happenings. Second, they have a specific structure that may include title, starting, body, and ending. Third, their narratives are simple but coherent. Fourth, their principal aim is to engage more people in the story. To do so, they use more emotional appeals than logical inferences. Fifth, rumors often tend to present logic that is insufficient and evidence that is weak and unsubstantiated. Sixth, rumors stories are superficial and not composed of any complex arguments. Finally, the wide-sharing of the rumor stories enables them to become viral, successful, and impactful. The discussion suggests that most of the rumors are meticulously constructed to accomplish specific goals: the underlying feature is *disinformation*.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This chapter presents a brief overview that would invite researches' interest to this less-explored area. Ample researches have been done so far on social media, storytelling, rhetoric, and rumor from the perspective of humanities, psychology, and philosophy. However, how users weave their stories and persuade others in different social media platforms demand in-depth observations. Also, research on rumor propagation in social media is equally important nowadays. Every successful social media rumor is a powerful story that has structural and rhetorical elements: the present chapter briefly overviews that.

Future empirical researches should further substantiate and extend this understanding through rigorous methodology. A few plausible relevant research topics in this area could be the users' response to online disinformation, the nature of audiences' engagement in online stories, and social media as a tool of persuasion and propaganda. As storytelling is the most common form of human communication, every evolution in storytelling technique (e.g., storytelling in the digital age) would demand more careful observation.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling lets human society survive and thrive whereas rumor might cause the opposite. Also, rumoring cannot stand alone without storytelling. More interestingly, the success of both storytelling and rumoring depends on rhetoric. Therefore, the three variables are interrelated and interdependent to some extent. Their presence is commonplace in social media. This chapter has thoroughly discussed the connection of each variable with social media and their tripartite relationships in the context of social media. The observation and analysis come up with a few remarks illustrated in the respective sections. The unique communication features and communicators of social media changed the traditional pattern of storytelling. In the age of social media storytelling, stories are seemingly more dialogic and interactive than literary and linear. However, the stories told by social media rumors may not fully support the claim as more rumor stories bear the features of literary storytelling. Social media rhetoric also alters the idea of rhetoric and, to some extent, makes rhetorical usage in communication more inclusive (Al-Zaman, 2020b). The analyses of social media rumors give us few insights but they are not substantiated through rigorous and systematic research.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Avatar: The word is derived from the Sanskrit language. In Hinduism, avatar means the incarnation of a deity. However, in internet studies, an *avatar* is an icon that represents a person on digital platforms.

Cybertext: The digitized text that appears in digital media platforms or cyberspace, such as social media. It is interactive, technologically enhanced, and requires a digital device to function.

Disinformation: A type of information that is distorted and conveyed to the audience intentionally to accomplish a goal. It is a purposive and strategic action, mainly for political agenda or economic gain. It is different from misinformation and ordinary rumor.

Hashtivism: A communication method in social media using the hashtag (#). It is a tagging technique that connects the like-minded users in online platforms, and it is useful to express solidarity and personal standpoint regarding an issue.

Hypertext: A cross-referencing system in digital media platforms that allows one source to connect with other relevant sources. It makes the acquisition of information easier through linking and accumulating many important sources to a single place.

Netizen: A portmanteau of *internet* and *citizen* that refers to the citizen of the internet. The term was first coined in 1996, but it becomes popular in the 2010s, due to the popularity of social media.

SNSs: The acronym of social networking sites. SNSs are the online platforms that allow users to communicate with others virtually. The two terms, social media and SNSs, are often used interchangeably. Facebook and Twitter are considered as the two most popular SNSs in today's world.

Chapter 4

Linguistic Elements as Tools for the Analysis of Media Narratives

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ABSTRACT

A close linguistic analysis of media discourse might provoke and provide useful information regarding the power of media itself and the way people construct meanings. The present study seeks to explore how social problems are reflected in media texts. The representation of social problems—crime, poverty, migrant crisis, as well as minority groups—contains linguistic elements which are aimed at constructing certain images of these issues. Figurative linguistic elements are used to enhance the reliability of the story, to appeal to the readers' emotions, and to manage the story and the sequence of the events which are being represented. A proper use of language in the representations social problems could be considered as an effective tool to keep readers interested in the story and transform it into one that is engaging and reliable at the same time.

INTRODUCTION

Society has been extensively immersed in media content for the last few decades, as the number of Internet users has reached almost 5 billion today, accounting for nearly 40% of the total population. At the same time, according to live data provided by InternetLiveStats, the number of internet sites will soon reach 2 billion. As Koltay (2011) notes, media content has an impact not only on the reader's views, but also influences human behaviour and our daily processes of communication as well as collaboration. The understanding of media becomes vital if media is seen as an opportunity for individuals to share digital messages and an opportunity to impact ones' beliefs as well as present different kinds of information. The capability to analyse critically media information can help to understand the true depths of a story as well as identify the message which was meant to be sent to the receivers. As Bernoff and Li (2008) suggest, social media as an ecosystem may be analysed from the participants' perspective in their capacity as creators, critics, collectors, followers or spectators. Taking into account the type of social media, the

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information on social media can be seen as “half-life information” or “depth of information” (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). The former refers to the time limit the information is seen as useful, while the latter is attributed to the richness of content the information provides.

Today’s media can be defined as a means of mass communication which disseminates the message to the readers (Crow & Lawlor, 2016). It can reach the public using different platforms, such as advocacy media, social media and other forms of information transfer. Moreover, the multiple actors in media can frame the message they send differently. Origin, production, content as well as effects of message can be constructed and designed using different framing techniques and processes which mostly depend on setting, intention, motive and effect the message should achieve (Mathes, 2012).

One of the most important things about media texts is the meaning that these texts are conveying. However, media texts often have a meaning which the reader is conscious of, but, in addition to that, there are other meanings which may be produced unconsciously by the reader (Burton, 2010). Then, readers choose whether they are controlling their engagement with the text or no, depending on their interests or experience. Thus, a text can mean different things for different readers. It can be said that “anything may be described as a text if people can engage with it to produce meanings about themselves, their society and their beliefs” (Burton, 2010, p. 6). The increasing number of possibilities of interactions in digital media allows individuals to become active participants in content creation as well as devour different kinds of media content. At the same time, social media offers huge potential for “mass-self communication” (Castells, 2013), introducing the forecasting and possible solutions for problems or raising sensitive issues. Multimedia discourse, as noted by Fairclough (2015), is compelling due to the power relations it contains. Nevertheless, these casual interactions and commitments between diverse activities, events, texts and structures of social and cultural life, as well as the reasons for their evolvment and influence, might be analysed by critical discourse analysis in order to explore why they are invisible.

BACKGROUND

The emergence of digital interactions provided an empowering opportunity for individuals to become active participators in content creation as well as absorb different kinds of media content. In particular, these days, modern interactions are all about “the widespread use of hashtags and social media logos in promotional texts such as adverts and TripAdvisor reviews or new forms of protest mobilization, e.g. through Facebook” (Khosravinik & Unger, 2015, p. 206). These and a number of other different types of digital content become a fundamental aspect in the life of the modern society, which is inseparable from digital interactions. As Anozie (2018) argues, messages in media reflect events happening in a particular society. Furthermore, the societies with positive value systems, balanced economic and political systems will revel in positive transference from the media, while in the opposite case, the meanings derived from the media could be negative. Anozie (2018) notes that “understanding the societal makeup will reveal the value systems, and cultures, which the members live by, and how these affect their conducts and their response to media messages” (p.423), guiding society towards the existing relations between the influence of mass media and the effects of negative cultures and value systems on a particular society. The social media might be seen as platforms for creating new policies and making members of society accept these new policies, thus regulating and determining the attitudes of community members (Selvi, 2018).

The increasing number of possibilities for interactions in digital media allows individuals to become active participants in content creation as well as devour different kinds of media content. At the same

time, social media offers huge potential for “mass-self communication” (Castells, 2013), introducing the forecasting and possible solutions for problems or raising sensitive issues. Biswas, Ingle, and Roy (2014) state that social media could be understood as a medium of communication that enables interactions through user-created content, thus maintaining interpersonal relationships. Lundby (2008) argues that digital stories created by amateurs may encourage social participation as well as form a space for “self-representational digital storytelling, with its risks and its opportunities for democracy and individual identity formation in media-saturated societies” (p. 363). At the same time, Couldry (2008) notes that “the whole range of personal stories now being told in potentially public form using digital media resources” (p.374) may be understood as narrations through which social consequences of new media are displayed. Sterin and Winston (2017) suggest that technological transformation affects the society as a consumer of media and, as a consequence, special attention should be paid to the media content creation and its distribution. Therefore, as modern society is exposed to media content and the exchange of information is easier than ever before, mass media and social media have the possibility to edit and interpret particular information in a way that may manipulate the readers’ perception (Happer & Philo, 2013). From this perspective, the media is one area of debate to which the critical use of discourse analysis from applied linguistics may contribute to the development of a different approach to grasping the media message. Critical discourse analysis considers discourse as being socially influenced and highlights the possibilities of redefining, recreating and reforming the perceptions of social issues.

LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF SOCIETAL ISSUES IN MEDIA

Media texts certainly mean something and tell stories because they have a narrative. They are “thought to affect, in a very real sense, the way in which we understand ourselves/others and the way we lead our lives” (Briggs & Cobley, 2002, p. 307). The main function of a narrative in a media text is to generate elements like place, time, and relationship in a way that the audience could engage and experience it as a kind of reality. It can be suggested that a media text has some kind of features that present a form, cues to the audience, all of which give shape to a narrative creating a specific meaning (Burton, 2010).

The reader holds an important and key position in media texts. The main meaning depends on how an individual understands and interprets what he/she sees or reads online. Livingstone (2007) suggests that “a reader cannot be completely passive, for the words will remain a blur of black and white marks, and so to the audience cannot be completely passive, for the media text will remain meaningless” (p. 1). However, a media text strongly influences the reader’s understanding of what is meant by the text. The essence is involving the reader with the story and constructing it as a truth. Thus, making people believe that something shown in a picture or written in a piece of text is the truth is the key aspect in terms of mass media and constructed reality. Media texts can also be considered as representations of objects that create meaning through visuals.

The deeper linguistic analysis of media discourse and close attention to the media texts themselves might provoke and provide even more useful information regarding the power of media itself and the constructions of meanings (Gillespie & Toynbee, 2006). Additionally, it could be suggested that properly adapted and constructed media message might contribute to achieving the appreciation or approval of citizens. Moreover, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of analysing the linguistic features of media discourse primarily because the media content, i.e., media messages, texts and their features, have a significant impact on citizens themselves (Fairclough, 2003). These days, media discourse is an

especially important part of society as discourse itself is a fundamental part of society and is a powerful tool for constructing the realities of a person (Talbot, 2007). Therefore, the language and texts provided by media are a significant factor determining media's effectiveness and functionality as a tool for communicating various types of digital information, in this case information about certain social issues. In many cases, certain uses of language are aimed at evaluating, legitimating as well as constituting social structures and other social realities (van Dijk, 1998). Additionally, this is supported by several researchers who emphasize the ideological aspects which are often reflected by language, and often it is visible in news media. To be more specific, any written or spoken piece of language which is aimed at representing the world contains certain ideological aspects (Fowler, 1991). Accordingly, it is possible to state that "language is not a clear window but a refracting, structuring medium" (Fowler, 1991, p. 10). Thus, it could be suggested that any kind of text and the use of a certain style of language in media, in many cases, might be influential and significant to the construction of human perceptions. Moreover, meanings and the understanding of social aspects of society are affected by the language and textual representations offered by media (Carvalho, 2005). Therefore, language could be described as "a representational system" (Rosenberg, 1974, p. 8). That is, the creators of media content become able to represent and portray events or specific social issues using specific language, this way shaping human understanding.

The present study seeks to explore how social problems are represented in media texts, as these representations keep society informed about the surrounding world and social realities, and, consequently, perceptions and opinions of citizens are constructed. The representation of certain events and social problems is especially relevant in the case of news media (Carvalho, 2008), as the power of news to influence readers is undeniable. News media is a constructed reality as diverse news articles tend to represent certain events having the possibility to decide how specific events will be presented to the audience. Sotirovic (2006) suggests that, in order to affect the readers, "reporters can make their stories more pertinent and more interesting to their audiences, especially if they are also dramatized through appeals to the senses and emotions" (p. 124). This is especially applicable to the representation of various social issues in media texts. Hence, a proper use of language in the representation of reality, including relevant social problems, could be considered as an effective way to keep readers interested in the story and transform it into one that is engaging and reliable at the same time. The significance of certain linguistic elements used in the representation of reality is unquestionable. A framework for analyzing media texts which reflect social issues was developed by Carvalho (2008). It aims at identifying the dominant features of media discourse which are influential in the construction of meanings.

This framework presents the following indicators which are important for the representation of reality in media discourse:

1. *Layout and structural organization* consists of primary features of the text (size, number of sections of an article, page numbers, and the illustrations next to the article). These elements are significant for the overall analysis of the media representation of an event as they reveal the value of the issue and how they are interpreted and organised by the media source.
2. *Objects* are the second important aspect in the representations provided by media. An object is similar to the topic of the article, however, as suggested by Carvalho (2008), the concept is related to the topics that the text contains rather than only referring to the concerned realities. However, this part of media discourse analysis is especially important because it could reveal more significant results regarding the role of the media text.

3. *Actors* are another elements that impact the representation of an event in media. The term “actor” represents the “individuals or institutions that are either quoted or referred to in the text” (Calvarho, 2008, p. 168). In other words, actors are both characters in the story and individuals who are capable of performing certain actions. By examining individuals who are mentioned in the article and who are concerned with the situation that is being described, a significant proposition could be confirmed regarding the ability of a particular text to shape the meaning and the content of the article (Carvalho, 2008). Moreover, the current framework could serve as a basis for analyzing the tendency of media to determine the dominant position of an actor and how actors are framed by media, as the story and the information presented from a certain viewpoint might contribute to the overall perception of the readers of the social issues and events that are being reported.
4. *Language, grammar and rhetoric* encompass words that are employed to represent events—certain verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc.—while the style of language—formality, the level of technicality—are especially important parts of the text as they construct the meaning. The grammar of the text and the choice of words are among the significant linguistic elements that add to the construction of ideologies in the media text, and active/passive constructions, as well as nominalisations, are the ones that need special attention (Calvarho, 2008). According to Peace (2001), the process of nominalisation is a highly important part of a text as it provides an opportunity for the author of the action to become unknown and hidden, and the action itself is turned into a distinct thing. Although traditionally nominalisation is constructed by supplementing the word with the suffix, it could also be realised with no additions when referring to conversion—the phenomenon where one word with the same form belongs to different classes of words (Bauer & Valera, 2005). Moreover, another equally important feature is represented by the rhetoric elements. There are number of rhetorical devices applied in media texts and rhetorical devices which are important for the overall structure of attractive texts in general, such as alliterations, metaphors, epithets, anaphora, rhetorical questions, appositions, to name a few. Rhetorical devices are used in media texts to represent certain events in order to affect the emotions of readers, consequently raising their interest and attraction. Thus, it could be argued that language, grammatical choices and rhetorical devices are especially important parts of media discourse.
5. *Discursive strategies* are another relevant element in the analysis of media discourse in reality representations. Carvalho (2008) notes that the concept of discursive strategies could be explained as the “forms of discursive manipulation of reality by social actors, including journalists, in order to achieve a certain effect or goal” (p. 169). Discursive strategies employed in media discourse refer to the processes of making claims, pointing, emphasising, and indicating certain matters concerning an event that might impact the perceptions of readers. Carvalho (2008) suggests that distinctive discursive strategies relate to framing when organising the text from a specific perspective and deciding on the angle of the event the author is writing from, employing selection and composition techniques to include and exclude facts as well as arranging these facts in the text. *Positioning* (the construction of the actor’s representation in the text), *legitimation* (the justification of specific actions mentioned in the text) and *politicization* (certain political powers and statuses are added to the situation under discussion) are other aspects that should be taken into account when analyzing such discursive strategies. The forms of discourse manipulation could reveal a lot of beneficial information regarding the impact of media text on the reader’s understanding of a specific social issue and how certain events are perceived by a particular reader. The discursive strategies are highly significant for the analysis of media discourse, including certain representations of events

related to social issues, when one examines the impact a particular topic or text could make on the members of a particular society;

6. *Ideological standpoints* are important when analyzing the media discourse in relation to the formation of ideologies. Since ideological aspects are “embedded in the selection and representation of objects and actors, and in the language and discursive strategies employed in a text” (Calvarho, 2008, p. 170), in many cases, detecting ideology in a particular text might be complex (Calvarho, 2008), since media tends to represent certain events in a way it seems obvious and determines ways in which reality should be constructed (Allan, 2010). However, ideology that is evident in news discourse is an important feature of the representation of social issues in media primarily because it consequently affects certain beliefs and opinions of the members of a society. Media discourse as a representational system reveals the tendency of media to construct and influence the flow of the story and the overall representation of reality that is being told in the text. It could be suggested that, in many cases, representations provided by media affect how certain problems are understood and interpreted (Ford & King, 2015).

Linguistic Representations of Poverty in Media

News media platforms remain one of the most fundamental media which keeps society informed and aware about global events and particular beliefs. Additionally, media has arguably become an agent of social representation and has the ability to shape meanings and beliefs that validate certain positions of a social group (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). This is also relevant when portraying social issues in media. A number of social issues, including violence, poverty, crime, stereotyping, discrimination of migrants and minority groups and many more are portrayed in news media.

One of the social issues that is still a predominant topic of discussion in media is poverty and the people who are experiencing it. A number of studies have been conducted in order to examine media texts and language used for describing poverty and poor people (Harper, 1996; Abril, 2010; Misturelli & Heffernan, 2011; Lister, 2015). The vocabulary employed and certain choices of words are linguistic elements which are important for media discourse analysis. Certain verbs, adverbs, adjectives play a vital part in constructing meaning in the text (Calvarho, 2008).

To support this point, the study conducted by McKendrick et al. (2008) analysing the ways media, in this case media in the United Kingdom (UK), represents poverty as well as influences public opinion and understanding of certain social issues, could serve as a good example. The analysis covered different types of media, i.e., news coverage on TV and radio, newspapers, magazines, etc. The findings of the study revealed that words ‘poverty’, ‘poor’ and ‘impoverished’ are the most applied when describing poverty in UK news media. Additionally, researchers found out that other strategies applied in UK news media for the representation of poverty are related with the lack of shelter, various colloquial descriptors, the descriptions of area and descriptions related with the individual’s financial status— ‘bankrupt’, ‘insolvent’. Thus, it could be noted that the usage of adjectives to represent poor people is a dominant tendency in news media, and, arguably, this is due to the fact that the author may want to emphasize and highlight the poor living conditions even more extensively. Moreover, in the same study, McKendrick et al. (2008) revealed that the amount of representations of poverty by media varies depending on the genre. More precisely, in 2007, representations of poverty more often appeared on newspapers than in broadcasting and news magazines —poverty was more likely to be mentioned in Sunday broadsheet newspapers at an average of 8.8 times. In addition, it is important to note how these representations and

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references to poverty were composed, i.e., “formats in which UK poverty is mentioned in the UK news” (McKendrick et al., 2008, p. 21). The researchers discovered that, in most cases, poverty was represented and mentioned in the form of news articles, i.e., almost half of overall “poverty reports”.

Thus, it might be suggested that the certain choices of words in media discourse are used to represent poverty and poor people in a more negative way. News media is a prevalent and powerful tool for representing poverty and influencing the understanding of citizens, because media platforms these days are considered to be one of the most significant sources of information. Since the language and texts in media in many cases have a great impact on society’s opinions, it is necessary to acknowledge the discourse of media as a powerful representation of other social issues as well. Another similar study conducted by Harding (2016) presents the results of the analysis of the way poverty is described in the Canadian daily and national press. Harding (2016), by applying the method of content analysis together with the critical discourse analysis (CDA), aimed to get better insights of the overall content of news texts. The findings revealed that the dominant inferences related with the representation of poverty are mainly composed of figurative language, metaphors together with simile, personification as well as colloquial language are applied by news authors in order to represent poverty and unrealistic living conditions of poor people (Harding, 2016). Additionally, news media tends to implement astounding narrative twists, colourful language and dramatic sense to the stories in order to arouse interest of large audiences (Harding 2016). Paterson and Gregory (2019) when analyzing the discourse of poverty argued that, although different kinds of media may have different political stance and poverty definitions, the use of linguistic elements and semantic fields is similar. The results of concordances in *Daily Mail* and *Guardian* present that construction of poverty discourse tend to use repeatedly employment, housing and benefits as the key words.

Thus, it could be suggested that using figurative language in portraying social issues contributes to a more engaging and eye-catching image of a certain event related to social issue and individuals who are experiencing it, which, consequently, attracts the attention of audience and forms a particular view of a certain sensitive case.

The Representation of Crime in Media

Crime is one of the continually covered topics in media as the numbers of committed crime events are fluctuating. Therefore, regular announcements and global news related with the events of crime in media become an integral part of an individual’s daily life. The most recent events of crime, such as domestic violence, homicides, terrorism and the experience of the people who suffered them are reported by news media (Kitch, 2009). Additionally, since highlighting of crime events is relevant to the society’s cultural and political life as well as to its morality concerns, it could be noted that crime news is influential in constructing the individual’s understanding of crime offenses (Mayr & Machin, 2011). Therefore, the importance of language used by stories of crime covered by media is evident since the choice of words and linguistic techniques play a significant part in the process of perceiving different aspects of the presented events.

Mayr and Machin (2011) conducted a lexical analysis of crime texts in media, analysing lexical fields which can be used to signify meanings not made explicit, for foregrounding and backgrounding different kinds of crime discourses. By employing a critical linguistic representation of crime in media, the authors argue that recontextualisation or transformation of social reality using a text is highly significant, as it reveals how language is used to represent and transform certain social issue. The process of

recontextualisation may be achieved by applying substitution when certain activities are described in a more generalized way, and, while describing people, the focus is put mainly on their appearance instead of their actions. In addition, specific elements are added in order to transform legitimation, reaction or purpose into key elements; rearrangement is added when elements of the represented social practice are not represented in the order of their occurrence; and, finally, evaluation—this concept involves the evaluation of a certain activity or people that are being described in the text, mainly focusing on the priorities, aims and objectives of the writer (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Applying the procedures of addition, substitution, rearrangement and/or evaluation in the process of recontextualisation may be frequently used by news media in order to represent crime, in sometimes shocking ways, and to shape social reality (Mayr & Machin, 2011). It could be suggested that this approach might be applicable to almost every case of crime offense. Van Krieken, Sanders and Hoeken (2015) analysed “how grammar and reference in journalistic narratives help to represent the viewpoints of eyewitnesses to shocking criminal acts” (p. 220). This is related to the previously introduced framework (Calvarho, 2008), which highlighted discursive strategies such as framing and positioning of the situation being described where the approach to the story is chosen by the author, in this way constructing the reality. In their study, Van Krieken et al. (2015) emphasise representation modes – direct, indirect or free indirect – that signify the extent to which the author of the narrative merges his own viewpoint with another individual’s viewpoint. Even though journalists are not allowed to apply techniques used in the texts of fiction, certain grammatical roles as well as referential expressions shape the readers’ attitudes and understanding of the presented events related with crime (van Krieken et al., 2015). Therefore, certain grammatical choices and referencing in news represent a technique applied by journalists who seek to represent crime-related events from the eye witness perspective, as well as to describe events in a more shocking, dramatic, and engaging way.

Moreover, representation of crime in news media is usually focused on negative portrayals of offenders. Such representations might influence the whole image of the offender as perceived by society. Gordon (2018) notes that media tend to describe young people in a negative way, highlighting the negative image by appropriate word choices. Tabbert (2013) emphasizes the ability of news media to construct ideologies related to crime and believes that “the notion of an evil, perpetrating monster constructed in the media as part of societal discourse on crime is based on ideologies” (p. 14). Additionally, Tabbert (2013) suggests that “victims and offenders are placed in opposition to each other on each end of a morality scale” (p. 16). Thus, it could be said that the representation of both sides—the offenders and victims—is ideologically constructed by news media and such representation is influential in moderating society’s perceptions of these sides. The author applies Critical Stylistics and Corpus Linguistics in the study. Corpus linguistics allows the analysis of large volumes of authentic data, while critical stylistics is used for textual critical approach purposes. The images of offenders are mainly constructed by news and, thus, the beliefs of crime in society is highly dependent on the digital content, describing a certain crime-related event (Tabbert, 2015). Additionally, the coverage of certain information related to offenders in media is frequent, and consequently such information remains undoubted. This is often achieved by using adjectives, combinations of nouns, nominalisation and apposition. Furthermore, “Direct Speech and Indirect Speech are used to transport subjective assessments about the offender, mainly quoting authoritative persons who sometimes make those subjective assessments.” (Tabbert, 2015, p. 104). Additionally, the use of the passive voice transforms victims “into the goal of the sentence” (Tabbert, 2015, p. 172), even though, at first, the victim was positioned as the subject of the sentence.

The Representation of Migrants and Minority Groups

Even though media has its positive impact on society, being one of the main sources of information and a tool for communication as well as learning, in many cases media may represent certain social issues or events related with them in misleading and dramatic ways, which have an impact on the perceptions of society.

When presenting and representing migrants, various channels of media often focus on “negative depictions that might reflect a deeper, underlying racism, nativism or Islamophobia in the media” (Bleich et al., 2015, p. 861). If “media may be viewed as a mirror of a society” (p.861), reflecting a broader public attitudes, then negative representations are influencing the society’s judgments and perceptions of these social groups. In such cases, certain linguistic elements are applied for constructing ideological and negative views of migrants or groups of minorities as the fact which, over time, is often accepted as the truth (Baker et al., 2013). In many cases, these representations are inseparable from specific linguistic strategies that contribute to the ideology reflected in the media. Arguably, as media is one of the most important sources of information in modern society, ideological representations of minority groups contribute to negative views toward these groups of individuals. Samaie and Malmir (2017) analysed the negative portrayals of Muslims as a minority group in the US news media from a historical perspective to discourse analysis. The most frequent linguistic elements in the representation of Muslims as a minority group in news media include nomination strategies and predication strategies. The former aims to construct different actors or events applying a number of linguistic elements including metaphors, verbs, and nouns that are used to describe certain processes and actions (Reisigl, 2018). The strategies of prediction include evaluative and stereotypical attributions of negative or positive traits, collocations, comparisons together with similes and similar. Samaie and Malmir (2017) note that metaphors prevail as the dominant stylistic devices applied in the representation, helping to associate the minority group with stereotypical images of discriminatory manifestations. Application of certain grammatical choices and stylistic devices in representation of socially sensitive aspects tend to be related to negativity rather than tolerance and recognition. Moreover, in many cases, the representation of migrants in media is related to crime and violence (Dunaway et al., 2010). Brouwer, Woude and Leun (2017) argue that, in many cases, migrants in media discourse are portrayed negatively, i.e., migrants are described as criminals, employing certain choices of vocabulary. Thus, such representations effectively contribute to the formation of negative perceptions of readers. Colombo (2018), in her study of representations of refugee crisis in Italy, focuses on the analytic categories, i.e., lexical choices, referential and predicational strategies which are adopted to highlight relevant linguistic and discursive features of the texts and their implications. Kharshing (2020) argue that race-based differentiation increase the negative attitudes to other groups in a particular society revealing the impact of identity politics construction. Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017) note that news stories should be transformed to become more complex, aiming at generating a debate instead of forming presumably negative effects. The authors note that “voice as narrative needs to change so that the range of speakers, emotions, justifications and consequences around human mobility also becomes more detailed” (p. 630), although today the description of migrants is lacking their depiction as social and political participants in a new society.

Media plays a crucial role in shaping the narratives of different stories in the migrant representation context, as they construct the stories and opinions on the migrants’ issue around the world, with a prevailing negative bias. The necessity of media literacy has to be broadened in order to understand correctly and precisely what aspects the reader is most unlikely to identify.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The present paper exploits the representation of the society's sensitive issues in media mainly from theoretical perspectives. Based on the findings, further research could aim to look for deeper analysis of various media contents. Particular attention should be paid to the choice of linguistic elements in constructing narratives in media texts as they could depend not only on the type of media or content but also on the ideological perspective and on the society's media literacy. The empirical findings could be one of the most significant factors determining how text creators employ linguistic elements in text production in a particular situation and timeframe. Moreover, a particular choice of linguistic elements could reveal an individual's and a society's general status quo in media literacy.

CONCLUSION

Media plays a crucial role in shaping narratives in the context of socially sensitive stories. The linguistic representations of social issues are manifested through linguistic elements such as active/passive voices, nominalisation, direct/indirect speech and rhetorical devices. The emphasis on poor living conditions and poverty in general are usually expressed through rhetorical devices and nominalisations. In the linguistic representation of crime, direct/indirect speech, nominalisation, and apposition are widely applied elements. Direct/indirect speech is used by journalist to present events from a certain perspective. Nominalisation and apposition are applied when there is a need to keep certain information, related to the event, invisible. Rhetorical devices, including metaphors, and elements of nominalisation are among the dominant characteristics of linguistic representations aiming to emphasise negative attributes and actions of migrants and minority groups. In addition, stereotypical attributions are also employed in the linguistic representation of crime. Moreover, the linguistic representation of all the social problems under discussion consists of certain discursive strategies, such as evaluations of the actions, and/or positioning of specific groups of people.

The representation of social problems—crime, poverty, migrant crisis, minority groups, etc.,—contains linguistic elements which are aimed at constructing certain images of these social issues. Media texts use figurative linguistic elements to enhance the reliability of the story, to appeal to the readers' emotions, and manage the story and the sequence of the events which are being represented. An in-depth analysis of messages in media in what regards syntactic structures, lexical style and stylistic devices, could lead to a better understanding of the hidden meanings, connotations, associations as well as the pragmatics of speech acts. At the same time, deeper linguistic analysis of media discourse and close attention to the media texts themselves might provoke and provide even more useful information regarding the power of media itself and the constructions of meanings as well as the impact of these representations on the members of a particular society. Therefore, the language and texts provided by media are a significant factor determining media's effectiveness and functionality as a tool for communicating various types of digital information, with certain instances of language aimed at evaluating, legitimating as well as constituting social structures and other social realities.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Discourse Analysis: A linguistic approach to the study of written or spoken language in relation to its social context.

Discursive Strategy: A deliberate plan regarding the linguistic practices and tactics employed in discourses in order to persuade the audiences.

Linguistic Element: A particular word or phrase used to increase or decrease the connotative effect.

Linguistic Representation: The choice of particular words for the description of a particular event or individual.

Media Content: A text on a particular subject relevant in a particular timeframe, which uses the virtual space as medium of dissemination.

Nominalisation: The linguistic process of turning verbs (actions, events) into nouns (objects, concepts, people).

Recontextualisation: Representation or transformation of certain social issues in a text using particular language elements.

Section 2

Storytelling and Marketing: The Art of Becoming Unforgettable

Chapter 5

People Make Places, What Do Stories Do? Applying Digital Storytelling Strategies to Communicate the Identity of Cities and Regions

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this chapter is to explore how cities and regions can use digital storytelling strategies to reach and engage with their target audiences. Despite the growing body of literature regarding digital storytelling, the contributions and examples about regions and cities are still scarce. This chapter analyses the storytelling strategies of promotional campaigns regarding three cities and two regions around the world. Using a theory-driven framework, each storytelling example is dissected and interpreted. This study demonstrates that digital storytelling is worth consideration, as it offers a relevant set of advantages for marketing and communication managers, and enables the development of the place image and a consistent communication of its identity that can be co-created with various stakeholders, including the target audiences. It also shows that there are a diversity of approaches that can be adapted by place branding strategies, namely in terms of narrative, perspectives, and medium components.

INTRODUCTION

Cities and regions have long felt the need to affirm their individuality and identity as they need to position themselves in the global context, namely to influence potential visitors' behavior (Vinyals-Mirabent &

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Mohammadi, 2018, p. 91). They are living, working, and studying spaces for different target audiences, investor sites, as well as tourism destinations. Clearly, communicating with such diversified audiences is challenging. Zenker (2018) stresses that city marketing and branding is a crucial part of urban governance, as they help attract not only tourists, but also inhabitants and investors. Indeed, these strategies aim to develop an attractive image and positive reputation (for different stakeholders and target audiences). The image and identity of places are acknowledged as fundamental for communication, as they capture people's attention and foster their imagination (Szromnik, 2016, p. 130). In such a context, storytelling has become an integral part of places' communication strategies in order to promote and differentiate destination brands online (Youssef, Leicht, & Marongiu, 2019, p. 709). Without surprise, local governments and cultural organizations are encouraging the adoption of storytelling campaigns due to their efficacy with respect to the touristic and economic success of a region (Bassano et al., 2019, p. 18).

This chapter argues that digital storytelling is a particularly effective strategy to create a strong and consistent place identity. Indeed, regions and cities are full of stories, and their online presence can be a determinant success factor, as it allows greater reach and interaction with target audiences, creating proximity and familiarity that is expected to enhance positive achievements for tourism and the economy as a whole. If a story has enough appeal and interest, it can spread through social media and potentially be shared around the world, becoming viral. With the right storytelling skills, the stories' potential spread and reach on social media can result in influencing millions of people (Lund et al., 2018, p. 273). Overall, this strategy gives great power to brands to improve connections with their consumers (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012, p. 189). Digital storytelling can help cities and regions achieve greater awareness, effectively reach their target audiences, and create value to the local stakeholders. Storytelling allows for the initiation and strengthening of relationships between actors. As such, it can effectively mobilize and unite public and private actors on multiple governance levels, creating synergies, and overall contributing to development of the place (Hartman, Parra, & de Roo, 2019, p. 96).

In spite of the relevance of the topic for practitioners and governments, and the growing body of literature regarding digital storytelling, the contributions and examples applied to place brands are still scarce, especially concerning cities. Building on this gap, the main objective of this chapter is to explore how cities and regions' marketing and communication managers can effectively use digital storytelling strategies to reach and engage with their target audiences. Despite the fact that cities and regions communicate to several targets, from local stakeholders, to investors and visitors, both the literature on digital storytelling and the campaigns disseminated online by local authorities often focus solely on tourists. Obviously, when exploring local identity, the messages conveyed are also expected to positively impact on other targets, namely the local stakeholders. Consequently, this chapter builds on contributions made by the literature on tourism and communication, analyses the use of place storytelling namely targeted at tourists, highlighting whenever possible the implications for general targets. Considering that there is a diversity of approaches that can be adopted, namely in terms of narrative, perspectives, and medium components, the chapter critically analyses five digital storytelling campaigns of both cities and regions, primarily targeted at tourists. Using a theory-driven framework, each example is deconstructed and explored in order to compare its characteristics and to understand its ability to effectively position the city or region. Overall, this chapter provides interesting cues for cities and regions' communication managers, demonstrating that storytelling can effectively promote place identity, create a reputation, and offer relevant opportunities to distinguish among places in today's global market. It is shown that in spite of some common characteristics of the campaigns analyzed (e.g., classic three-part structure, the use of music and tagline, positive emotional content), both cities and regions from distinct locations are

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using very different strategies in terms of plot and type of characters, hence demonstrating the variety of approaches and positioning possibilities enabled by storytelling.

BACKGROUND

All animals (and some plants) communicate, but humans are able to tell stories (Joubert, Davis, & Metcalfe, 2019, p.1). Stories have been used to convey wisdom, knowledge, and culture. People tell stories for multiple reasons: as means of entertaining, transferring knowledge between generations, maintaining cultural heritage (Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 15707). During childhood, stories form nerve structures in the brain, which allow young children to understand and connect disparate events. Similarly to the facial recognition process, the brain grows to recognize story patterns (Weedon, 2018, p. 50). Each generation evolves as a consequence of the stories told in society. Storytelling is an integral part of what distinguishes us as human beings; we need them to understand ourselves and communicate who we are. It is through the sharing of stories representing our own experiences that we can better understand our lives' conflicts and consequently find explanations about our role in the world (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2005, p. 16). In fact, the stories we share with others are the foundation of any human relationship. Stories put words and images into shared experiences. They help shape the perception of who we are and what we stand for (Fog et al., 2005, p. 21).

Telling stories is the art of weaving and building the product of intimate knowledge. It is a delicate process, a process that can be easily broken, failing to fulfill its promise, disintegrating a mere nonsense text (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 31-35). Stories have the power to unveil new worlds and enable our self-projection to different realities. In addition, our thoughts and emotions are also limited by the narrative structure (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote, 2016, p. 115). Today, there is a solid empirical understanding of narrative as a clear aid to memory, as a means of understanding the world and as a way to create and strengthen emotional connections (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p. 21). Good stories amuse, explain, inspire, educate and convince. Bad stories disappoint, insult public intelligence, and weaken communication (Gabriel, 2000, p. 215). Consequently, storytelling has become a common term widely used by writers, media producers, marketers, and public relations professionals (Weedon, 2018, p. 47).

Digital Storytelling as a Marketing Communication Strategy

Digital storytelling is a particularly powerful and creative marketing and communication strategy. As technology is changing the way stories are consumed (Joubert et al., 2019, p. 3), storytelling is becoming one of the main strategies adapted for digital marketing, especially on social media. Indeed, social media marketing strategies seek to interact with the audience, and frequently they opt to tell a story (Romo, García-Medina, & Romero, 2017, pp. 143-146). Lund, Cohen, and Scarles (2018, p. 275) argue that storytelling is a very powerful component for social media marketing. Social network sites combine features of text and image, through which users tell stories to communicate actions and ideas with each other and develop their self-representations. Similarly, stories allow audiences to understand the reasoning behind the values of a company or a brand (Fog et al., 2005, p. 227). Consumers interpret brand experiences through stories. Stories can persuade, strengthen relationships (Clarizia, Lemma, Lombardi, & Pascale, 2017, p. 567; Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote, 2016, p. 120), motivate consumers and facilitate value co-creation (Scholz & Smith, 2019, p. 1108). By telling a good story,

users share their brand narrative's interpretation and personal perspectives. Consequently, engaging in pleasant storytelling utterances can attract audiences, build connections, and ultimately communicate their interpretations and values.

Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) explain that, in the past, the premise of telling stories about a particular brand focused on its history. It also considered the fact that the consumer was mainly a listener. With the advent of social media, connections through platforms like Facebook expanded exponentially and changed how consumers perceive and interact with brands (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012, p. 190). So, technology, the internet, and social media enabled the dissemination of branded content (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012, p. 191), leading to the emergence of new possibilities for storytelling (Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 15721). Stories became the means of communication, materializing the notion that social media are spaces of narrative (Lund et al., 2018, p. 274). The outputs can include attractive, engaging and even emotional storytelling formats, immersive and interactive narrative experiences, non-linear multidimensional narrative opportunities, and collaborative contexts that increase the ability to create and communicate stories (Barber, 2016, p. 3).

Storytelling is recognized for its power to promote loyalty and to develop relationships with customers and prospects beyond the mere use value of a product or service (Weedon, 2018, p. 48). This happens particularly on digital platforms, due to their features that facilitate communication flows, make information easily accessible and ultimately convert target audiences into customers, boosting sales (Romo et al., 2017, p. 145). For that reason, leading brands communicate with their customers and use stories to reach their customers emotionally and convey the essence, identity, heritage, and values of the brand (Romo et al., 2017, p. 146).

Adopting Digital Storytelling on Social Media for Place Branding

People are attached to particular places. They have personal experiences, emotions, memories, and stories about places, which they then share with neighbors, friends, relatives and strangers. Places are made of past events, images and stories. Stories play an exceptionally important role in how people assign value to a place (Timmermans, Van den Goorbergh, Slijkhuis, & Cilliers, 2013, pp. 39-40). All those stories provide personality and identity to the place, which is connected to exceptional people, unusual incidents, or historical events (Timmermans et al., 2013, p. 43). In such contexts, storytelling seeks to communicate the identity of places, as well as their attributes comprising cognitive, affective and conative dimensions, which can involve all its stakeholders (Youssef, Leicht, & Marongiu, 2019, p. 707) and target audiences.

Unsurprisingly, a large number of towns, cities, and regions are investing in branding campaigns, aiming to establish a reputation and to reach the global market (Hultman et al., 2016, p. 5156; Sevin, 2014, p. 47). Notably, storytelling is a fundamental part of online communication strategies to promote and distinguish among place brands, including tourism destinations (Youssef et al., 2019, p. 708). Indeed, social media plays a significant part in many aspects of tourists' decision-making behaviors (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014, p. 34).

Online storytelling points out the tangible and intangible attributes of destinations (Akgun, Zehir, Ayar, & Keskin, 2016, p. 32), allows for the discovery of cultural heritage, and develops the cross-cultural understanding of the place (Clarizia et al., 2017, p. 579). For instance, in the case of tourism industry, there is clear evidence of the impact of storytelling on tourism. The intensity of a tourist's sensation

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of being transported by the content of a particular narrative will influence his or her intention to visit (Wong, Lee, & Lee, 2016, p. 459).

Although it is undeniable that storytelling is essential to the positioning and ultimately the success of cities and regions, it is important to note that an essential part of the studies available belong to tourism literature. Moreover, Moin, Hosany, and O'Brien (2020, p.1) explain that the studies about storytelling in tourism focus mainly on tourists' stories, and less about destination promotional videos. In fact, these authors argue that the majority of destination commercials fail to exhibit state of the art practices of storytelling, which clearly represents lost opportunities. Therefore, it is essential both to explore the digital storytelling potential to promote cities and regions, as well as to further study this topic, in order to provide insights that can guide practitioners to more effective strategies, namely by considering that tourists are one among several target audiences that can be inspired and influenced by storytelling.

The Main Components of Storytelling

In order both to develop storytelling strategies and to analyze and compare storytelling campaigns, it is essential to understand its components, as well as the expected outcomes and impacts on the audiences' behaviors. This section describes the components of digital storytelling campaigns, and proposes a framework that can be adapted by academics, students, and practitioners to develop and evaluate storytelling initiatives, including digital campaigns developed for place branding. In order to develop the framework, this chapter follows the structure proposed by Lugmayr et al. (2017, p. 15710), who narrowed down the essential components of storytelling to four elements: perspective, narrative, interactivity and medium.

Narrative Arc

Stories often have a beginning, a middle and an end, a structure that is also known as a narrative arc. The unexpected twists and turns that characterize a good story line build tension and keep the attention of readers, listeners and viewers (Joubert et al., 2019, p. 2). By highlighting the essential ingredients of a good and effective narrative - strong characters, compelling plot, and conflict resolution -, these attributes and characteristics remain relevant also for digital storytelling (Barber, 2016, p. 3).

Perspective

Considering that each story must have a point of view, storytelling is used to communicate messages that reflect positively on the brand being communicated (e.g., product, city, region). So, the message needs to mirror the cause or the experience intended for the communication campaign. In general, a storytelling campaign must speak to the emotions and communicate values that the target audiences can understand (Fog et al., 2005, p. 20). Consequently, perspective must include some essential elements such as cognition and emotion, in order to create engagement and emotional immersion. The story line must also include features such as rendering and presentation, the process of encoding and decoding (Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 15711), and behavior dimensions (Pera & Viglia, 2016, p. 1143).

The emotional feature acquires a great importance in the context of marketing because emotions are recognized as an essential and direct influence on human behavior (Schreiner, Fischer, & Riedl, 2019, p. 4). For emotional arousal, one essential aspect is to include some degree of conflict in the story.

According to Fog et al., (2005, p. 153) the message conveyed is received by the audiences through the conflict tensions presented by the story and its resolution.

The transmission of a reality or a point of view from a certain perspective can trigger emotional responses. The emotions stimulate human cognition, allowing the audience to perceive the narrative as an emotional experience, and the experience is the process of creating a mental model by the audience. The public transforms what they witnessed into knowledge, which fosters audience engagement (Lugmayr et al., 2017, pp. 15710-15713).

Narrative

Narrative is a concept that combines narrative content and narrative form. A narrative is a relationship between the components of causality, effect, space and time, sequence, and plot (Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 15711). The flow of a story and its events are very important to the audience's experience. In fact, it is the narrative flow of events that drives the story. Stories are a progression of events over a period of time, and the sequence of events needs careful consideration. Therefore, there must be a structure that maintains the public's interest (Fog et al., 2005, p. 91; Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 15712). The sequence or the plot of events evolves according to a timeline that relates actions to people and characters, whose life events develop based on cause and effect relationships. Therefore, the story can be seen as a causality effect within a time-space relationship, creating a narrative flow (Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 15711). Moreover, as the story can be divided into three parts, the beginning, the middle and the end, this progression also creates conflict and defines the parameters for the continuity of the story (Fog et al., 2005, p. 42).

Another important element in storytelling is the characters (Fog et al., 2005, p. 36; Moin et al., 2020, p. 4; Pera & Viglia, 2016, p. 1143). The role each character plays in the story and how characters complement each other (e.g., relationships, tensions) forms an active part of the narrative (Fog et al., 2005, p. 88).

Finally, another essential component of the narrative is the climax. The climax occurs in the continuity of the conflict, just before the outcome of the story and it is the most important moment in the character's journey (Fog et al., 2005, p. 44; Pera & Viglia, 2016, p. 1143), because it is the crucial point of the conflict. Moreover, it is also the moment when the audiences' emotional arousal is expected to reach the highest point.

Types of Characters / Archetype Enactment

Based on the concept of the hero's journey, Moin et al. (2020, p. 4) suggest that there are nine types of characters: Hero, Shadow, Mentor, Herald, Threshold, Shapeshifter, the Trickster and, finally, the Ally.

- **Hero.** This archetype represents the ego's search for identity and wholeness and the process of becoming complete. The hero is constantly facing villains, betrayers, friends, lovers. The dramatic purpose of the hero is to give the audience a window into the story. In fact, the audience is invited to identify with the hero from the early stages of the story, to merge with him / her and see the plot through his / her eyes. The Hero is usually the most active person in the script and his / her will and desires are what drives the stories (Vogler, 2007, p. 29).
- **Shadow.** The Shadow represents the energy of the dark side, the unexpressed, unrealized, or rejected aspects of something, like dark secrets (Vogler, 2007, p. 65).

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- **Mentor.** This archetype is expressed in the characters who teach and protect heroes. Another important function of the Mentor archetype is to motivate the hero and help him / her (Vogler, 2007, p. 39).
- **Threshold and Guardian.** Heroes face difficulties on the road to adventure, the Threshold and the Guardian represent a threat, but if properly understood, they can be overcome, or even turned into allies (Vogler, 2007, p. 49).
- **Herald.** When a new force appears and becomes a new challenge to the hero. Herald characters announce significant changes. Heralds are messengers, because they have the important function of announcing the need for change (Vogler, 2007, p. 55).
- **Shapeshifter.** They change appearance or mood and are difficult for the hero, because they may mislead the hero or keep him / her guessing. Their loyalty or sincerity is often in question (Vogler, 2007, p. 59).
- **Ally.** Heroes need someone that can help. The Ally is a companion, sparring partner, conscience, or even a comic relief. The presence of the Ally brings out human feelings or reveals important questions in the plot (Vogler, 2007, p. 71).
- **Trickster.** Tricksters symbolize the energies of trouble and desire for change, and the characters in stories who are mainly clowns or comical sidekicks express this archetype (Vogler, 2007, p. 77).

In addition, heroes are associated with particular traits and moral values. Goethals and Allison (2012) explored what people think about heroes, as well as the determinants of the heroic behavior. They found that conceptions of heroes included high levels of competence and morality. They listed the heroic attributes known as the great eight. The eight attributes are: smart, strong, selfless, caring, charismatic, resilient, reliable, and inspiring.

Interactivity and Medium

With the development of digital media, interaction has become an inherent element of the narrative, including resources such as human-computer interaction and interpersonal interaction, and the possibility of being able to modify and decide the narrative flow (Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 15715). Obviously, the level and type of interactivity is dependent on the medium. As such, this component of the framework addresses the technology used and the medium for storytelling, and includes features such as the channel, the media objects, and digital content forms (Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 15717).

As stressed by Lambert (2010), digital storytelling must also include soundtrack, a sense of economy (just enough content) and adequate pacing. Indeed, a good rhythm of the story is essential to avoid monotony. As for soundtrack, it acquires a great importance in digital storytelling, because music can enhance and highlight the story, adding complexity and strength to the narrative.

Story Type

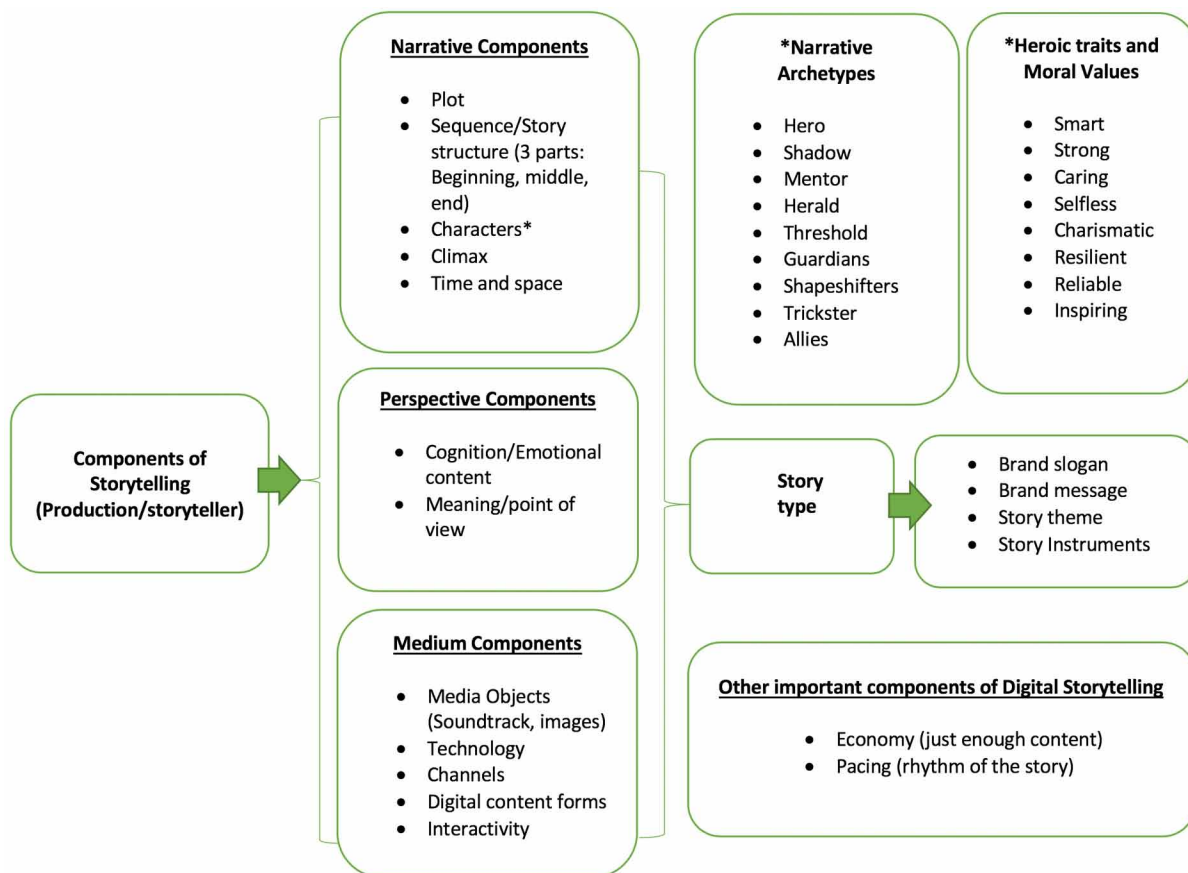
Elements such as tagline, voiceover, monologue, dialogue, and text provide valuable information to understanding the story theme and story type (Moin et al., 2020, p. 4). Still, to fully understand the use of stories for branding and marketing purposes, such as stories in commercials, advertising, and promotional videos, there are a few elements to consider, such as: the story theme, the brand slogan, the tagline and brand message (Moin et al., 2020, p. 6). Slogans are key elements of a brand's identity

because they contribute to brand equity, they enhance a brand’s image, and they support the recognition and recall process. Slogans help create brand differentiation in consumers’ minds (Kohli, Leuthesser, & Suri, 2007, p. 420). Consequently, they are particularly important for storytelling strategies. Although slogans are common in commercial, advertising, and marketing types of communication, it is increasingly common that place branding strategies develop slogan signatures for cities and regions, which can help in aspects such as memory, positioning, values, and image.

Proposed Framework for Analyzing Storytelling Campaigns

Considering the contributions in the literature review described in this section, particularly the insights and models developed by Lambert (2010), Lugmayr et al. (2017), Moin et al. (2020), and Pera and Vi-glia (2016), Figure 1 presents a framework that synthetizes the components of a storytelling campaign.

Figure 1. Proposed framework for storytelling campaign analysis



This chapter argues that this framework is useful for practitioners, academics, and students alike. Indeed, by narrowing down the main components of storytelling campaigns, it assists the development and production of new campaigns. Also, it provides guidance to assess and compare different campaigns,

as it will be demonstrated in the next sections. It should be noted that this framework refers to storytelling in general, although some dimensions and taxonomies (e.g., brand slogan, brand message) are more commonly associated with advertising and marketing campaigns. Still, they are also considered in the storytelling campaigns of some places and regions, namely in the case of associated place branding strategies.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STORYTELLING CAMPAIGNS

As already mentioned, the main objective of this chapter is to explore how marketing and communication managers of cities and regions can effectively use digital storytelling strategies to reach and engage with their target audiences. The previous sections demonstrate not only the potential of storytelling, particularly when applied by brands using digital media, but also its complexity, as synthesized by the framework of analysis proposed in Figure 1.

Moreover, one of the most evident gaps in tourism and destinations literature refers to the need for more evidence about storytelling campaigns developed by destination marketing organizations. In fact, as stressed by Moin et al. (2020, p. 1), extant literature focuses mainly on tourists' stories. So, storytelling campaigns about place identity have been so far disregarded. Still, towns, cities and regions are investing in branding campaigns to create a reputation, and to be able to compete in today's global market, namely to attract inhabitants, visitors, and investors, to name just a few. Some are using storytelling approaches in order to foster their communication objectives and to effectively create emotional impact on target audiences. Still, the literature is particularly scarce regarding storytelling campaigns about place identity. In order to fill this gap, this chapter includes in the next sections a comparative analysis of storytelling campaigns created to promote cities and regions amongst their target audiences.

In order to achieve that, storytelling campaigns were identified via online search, using two sets of keywords, one referring to the type of content (e.g., storytelling campaign, storytelling video) and another defining the scope of the study (e.g., region, town, city). Some results were provided by Ads of the world (www.adsoftheworld.com/), an advertising archive and community that features work done by communication and marketing agencies around the world. As this search was conducted in the first semester of 2020, the study was restricted to the previous five years (2015-2019), so older campaigns were excluded. The additional criteria for campaign selection were: video-type content, promoting uniquely a region or city. As a result, a list of 25 campaigns was identified. The selection of the final sample of 5 campaigns was guided by the following criteria: (i) campaigns that considered the characteristics of storytelling highlighted by extant literature; (ii) campaigns that were shared on social network sites; and (iii) enabling diversification in terms of both location (i.e., different continents), and profile (i.e., cities and regions). The sample of the 5 storytelling campaigns selected for this study is identified in Table 1. These campaigns were primarily designed by tourism boards to attract tourists, they fit several target audiences and often provide a global view of the city or region, and hence are considered relevant to communicate not only with prospective tourists, but also with other stakeholders.

Table 1. Generic information about the storytelling campaigns analyzed in this chapter.

Video	Place	Total Views	Duration	Year	Description
TTYL https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=89&v=UwnI7oH-cwQ&feature=emb_title	Montréal, Canada	8 819	4:16	2016	Storytelling campaign created by Lg2, for Tourism Montréal
Go on a Journey with a Taxi Driver from Riga https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkRZStXS9us	Riga, Latvia	72 307	1:15	2017	Storytelling campaign created by DDB, for LiveRiga
Firsts That Last https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbXVBfEQSyQ&feature=emb_title	North Carolina, USA	144 039	2:33	2018	Storytelling campaign created by LGA, for Visit North Carolina
The Sweetest part of India https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CjwVHGIXho&feature=emb_title	Bengal, India	1 659 308	3:24	2017	Storytelling campaign created by Ogilvy, for West Bengal Tourism
The Wedding of Siri & Alexa – The first A.I. Marriage https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wG-18YiQEs4	Vienna, Austria	2 891 445	2:15	2019	Storytelling campaign created by Serviceplan, for Vienna Tourist Board

Note: Total views data was retrieved on May 10, 2020.

Study Sample

The analysis was conducted using storytelling campaigns from the web about five different places: 3 cities - Montréal (Canada), Riga (Latvia), Vienna (Austria), and 2 regions, Bengal (India) and North Carolina (USA). A brief description of each campaign is provided below.

“TTYL”, Montréal, Canada

Tourisme Montréal launched the interactive campaign “#MTLmoments” hashtag, using user-generated content as inspiration for short films. The TTYL video add was part of the #MTLmoments project, a project to Discover Montréal through the eyes of locals using the #MTLmoments hashtag. The locals were able to join the online Montréal party by sharing their favorite moments using the hashtag #MTLmoments. The project consisted of choosing local directors to put their own spin on their chosen #MTLmoments through a short film, revealing their perspectives about the city. The campaign won several prizes, including a Grand Prize in Social Media Strategy and Integrated Campaign categories from the Boomerang Awards. TTYL was directed by Iouri Philippe Paillé. It shows perspective of the Montréal nightlife and the modern romance. The story focuses on romantic talk on the phone while one of the characters walks through the city, showing us the aesthetics of the famous nightlife from Montréal.

“Go on a Journey With a Taxi Driver from Riga”, Riga, Latvia

The Riga Tourism Development Bureau developed the digital campaign “The Insider’s Guide to Riga”. The ad agency DDB created the Wes Anderson-inspired tourism campaign for Latvia’s capital city Riga

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reusing the director's signature symmetry, with the main aim to promote the city. The campaign was top ranked among 164 films and named "World's best tourism film" for 2019 at the International Committee of Tourism Film Festivals, in Austria. It is about a culture loving taxi driver from Riga, a huge fan of Wagner. The taxi driver is also a tour guide and shows to the tourists famous landmarks in the city, such as museums. Wagner's music is played in the background.

"Firsts that Lasts - Jazmene and Peyton", North Carolina, USA

Aimed primarily at increasing the number of North American visitors, "Firsts That Last" features real-life travelers making their first trip to North Carolina, captivating first-time experiences they have on their trips. For this campaign for the North Carolina Tourism, people that had never been to North Carolina Region were brought there, and their first experiences there were filmed. The campaign earned a Mercury Award from the National Council of State Tourism Directors and the U.S. Travel Association. The chosen story was about the journey of Jazmene and her daughter, Peyton through North Carolina, a family of two that had never seen the sea.

"West Bengal: The Sweetest Part of India" – Bengal, India

"The Sweetest Part of India" recalls Bengal's fame for sweetmeats, but also emphasizes the friendliness and homeliness of the Bengalis. This storytelling campaign promoted Bengal as "the sweetest tourist destination" and was created for the tourism department of West Bengal. The main goal of the campaign was to attract both domestic and foreign tourists to the region. It was nominated for the 2017 Kyoorius Creative Awards and was shared on Facebook by more than 30.000 people. The campaign highlights Bengali culture, cuisine, religion, history, and lifestyle, through the journey of a foreign woman. It associates Bengal's famous sweetmeats with the sweetness, humility, and hospitality of Bengali people.

"The Wedding of Siri & Alexa – The First A.I. Marriage", Vienna, Austria

The Wedding of Siri and Alexa was a campaign created for the Vienna Tourist Board. The campaign supports LGBTQ+ rights, because since the 1st of January 2019, Vienna started to support marriage for all genders. The wedding of the two Artificial Intelligence characters was used to promote the image of a friendly and unprejudiced city. The campaign was watched on YouTube 2.9 million times so far. The campaign also created a website, <https://www.siriandalexa.com/>, which provides more information, pictures and videos about the peculiar love story of the A.I couple, and the city as well.

Analysis Procedures

The following analysis was constructed through the interpretation of the video content, and was structured in three phases:

Phase 1: Analysis of the story type, which includes interpretation of brand slogan, brand message, story theme, and the techniques used in the video.

Phase 2: Analysis of the narrative components, which includes interpretation/analysis of the plot, emotions transmitted through the story, the sequence and story structure, highest moment of the narrative (climax), and the characteristics of the main characters.

Phase 3: Analysis of the perspective and medium components of the campaigns.

The method adopted should be considered theory-driven, as it builds on contributions in the literature that resulted in the analysis framework presented above. Using the proposed framework, each storytelling campaign was decomposed into a set of components and interpreted, guided by contributions in extant literature.

Results and Interpretation

The videos of the campaigns are less than 5 minutes long, and the most common topics covered were adventure, culture and love. The story instruments common to all campaigns are tagline, brand logo, and music (Table 2). These findings are in line with extant literature which points out that taglines, music, and even monologues perform a very important part in the brand stories (Moin et al., 2020, p. 7).

Table 2. Story type

	Bengal	Montréal	North Carolina	Riga	Vienna
Brand slogan	Experience Bengal, the sweetest part of India	#MTLmoments (not clear)	Firsts That Last	Come to Riga and have a culture ride	In Vienna there is love for everyone
Brand message	Bengal is a sweet place, emphasizing the humility as well as the generosity of the Bengali population	Perspectives from the city, through the eyes of a character (not clear)	Real life experiences that last forever	Riga is a place for culture lovers	Love is a concept that transcends gender
Story theme	Adventure, hospitality and culture, gastronomy	Love, nightlife	Adventure, nature, sensations, family, love, dreams	Culture ride	Love, LGBTQ+ Rights, Artificial Intelligence
Story Instruments	Tagline, music, brand logo, monolog	Music, dialog, brand logo, tagline	Monolog, dialog, tagline, brand logo, music	Voice cover, music, brand logo, monolog, tagline	Music, dialog, brand logo, tagline

All campaigns display a slogan, without exception. Excluding Montréal, all the slogans are deeply linked to the message that each video aims to convey to different audiences. As for the brand message, although all different, the campaigns have in common positive aspects about cities and regions. With respect to Bengal, the emphasis is on a sweet, humble and very rich culture. Montréal sends the message of a city with a very active and varied nightlife. North Carolina creates a message about the importance that new experiences have in people’s lives. Riga conveys a strong cultural positioning. Finally, Vienna takes a stand on tolerance and gender equality, by using the concept of love and identifying it as universal.

The stories feature distinct themes (e.g., gastronomy in Bengal, nightlife in Montréal, LGBTQ + rights and artificial intelligence in Vienna), but there are some shared topics, such as adventure (Bengal, North Carolina); culture (Bengal, Riga), and love (Montréal, North Carolina, Vienna).

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Finally, when it comes to story instruments, some are common to all the campaigns analyzed in these pages, such as tagline, music and brand logo. Monolog and dialog were used in three of them, and voice cover in one.

Table 3. Narrative components

Narrative Component	Bengal	Montréal	North Carolina	Riga	Vienna
Plot Summary	Adventure story of a tourist who travels around Bengal. (Adventure)	Love story between an accountant and his client Eva. (Drama and Romance)	The story of a family that never saw the sea, and their road to that adventure. (Adventure)	The story of a culture-loving taxi driver from Riga, who is also a tour guide. (Comedy)	The story of an unusual marriage between two A.I. girls. (Romance)
Emotional content	Positive emotions. (Happiness, satisfaction, compassion, love, joy)	Positive emotions. (Happiness, love, excitement)	Positive emotions. (Happiness, love, satisfaction)	Positive emotions. (Happiness, amusement, excitement)	Positive emotions. (Happiness, love, pride, joy)
Sequence, story structure: (beginning, middle, end)	The 3 parts were explicit. Clear sequence	The 3 parts were explicit. Clear sequence.	The 3 parts were explicit. Clear sequence	The 3 parts were explicit. Clear sequence.	The 3 parts were explicit. Clear sequence.
Climax	When the main character enters a Bollywood set by mistake.	When the main character leaves a heart on his lover's window.	When the two main characters see the sea for the first time.	Multiple climaxes; when a new fact about the taxi driver is presented, and when a new location is revealed.	The "I do" part of the wedding.
Time and Space	Several days/various places in Bengal.	Night (part of one day). Street view of the night from Montréal.	One day. Various places from North Carolina.	Several days. Various places from Riga.	One day. Action concentrated mostly in one place.
Main Characters	Foreign woman (tourist)	An accountant	Jazmene and Peyton (Mother and daughter)	A Taxi driver from Riga	Siri and Alexa
Heroic traits and moral values of the main characters	Caring	Selfless, Caring	Inspiring, Caring, Selfless	Charismatic, Reliable, Smart	Inspiring, Caring, Smart
Narrative Archetypes	Hero, Allies, Mentor	Hero	Hero, Mentor	Hero, Mentor	Hero, Allies

Table 3 analyzes the narratives. As highlighted in the literature review at the beginning of the chapter, narratives help to inculcate events with meaning and to adapt to the needs and desires of the audience (Gabriel, 2015, p. 277). The campaigns present simple plots, with a clear sequence, and the three parts of the narrative structure (beginning, middle and end) are present in all of them.

Each campaign tries to stimulate positive emotions such as happiness, excitement, joy, and love. Nowadays there is an understanding that storytelling helps to make emotional connections and that it is a way to build recognition and identity (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p. 24). One of the most important

components of the image a city or region is its values, because values can create perceptual dimensions and shape audiences' perceptions and image. Positive values are good to position a city and to increase competitiveness (Pompe, 2017, p. 12). The five campaigns explore only positive emotions.

Cities carried out different strategies to differentiate themselves from other cities and to attract tourists. The campaigns of Bengal, North Carolina and Riga are mainly focused on showing different locations and place attributes, presenting beautiful, rich, and interesting image content from those locations. A different strategy was adopted in the campaigns from Montréal and Vienna. In fact, their campaigns do not focus on local attractions, they focus more on the message and on the characters in order to show a different perspective of the city. So, instead of focusing on traditional touristic places, these campaigns feature emotional and social content, such as gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights and nightlife scene. These campaigns also confirm some points made by extant literature, showing that different stakeholder groups can actively participate in content creation, as the involvement residents and public managers may increase the impact of place marketing (Eshuis et al., 2018, p. 931).

Regarding the characters, and as shown in Table 3, only the Bengal campaign used a tourist as its main character. The other campaigns used different approaches for presenting the main characters. Montréal focused on an accountant, a person from the city with a very common profession. North Carolina presented a family of two, but not as the traditional family on vacation. Riga's campaign chose a taxi driver for the leading role, and finally Vienna used two artificial intelligence characters as the main focus.

The heroic traits, moral value and narrative archetypes were present in all the campaigns. According to Moin et al. (2020, p. 8), the presence of heroes makes the action more compelling. Overall, the main characters of the five campaigns are presented as having noble moral values, hence generating positive feelings in the audience.

Table 4 presents results about perspective and medium components of the campaigns, including propose and point of view from the story, choice of content, pacing, soundtrack, quality of images, and economy of the story. Most of the criteria had an excellent assessment performance. The exception was the campaign from Montréal, regarding the economy of the story, purpose, point of view and choice of content. The aesthetic created around the story slightly complicates the perception of values and characteristics that the author wants to transpose about the city. Although with some difficulty, namely because the video seems quite long, the message that Montréal is a city with a very exciting nightlife gets through to the public. The purpose of the story and the point of view in all other campaigns are clear and meaningful. The choice of content is able to create distinct atmospheres and tones that matched the different parts of the story. The pacing and the economy of the story build a strong story line in the right amount of time, with one exception (Montréal), as already mentioned.

The high quality of the images and the chosen soundtracks were perfectly selected, because they helped the other traits become more coherent, fluid and meaningful. Music can add meanings to advertising because it can reinforce the cultural context to communicate meanings (Hung, 2000, p. 26).

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Table 4. Perspective component

Category	Bengal	Montréal	North Carolina	Riga	Vienna
Purpose of story	Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout.	It is somewhat difficult to figure out the purpose.	Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout.	Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout.	Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout.
Point of view	The point of view is well developed and contributes to the overall meaning of the story	The point of view is stated but does not connect with each part of the story, although an attempt is made to the overall meaning of the story.	The point of view is well developed and contributes to the overall meaning of the story	The point of view is well developed and contributes to the overall meaning of the story	The point of view is well developed and contributes to the overall meaning of the story
Choice of content	Content creates a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story.	Content creates an atmosphere or tone that matches some parts of the story. The images may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors.	Content create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story.	Content creates a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story.	Content creates a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story.
Pacing	The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story line.	The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story line.	The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story line.	The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story line.	The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story line.
Soundtrack	Music stirs a rich emotional response that matches the story line well. Images coordinated with music.	Music stirs a rich emotional response that matches the story line well. Images coordinated with music.	Music stirs a rich emotional response that matches the story line well. Images coordinated with music.	Music stirs a rich emotional response that matches the story line well. Images coordinated with music.	Music stirs a rich emotional response that matches the story line well. Images coordinated with music.
Quality of images	Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story	Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story	Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story	Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story	Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story
Economy of the story	The story is told within exactly the right amount of time.	The story composition is typically good, though it seems vague and needs more detail in one or two sections.	The story is told with exactly the right amount of time.	The story is told with exactly the right amount of time.	The story is told with exactly the right amount of time.

Table 5. Medium components

Category	Bengal	Montréal	North Carolina	Riga	Vienna
Channels	Digital media	Digital media	Digital media	Digital media	Digital media
Digital Content form/ Technology	Video (audiovisual)	Video (audiovisual)	Video (audiovisual)	Video (audiovisual)	Video (audiovisual)
Interactivity	Video allows interactivity trough web and social media.	Video allows interactivity trough web and social media.	Video allows interactivity trough web and social media.	Video allows interactivity trough web and social media.	Video allows interactivity trough web and social media.

Regarding the medium components (Table 5), all the aspects are common through the five different campaigns, as all the chosen ads were videos shared on digital platforms (e.g., YouTube and Facebook) that allowed the audience to interact with the content.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Stories are very powerful and by using storytelling communication can become more effective and persuasive. Stories connect with the consumer by sharing values and by evoking emotions. Emotions, in fact, are very powerful because they build trust, create intimacy, and can hold attention. Tourism destinations construct their identity based on sociality, emotions, interaction and connectivity (Gravili, Rosato, & Iazzi, 2017, p. 8). And in fact tourists need stories with attractive plots and characters to conceive the tourism destination in their minds. Positive stories and effective storytelling channels in destination brand communication are very important (Yavuz, Sumbul, Ergec, & Derdiyok, 2016, p. 63). Arguably, these strategies are expected to be effective with other targets, including local stakeholders, especially considering that they communicate place identity. Still, it is somewhat surprising that storytelling seems to be particularly used to approach tourists. Considering the opportunities provided, storytelling should also be considered by communication and marketing managers of cities and regions to communicate with other targets, such as local stakeholders and investors.

As demonstrated in this chapter, storytelling strategies are complex and comprise several components that ought to be carefully considered. Other recommendations for creating a video storytelling campaign for cities and regions include:

- Identifying the characteristics, values, and attributes that represent the city or region;
- Knowing their inhabitants, their habits and traits;
- Defining the target audiences and studying their consumption behaviors (including regarding information);
- Adapting the message to different targets;
- Choosing the digital media that are best for sharing the video with the target audiences;
- Making the message clear by providing a coherent narrative flow.

For creating the video content other aspects need to be carefully considered, such as defining the storyboard, choosing the soundtrack, featuring the brand, its logo, the slogan and the tagline.

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Moreover, it should be noted that several stakeholder groups have a different influence on the positioning of a brand online (Eshuis, Braun, Klijn, & Zenker, 2018, p. 932), so the co-creation processes that emerge from stakeholders' actions and communication initiatives should also be articulated in order to maximize the results and to achieve a strong and unique brand message.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study demonstrates the diversity of approaches to storytelling campaigns created by cities and regions. Indeed, despite the sample being limited to five campaigns, they use different combinations of narrative, perspective and medium components. Their heroes and messages are very distinct. Still, they share some characteristics, such as narrative structure and a focus on the main characters' values. It is recommended that future research further explores contrasting storytelling strategies, namely by choosing contrasting cases with variables at different poles of several spectrums. Being clear that all of them want to develop positive emotions on target audiences, one of the aspects that deserves future research is the efficacy of these campaigns, which could be analyzed using different methodological approaches.

Hence, future research opportunities include using both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather the views of managers, residents, and other stakeholders. Interesting research questions include but are not limited to how different target audiences perceive different storytelling approaches, the effects of narrative approaches and main character profiles on trust, place attractiveness, and place loyalty. Studying the managers' views could also provide rich information on outcomes and marketing objectives associated to storytelling campaigns, as well as with the factors that explain the adoption and resistance to such strategies.

Overall, the framework used in this chapter provides rich information on the campaigns. It would be interesting that future research use similar frameworks to analyze and compare other campaigns.

CONCLUSION

Digital media are essential marketing channels these days. Having the potential to reach millions of people is an advantage that can be appreciated by small cities and regions wanting to showcase their attributes and to develop their image and positioning. There are countless factors that can identify a city or a region: its culture, history, religion, gastronomy, political and economic structure, biodiversity, and people. Additionally, each city and region has its own stories, which tend to offer particularly interesting perspectives on its essence, and has one main advantage of conveying values and emotions and of connecting people to places – including target audiences.

The campaigns analyzed in this chapter are about cities and regions of some size and the analysis comprises some structural and content aspects. The strategies were successful, and therefore, by decomposing and analyzing the campaigns, an opportunity is created for small regions and cities to understand how they have created successful strategies to differentiate themselves from other regions. The analysis made it possible to ascertain that, although the stories are totally different from each other, there are several common aspects. This is the case with the use of tagline, logo, and music. The classic three-part structure and the relative fluidity of the story are also important points to remember, which are present in all campaigns. Finally, the emotions created are always positive and the characters always

express positive values and a noble character. Being clear that there is no one way to apply storytelling to cities and regions, it is clear that all the components of the strategy proposed in this chapter should be carefully considered.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Brand Positioning: The distinct place the brand occupies in consumers' minds.

Brand Slogan: A short and catchy phrase, easy to memorize and that stays in the consumers' minds, which characterizes a company, a product, or a place.

Digital Storytelling: A marketing and communication strategy based on narrative techniques (plots, characters), and digital techniques (video, audio, 3D). It comprises the production of stories for digital media that are associated with a brand in order to connect emotionally with target audiences.

Narrative Archetypes: Patterns, elements, and mechanisms commonly used in the fields of arts and literature, which help to add meaning and significance to a story.

Place Branding: A marketing strategy that is based on the premise that cities, regions, and countries can be branded. Place branding is largely linked to the characteristics of its native people, the characteristics of the region, the culture, the gastronomy, the organizations, and its history.

Social Media: Interactive and digital tools and platforms that allow the production and sharing of different types of content, such as video, image, text, infographics, and music.

Storytelling Strategies: Strategies designed to persuade through stories. The main objective of storytelling strategies is to create emotion and cognition through a story, in order to persuade and engage an audience.

Chapter 6

Pitch This: Storytelling as a Means to Enhance Your Personal Brand

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ABSTRACT

The following chapter describes the design and implementation of a teaching and learning strategy that aimed to explore the affordances of storytelling when it comes to the management of students' personal branding skills. Designed to help students craft their online professional persona and produce video-based pitches, this strategy was developed taking into account the concepts of personal branding and digital storytelling, as well as a preliminary questionnaire focusing on participants' perceptions. Having been implemented within English for Specific Purposes classes, this strategy was successful in promoting students' engagement and making them aware of the importance of having a strong personal brand, something that can be enhanced through contemporary storytelling methods.

INTRODUCTION

Relying on individual experiences and reflections, Digital Storytelling (DS) has become particularly relevant in today's highly mediatized world. As it became increasingly popular and widely available, mostly due to the pervasiveness of digital devices, the use of DS in educational contexts has also become widespread. Considered to contribute towards the enhancement of learning experiences, DS can also provide contextualized and multimedia materials, appealing to different learning styles and skills in different levels and fields of study, including language learning.

As more and more researchers are analyzing and documenting the affordances of digital storytelling in language learning, this chapter aims to further research carried out within this scope by giving

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a detailed account of a strategy used in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in two different Portuguese Higher Education Institutions (HEI). This strategy addressed the need to develop the students' communication skills in regard to their online persona and self-marketing, particularly in current job search scenarios.

Based on these premises, and focusing on the students' pursuing degrees in Management and Tourism, in this chapter the authors describe how they combined the use of storytelling techniques and the creation of professional video-based personal pitches, in order to help students to establish and convey a strong and distinctive personal brand. In addition to exploring the affordances of storytelling and develop students' personal branding skills, this strategy was designed to allow students to position themselves professionally online, raising their awareness as to the importance of personal branding and the value of language learning through digital storytelling.

In order to achieve these goals, the authors start out by establishing a theoretical rationale, in which they define the concepts of personal branding and DS, highlighting how these can converge to leverage language learning. Based on a literature review, this research was instrumental in framing the teaching and learning strategy to be implemented with students. Next, following up on an entry questionnaire outlining students' digital presence, their awareness on the topics of personal branding and storytelling and their willingness to use digital devices and produce videos, the authors describe the design and implementation of a teaching and learning strategy. Drawing on preliminary data, the second half of this chapter focuses on how the teaching and learning strategy used was tailored to meet both the students' and the market's needs.

Aiming to develop students' language competence, their ability to create an effective technology-based personal pitch, making use of storytelling techniques, and to raise their awareness as to the importance of developing a strong online personal brand, this strategy intends to be effective in providing a space for personal narratives and fostering reflections about not only recruitment trends, but also about the impact online presence and behavior can have on their future.

BACKGROUND

At a time when networking and social media have become paramount, particularly for recruiters, it is important that HEI are able to adapt and develop strategies that help students navigate these complex and, at times, murky platforms. Moreover, students must be made aware of the importance of engaging their audience by telling a compelling story, which can be shared across different media, employing different methods and techniques. As this is part of an ongoing, never-ending process, developing transferable skills such as self-awareness, critical-thinking and digital competences is key.

Defined as the "strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself, based in a unique combination of individual characteristics, which signal a certain promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery" (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova, 2018, p.6), the concept of personal branding can be associated with the creation of a professional image to apply for a job. Enhanced and highlighted by social media, this image should reflect not only your technical skills and expertise, but also soft skills, the ability to communicate efficiently and correctly on multiple channels and platforms.

As recruiters become increasingly demanding and mindful of the importance of soft skills and the challenges of finding competent and multifaceted candidates, social media has also become a valuable

and convenient cache of prospective applicants, particularly in highly competitive global industries, such as IT, Management and Tourism. On the other hand, as peer-to-peer transactions and online reputation are increasingly becoming the cornerstone of today's sharing economy, establishing and conveying a strong and trustworthy personal brand can be paramount. Leveraged and enhanced by technology and social media, it is important that this brand is at the same time distinctive and consistent, as well as customizable and adaptable to multiple digital platforms.

Personal Branding

Strongly associated with marketing, the concept of personal brand is an extension of the concept of branding, as the latter has branched out, moving beyond "its products and corporate origins" (Harris & Rae, 2011, p. 16) to, in this case, include individuals. Considered to give you "the ability to stand out in a sea of similar products" (Brogan, 2010, p. 234), personal branding allows individuals to create "the image of who he or she wants to be in everything they do in order to create their unique selling proposition in the market place" (Potgieter, Doubell & Klopper, 2017, p.2251). By combining a wide range of personal attributes and value, which are "rendered into [a] differentiated narrative and imagery with the intent of establishing a competitive advantage in the minds of the target audience", a strong personal brand is, therefore, a "mix of reputation, trust, attention, and execution" that relies on self-marketing, i.e., "the marketing effort that a person adopts in order to promote oneself in the market" (Khedher, 2015, p. 19).

Crucial to job seekers, the idea of maintaining and projecting a positive impression and creating a professional image has been enhanced and augmented by digital technology, and most particularly social media, and can be associated with the concept of social capital, i.e. "the ability to use resources and engage in mutually advantageous social cooperation through a social network" (Johnson, 2017, p.22). Studies on the affordances of social media have determined that they can both hinder and increase users' social capital (Fieseler & Fleck, 2013; Khedher, 2015). As a result, job seekers (and particularly students about to enter the job market) must be made aware of the impact their online social interactions might have in future employers and their perceptions of them.

This awareness is becoming more relevant, as more studies confirm that recruiters are increasingly using social media not only to screen applicants, but also to canvass for future workers, based on their qualifications and skills (Johnson, 2017; Wetsch, 2012; Grasz, 2016). On the other hand, applicants' online presence can also prove detrimental, as "inappropriate photos, use of alcohol or drugs, and discriminatory comments negatively influence hiring" (Johnson, 2017, p. 22).

Referring to new trends in the workplace, Harris and Rae (2011) highlight the role social media can play in promoting new ways of communicating and collaborating, which reflect an endemic change in the nature of many jobs, thus resulting in the need for "new cultures, mindsets and skills" (p. 14), which, in turn, will also reflect on job seekers. This trend has been building up for the last 20 years, with studies gradually showing an increase in the use of social media by recruiters, who have also become more demanding. Alluding to different surveys carried out by the established employment and human capital management company CareerBuilder (Grasz, 2016), over the last decade, different authors acknowledge this progression, highlighting both the positive and negative consequences of the social network screening of job applicants. While in 2011, about one in five employers screened candidates based on their social media profiles, which could essentially result in either their embarrassment or success, namely if "the top of the search results will be the photo of the applicant receiving an achievement award from his University, or a link to his blog which showcases his interests and experience, or to his LinkedIn

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profile which has links to glowing testimonials from people who know him well” (Harris & Rae, 2011, p. 17), more recent studies have shown how this process has become more complex. Currently, an estimated seven out of ten employers in the USA now actively use social media to research and screen job applicants (CareerBuilder, 2018). In fact, according to Curtin (2020), 57% of employers are less likely to invite someone for an interview if they have no online presence, which, in itself, is revealing of the importance of having a carefully thought out online profile.

However, as mentioned previously, this online presence can be a double-edged sword. The percentage of companies that claim not to have hired someone in result of an online screening process (54%) is higher than those stating the opposite (44%), namely that it was the “content on a candidate’s social media profile that caused them to actually *hire* the person” (Curtin, 2020). In this case, the fact that the candidate demonstrated great communication skills (37%) and showed a professional image (36%) and creativity (36%) was key. These findings are supported by several studies that also highlight the fact that social network profiles give “a more rounded view of the individual and hence a better assessment of their likely ‘fit’ within the organization”, playing up the fact that “by actively managing their online presence, people can maximize the opportunities to develop their personal brand” (Harris & Rae, 2011, p. 19), hence amplifying the prospect of being hired.

Leveraged by social media and recruiters, personal branding is, therefore, “becoming a critical differentiator between the proactive and the reactive members of today’s society (Harris & Rae, 2011, p. 14), particularly amongst job seekers. As a result, researchers are increasingly putting forward models outlining factors and criteria that make up a strong and authentic personal brand (Rampersad, 2008), based on individuals’ knowledge, experience and skills (Harris & Rae, 2011) and their character (Shah 2017). According to Potgieter and Doubell (2018), this brand should be consistent, relevant, clearly defined and speak to each individual’s authority, specialization, integrity, goodwill, persistence and personality, as to not only address the target audience, but also create distinctiveness, based both on hard and soft skills, and moral values and behavior. As the dynamic outcome of a “strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself, based in a unique combination of individual characteristics, which signal a certain promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery” (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova, 2018, p. 6), personal brands and the role they have come to play in the recruitment process are complex constructs, of which many job applicants, and most particularly graduate students are not always aware of or equipped to deal with (Robles, 2020). Bridgstock (2019) identified how graduate students currently struggle to use social networking sites for job searching, despite their widespread use of social media. Referring specifically to the professionally oriented social networking platform LinkedIn, the author points out students’ lack of “professional skills” (p. 144) to use the platform, drawing on previous work to acknowledge the need to develop them.

On the other hand, as stated by Van Dijck (2013), digital platforms have undergone several structural changes, in that “rather than being databases of personal information they became tools for (personal) storytelling and narrative self-presentation” (p. 200). This has made ‘standing out from the crowd’ an even more complex issue, making it necessary to not only understand how these networks work, but also master storytelling techniques, as tools to create a personal brand.

Storytelling

Because it relies heavily on self-marketing, personal branding places a strong focus on this idea of individual promotion, in the way it makes use of individual experience and features. When it comes to “connect[ing] the dots and give meaning to isolated events” (Roxo, 2020), stories can play a vital role, particularly if you consider today’s mediatized world and the need to communicate using different platforms.

An organic part of human evolution and people’s everyday lives, storytelling is conventionally and broadly described as the “accumulated knowledge and wisdom to help navigate and explain the world around us” (Mancuso & Smith, 2014). Traditionally it associates four core elements – message, conflict, characters and plot (Fog & Blanchette, 2010; Giorgino & Mazzú, 2018) – in the sense that they are crafted not only to convey specific content, but also to captivate and appeal to an audience, holding their attention through a sequence of events. Thus, stories are quintessential elements of communication that continue to play a pivotal role within different scopes of human activity.

Due to its “technical-formal structure, coupled with the semiotic character of its oral practice and the interaction between the linguistic and kinetic code, the proxemic and the prosodic” (Batista, 2018), storytelling is being increasingly used in corporate settings, not only within organizations themselves, but also in order to promote knowledge transfer and develop a strong and captivating brand image (Gonçalo, Borges, Cassol, & Moré, R., 2013). Leveraged by the widespread evolution and use of technology, the emergence of Digital Storytelling (DS) has deepened this connection even further by diversifying and extending the way information can be disseminated.

Converging in the combination of telling stories and the use of images, audio, text and video (Ros-siter & Garcia, 2010), or “the art of telling a story with the help of modern technologies” (Alexander, 2011), DS is considered to add layers of interactivity to traditional storytelling, also reaching out to different audiences and platforms. Thought to have an intrinsic value, DS can open the door to a more comprehensive and enhanced presentation of the self, something that can be an advantage when applying for a job. By facilitating meaning-making in context (Johnson, 2017), storytelling can enable recruiters to get to know the applicants from a different perspective. However, despite these advantages and the accessibility of social networks, applicants must be aware of the importance of keeping content relevant and consistent with the different platforms.

Understood as a process, the concept of transmedia storytelling involves producing different content for different platforms, by introducing new elements to a new medium, rather than reproducing content across different platforms (Jenkins, 2010; Veglis, 2012). In a recruitment-related context, this entails coming up with a professional storyline that gives recruiters a more comprehensive outlook on your profile, through customized narratives that make the best use of the platforms being used and the specific target audience (Gorbatov, Khapova, & Lysova, 2018; Robson, 2019).

Working with personal branding and storytelling within an academic, language teaching context is therefore a challenging venture, as in addition to working with more standard content, such as language exponents and basic narrative structures, activities must cover a wider range of both technical and transferrable skills. Aiming to better equip students with skills that will help them throughout recruitment processes, the strategy described in this chapter incorporates all these elements, making a compelling case for contemporary storytelling methods in the language classroom.

PERSONAL PITCHING AND PERSONAL BRANDING

Designing a Teaching and Learning Strategy

Based on the premises established in the previous section and the fact that the ESP syllabi within both Tourism and Management undergraduate degrees include a module focusing on careers and job applications, researchers set out to develop a strategy that would augment students' experience and knowledge, bringing them more in synch with current market trends regarding recruitments methods and techniques. This approach, though applied to specific settings, is aligned with the current "new visions for contemporary higher education in the digital age" (Rampelt, Orr & Knoth, 2019, p. 4), namely in what concerns the need to bridge the gap between academia, societal developments and challenges and the labour market, as well as the need to pursue digitalization policies that make allowances for students "to acquire new skills and competences that enable them to fully benefit from the 'digital dividends' of technology" (Rampelt, Orr & Knoth, 2019, p. 5). Channeling these "new learning spaces" (Rampelt, Orr & Knoth, 2019, p. 5), can, therefore, play a role in improving the overall quality of learning programs, particularly when it comes to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, namely by promoting innovative pedagogies and interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches within educational institutions (European Commission, 2016).

Given the role currently played by social media tools and the perceived importance of having a strong a distinctive personal brand, it is vital the students be made aware of each platform's particular features and the fact that their profiles must be kept up-to-date and convey accurate, relevant and concise information about their academic, professional and personal achievements (Clark, 2011; Morgan, 2011) – something that can be done in different ways, combining different formats. Besides social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and even Youtube, other perhaps less obvious choices, such as Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest or blogs, can also be used to this end. These platforms can be used to complement each other in a combined approach to strengthen and project a personal brand and extend personal narratives.

By employing storytelling techniques, applicants have the possibility to create their unique narratives, in which they share their knowledge, skills and experience in a way that demonstrates their progress and showcase other attributes. In this context, resorting to DS, applicants can use audiovisual content, and create video CVs or personal pitches, in which their knowledge, confidence and communication skills can be highlighted (namely through body language and overall posture) (Chen, 2013; Pace, 2008; Johnson, 2017).

In fact, professional online profiles, video CVs and digital portfolios are currently key for recruiters. According to recent forecasts, it is estimated that by 2022 videos will represent more than 82% of online content, with the format being on the rise in professional platforms such as LinkedIn (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tjmccue/2020/02/05/looking-deep-into-the-state-of-online-video-for-2020/#5879d62eac5f>). Because they allow applicants to not only describe their skills, but also demonstrate them (Johnson, 2017), videos and presentations (that can be uploaded to different platforms and enhance your online profiles), will, therefore, become even more relevant in recruitment processes.

Based on this assumption and framed by the rationale described in the previous section, the authors set out to devise a teaching and learning strategy that would allow students to develop their language skills and raise their awareness to the importance of developing a strong and effective personal brand, particularly when applying for a job.

Drawing from the syllabi and pre-defined learning outcomes, that included the identification of procedures involved in the recruitment process, techniques used in job interviews and the creation of CVs, they decided to base part of this approach on LinkedIn and the use of personal video pitches that could be attached to their professional profiles.

As this strategy would ultimately result in a new approach, prior to its development, it was necessary to draw students' profile as to understand if they were not only open to take part in the activities, but mostly understand if they were technologically competent to do so. Due to the complexity and importance of the topic, it was also important to determine students' prior perceptions regarding personal branding and storytelling. As a result, a preliminary online questionnaire was developed and sent out to Management and Tourism students attending ESP classes, as to set the ground for future work.

Students' Profiles and Perceptions

After asking a total of 49 students, 73.5% (n=36) of which studying Tourist Activities Management at ESHT (School of Hospitality and Tourism – Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal), and 26.5% (n=13) studying Quality Management at ESTGA (Águeda Superior School of Technology and Management – University of Aveiro, Portugal), it was possible to establish that all have access and frequently use digital devices, particularly smartphones (89.8%) and laptops (81.6%). These devices are mostly used to access chats/messaging services and social networks (respectively 89.8% and 81.9% use these platforms several times a day), and sharing or online streaming platforms/services (59.2%). In addition to their regular use of digital devices and services, concerning their academic experience, all (100%) agree that technology can be used to support classroom learning, whereas 95.5% agree that it can also motivate students and help make meaningful connections to the learning material. As for the appeal of producing their own digital content, 75.5% agree with the statement, while 69.3% of students consider they get more actively involved in courses that use technology.

When asked about the role played by technology within the ESP classroom, 79.6% consider that, generally, using digital technology in English classes will help them to develop their creativity. However, when asked specifically about videos, this number rises to 98.0%, with 75.0% of respondents highlighting the fact that videos support the development of speaking/presentation skills, and facilitate the acquisition of specific terminology (72.9%), reinforce knowledge (68.8%), motivate students (64.6%) and revise content (62.5%).

Regarding the concept of personal branding, only 30.6% (n=15) are familiar with the concept of personal brand, and from those, half (53.3%) are unable to describe their own brand as “strong”. Nevertheless, students who are familiar with the concept consider that it can be beneficial in career management (100%), playing an important role when it comes to showcasing personal skills (93.3%), as well as increasing visibility (60.0%) and visibility (53.3%). According to these respondents, the perceived importance and impact of their brand influences what they publish online, leading them to adapt the content they publish (80.0%), with 66.7% stating they actively use their social media platforms to practice personal branding.

As for DS, albeit being familiar with the concept, students' answers are not as conclusive. Overall, there is a certain degree of uncertainty towards the affordances of DS, as 53.1% of respondents are unsure whether it is more effective than paper-based reflections. Regardless, 89.8% of students believe DS can help develop their speaking skills and 65.3% would like to see it integrated into their English assignments. These results, combined with the fact that even from among those students who are familiar with concept of personal branding only 53.3% share content related with their study/professional skills,

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seem to corroborate the project's initial premise that students need to be introduced to the concepts and made aware of the importance of a strong personal brand and what it entails. On the other hand, the overwhelmingly positive way videos are perceived, and the fact that students recognize the significance of both DS and English use for the development of a personal brand (respectively 66.7% and 60%), legitimates the assumption that these two different areas can in fact be combined in order to develop an integrated approach that can benefit students and ultimately help them to get noticed and hired.

Taking this into consideration, the ensuing teaching/ learning strategy was developed, as to assist students in creating and/or developing a personal online brand, namely through the creation and enhancement of a LinkedIn profile and the production of a video-based personal pitch that could be used when applying for a job. In order to achieve this general goal, and considering the indisputable benefit of DS within this scope, this strategy was thought out to integrate different techniques and models, as to let students not only experiment with different features, content and format, but also help them find the solutions that best fit their individual profiles.

Operationalization

Framed by a set of language learning principles related to communication and specific terminology, the teaching/learning strategy devised aimed to combine both theoretical and practical aspects related to personal branding and DS. As seen in Table 1, this strategy was outlined in 4 different phases, having relied heavily on workshops that would allow a mixed approach.

Table 1. Implementation phases

Phase	Activity (A)	Time
1	A1 – Workshop on personal branding and how to create and maintain a LinkedIn Profile (1 face-to-face session)	2 hours
2	A2 – 2 Workshops on pitching and storytelling (2 face-to-face sessions)	4 hours
3	A3 – Development of the video (autonomous/individual work)	2 weeks
4	A4 – Presentation of a critical review of the videos by a Recruitment Specialist (1 face-to-face session)	4 hours

Source: (The authors)

Phase 1

As stated previously, based on the preliminary questionnaire's results, it was necessary to have an introductory session in which students would be (re)introduced to the concept of personal branding and the importance of having a strong online personal brand, particularly when applying for a job. Given the nature and relevance of LinkedIn in this setting, this first 2-hour, face-to-face session also included creating or updating a LinkedIn profile. Working closely with the ESP professors, a Digital Marketing Strategist was invited to discuss the significance and impact of a carefully thought-out professional online presence and conduct a workshop on effective LinkedIn profiles. Working with different, context-specific models, students were also given the opportunity to review existing profiles and asked to comment on

and highlight language-related content pertaining to formality, exponents and structures, having been made aware of different communication techniques regarding accurateness, clarity and appeal.

Phase 2

Phase 2 (see Table 1) entailed two 2-hour, face-to-face sessions focusing on the concepts of pitching and DS. Again working with models and examples from the business context, these sessions tried to combine both the applicants and the recruiters' perspectives, in an attempt to foster students' critical thinking and to introduce them to different and fresh approaches to storytelling, that could be applied in digital settings. On that account, students were given the opportunity to work with different types of pitch, specifically the twitter pitch, the elevator pitch and the Pixar pitch.

The Elevator Pitch

Considered to be “a staple of most university entrepreneurship programmes” (McCollough, Devezer & Tanner, 2016), elevator pitches are based on the notion of being in an elevator and having the time of the ride to make a pitch (or presentation) of an idea, product, or, even oneself. This pitch is, therefore, short and should make a compelling case for what is being presented.

Referring to academic storytelling and elevator pitches, McCullen (2017) outlines 3 key questions, which are the cornerstone of both stories and academic pitches: who is your audience; does the story have an end; and does the story have tension. This is to say that pitches should persuade, influence or seduce audiences, engaging them and getting them to pay attention.

In language teaching, elevator pitches have been used to motivate students by presenting them with real-life scenarios. Much like in the case of this strategy, the use of videos of commercial pitches, or pitches that have won competitions, is considered useful as “learners can figure out not only the traditional parts of the speech, but also the originality of each individual speaker, or in other words, the hook of each speaker” (Răciula, 2020, p. 231). Moreover, learners can then use these models and the ensuing analysis to leverage their own pitches.

On the other hand, using an established marketing and entrepreneurial tool and authentic materials can also help students feel connected to the content, adding value to their experience and boosting their confidence on the use of storytelling within this scope.

The Twitter Pitch

Similar to the elevator pitch, the Twitter Pitch consists in summarizing your CV in 280 characters or less. Based on writing (even though it can be combined with other media and platforms), this pitch is based on synthesis, as you must determine what is absolutely key and essential to include – namely who you are, what you can do and what you wish to accomplish (Oriol, 2016). In this sort of pitch, every word and sentence must be used intentionally and be effective in order to engage and attract readers (Mastro-rocco, 2018; Tanno, 2019). In that way, these summaries can include narrative elements, engaging both the writer's and the reader's creativity in making sense of the text (Sadler, 2017).

Even though it is not as used as other pitches, it can be quite effective in getting people's attention, as the target audience gets the information it needs in a very direct way. According to Johnson (2017),

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Twitter also has the potential to showcase your personal brand, not only because of your video and additional links, but also because it makes it easy for people to find you.

The Pixar Pitch

Perhaps less known than the aforementioned pitches, the Pixar pitch is based on standard Pixar films' structures, which are considered to follow "six sequential steps that can help you identify your brand story in just six sentences" (Zuehlke, n.d.). According to the author, based on Emma Coats and Joseph Connors's analysis, the introductory phrases for those six sentences are: Once upon a time, there was (establishing the current issue or state); Every day (focusing on the ongoing situation, which can be seen as either a threat or an opportunity); Then, one day (representing a turning point presented by the challenge or solution); Because of that (presenting a challenge or solution); Because of that (another challenge or solution); and Until finally (the resolution, lesson or unique outcome).

This approach is not only creative but also successful in setting up a structure for a story, which, again, can easily be transposed into different formats and platforms.

In addition to analyzing different examples, in phase 2 students are given the opportunity to experiment with the different pitches and reflect about the elements to include in their own personal pitch.

Phase 3

While the previous stages mostly focused on reflexive practices and analytical exercises, as well as personal branding and storytelling techniques, phase 3 is based on students' autonomous work, as they are asked to develop their video pitch. Making it clear this task was to be perceived as an academic exercise and that the videos would not be assessed for their technical merits, students were given a set of guidelines regarding the length, overall content, quality and format of the video and deadline to complete the task. As the activity took place within the ESP class, students were also asked to include English subtitles in their videos.

Nevertheless, it must be highlighted that, even though language was a key component throughout the workshops, the teaching and learning strategy encompassed several other skills, such as creativity, self-awareness, autonomy, critical thinking and digital competence. As a result, students produced very different videos, ranging from animations to simulated conversations (in actual elevators) in which they would not only introduce themselves and pitch their key skills, but also discuss specific positions they would like to apply for. Most students opted for addressing the audience directly and making eye contact with the camera, modeling their posture after the examples discussed in phases 1 and 2. It was noticeable that students were careful to consider nonverbal elements such as clothing and body language, that were also discussed in the preparatory sessions. As for their brand, students tried to incorporate personal features, either by providing examples from their everyday lives or including pictures from their childhood, families and/or role models.

Phase 4

Finally, phase 4, which is to be put into effect, will involve a critical viewing session, in which a Recruitment Specialist will review and give feedback on the videos produced by the students, who will then be

able to produce more polished versions that can be included in their online profiles and used in actual job applications.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the nature of the strategy described throughout the chapter, which aimed to develop students' language competence, their ability to create an effective technology-based personal pitch, making use of storytelling techniques, and to raise their awareness as to the importance of developing a strong online personal brand, researchers believe this strategy has been effective. Based on classroom observation and preliminary results, the strategy has succeeded in providing a space for personal narratives and fostering reflections about not only recruitment trends, but also about the impact online presence and behavior can have on students' future.

From a broader perspective, this strategy also succeeded in promoting pedagogical innovation, being consistent with current societal and educational challenges and demands. By fostering collaboration and interdisciplinarity, it can be perceived as an example of how to incorporate digital tools into the curricula and stimulate creativity and entrepreneurship, two key competences in the new skills agenda sought by the European Union.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Considering this strategy is still being implemented and is part of an ongoing project, data as to the students' perceptions on the strategy and the analysis of the outputs (students' videos) is still pending. This analysis will broaden the space for discussion and ultimately enhance participants' reflections, thus setting the ground for more in-depth conclusions.

Overall, however, drawing from preliminary data, it is possible to conclude that integrating different knowledge areas and updating ESP curricula is key and can result in enhanced teaching and learning experiences. As a result, the study will be replicated with different classes in subsequent academic years, in order to undertake a more comprehensive, diachronic study. As part of an international ESP research network, researchers will also strive to broaden the scope of the project to other areas, including IT and Engineering students, which will reinforce the conclusions and ultimately help refine the approach.

CONCLUSION

A strong personal brand can be crucial in showcasing your skills and expertise in a particular field. However, in order for it to be acknowledged and recognized, it must be well crafted and bear in mind the medium and target audience. This brand can play a pivotal role in recruitment processes, in which it is important to stand out and convey an engaging story that spikes the reader or the viewer's interest. At a time when networking and social media have become essential for recruiting, students, regardless of their area, should be aware of the challenges associated with their online persona and be able to take advantage of the several digital platforms available. In addition, as there are currently many tools available for students to use to reinforce and monitor their online presence, it is important to help them navigate

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these platforms, providing them with reliable information and feedback, so they can take full advantage of them to effectively communicate their personal brand and tell their story, by applying relevant and contemporary methods.

Because this is a complex process that relies heavily on individual perceptions and musters different skills, it is important that educators and practitioners are be open to design and implement integrated strategies and assignments that can assist students with these skills, thus supporting the development of their personal brand.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Digital Storytelling: The convergence of telling stories and the use of images, audio, text, and video.

Elevator Pitch: Short presentation, based on the idea of being in an elevator and having only the time of the ride to pitch an idea or product.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP): A subset of English as a foreign language. It refers to the teaching of English that focuses on developing communicative skills in a particular field or occupation. ESP courses are designed to meet the specific needs of the learners, with reference to the particular vocabulary and register they require.

Online Persona: The social identity that internet users project, where an online persona is an expansion of your real-life identity. It is based on what you publish online, and it can shape other people’s perceptions of you.

Personal Branding: With a strong connection to marketing, personal branding is an extension of the concept of branding. It applies to individuals, allowing them to create a unique image, based on their features, experiences and skills.

Pitch This

Pixar Pitch: Based on the standard structures of Pixar films, this storytelling and presentation model follows a six-step structure, which establishes a sequence and includes a resolution.

Twitter Pitch: Using the format of a tweet, this is a type of presentation which consists in telling a story (or summarizing your CV) in 280 characters or less.

Chapter 7

Brands and Stories in Ads: The Relationship Between Storytelling and Brand Distinctiveness

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling in advertising allows consumers to recall the narrative, characters, and brands related to the story. This consolidates the consumer's idea of a brand as unique and distinct from others and can also be the basis for brand distinctiveness. As such, the present chapter will firstly take into consideration the existing theoretical framework related to the use of storytelling in the creation of narrative ads, and then it will present the creation, unfolding and results of an investigation involving 326 individuals. The data collected from this study demonstrates that the structure of the narrative of a storytelling ad positively influences the distinctiveness of the brand. Moreover, this study shows the mediating role between narrative structure and the perception of brand distinctiveness. This chapter enhances knowledge on advertising, narrative, and brand distinctiveness and supports new researches in this field.

INTRODUCTION

Human memory is based on stories (Woodside, 2010), they have attracted people since the beginning of time and are the most common way for human beings to communicate (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

Storytelling facilitates the processing of information by individuals and develops high levels of recollection when it comes to the narrative, characters and brands associated with the story (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). The use of storytelling by companies aims to develop strong brands based on narratives (Donzé & Wubs, 2019) in order for the ideas, concepts and connections to the narrative to develop brand associations (Carnevale, Yucel-Aybat & Kachersky, 2018). As consumers create a social relationship

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between the narrator and his audiences (Pera & Viglia, 2016), stories are more easily remembered than facts and the other actions of a brand (Lundqvist et al., 2013).

The best way to convince someone is to tell a good story, as there is a lot of information to tell, but the stories also arouse the audience's emotions and energy. However, persuading with the right story is difficult (Woodside, 2010). Stories imply some essential elements that the storyteller must include in his or her production: cognition, emotion and behavior (Pera & Viglia, 2016).

Consumers are led to reflect upon and understand the signs, and the scenario always becomes a unique scenario, leading the consumer to understand the history and the brand associated with it as unique and distinct from other brands (Carroll, 2009). This use of visual cues can currently be most effective when the goal is to create impressions rather than convey meaning. Brands that care about giving meaning to their stories achieve greater levels of engagement with the messages they convey (Carroll, 2009).

When consumers try to interpret a storytelling ad, they combine the information received with existing personal and narrative representations (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). Advertising is essential to create brand meaning, endowing brands with symbolic values and incorporating them into their broader socio-cultural context. It seems evident that brands use storytelling to express their image, mainly through symbolism, rhetoric and narrative (Gurzki, Schlatter & Woisetschläger, 2019).

The ease with which an ad is understood can reinforce existing consumer beliefs, so advertising is essential to create brand meaning, endowing brands with symbolic values and incorporating them into their broader socio-cultural context (Gurzki et al., 2019). Stories about brands that satisfy consumers could influence the consumer's brand experience, through the feelings and behaviors that are evoked by brand-related incentives (Carroll, 2009; Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

Thus, due to the difficulty in obtaining differentiation and a distinct image as brands compete for the abstract discourses that appear, multiple routes of interpretation emerge (Gurzki et al., 2019). So it is our goal to present in this chapter a systematic review of the literature around the study already carried out and whose focus was the connection between storytelling and brand distinctiveness. Furthermore, through a quantitative analysis we will show that the structure of the narrative of a storytelling ad positively influences the distinctiveness of the brand.

BACKGROUND: ADVERTISING

Advertising has been used for decades as an effective communication tool. This is the result of the evolution of a traditional broadcast system for a multi-platform communication system (Knoll, 2016). In this system, creativity assumes the main role. Some authors (Ogilvy, 1995; El-Murad & West, 2004; Sasser & Koslow, 2008) recognized creativity as the most important concept in the development of effective advertising. Creativity is defined as something different, divergent and with novelty (Smith & Yang, 2004), as well as something which is relevant to the audience (Ang, Lee, & Leong, 2007; Smith et al., 2008). Creative ads capture the attention of the audience and deliver the message more effectively (Gibson, 1996). The creativity associated with novelty, meaningfulness, and connectedness increases the brand's likability, as well as the recall (Ang et al. 2014), the awareness and the favourable attitudes toward the ad and brand (Yang & Smith, 2009). These authors also argue that creative ads reduced individuals' resistance to persuasion and generated positive attitudes when it came to the brand and their purchase intentions.

On the other hand, advertising styles can also contribute to brand distinctiveness (Romaniuk, Sharp, & Ehrenberg, 2007) and this can become a competitive advantage for brands (Berendt et al., 2018). Actually, when consumers are faced with an overload of information and a higher number of hypotheses of choice, the distinctive qualities of a brand reduce the consumer's effort and information processing. Therefore, the life of consumers is easier, because they have less to think about and search for, as distinctiveness offers the differentiation that they value (Romaniuk et al., 2007).

In advertising, we can see this example through the principle of 'unique selling proposition' (USP) (Reeves, 1961), where advertisers give consumers a reason to buy that brand. However, some authors emphasize the fact that advertising can also be persuasive without a USP (e.g. Ehrenberg et al., 2002). More than searching for a unique selling proposition, it is also important to find the distinct characteristics and qualities of the brand, which must be promoted in different media, so that, in the purchase process, the consumer can easily identify that brand among its competitors (Romaniuk et al., 2007). It is also important to use distinctive qualities in brand advertising (Romaniuk et al., 2007) in order for consumers to be able to easily identify said brand. Therefore, distinctive qualities and other elements of brand identity can replace the brand name and help consumers recall the brand, as well as the advertising associated with it, and provide additional incentives when processing the information (Romaniuk et al., 2007). These elements can include colors, logos, symbols, celebrities or advertising styles (Romaniuk et al., 2007). Such elements, namely advertising, packaging, sponsorships or others, are just as important as the brand name and allow consumers to identify the brand in multiple ways. This reinforces the consumer's memory about the brand and it increases the brand's equity on the market (Aaker, 1996). In short, as the distinctive qualities and characteristics of a brand linger in a consumer's memory, it is much easier for the consumer to identify that brand (Romaniuk et al., 2007).

STORYTELLING

Storytelling is intrinsic to everyone (Hopkins, 2015), and that is why it has become increasingly important in brand strategies and advertising, in which it is used to create a close relationship with the audience (D'Amato & Panarese, 2016).

When brands create stories (storytelling), it allows consumers to be connected to the experiences transmitted through ads and to effectively interpret messages, stories being a "a tool of persuasion" in marketing and advertising (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote, 2016). This tool is based on three parts: the story told and heard by consumers; the understanding of it; and the meaning shared in groups through metaphors that facilitate the understanding of a wide variety of notions (Kaye & Jacobson, 1999). This format is seen as an effective advertising tool which promotes the communication and transmission of messages (Padgett & Allen, 1997) and which can be based on three types of storytelling: the founder's story, the consumer's story and an informational ad, which should include at least one main character and one event, as the minimum elements of the story (Hong & Cho, 2016).

For brands, using storytelling ads is a constant challenge to engage consumers with their stories. Brands need to invest not only in branded content but also in true storytelling (Hamm, 2013), which proves that stories are exceptionally valuable in the eyes of the consumer and that storytelling is the greatest secret weapon which helps a brand to differentiate itself from its competitors. Thus, storytelling ads can engage consumers (Woodside et al., 2008), simplify information processing and nurture higher levels of recall (Woodside et al., 2008; van Laer et al., 2014). Moreover, storytelling creates positive feelings and it is

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perceived by consumers as more convincing and fosters a sense of connection between the stories of brands and the stories present in consumers' memories. (Schank & Abelson, 1995).

Stories contribute to a deeper comprehension of the benefits of a certain brand (Kaufman, 2003), enhancing brand trust, brand awareness and the perception of that brand as unique and distinct (Kaufman, 2003; Kelley & Littman, 2006). Through narrative transportation, storytelling ads stimulate consumers' imagination, triggering long-term attitudes and intentions (van Laer et al., 2014).

Adaval and Wyer (1998) stated that potential customers imagine "the sequence of actions" in which a product is used rather than calculate the usefulness of the product, and a narrative form in a message is more easily conveyed than an informational form" (p. 208). Storytelling comprises ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, all wrapped in narratives or stories that induce emotions (Serrat, 2010). And these emotions are essential in order to learn and recall (McMahon, 2013).

Storytelling ads are narratives based on human experiences and are different from informational ads (Kleres, 2011). In fact, these storytelling ads arouse consumer's emotions through the combination of stories and their own experiences (Escalas, 2006). When stories are realistic to people making up the audience, the relevance of narratives increases and people have emotional appeals (Kang et al., 2020). Within the context of such ads, Brechman and Purvis (2015) emphasize that the highest degree of emotional intensity is the climax, where the levels of emotional involvement is also higher.

Some authors (Heath, Bell, & Sternberg, 2001; Berger and Milkman, 2013) analyze the motivations of consumers to share content (WOM) and conclude that emotions are a relevant factor, as well as a good and effective method of creating content destined for opinion leaders.

INFORMATION PROCESSING MOTIVATED BY NARRATIVES

Consumers process verbal information differently from the information presented in the format of an image or video, so narrative advertising may vary according to the format of the story. Studies show that the characteristics of the narrative (for example, music, humor, spokesperson) can affect the processing of the message (for example, argument) by consumers (Lien & Chen, 2013).

Narrative plays an important role in judging and evaluating products and brands (Lien & Chen, 2013). Narrative processing encourages customers' future experiences, creates object appraisals and develops general attitudes and beliefs about objects. In this context, the brand experience -defined as the customer's sensations, feelings, cognitions and the behavioral responses evoked by brand related stimuli, such as design and brand identity, packaging and communication- is developed through the perceptions of customers, which are reflected by all possible exposures to a brand (Lee et al., 2018).

After seeing a narrative ad, consumers are likely to use the ad's information along with their previous experiences and subjective knowledge or thoughts to build new stories (Lien & Chen, 2013). Thus, the brand becomes significant for consumers and this process leads to new positive attitudes towards the brand, as distinct from other brands. The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) states that when individuals observe the behavior or the experiences presented in narratives, they remember the sequence of events and use the information in the video ad to guide their next behaviors (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010); moreover, when a character is recognized by the audience, there is a positive reinforcement of the value of the ad in the mind of the viewers.

The simplicity of imagination helps consumers to have deeper relationships with brands and the identification with characters in a narrative act as a catalyst to activate the persuasive effect of brands

(Hosany, Buzova & Sanz-Blas, 2020). Observing a character in a narrative can lead the viewer to engage in behaviors related to the brand. Although not all behaviors are adopted, the similarity to the character can increase this effect (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). Thus, these authors argue that the narrative transportation and the identification with the characters have a preponderant role in the modeling of behaviors (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010).

Hosany et al. (2020) underline that, in individuals resistant to entertainment and who present counterarguments by calling into question the veracity of the message, the influence of the narrative on behaviors is reflected to a lesser extent (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010).

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Narrative ads can easily activate consumers' emotional responses, creating a link between everyone's self-concept and the ad itself. These links between the individual and the advertisement are included in the links or connections to the brand (Lien & Chen, 2013) which may be different from those to the other brands. In short, the creation of sensations influences perceptions, judgments and behaviors (Lee et al., 2018) that depend on each one. Multisensory ads that lead to higher positive perceptions promote attitudes favorable to the brand (Lee et al., 2018), making it different and unique.

From a cognitive perspective, human beings have a limited capacity to process information (Lien & Chen, 2013), therefore they only process attractive information. Ryu et al. (2019) suggested that narrative processing allows consumers to understand complex stories more quickly (Ryu et al., 2019). Due to the importance of the narrative structure for the human mind, product ratings and interaction, ease of use and aesthetics are all believed to be different if the narrative structure is fragmented (van den Hende & Schoormans, 2012).

People perceive and store social knowledge in their memory as stories, because most information and social knowledge is organized and presented in narrative structures (Lien & Chen, 2013). A good brand story, demonstrating favorite brand meanings, can build for the consumer an emotional connection with the brand (Ryu et al., 2019).

When a new message appears through a consistent narrative structure, people understand and interpret the information contained in the narrative. From this perspective, a message that adopts a logical and coherent narrative structure is easier to accept, process and evaluate than a similar non-narrative message (Lien & Chen, 2013). In this context, the narrative structure leads consumers to better evaluate brand messages, making these brands unique. For example, for a consumer of luxury services, a brand is rated more favorably when the elements of the brand are displayed in narratives based on emotional stories, rather than in narratives based on the rationality of functional attributes, for example "you can only sell a diamond ring if your ad links the product to love and happiness" as a further argument. This strategy is essential for brands to communicate different symbolic benefits to their customers. Symbolic consumption is affected by the narratives of brand advertisements (Ryu et al., 2019). The stimuli involved in narrative ads generate vivid images of the story's plot (Lien & Chen, 2013), and for consumers with hedonic motivations, emotional engagement with the inspiring stories of brands is higher.

Kim, Lloyd and Cervellon (2016) distinguish that engagement primarily occurs with the medium in which the ad appears and, only then with the brand that is advertised. This engagement arises through the consumer's experience, the content presented and the context of the medium in which the ad is presented. The engagement process is different from involvement, since involvement refers to an individual's

interest in a brand while engagement refers to the individual's commitment and connection through an active relationship with brands. Engagement with the brand's ads depends on how each person has the capacity to act, feel and immerse himself or herself in the elements presented. In this context, the narrative can contribute to the creation of meaning and a personal imagery of the brands (Hosany et al., 2020).

A new marketing paradigm is based on the role of sensory marketing which seeks to influence customer behavior after ad exposure (Lee, Jeong & Oh, 2018). The description of a new concept in a story format can facilitate the processing of new information and can lead to a faster and more holistic understanding of information about a product or a brand (Schweitzer & Van den Hende, 2017).

The elements of an ad for a distinct brand must include an attractive structure that convinces consumers and that allows the brand to convey its unique meaning to consumers in order to help people in the process of decoding experiences (Ryu et al., 2019).

A narrative structure consists of two main elements: chronology and causality. Chronology means that the narrative events of an advertisement, in video format, occur over time, so that viewers perceive its beginning, the progress of the story and its end as time flows. Causality relates events throughout the story (Lien & Chen, 2013). The proper structure of an ad that convinces consumers depends on the context in which each ad is displayed, so there is no single element that should be included in a narrative ad (Ryu et al., 2019). For this reason, narratives are complex stimuli that are difficult to manipulate, while maintaining the integrity of the plot and characters. Thus, to clarify the human intentions of the characters involved in the stories, the authors of the narratives carefully incorporate only the details they consider important (Vaughn, Childs, Maschinski, Paul Niño & Ellsworth, 2010).

In cases where the identification with the character is high, the degree of realism of the information (images, animations or prototypes) is less important than the narrative aspect of that information. When the character is removed from the story, the narrative structure becomes poorer and this limits the opportunities for the client to engage with a main character and connect with the story and the use of the product, even when all other product information is maintained in the advertisement (van den Hende & Schoormans, 2012). In the case of product demonstration videos, the demonstrator acts as the main character of a story that has the pre-determined objective of presenting the functions or features of products.

In this context, telling a story through an appropriate structure, allows brands to convey different brand messages and build strong relationships with consumers. Properly narrated brand messages help people understand and retain the information by which the brand is distinguished (Ryu et al., 2019). In short, these authors suggest that the ads should present clear storylines with attractive characters and settings, strong historical connections for a credible story and a narrative voice in the first person.

In narrative ads, strong arguments are more persuasive than weak ones, although this influence depends on the attitudes of individuals (Schreiner, Appel, Isberner & Richter, 2018) as they lead to a better attitude towards the ad and the product displayed, of course, when compared to weak arguments or non-narrative ads (Lien & Chen, 2013).

However, the strength of the argument will have less relevance in situations where the stories follow typical story structures (Schreiner et al., 2018). In this case, the authors claim that building intense images can have a negative effect on the argument's strength. The manner in which the strength of the argument influences a change in attitude should be limited, as the recipients of the stories lack the cognitive resources to examine the information included in the story (Schreiner et al., 2018).

NARRATIVE TRANSPORTATION

With a focus on narrative and its potential, marketers can encourage customers to immerse themselves in future experiences by imagining themselves part of the stories (Kim et al., 2016). When consumers watch an ad, they feel like living and becoming part of the narrative world (Ryu et al., 2019).

The story format transports consumers to otherwise inaccessible environments and offers them the opportunity to view themselves in those environments. The concept of narrative transportation is the concept behind the success of viewing a text or video (van den Hende & Schoormans, 2012) in which the story format acts as a driver for the audience to enter the scenes of the film (Schweitzer & Van den Hende, 2017).

In the theory of narrative transportation, stories influence customers' mental processes through their attention and emotions (Lee et al., 2018). The bonds made by storytelling create emotions in the audience, even in situations in which individuals have no contact with the product (Hosany et al., 2020). Narrative transportation is the main psychological mechanism (Green & Brock, 2000) underlying consumer entry into the story presented (Kim et al., 2016) and, through narrative transportation, the substitute experience will seem real and compensate for the lack of realism in the (visual) information presented (van den Hende & Schoormans, 2012).

Green and Brock conceptualized the transportation for the narrative as “a distinct mental process, acting as an integrating mix of attention, images and feelings” (2000, p.712). In this area, Vaughn et al. (2010) define transportation to the narrative as a process of emotional and cognitive immersion in a narrative, in which we lose track of the real world as the mental simulation guided by the events of the story unfolds. In short, narrative transportation occurs when the consumer is absorbed by the narrative and lives the story inside, making it part of history (Ryu et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2016). Gerrig (1993) compared the concept of narrative transportation to a shuttle: once the individual sees himself or herself being transported to the narrative, he or she leaves the real world for a short while, only to return moments later (Ryu et al., 2019).

In summary, narrative transportation is different from traditional advertising models, since, instead of consumers evaluating the logical arguments of the products, they evaluate the brand based on emotional responses (Kim et al., 2016). When transported to the world of the story, people build a representation rich in images. These vivid images are considered a key ingredient of the impact of the story (Schreiner et al., 2018).

ANTECEDENTS FROM TRANSPORT TO NARRATIVE

The degree of transportation depends on the degree of connection to the narrative structure (Lee et al., 2018). Green and Brock (2002) show that the narrative structure influences the immersion in the video scenes (Lien & Chen, 2013). Transportation depends not only on how the situation is presented (Schweitzer & Van den Hende, 2017) and on the attributes of the message, including its artistic level (Lee et al., 2018), but it also depends (Deighton et al. 1989; Lien & Chen, 2013) on the degree of dramatization of the ad. A vivid product description tends to have a higher transportation effect than a pale product description (Lee et al., 2018).

The depth of transportation for the narrative depends on the advertisement, so stories with better structure and higher quality are more likely to have individuals who transport themselves to the narra-

tive (Schreiner et al., 2018). The abstraction of narratives compared to real social life can help explain why brand narratives are so relevant to consumers, since they have to project themselves into a world of stories to understand what the characters are thinking and feeling (Vaughn et al., 2010). In this context, familiarity with the scenario (Wang & Calder, 2009), the resemblance to the main character (Wang & Calder, 2009), the congruence with and empathy for the main character facilitate transportation to the narrative (Lee et al., 2018).

In the emotional connection to the characters in the video, Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010) considers three dimensions: 1) identification, which refers to an emotional and cognitive process by which a viewer imagines himself as a particular character; 2) the perceived similarity, which concerns the judgment of the proximity of a character to the viewer in terms of attributes, characteristics, beliefs or common values and 3) the social interaction with the character, through an apparent face-to-face relationship between the viewer and the character through the bond that develops between the character and is influenced by the previous dimensions of identification and similarity.

In the case that the individual has friends or family members similar to the narrative character, the individual enters the video more deeply (Schreiner et al., 2018). Hosany et al. (2020) add that the element of “routine” creates intimacy and empathy through a sense of attachment to the characters and scenarios shown (Hosany et al., 2020). Thus, it is considered that previous knowledge or experience related to the themes of a story (Wang & Calder, 2009; Schweitzer & Van den Hende, 2017), consumer motivations (Lee et al., 2018) and their characteristics (Van Laer et al., 2014) are relevant to process and understand the information presented. Moreover, Hosany et al. (2020) add that individuals with a greater propensity for imagination will be more easily transported to the narrative.

CONSEQUENCES

Narrative transportation can mediate the relationship between the structural elements of the story and the brand image (Ryu et al., 2019).

In this field, narrative transportation is a pleasant state that requires action by the individual, leaving less attention than usual for him or her to critically evaluate the information presented in the ad (Vaughn et al., 2010). For this reason, the theory of narrative transportation suggests that the strength of the argument plays a minor role in narrative persuasion (Hosany et al., 2020) because, when transported to a story, the recipients of that story do not have enough memory resources to process fake messages (Lee et al., 2018), and their motivation and ability to argue against messages lessen (Vaughn et al., 2010).

In this context, transportation is incompatible with counterarguments (Ma et al., 2018). During the narrative ad, people tend to immerse themselves in the story and do not expend the energy necessary to understand the relevant arguments of the ad (Lien & Chen, 2013). The thoughts that dispute or are inconsistent with the argument are reduced when the level of transportation for the narrative is high (Ma et al., 2018). With a high level of transportation, the individual is more focused on the events of the narrative and, consequently, the levels of attention, image and emotion increase (Schreiner et al., 2018). In the case of narratives that present new products, consumers transported to a situation, such as the use of a new product concept, feel immersed and understand the characteristics of the product. The use of the product can be visualized mentally through the demonstration of a functional prototype presented in video format (van den Hende & Schoormans, 2012). Therefore, transportation to the narrative is important

for persuading consumers (Vaughn et al., 2010) and is considered as an alternative path to persuasion with long-term consequences in relation to attitudes and intentions towards brands (Kim et al., 2016).

Although many brands tell stories in their ads, not all are convincing enough to create a distinctive brand identity. The brand narrative has the unique potential to go beyond sharing brand information and resonating with consumers at a deeper level (Ryu et al., 2019), thus creating brand distinctiveness.

BRAND DISTINCTIVENESS

In modern-day society, even individuals search for uniqueness in order to differentiate themselves from others in the consumption and use of goods, and to promote their unique social identity (Tian et al., 2001).

For brands, differentiation is an important factor of growth and distinction from competitors, heavily influencing the customer's choice (Aaker, 2003). This reality guided theoretical principles and marketing strategy (Aaker, 1991). Therefore, brand distinctiveness is "the perceived uniqueness of a brand's identity from other, generally competing brands" (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012, p. 408). These abovementioned authors of this work consider that brand distinctiveness has three dimensions: 1) brand prestige, affecting individuals' sense of identifying themselves as members of the community (self-categorization); 2) community affective commitment, which is the direct determinant of brand commitment; and 3) the fact that customers' brand commitment leads to greater positive WOM, or word-of-mouth marketing (Mousavi et al., 2017).

If consumers see a specific brand as different (Ries & Trout, 1986), they will value it emotionally or symbolically (Broniarczyk & Gershoff, 2003). As they perceive that brand as distinctive, they chose it more quickly and with ease (Yang, 2012). This process results in higher awareness and differentiation in consumers' minds attributed to that brand (Yoo et al., 2000).

This also reflects the consumer's "need for uniqueness" (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001) defined as "an individual's pursuit of differentness relative to others that is achieved through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's personal and social identity" (p. 50). In short, brand distinctiveness is a driver of consumer brand identification (Stokburger-Sauer, 2012) because it precedes the consumers' identification with the community members (Lam, 2012) and a specific brand (Berger & Heath, 2007), as well as their identity through the consumption of the brand (Thompson et al., 2006).

When seeing the brand as distinctive and prestigious, consumer identification with the brand is fortified (Mousavi et al., 2017). Therefore, brand distinctiveness and brand prestige have a positive influence on Consumer Brand Identification (CBI) (Stokburger-Sauer et al. 2012). While brand prestige corresponds to reverence or the status associated with a brand, brand distinctiveness emphasizes the brand's perceived uniqueness compared to its competitors (Stokburger-Sauer et al. 2012). With prestige and distinctiveness, the brand is associated with a higher level of consumer-company identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

For Wong and Merrilees (2008), a brand's image and uniqueness is more valuable in the consumer's mind than the quality and characteristics of the products. A good explanation for this concept would be that "[b]rand distinctiveness refers specifically to the brand and includes aesthetic cues such as shape, location, display promotions, colour, store atmospherics which entail the five senses: sight, sound, scent, touch, and taste and can include, for example, employee appearance" (Gaillard, Romanuik, & Sharp, 2005, p.25). Another element to be taken into consideration is that the customer's experience with the

brand has consequences on how he or she distinguishes the brand from others which sell products in the same category (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000). Therefore, brand distinctiveness is also a consequence of brand experience (Roswinanto & Strutton, 2014), in that high-level experiences also increase the distinctiveness of that brand.

Schmitt (2009) underlines that consumers “want something [a brand] that engages their senses and touches their hearts”; “excites or intrigues them”; and “strikes them as authentic and genuine” (p. 318). Since each consumer forms his or her own distinct image of the brand (Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012), the main objective for companies should be to build recall in the consumer’s mind, so that he or she can then recommend the brand.

Brand distinctiveness has been studied in several areas such as tourism and brand sustainability, the special airlines sector (So et al., 2017) and the luxury-cruise market (Shim, Kang, Kim, Hyun, 2017). This latter study shows that brand distinctiveness has positive effects on emotional brand attraction and that the brand community can affect travelers’ perception of brand distinctiveness (Shim et al., 2017). In this context, what follows is a case study revolving around a 2016 ad for Licor Beirão and the implications of using narrative transportation in this campaign.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NARRATIVE ADS: A CASE STUDY

Due to the importance of narrative in marketing, we developed an empirical study to test the effects of narrative structure and narrative transportation on brand distinctiveness. The narrative structure (Lien & Chen, 2013), the way the situation is presented (Schweitzer & Van den Hende, 2017) and the attributes of the message (Lee et al., 2018) influence the transportation effect for the narrative, so our empirical study tried to test the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis One: Narrative Structure positively influences Narrative Transportation

Telling a good story is important to create a strong, unique and distinctive brand and it is through the elements of an ad that a brand convinces consumers of a unique and distinctive meaning. The narrative structure allows customers to differentiate and distinguish the brands (Ryu et al., 2019). In this sense, our study will test the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis Two: Narrative Structure positively influences Brand Distinctiveness

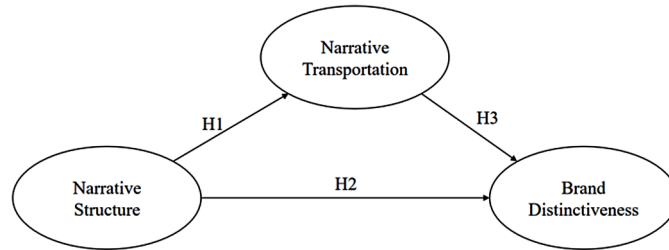
The transportation theory states that narrative transportation allows individuals to create their distinct meanings from the brand (Lee et al., 2018). In this sense, the empirical study will test the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis Three: Narrative Transportation positively influences Brand Distinctiveness

From the research hypotheses, we elaborated a conceptual model presented in figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Source: The Authors



Narrative transportation can mediate the relationship between the structural elements of the advertising structure and brand judgments. In this context, the empirical study will also test the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis Four: Narrative Transportation plays a mediating role in the effects of Narrative Structure on Brand Distinctiveness

The empirical study carried out tried to test the relationships of the model presented in Figure 1. For this purpose, we developed a questionnaire with multi-item measures for each construct through the following process. First, we developed a draft questionnaire by reviewing the literature and the scales that had already been tested. Then, the items were translated into Portuguese and adapted to the context in which it was inserted. The items were measured on the 5-point Likert scales whose interval was between (1) strongly disagree and (5) strongly agree. In a second phase, we developed a pre-test with 20 individuals that allowed us to detect existing problems.

At the end of this process, the items in the questionnaire were those shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire items

Concept	Item	Code
Narrative Transportation (Dessart, 2018)	While I was watching the ad I didn't think of anything else.	NST1
	This ad appealed to me from start to finish.	NST2
	While watching the ad, I imagined myself in the scenes of the video.	NST3
Narrative Ad Structure (Dessart, 2018)	The structure of this video has a beginning, middle and end.	NTR1
	I understood the evolution of the character.	NTR2
	I understood the main message	NTR3
Brand Distinctiveness (Wang & Tang, 2018)	This brand always stands out from the others.	BDT1
	This brand is unique.	BDT2
	This brand is different from other beverage brands.	BDT3

Source: The Authors

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Data collection was in person and adhered to the following process. First, a one-minute ad follows the story of a young man who is shown as suffering the repercussions of a bad alcohol-related decision, and who, by the end, finds a young woman who had the same affliction. The two are happy together and the moral of the ad is that one should only drink Licor Beirão, the taste of Portugal. This narrative video available on Youtube was presented to the individuals at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZAAARvVsxI>

After the presentation of the video, individuals were asked to respond anonymously to the questionnaire whose items were previously presented. Through this data collection, 326 people responded, but we only took into consideration as valid the responses of 319 individuals, whose characteristics indicate that 37.3% are male and 62,7% female, and whose ages in most cases younger than 30 years old (69.2%), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Sample characterization

Measure	Items	N (%)
Gender	Male	119 (37,3%)
	Female	200 (62,7%)
Age	< 20	10 (3,1%)
	20-29	211 (66,1%)
	30-39	59 (18,5%)
	40 - 49	28 (8,8%)
	> 50	5 (1,6%)

Source: The Authors

The PLS - Measurement Model

For data analysis we employed structural equation models using PLS-PM estimation. This method is integrated with multivariate analysis methods and is increasingly used in social sciences, as in the case of marketing and advertising, as it accounts for a wide array of variables.

The analysis of PLS-PM models takes place in two phases. In the first phase, the measurement model is analyzed and, in the second phase, the analysis of the structural model is created. For this, we used the SMART PLS 3.2.8 software.

Before starting the data analysis, we performed a preliminary analysis of the data and verified the multicollinearity criterion between the items $VIF < 5$ (Maroco, 2014; Hair et al., 2016). From the results obtained and presented here in Table 3, we found that the standardized coefficients (λ) are greater than 0.7 ($p < 0.01$), the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5 and the composite reliability is greater than 0.7. According to the literature review, these concepts have reliability and convergent validity (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Table 3. Measurement model analysis

Latent Variable	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	λ	t Value	AVE	C.R.
Narrative Structure						0,901	0,752
(NST)	NST1	4.245	0.862	0,876	42,777**		
	NST2	4.248	0.877	0,874	42,584**		
	NST3	4.436	0.808	0,850	35,577**		
Narrative Transportation						0,826	0,618
(NTR)	NTR1	3.803	1.137	0,809	25,217**		
	NTR2	3.915	1.112	0,890	60,639**		
	NTR3	2.574	1.332	0,637	12,576**		
Brand Distinctiveness						0,925	0,804
(BDT)	BDT1	3.784	0.983	0,893	61,048**		
	BDT2	3.843	0.980	0,895	53,342**		
	BDT3	3.815	0.963	0,902	55,957**		

** p< 0,01; * p< 0,05

Source: The Authors

By looking at Table 4, we concur that the discriminant validity is confirmed by the criterion of Fornell and Larcker (1981), in which it is verified that the square root is superior to the correlation between the variables.

Table 4. Discriminant validity: criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981)

	BDT	NST	NTR
BDT	0,896		
NST	0,454	0,867	
NTR	0,354	0,532	0,786

Source: The Authors

Table 5. Discriminant validity: Racio Heterotrait-MonoTrait

	BDT	NST	NTR
BDT			
NST	0,519		
NTR	0,450	0,696	

Source: The Authors

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For the analysis of the discriminant validity, we verified that the Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) criterion for HTMT has a value of below 0.9. Through these two criteria, we considered that the concepts are distinct from each other, fulfilling the discriminant validity.

In summary, we concluded that the measurement model is valid because the convergent, factorial and discriminant validity all exist.

The Structural Model

The second phase of the analysis of the results through the PLS-PM estimation aims to test the causal relationships existing in the study. For this purpose, we chose the bootstrapping sampling technique with 5000 subsamples. The results obtained are shown in Table 6 – the direct structural coefficients.

Table 6. Structural coefficients

Hip.	Relation	β	<i>t</i> Values	<i>p</i> Values	Confidence Interval (95%)		Validation
H1	NST@ BDT	0,371	5,515	0,000	0,235	0,497	Confirmed
H2	NST@NTR	0,532	12,064	0,000	0,446	0,617	Confirmed
H3	NTR@ BDT	0,157	2,644	0,008	0,045	0,277	Confirmed

Source: The Authors

In order to finalize our demonstration, we added in our analysis a test to prove hypothesis H4 through which we tried to assess the indirect effects present in the model. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Indirect effects present in the model

Hip.	Relation	β	<i>t</i> Values	<i>p</i> Values	Confidence Interval (95%)		Validation
H4	NST@ BDT	0,084	2,539	0,011	0,024	0,152	Confirmed

Source: The Authors

Our empirical research confirmed the four hypotheses under study. From our analysis, we found that the presentation of an ad in the form of narrative influences brand distinctiveness and our model obtained a relevant explanation ($R^2 = 0,219$). Our results also showed that the variation of narrative transportation is explained by 28.9% as depending on the structure of the narrative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this chapter, relevant issues have been identified in the area of narratives used in advertisements, as they appear in the studies of several authors. From the beginning, we assumed that the structure of the narrative plays a major role in consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards brands. The

structure of the narrative, presented in an organized way in terms of causality and chronology, influences the distinctiveness of a brand. Our study highlights these connections, as an assessment of the narrative structure influences the distinctiveness of the brand and its uniqueness in relation to competing brands. In fact, the structure presented in terms of the abovementioned elements was considered unique and, therefore, the effects on the perception of the brand can be viewed as completely relevant.

Another aspect analyzed and presented throughout this chapter is related to narrative transportation. This concept, which is described as an entry by viewers in the scenarios of the video they are presented, also has significant effects on the evaluation of the brand as distinct and unique. Through advertisements, the brand's meanings are shaped by the immersion in the scenes of the video, which causes narrative transportation to play a mediating role in the relationship between the structure of the advertisement and the perceptions and assessments of the brand's meanings.

And finally, our empirical study demonstrates the assumptions we made at the beginning and analyzed in the first part of the chapter. The relationship between the narrative structure and brand distinctiveness is direct, and the mediating role of narrative transportation is also clearly evident from the data we presented. In this context, advertisers must pay attention, first, to the structure of their ads, since it is through this structure that the evaluations of the ad and, consequently, the understanding of the brand meaning and its distinctiveness, take place. Secondly, they must pay attention to introduce elements which make their scenarios attractive, as well as characters which will allow the viewers of these ads to be transported out of their real world. In this way, brands will benefit from a more consistent array of affective responses and stronger emotions.

Several brands around the world are to be emulated when it comes to the success of their ads, since they have already used storytelling techniques in their campaigns. We could mention IKEA (Ikea Family campaign), Absolut (Equal Love campaign), Lacoste (Timeless campaign), Coca Cola (Share a Coke campaign) and Momondo (The DNA Journey campaign), among others.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The study of the relationship between consumers and brands has been one of the focus points in recent scientific studies. In this field, the themes presented here seek to relate the structure of the ads to the responses of consumers to those ads and to the brands. Throughout this text, it is understood that the structure of the narrative of an advertisement affects the consumer's response to a brand. In this sense, several lines of investigation are open. In particular, it is relevant to seek answers to the impacts of the structure of an ad on the evaluations of consumers of a brand. In addition, it is relevant to analyze the effects of the immersion of the narrative as a mediator of these impacts.

As a result of the text presented throughout our chapter, we believe that it will be relevant to evaluate the effects of the elements of the narrative structure of advertising advertisements, such as the scenarios and characters included. It will be also relevant to analyze these elements in terms of chronology and causality.

We also consider it relevant to deepen the study around narrative transportation. For the study of this variable we consider that the elements of the narrative structure play a determining role in immersion in the scenes of the ads. We add that the impacts of narrative transportation will influence brand emotions and affective responses to brands, making them distinct and unique.

CONCLUSION

This chapter allows us to recognize the role of narratives and their influence on the relationship between consumers and brands. Upon reading this chapter, the reader learns that the structure of narratives has an influence on brand distinctiveness. Consumers perceive the brand as distinct and unique and this influences awareness as stated by Yoo et al. (2000). On the other side, narrative influences consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards brands. We conclude that the narrative transportation plays a mediating role in the impacts of the narrative structure and also narrative transportation influences emotions and relationships with brands.

Furthermore, brand distinctiveness is explained by the variation of narrative structure and narrative Transportation. It has implications for marketers and advertisers that should create ads that immerse consumers on video scenes in order to achieve favorable attitudes through the brand.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Brand Distinctiveness: Set of qualities and characteristics that make the brand unique and distinct in the eyes of the consumer, allowing it to distinguish itself from its competitors.

Brand Experience: Defined as the client's sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli.

Causality of the Narrative: A term which refers to the relationship, interaction and integration of the elements included in a narrative.

Chronology of the Narrative: A term which represents the way narrative events occur over time.

Engagement: The level of commitment and connection on the part of an individual when it comes to an active relationship with the brand.

Narrative Structure: The presentation of elements (e.g., characters or artistic level) in a narrative through a chronology and causality.

Narrative Transportation: The process of emotional and cognitive immersion in a narrative, in which the individual loses track of the real world as the mental simulation triggered by the events of the story unfolds.

Storytelling: A technique widely used in marketing and advertising, and which could be defined as the ability to transmit content and tell stories in a relevant way, capturing the user's attention effectively and persuasively.

Chapter 8

Gender and Patriarchy in Turkish Advertising: A Semiotic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The present chapter discusses a particular advertisement aired for a bank in Turkey from a semiotic perspective. Advertising as film is visual storytelling. A film has language and form, and is made up of parts that relate to one another in specific ways that affect the audience. Film techniques take on a semiotic function in the process of meaning construction. As a cultural phenomenon, advertisements can reveal hidden meanings, such as gender issues and patriarchal discourse in the case of the analysed advertisement.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of advertising on culture and gender has been debated and discussed for more than forty years. Today, researchers in this field are aiming to underpin specific problems within advertising and gender debate, including the notion of postfeminism, queer visibilities, and hegemonic masculinities. As a result, and considering that people are still not completely aware of problems related to gender and patriarchy, reproducing these concepts in advertising should be issues to be discussed in Turkey.

Advertising has been accepted as a type of mass media, and has an important role in socialization. Advertisements have been critically evaluated as cultural texts and as an ideological apparatus that reproduces gender roles and promotes patriarchy. The hidden messages that construct hegemonic and patriarchal meanings cannot be always easily recognized because advertisements convey them to people by implicitly telling the story.

Storytelling has been part of human culture for thousands of years, and it is a powerful and enduring means of communication (Zatwarnicka-Madura & Nowacki, 2018). Since marketers understand that buying decisions are based on emotional experiences, and that storytelling can generate positive

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emotional responses, communication is shifting from persuading consumers through the direct delivery of information to an emphasis on appealing to their emotions. This is why advertising professionals tell people a story. They aim to entice consumers' emotions by using matching stimuli to enhance persuasion effects and gain a foothold in their minds.

Advertising is a form of cultural storytelling that, inevitably, is not only shaped by society, but also shapes and affects society, legalizing undesirable facts, such as gender inequality and patriarchy. Thus, it should be discussed by both academia and marketers, not directly, but indirectly, namely by referring and implicating how gender inequality and patriarchy have been reflected in advertising.

This chapter aims to reveal the hidden meanings of advertising that supposedly support opportunities for equal education by discussing the discourse of advertising in a critical manner. In this chapter, the author considers advertising as a cultural phenomenon, and advertising texts as cultural artifacts to be read and discussed critically in order to reveal the hidden, gender-biased and patriarchal discourse of advertising. The author will resort to semiotic analysis in order to put her points across.

BACKGROUND

Advertisers are in the business of changing human behavior through messages, and stories can make that happen (Sharma, 2019) because stories touch upon human emotions and make a connection unintrusively (Kissell, 2019). According to Kim (as cited in Kissell, 2019):

People don't always react well to being told to buy a product. But, structural elements in the narratives, such as the presence of the main character in a story and their actions in the plot, enable a viewer to relate to the story in the ad, which in turn generates more positive feelings in the viewer. (para. 4)

According to Bruner (as cited in Väre, 2014), this is due to the fact that human beings are culturally conditioned to think in narratives about their lives, to organize their experiences into a narrative form. As narrative advertising leads to narrative processing, individuals create meaning for themselves by incorporating the brand story as props in their own life story (Escalas, 2004). In addition to this, Moraru (2015) stated that "in advertising, narration is used to convey the brand or product message, position it in the minds of consumers, and, ultimately, achieve satisfactory levels of retention" (p.195). Yang (2013) found that, by triggering emotional reactions, "storytelling is more persuasive than statements or quantitative information" (p. 146).

Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki (2018) stated that numerous studies on narrative advertising and storytelling show their effectiveness in influencing the audience. Research on the effectiveness of storytelling shows that its use has a positive effect on communication and behaviour, in particular on the awareness of the message conveyed by the advertisement, on the perception of quality, the attitude towards advertising, the shopping intentions, and the engagement in the content of advertising (Zatwarnicka-Madura & Nowacki, 2018).

As a part of culture industry, advertising practices are symbolically and culturally meaningful. Therefore, advertising has managed to attain culturally and symbolically constructed meanings (Nas, 2015). Advertising as a cultural text reflects a society's discourses based on social beliefs, values, customs and traditions, and life-styles (Kaya, 2017).

Culture is a communal product, which is created and developed through human interactive relations. Each society has its unique values, such as traditions, customs, ethical values, and perspectives, which have shaped it from the past to the present. Human beings become partners in the cultural heritage of the community in which they are born. The most characteristic feature of a culture is that the experiences of the ancestors reach new generations through traditions as a means of cultural transference.

Traditions, which are a social phenomenon, are among the factors that enable society to survive. Tradition includes people's consensus on social life, cultural bonds of fraternity, and social contracts. According to Shils (1981), tradition is a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance and with origins in the past. Tradition is something passed down from one generation to the next, generally by informal means, with little or no change in the transmission of that item or in the item that is transmitted (Allison, 1997). In the last decades of the 20th century, some folklorists asserted that tradition entails a complex set of relations between the past and the present, in which the past sets precedent for the present and the present reflects the past by adhering to a particular tradition (Allison, 1997).

As stated by Tate (2005), over time, the traditional institutions of society—families, churches, and schools—could shape character in people, because traditional culture, with its familial bonds, customs, manners, and gentry, provided society with common interests and goals. The government's role in life was minimal. It was society, i.e., the collection of traditional institutions and customs, which influenced life and culture most directly (Tate, 2005).

According to Qualter (1991), advertising as a major agency of social control, provides an authoritative guide to social behavior by defining appropriate behavior through illustration and example, rather than through direct command, because traditional institutions' power to command is greatly diminished in a secular society, and people, therefore, turn to newer and more relevant authorities. He stated that advertising assumed some of the authority which older institutions had previously exercised, but with the important difference that, unlike the church and other powerful organizations, advertising was amorphous, so lacking any central locus of power.

Advertising is a cultural and ideological text that is fed by culture, but also influences the culture in which it is produced. Many critics of modern consumer/popular culture argue that the real impact of advertising is on the cultural climate of society (Dyer, 2009). There is a mutual transfer between advertising and culture. The advertiser employs language, images, ideas, and values drawn from culture, and assembles a message which feeds back into the culture; both communicator and receiver are products of culture—they share its meanings (Dyer, 2009). Just like works of art and literature, advertising is one of the prominent forms of expression of culture, in other words, it is a cultural narrator. According to Sherry (1987), advertising can be used as a vehicle for understanding the structures of reality within a culture.

The concept of gender includes various behaviors and norms that are expected by society, associated with masculinity and femininity, and the roles attributed to men and women (Yalman & Güdekli, 2008). The World Health Organization (2020) defines gender as “the roles, behaviors, activities, attributes, and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, and women and men. Gender interacts with, but is different from, the binary categories of biological sex.” (para. 6). Humans have learned the appropriate gender behavior through socialization in the society in which they live. As one of the tools of socialization, media have usually portrayed the sexes as they are in society, in other words they have shown sexes as expected by people. Advertising shows both women and men to behave in particular ways, and, this plays an important part in the reinforcement of gender stereotypes (Başfıncı, Ergül & Özgüden, 2018).

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Pringle and McDowell (1992) stated that “The dominant female images in advertising are of women either as alluring objects of sexual gratification or as successful housewife and mother who tends to a beautiful happy family and still has time to be soft and gentle to her husband.” (p. 150).

Advertising usually uses stereotypical gender roles. Gender stereotypes are general beliefs about sex-linked traits (i.e., collections of psychological characteristics and behaviors characterizing men and women) and gender roles (i.e., activities differentially appropriate for men or women) (Browne, 1998). Eisend (2010) pointed out that, according to many critics, advertisements show social stereotypes, which, in turn, reinforce stereotypical values and behavior in society. Criticism is based on the assumption that what people see or hear in the media influences their perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Advertising usually constructs implicit meanings of gender inequality, which is difficult to recognize. Nas (2015) stated that advertising has been widely criticized as a type of discourse because it reproduces the gendered relations of power and women’s subordination resulting from such relations. He highlighted that advertising has further been considered as a vehicle for legitimizing male hegemony and normalizing women’s suppression.

Wikipedia (“Patriarchy,” 2020) defines patriarchy as a “social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property”. Facio (2013) stated that, “for many feminists, patriarchy is much more than civilizations that existed in the ancient past, and goes beyond the unequal distribution of power between men and women in certain aspects of our societies, as many dictionaries still define it” (para.2). He defined the patriarchy as follows:

A form of mental, social, spiritual, economic and political organization/structuring of society produced by the gradual institutionalization of sex-based political relations created, maintained and reinforced by different institutions linked closely together to achieve consensus on the lesser value of women and their roles. These institutions interconnect not only with each other to strengthen the structures of domination of men over women, but also with other systems of exclusion, oppression and/or domination based on real or perceived differences between humans, creating states that respond only to the needs and interests of a few powerful men. (para. 4)

Patriarchy as a concept has been defined by various feminist theorists. Kate Millet (as cited in Buckley, 1986) defined patriarchy as follows: “The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political offices, finances - in short, every avenue of power within society, including the coercive force of the police, is in entirely male hands” (p. 5).

Goldberg (as cited in Blloshmi, 2013) defined patriarchy as any system of organization in which the overwhelming number of upper positions in hierarchies are occupied by males. Hooks’s definition (as cited in Blloshmi, 2013) is that “patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance” (p.8). In a patriarchal mindset, women have been seen as a symbol more than real beings (Yanni, 1990). Hopkins (2010) conceptualized masculinism as patriarchal ideology:

The patriarchal ideology is therefore revealed not only in the masculine fantasies represented in the advertisements, but through the visual ideology of the masculine gaze itself. Phrased in semiotic terms, these signs are revealing not only in the masculine representations they signify, but in the very mascu-

linist process of signification whereby the signs are produced-consumed-interpreted as engendered and ideologically-charged. (p.45)

GENDER ADVERTISMENT, SEMIOTICS AND VISUAL STORYTELLING

Advertising sometimes reflects a patriarchal view of society, like in the case of certain ads broadcast in Turkey on different media. Nas (2015) stated that

Patriarchal society treats the cultural and social differences between men and women as given and natural, hence it normalizes inequalities. Gender is, therefore, a useful analytical term for the feminist scholarship to point out that differences between men and women are not natural, but, rather, they occur as a result of cultural and social processes, which tend to reproduce male hegemony. (p. 39)

Advertising is an important tool of communication that produces and transmits ideologically encoded meanings about gender and patriarchy. From a gendered perspective, advertising is exploited as a patriarchal discourse that generates certain subjectivities to impose particular gender norms on women; therefore, advertising is an important vehicle in Turkey's patriarchal cultural dynamics (Nas, 2015).

The advertisement under scrutiny in this chapter tells a story in a way that, according to Labov (1997), logically and coherently presents and organizes consecutive facts, beginning with the introduction of the events (stories), through orientation, complication, tension and denouement. It is storytelling. Indeed, Greene, Koh, Bonnici, and Chase (2015) defined storytelling as "oral communication, structured around a logical sequence of events, utilizing human and/or animal characters, with personalities and emotional qualities, presented with voice, gesture and facial expression" (p. 112). According to Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki (2018), "interactions between the characters of a story build its attractiveness in the eyes of recipients. The story itself is the basic way to convey its perspective and perceived values. It enables the transfer of complex emotions thanks to its structure" (p. 695). This advertisement has all the features and functions Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki mentioned. According to this chapter's author, this film has hidden meanings that reproduce the reality of the current Turkish society, namely that patriarchy and gender still rule the way of living.

In order to disclose the meanings hidden in the analysed advert, the author uses semiotic analysis. Semiotics (or semiology) is a method for examining textual material, with roots literary and cultural analysis, rather than in the tradition of social science research (Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1990). Semiotics is concerned with how meaning is created and generated in texts (i.e., advertising, films, television programs, and other works of art). As Berger (2017) stated, "meanings are socially produced, and society has to teach individuals what signs mean. We are unaware of the extent to which culture shapes our feelings, actions, and even our identities. Meaning, then, is always social" (p. 5). In other words, the meaning is created, shaped, and taught by culture, and this meaning is not always available on the surface. As it is sometimes necessary to further explore, semiotics helps researchers to lay it bare.

Saussure (as cited in Berger, 2017) identifies semiotics as a science that studies the life of signs within society. Saussure proposed to retain the word "sign" to designate the whole, and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by signified and signifier. These two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts.

According to Williamson (2002),

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A sign is quite simply a thing—whether object, word, or picture—which has a particular meaning to a person or group of people. It is neither the thing nor the meaning alone, but the two together. The sign consists of the signifier, the material object, and the signified, which is its meaning. These are only divided for analytical purposes: in practice, a sign is always thing-plus meaning. (p. 17)

In a semiotic analysis, three terms are used: signifier, signified, and referent system. Williamson (2002) explained the referent system as a mythological system, another set of signs in which the “referent” always means the actual thing in the real world to which a word or concept points; the referent is external to the sign, whereas the signified is part of the sign. She argued that:

Denotation is the work of signification performed “within” a sign (q.v.) as it were: it is the process whereby a signifier “means”—denotes—a specific signified (q.v.). When I discuss connotation, I am concerned with a similar process, but one where the signifier is itself the denoting sign: the sign in its totality points to something else. That something else I term a referent system. (p. 99)

Advertising as film is visual storytelling. A film has language and form, and it is made up of parts that relate to one another in specific ways that affect the audience. Film techniques such as shot types, shot angles, camera movement, frame, sound and music, and lighting have considerable importance in creating meanings in advertising. All these techniques take on a semiotic function in the process of meaning creation, so it is important to understand the functions of these techniques.

A shot is the smallest unit of visual information captured at one time by the camera that shows a certain action or event (Thompson & Bowen, 2009). All types of shots have an effect, a meaning, and a connotation, and are chosen for a specific reason. Extreme long shots show the object from a great distance, also called establishing shot (Zettl, 2006). In the extreme long shot, the human figure is barely visible. This is the framing for landscapes, bird’s-eye views of cities, and other vistas (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). In the long shot, an object is seen from far away or framed loosely (Zettl, 2006). In the long shot, figures are more prominent, but the background still dominates (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). A long shot shows a person or people in full and the scenery around them, and gives the viewer information about the setting.

Framing of a person from approximately the knees up is called knee shot (Zettl, 2006) or medium long shot. It is commonly used, since it permits nice balance of figure and surroundings (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). It is wide enough to show the physical setting in which the action is taking place; yet, it is close enough to show facial expression (Krasner, 2008). Medium long shot is falling between the long and close shots; this is more informative than emotional. It is too close for the epic scale of a long shot and too far to convey the intimacy of a close-up, making it emotionally neutral (Heiderich, 2018).

The medium shot frames the human body from the waist up (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). The medium shot covers any framing between a long shot and a close-up, and is also called waist shot (Zettl, 2006). In the medium shot, gesture and expression become more visible (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). The medium shot allows viewers to move in much closer, but in a more informative rather than emotional way. This technique is used so that the viewer can see the characters’ faces clearly and also their interactions with others.

A medium close-up is a shot cropped between the shoulders and the belt line; it is also called a bust shot that frames a person from the upper torso to the top of the head (Zettl, 2006) to focus on an object as a way of highlighting the importance of that object in the story.

An object or any part of it seen at close range and framed tightly is close-up (Zettl, 2006). A close-up can show a person's facial expression or the details of an object. It can be used to focus the viewers' attention on important details. This technique is useful to allow the viewers to understand emotions or a character's thoughts and feelings. The close-up is more intimate than the medium shot, and an actor's expressions and emotions are more visible and affecting. The viewer engages with the character in a direct and personal manner. The extreme close-up singles out a portion of the face (often eyes or lips) or isolates and magnifies an object (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

In over-the-shoulder shot, camera looks over a person's shoulder (shoulder and back of head are included in the shot) at another person (Zettl, 2006). It is used to make conversational scenes look as natural to the viewer as possible.

The shot which frames two people is called two shots. Two shots are used to show the emotional reactions between the subjects (Bowen & Thompson, 2013).

The lens of a photographic camera does roughly what human eye does, namely it gathers light from the scene and transmits that light onto the flat surface of the film to form an image that represents size, depth, and other dimensions of the scene (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). The lens and lens movement influence the aesthetic elements of a picture.

On the television screen, a zoom-in appears as though the object is gradually coming toward the viewer, while a zoom-out seems to make the object move away from the viewer (Zettl, 2006). Actually, all that the moving elements within the zoom lens do is gradually magnify (zoom-in) or reduce the magnification (zoom-out) of the object while keeping it in focus, but the camera remains stationary during both operations (Zettl, 2006). In the zoom-in, the camera itself does not move. Instead, the lens is refocused towards the character or object from a longer shot to a close shot. This technique can be used to bring the subject in frame closer to the viewer, making it seem much larger on screen. The zoom is useful to convey emotion, thoughts or feelings. It can also be used to draw attention to important details. In the zoom-out, the camera itself does not move. Instead, the lens is refocused to give a more distant view, giving a wider angle of view and making the character or object appear smaller. This technique can be used to reveal more of a scene to show where a character is or to whom he or she is speaking.

Emphasizing an object in a shallow depth of field through focus, while keeping its foreground and/or background out of focus, is called selective focus (Zettl, 2006). Selective focus is often used to call attention to the main action and to de-emphasize less significant parts of the surroundings (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Often, this involves centering the main character in the foreground and throwing the background out of focus (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

Tertiary motion is sequence motion; this is the movement and the rhythm induced by shot changes—by using a cut, dissolve, fade, wipe or any other transition device to switch from shot to shot (Zettl, 2011). In a fade, the picture either goes gradually to black (fade-out) or appears gradually on the screen from black (fade-in), signifying, much like a theater curtain, a definite beginning or end of a sequence, and it defines the duration (running time) of the individual event sequences or of the event itself (Zettl, 2006).

A Semiotic Analysis of a Turkish Advertisement

The present chapter sets out to analyse an advertisement which can be found on You Tube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FS2unbyzL8&t=1s>).

The story is based on the long-standing “child-brides” problem in Turkish society. At the beginning of the film, the father's words connote the ceremony of asking a woman's father for her hand in marriage,

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which is a tradition in Turkey. “You are asking for my girl” is a sentence which immediately triggers such a scenario in the minds of the viewers. Then, the father tells the still-unknown interlocutor about the housework at which the girl is good. During this step, the audience does not see the girl and thinks this is a classical ceremony. After realizing the girl is a child, the “child-bride problem” comes to the audience’s mind. Although a solution is offered at the end of the advertisement, it is still possible to refer to this problem by association. It is an ethical problem, and it is dangerous to present it by connotation, because showing something on the screen always reproduces or legitimizes that thing. The sexist discourse and the allusion to the child-bride issue are not the only problems. Indeed, the film shows many rooted and strict traditions, such as asking a woman’s father for her hand in marriage and the traditional father-daughter relationship. The relationship between father and daughter is formal, cold, and distant, so much so that the father is unaware of his daughter’s ability to build a robot. Showing all these points supports and endorses the idea that such behaviours are normal and appropriate. Another debatable issue shows the young girls’ obligation of being a mother to her siblings. By playing on the audience’s heartstrings, it is expected that they feel compassion for the girl.

The advertising film has been analyzed frame by frame. In each frame, both visual and auditory signifiers have been identified firstly. Then, their signified was specified, and the meaning presented in the last analytical step named referent system.

1st Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Extreme long shot. Single clay house in a large area with a big tree.
- **Auditory Signifier:** A calm music, lamb bleating, birdsong.
- **Signified:** Rural living.
- **Referent System:** This frame gives a clue about where the event will take place. The image of a single clay house on a deserted plain and lamb bleating is an indicant that the event will take place in the nonurban, countryside or village.

2nd Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Close-up; selective focus. Centering the teapot in the foreground and a woman facing back, serving something to the guests in the background, out of focus.
- **Auditory Signifier:** Stirring voices. The father’s words “so you ask for my daughter.”
- **Signified:** Low-income level; the ceremony of asking the woman’s father for her hand in marriage; traditional family.
- **Referent System:** In this frame, the audience’s attention is drawn to the teapot on the heating stove, so the hint which has been given in the first frame is supported. The heating stove refers to rural life, while the teapot on the heating stove refers to the lower-income level. The blurred foreground shows a man, a woman, and someone who is serving something (probably tea, because it selectively focused on the foreground teapot). The reference is to entertaining guests. The father’s words allow the onlooker to understand the reason for the visit. The guests apparently visited the family for a marriage proposal. Asking a woman’s father for her hand in marriage is a ritual that has become a tradition in Turkish and other societies. Since this ritual has been accepted as the first formal stage of marriage in Turkish society, the film brings to mind the event of marriage.

3rd Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up (bust shot). The father is looking at the person opposite.
- **Auditory Signifier:** The father's words "Valla, I'm not telling this just because she is my daughter. She cooks well, does laundry, and works on the field."
- **Signified:** The ceremony, culture, and traditions related to the process of asking a woman's father for her hand in marriage; proud father for his daughter's dexterity; gender stereotypes (i.e., being a woman in undeveloped countries).
- **Referent System:** In this frame, the audience is introduced to the father. The expression on the characters' faces and eyes is clear cut. The father is old, tired, and sad. The father's tone and the way he speaks reinforce this situation. The ceremonies of asking a woman's father for her hand in marriage imply some stereotypical behaviors such as praising the housework at which the woman is good., as all housework is the duty of the women. The father praises his daughter's dexterities by listing what society expects from the idealized gender roles of women. Cooking, doing laundry, working on the field, and taking care of kids are women's duties, and, according to the father, his daughter does all these well.

4th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up; detailed shot of hands. The seated person's head is not seen; she has her hands crossed on her knees.
- **Auditory Signifier:** The father's words, "she takes care of the kids."
- **Signified:** The culture and traditions related to the process of asking a woman's father for her hand in marriage; proud father for his daughter's dexterity; gender stereotypes (i.e., being a woman in undeveloped countries); "child bride" problem.
- **Referent System:** In this frame, another character appears and seems anxious, embarrassed, and distressed when the father says she takes care of the kids. By the detailed shot of the hands, the audience sees the character is playing with her hands and her cardigan. This behavior of the girl is a sign that she is not at ease and/or she is bothered with something. The face of the girl is not visible in this frame, but her hands and anatomy allow the onlooker to perceive that she is a child. This frame recalls the phenomenon of "child bride."

5th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up shot (bust shot); two shots with selective focus. The girl is cleared in the foreground, while the father is blurred and is talking in the background.
- **Auditory Signifier:** A calm piano voice; the father's words, "she took care of all her siblings."
- **Signified:** The process of asking a woman's father for her hand in marriage; proud father for his daughter's dexterity; gender stereotypes (i.e., being a woman in undeveloped countries); "child bride" problem; altruistic elder sister; motherhood.
- **Referent System:** In order to direct the audience's attention to the girl, this frame is characterized by the selective focus on the girl in the foreground and the father in the background. The invisible face in the previous frame becomes visible in this frame. Thus, this frame confirms the scenario of a child-bride that came to the viewer's mind in the previous frames. The girl bending her head

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and looking ahead indicates she is unhappy and distressed. Also, the father's words (i.e., "she takes care of all her siblings") refer not only to the girl's responsibility and devotion, but also to the father's pride of his daughter. On the other hand, the father's voice is mournful. It refers to the father's sadness for this situation. The soft sound of the piano in the background also creates an emotional ambiance.

6th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up shot (bust shot); two shots with selective focus and zoom-in on the father. The girl is blurred in the foreground, while the father is cleared and is talking in the background.
- **Auditory Signifier:** A calm piano sound; the father's words, "when her mother was gone, what else my poor girl could do?"
- **Signified:** The mother's death; desperation; the girl's mother role; responsibility.
- **Referent System:** In order to draw attention from the daughter to the father, the girl got out of the focus in the foreground, while the father leaves the background. Images, music, and the father's tone of voice created sentimentality. The first part of the father's words (i.e., "when her mother was gone") refers to the mother's absence and to death, while the rest of his words (i.e., "what else my poor girl could do?") refers to being helpless in face of death and feeling sorry for his daughter. At this point, the audience realize that the girl who is still a child has to take care of her siblings, who are children as she is, because of their mother's absence.

7th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up shot and detailed shot of hands. The face of the father playing with the tea cup in his hand is not visible.
- **Auditory Signifier:** A calm piano sound and the creaking voice of a cedar.
- **Signified:** Sadness and distress.
- **Referent System:** In order to direct the audience's attention to the father's emotions, thoughts and feelings, this frame offers a detailed shot of his hands. The father's body language (i.e., not drinking, but just holding and playing with the teacup) means he is mournful and desperate. The music and the light reinforce this pessimistic atmosphere.

8th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium two-shot of the father and the daughter. The father and the daughter are sitting side by side; the father is talking, while the girl's head is bent and she is listening.
- **Auditory Signifier:** A calm piano sound; the father's words, "she managed the house. She is skillful. She is good at sewing and embroidery. She fixes rip."
- **Signified:** Patriarchy, gender stereotypes (i.e., being a woman in undeveloped countries), and women's gender roles.
- **Referent System:** The shot techniques which characterize this frame allow the audience to see the characters' faces clearly, their emotional reactions and interactions between them. The girl's body language (i.e., the position of her hands and her sitting style, namely sitting next to her father, but

not looking at him) refers to patriarchy. In patriarchal families, talking without the father's permission, looking at their father's face or snuggling down are faulty, and disrespectful behaviors, especially for daughters. The father's words indicate that the girl took over the duties of her passed away mother. Taking care of the kids and managing the house are women's duties. If the woman is a mother, these are mothers' duties in gendered societies. Even though the primary duty of a schoolgirl is to receive education, doing all this housework because of her mother's death reinforces the idea that the girl is self-sacrificing. The fact that a girl at that age takes care of all her siblings when her mother is gone indicates that the girl has taken on a mother's duties; in other words, she has become a mother to her siblings.

9th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Close-up, two shots with selective focus. The girl is blurred in the foreground, while the father is cleared, talking, looking at his daughter, and smiling in the background.
- **Auditory Signifier:** The father's words, "but I didn't know."
- **Signified:** Happiness.
- **Referent System:** This frame is made by the close-up not only to make more visible the father's expressions and emotions, but also to engage the audience with the characters in a direct and personal manner. In this way, the father's gestures and emotional state are visible in detail. Sadness is the most obvious emotion of the father until this frame gives way to happiness.

10th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Close-up shot with selective focus and zoom-in on the girl. The girl is cleared, her head is bent and she is smiling in the foreground, while the father is blurred and talking in the background.
- **Auditory Signifier:** The father's words, "she can build robots."
- **Signified:** Science, technology, modernity, gender equality, success, humility, and pride.
- **Referent System:** In order to direct the audience's attention to the girl, the camera zoom-in and focus are on her, while the father is blurred. This way, the girl's gestures and emotional condition are clearly visible. When the father says "she can build a robot," the daughter smiles and bends her head bashfully. Bending the head and smiling is a sign of both humility and self-pride. Science, technology, modernity, gender equality in education, and success are referred by saying that a girl who lives in a village is able to build a robot.

11th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up (bust shot). The father is smiling and talking.
- **Auditory Signifier:** The father's words, "I did not know she was interested in science."
- **Signified:** Science, modernity, gender equality, success, happiness, pride, and astonishment.
- **Referent System:** In this frame, the audience can see the father's gestures again clearly by the medium close-up shot. His gestures and tone of voice convey happiness and pride, he is smiling and talking excitedly. His gestures while he says he did not know refer to his ignorance about his daughter's interest in science.

12th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Over the shoulder of the girl. One smiling man and two smiling women are visible.
- **Signified:** Happiness and mood of optimism.
- **Referent System:** In order to make the scene look as natural as possible to the audience, this frame implies the use of over-shoulder shot. Immediately after the father says that he did not know, the guests, who were invisible before, are introduced to the audience. The guests are smiling; this is a sign of happiness and that something positive is going to happen.

13th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Long shot. The girl, her father, and a man whose top of the head is invisible are sitting down. The father's and the daughter's heads are bent; the man is looking at them in a village room.
- **Auditory Signifier:** The father's words, "now you ask for my daughter's hand."
- **Signified:** Rural living, traditional father-daughter relationship, and the ceremony of asking a woman's father for her hand in marriage.
- **Referent System:** In this frame, the long shot is used to show the people in full and the scenery around them to give the audience information about the setting. The wares, furniture, and decoration of the room are the signs of rural living. The sitting style and the position of the girls' hands and feet refer to traditional father-daughter relationship in patriarchal societies. This also refers to the girl's respect and bashfulness. The ceremony of asking a woman's father for her hand in marriage is referred to by the father's words (i.e., "now you ask for my daughter's hand").

14th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Close-up. The girl is holding her head high and smiling.
- **Auditory Signifier:** Music; the father's words, "and say that she will be a scientist."
- **Signified:** Science, modernity, gender equality, women's success, and self-pride.
- **Referent System:** The close-up shot is used to show the audience the girl's face and gestures in detail. As soon as her father says the word "scientist," she proudly raises her head, looks across confidently, and smiles. This refers to the fact she is proud of her success and also proud of what she wants to be, namely a scientist.

15th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up with selective focus. Focusing in the father in the foreground and focusing out the daughter in the background. The father is talking with the man whose left ear is seen blurrily.
- **Auditory Signifier:** Music; the father's words, "may God bless you."
- **Signified:** Respectability of science and thankfulness.

- **Referent System:** The father's words are a sign that he values science, he supports his daughter being a scientist, and he is grateful for people who try to help his daughter for this purpose.

16th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium shot. A man and two women are smiling.
- **Signified:** Happiness and contentment.
- **Referent System:** The guests smiling refers to the fact they are happy and content.

17th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up (bust shot), two shot. The girl is smiling and her head is bent in the foreground. The father is also smiling and looking at his daughter.
- **Auditory Signifier:** Again, a calm, but more lively piano sound in the background; the father's words, "and you my dear girl."
- **Signified:** The father is proud of his daughter and is thankful to her; the girl's self-pride; happiness, and humility.
- **Referent System:** In this frame, all the gestures and emotions of the character are clearly visible, as a result of the shot technique used. The father's words and smile refer to the fact he is proud of his daughter and he is happy about her decision of becoming a scientist. The girl bending her head and smiling are signs of both humility and self-pride. The music up is the sign that positive things are on the way.

18th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Medium close-up (bust shot) with fade out. The girl is smiling and looking down.
- **Auditory Signifier:** Before a piano sound gets louder, the words, "There is only one thing that you can want for a kid" of a voice-over.
- **Signified:** End of a portion of a screen event.
- **Referent System:** In this frame, the fade-out technique is used to end the scene and begin the new one; in other words, gradually, the one-shot view is replaced by another. This refers to the story that will keep going in another place and atmosphere. On the other hand, the words of the off-voice capture the attention of the audience, while a livelier piano sound is used to level up the interest and keep the audience watching.

19th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Close-up (bust shot) with fade in. The same girl in the pasted frame is looking at someone who is invisible and talking.
- **Auditory Signifier:** Again calm, but, compared to the previous frame, a livelier and more audible piano sound; the words, "and that is for them having equal opportunities in education" of a voice-over.
- **Signified:** Beginning of a new event, gender equality, and children's right to education.

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- **Referent System:** The fade-in technique is used to signify a definite beginning in this frame. The words of a voice-over refer to all children, and indicate that they have the right to education, regardless of gender. The words of the voice-over in the previous frames refer to the fact that girls should not be deprived of their right to education; indeed, they should be educated instead of being forced to marry. The use of a male voice as a voice-over is significant, and this means that a male rejects patriarchy and sexism.

20th Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Long shot. Boys, girls, and teachers are in a classroom.
- **Auditory Signifier:** The same piano sound which was used in the previous frames; the words of a voice-over, “as (the name of the company) volunteers, we work to turn the kids of these lands into the scientists of the future with ‘Science Migration to Anatolia Project.’”
- **Signified:** Education, modernity, gender equality, and social responsibility.
- **Referent System:** In the long shot of this frame, boys and girls are together participating in a classroom. This is the sign of gender equality achieved through education. Sitting face to face is the sign of the modernity of the classrooms. The words of the voice-over indicate that the advertised company feels responsible for the future of the country and also for the education of the children of the country. The company tries to do its share.

21st Frame

- **Visual Signifier:** Extreme long shot of the background; medium shot of the girl in the foreground. The smiling girl is looking directly at the audience. Her home is visible in the background.
- **Auditory Signifier:** The same piano sound which was used in the previous frame, the words of a voice-over, “because, if our main objective is to reach up the level of contemporary civilization, then there is no limit in service for us.”
- **Signified:** Atatürk and Kemalism, modernity, and patriotism.
- **Referent System:** In this frame, the voice-over explains the message of the previous frame. In addition, the words “we shall raise our country to the level of the most prosperous and nations of the world” refer to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s Tenth Year speech he gave at the 10th anniversary of the Turkish Republic, on October 29, 1933. This means the company is a Kemalist patriot and is working determinedly and effortfully towards accomplishing the task that Atatürk pointed out as a target.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to Kandiyoti (1988), the clearest instance of classic patriarchy may be found in a geographical area that includes North Africa, the Muslim Middle East (including Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran), and South and East Asia. As Gönüllü Atakan stated (2014),

This system is composed of patrilocally and patrilineally extended households which give the senior men authority over everyone. Marriages are generally arranged by the families. Women are forced to get married at a very young age. Young brides enter the household of their husbands’ families as dispossessed

individuals, and can only guarantee their place by giving birth to a male offspring. The patriarchal order in the household rests on appropriating both women's labor and fertility. As a strategy, women internalize this patriarchal order, which is full of deprivation and hardship, with the future expectation of having authority over their daughters-in-law in the future. (p. 5)

However, today, especially in urban areas, significant changes have occurred in the above-mentioned classical patriarchal patterns. In rural areas, such as small towns, gender norms and patriarchy still prevail. During the modernization process in urban centers, family, marriage, education, fertility, and labor experiences of women differentiated from those of women living in rural areas, including small towns. Despite its growing economy and modernization, Turkey experiences certain problems in terms of democratic standards and human rights, particularly women's rights. Turkey's conservative and patriarchal cultural setting leads to intersectional ways of women's subordination.

The role played by advertising in the reproduction of gender norms has been articulated, especially beginning with the 1980s, with the development of advertising industry worldwide, and advertising has been accused of producing idealized images and conveying them to the public, continuously transmitting culturally hegemonic and patriarchal meanings (Nas, 2016). According to Nas (2016), gender inequality is reflected in media and popular culture, and Turkey's advertising imagery is dominated by overtly sexist representations of women. Thanks to the feminist struggle and criticism of the representations of women in advertising, as well as to a new trend named femvertising, brands are now eager to include certain critical insights into their advertising narratives that tend to challenge the hegemonic and patriarchal discourses on gender. At the beginning of the '90s, femvertising started to receive significant attention throughout the advertising community. Femvertising, which is the advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls, broke the stereotypes on the perception of the social roles of women. In 1994, Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty was accepted as the first femvertising campaign in the literature. Since the debut of this campaign, companies have become more involved in gender equality, and they began to focus on advertising campaigns that support and empower women's positions in social life.

Despite all these positive changes, unfortunately, it is not possible to say that all goes well. Due to Turkey's patriarchal cultural settings, women are still subordinated in both real life and in advertising stories. The feminist theory argues that women can reach the position they deserve in society by struggle. In Turkey, women struggle, but it seems that this is not enough. Undoubtedly, advertising, companies, brands, and advertising professionals should be aware of the effects of their discourse, and, instead of reproducing dominant, hegemonic, patriarchal, and gender meanings, they should support women's empowerment by not portraying them as passive and dependent.

The effort of academic research on this topic has slowed down after the scientific community has accepted this topic as legitimate. This lack of attention causes marketers to act as they wish. This chapter aims to raise awareness and guide marketers towards adopting gender equality in their communication strategies.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Visibility of queers, notions of post-feminism in advertising, hegemonic masculinities in advertising, and femvertising are the emerging trends in advertising and gender debates. Representations in advertising

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in terms of diversity (e.g., minorities, disabled people, and LGBTIQ) would also be the topic for future research in terms of dominant, hegemonic, and idealized meaning creation of advertising. Artificial intelligence in advertising is the latest topic in the academic field, nowadays. However, in Turkey, the use of artificial intelligence in advertising has not entered mainstream yet. Studies that will emphasize the importance, advantages and the ways of using AI in advertising would be helpful for Turkish advertising industry. As advertising is a form of storytelling, all these subjects could be studied in the context of storytelling.

CONCLUSION

The advertisement under scrutiny in this chapter has many polemical and problematic facts, even though its purpose is admirable. One of them is that, in Turkey, children, especially girls who live in villages and the countryside, do not have access to basic education because of inequalities that originate in gender, fundamentally. Also, these children find themselves on the margins of the educational system and do not benefit from learning opportunities, which would be vital for their intellectual and social development. This chapter has set out to demonstrate that conveying positive messages through strategies as those in the analysed advertisement, is objectionable in many respects. The chapter has shown that the advertisement reinforces gender stereotypes and reaffirms patriarchy, though not directly.

Beyond all these considerations, it must be said that the advertisement had a great impact on the audience. It has 3.865.356 views, 2135 likes, 11 dislikes, and 147 comments on Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FS2unbyzL8&t=1s>), and 237.500 views, 4100 likes, and 924 re-tweets on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/YapiKredi/status/983382539128725505?s=20>). This audience shows the potential such advertisements have in reaching out and, therefore, influencing a great number of people.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Auditory Signifier: Sound, music, words of characters, and silence stand for something; in other words, they have meanings to be interpreted.

Connotation: Meaning that evokes more than the primary meaning. Words carry cultural and emotional associations or meanings, in addition to their literal meanings or denotations.

Denotation: Primary or literal meaning without interpretation.

Femvertising: Empowering women in advertising.

Gender: The way of living depending on the biological sex, which is shaped by society.

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Hidden Meaning: The meaning behind something or the deep meaning, which needs to be disclosed by an attentive analysis.

Patriarchy: A social system that gives men superiority as a birth privilege.

Referent System: A system according to which the external reality is represented by a collection of signs.

Signified: The meaning of a signifier, in other words, the explication of that signifier.

Visual Signifier: A picture, figure, posture, gesture, or anything one can see with his/her eyes as being the sign of something. Just like in the case of the auditory signifier, the visual signifier has meanings to be interpreted.

Chapter 9

Exploring the Effectiveness of Storytelling in Advertising Through Eye-Tracking

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ABSTRACT

From a marketing perspective, storytelling involves creating, through advertising and communication strategies, an image of the company, brand, and products that makes it different from the competition. Advertising literature has shown that good stories have a way of inspiring, entertaining, explaining, and convincing, and can engage the emotional, attentional, and cognitive schemes of the customers. This is the first research that defines and makes an overview of the evolution of eye-tracking systems in the field of advertising which employs storytelling techniques. Particularly, the current chapter identifies the evolution of topics and relations between them, within the field of advertising research. The current study, therefore, advances an agenda for future research and constitutes a starting point for academics and professionals working in the field of advertising who intend to resort to eye-tracking techniques.

INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, storytelling constitutes the action of telling a story. In its more traditional version, a story is defined as a reimagined and narrated experience with enough depth and emotion so that the audience can remember it as a real experience (Simmons, 2015). From the marketing perspective, storytelling involves creating the image of the company, brand and products that makes it different from

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the competition through advertising and communication. In this marketing-oriented context, if we speak about telling stories, the firm is the storyteller and the market is the audience (Väre, 2014). By building the business idea of a company around a story, and, hence, affecting the emotions of the consumer, the organization can achieve a crucial position. As explained by Salzer-Mörling and Strannegard (2004), “good stories have a way of inspiring, entertaining, explaining and convincing, and can engage emotional, attentional and cognitive customers’ schemes” (p. 24).

To create a good story, traditional advertising research has developed innumerable models with the aim to clear up the most important steps in drawing the consumers’ attention. Specifically, *attention, interest, desire, action* is the hierarchy of effects proposed by the well-known AIDA scheme to describe the process of designing a persuasive story/advertising (Strong, 1925). This scheme inspired multiple models that, similarly, positioned attention first in a sequence of responses which ultimately lead to purchase. Although there is little evidence of a temporal sequence of advertising effects (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999), these schemes have contributed to highlighting *attention* as one of the key cognitive processes of interest for communication research. Gaining the consumers’ attention is becoming more and more challenging in today’s highly competitive markets and crowded advertising platforms. Yet, attention is a scarce resource and the quantity of stimuli daily calling for consumers’ attention substantially exceeds the individuals’ limited processing capacities. Therefore, it is essential for stories told through advertisements to be visually attractive compared to those of the competitors and to hold attention in a way that effectively communicates brand messaging.

In this context, enhancing storytelling effectiveness will rely on our understanding of the psychological mechanisms through which consumers attend to advertising, the factors that influence visual attention and how this, in turn, relates to other facets of the consumers’ response (Casado-Aranda, Sánchez-Fernández, & Ibáñez-Zapata, 2020). To fill this gap, the eye-tracking tool has become increasingly popular in recent years. The eye-tracking system is a device that allows a recording of the movements of the eyes when exposed to an object of interest, namely a text, an image or other visual material. In the field of advertising and storytelling, eye-tracking systems facilitate the record of the movements of a consumer’s eyes during behavioral processes, thus providing insights into the cognitive processes underlying the consumer behavior (Meißner & Oll, 2019).

To date, literature in the advertising and storytelling fields has long evidenced the outcomes (cognition, affect and behaviour) of the effects of individual (consumer goals or familiarity) and stimulus factors (advertising design) on visual attention (fixation number, viewing order or pupil size). Nevertheless, a full overview of the main papers, topics and relations among keywords and the most frequent themes in the use of eye-tracking when exploring advertising effectiveness remains unknown.

Hence, with the aim to clarify the main findings of recent eye-tracking research on advertising and storytelling persuasiveness, this chapter aims to: i) give an overview of the evolution of the use of eye-tracking in advertising and storytelling research; ii) advance the themes that are worth considering in future storytelling and advertising research by using eye-tracking; and iii) identify the main relations between the most frequent themes in the use of eye-tracking when exploring advertising effectiveness.

BACKGROUND

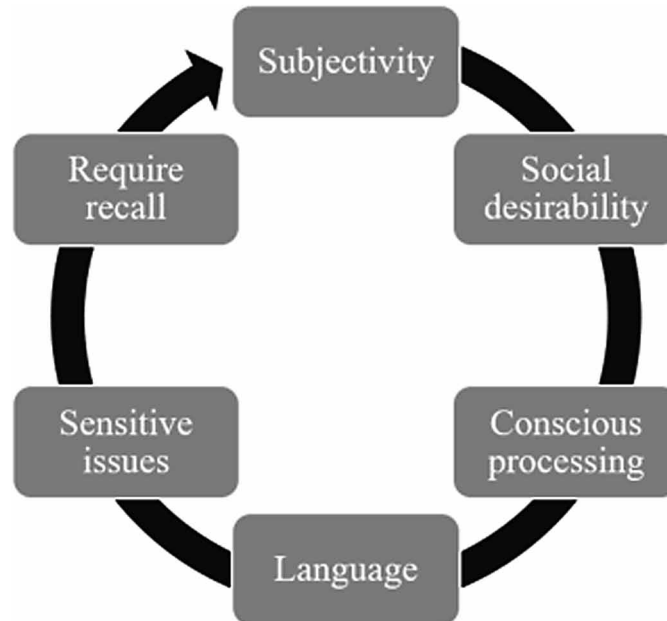
Traditional Self-Report Measures, Storytelling and News Media

Traditional research in advertising and storytelling effectiveness has made use of diverse perspectives to evaluate the attention, recall, feelings or attitudes toward specific stimuli. Thus, from the Black Box Models (Tellis, 1988), in which the key outcome of effective advertising was the amount of visits, literature advanced towards cognitive models, which considers the positive cognitive outcomes as variables of interest, namely recall or attention (Belch, 1981). Later on, studies appreciated the great value of emotions in advertising effectiveness (Bennet, 2015) through the consideration of the affective models (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). The freshest research in this arena believes that both cognitive and emotional reactions are key when evaluating advertising effectiveness (McKay-Nesbitt, Manchanda, Smith, & Huhmann, 2011; Martínez-Fiestas, del Jesus, Sánchez-Fernández, & Montoro-Rios., 2015). Based on such new line, the persuasion of storytelling relies on the conjoint consideration of cognitive responses (attention, beliefs and memory) and affective reactions (emotions). Marketing research has commonly made use of self-report methods, namely surveys, focus groups and interviews, to assess and predict consumer behavior when exposed to advertising and storytelling (Guixeres et al., 2017; Strick, van Baaren, Holland, & van Knippenberg, 2009). Despite the fact that such tools capture conscious expressions and verbal-language-based on responses from consumers regarding advertising recall, brand awareness or purchase intentions, they are subject to biases, such as (Casado-Aranda et al., 2020; Venkatraman, Clithero, Fitzsimons, & Huettel, 2012):

1. **Subjectivity**, that is, the quality of being influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions.
2. **Social desirability**, which refers to the tendency of survey participants to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favourably by others (e.g., interviewer).
3. **Conscious processing**, which encompasses the representation of the immediate map participants have conscious and logical access to.
4. **Dependence on language**, require recall and are not proper for sensitive issues (such as religion or sexual orientation).

Figure 1. Summary of the biases associated with traditional self-report techniques

Source: The authors



When Eye-Tracking Gives Insight Into Storytelling Media Persuasion

Deficiencies in measuring consumer behavior in self-report tools have led to the search for more precise tools coming from psychology and neuroscience to complement traditional market research methods. Eye-tracking systems constitute a tool recently used to measure eye movements and modifications in pupil dilation and contraction (Harris, Ciorciari, & Gountas, 2018). The radial fibers of the iris provoke pupil dilation because of somatic nervous system excitation. Contraction happens when the fibers of the iris are innervated by peripheral nervous system neurons (Harris et al., 2018).

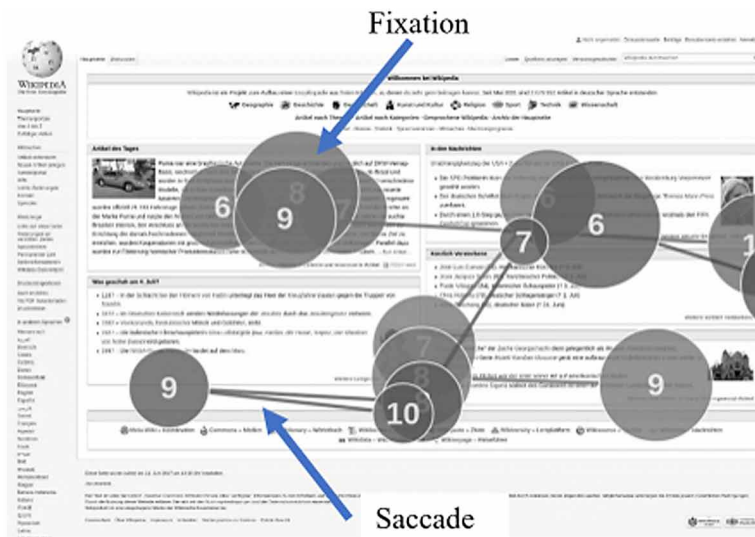
Russo (1978) was the first to outline the usefulness of eye movement analysis for the assessment of advertising effectiveness and understanding of consumer decisions and information. Since then, researchers around the world have largely proposed that pupil dilation occurs after valuable and positive emotional stimuli and contraction with unpleasant materials (Andreassi, 2000), thus giving insights into the cognitive processes underlying consumer behavior (Meißner & Oll, 2019). The basis for recording eye movements with eye-tracking lies in the premise that these provide an observable evidence of the way individuals attend to visual stimuli across time. Specifically, eye-tracking tools measure two basic eye movements:

1. **Fixations**, when the eyes are relatively still for about 200 to 300 milliseconds. Here is when information processing takes place.
2. **Saccades**, when the eyes make rapid “jumps” (Rayner, 1998). These are indicative of redirection, which limits visual perception and the ability to effectively process information until the eyes become still again.

Therefore, eye-tracking systems may facilitate the recording of these eye movements and, consequently, allow to discriminate between storytelling stimuli of the visual field by selecting and processing the desired ones at the expense of others. Thus, eye-tracking provides a better understanding of how and why specific advertising and storytelling stimuli (e.g., complexity, duration, format) produce certain media effects (visual attention, recall, etc.,) in consumers.

Figure 2. Example of fixation and saccade

Source: The authors



Eye Tracking Measures and the Consumer Psychological Variables

Traditional eye-tracking studies have mostly used diverse typologies of measure with the aim to capture specific consumer psychological variables in the field of storytelling. Specifically, five main measures have been used:

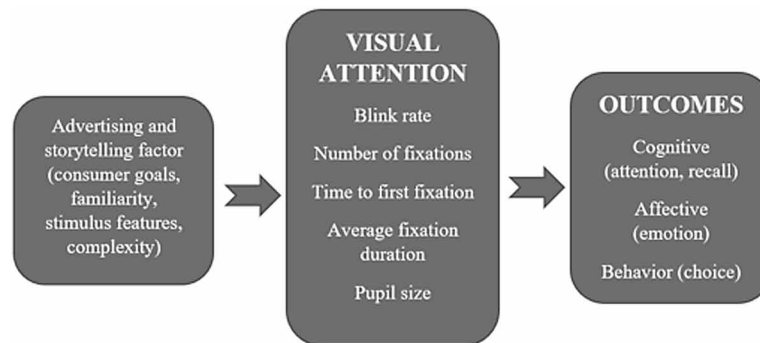
1. **Blink Rate:** Refers to the quick closing and reopening of the eyelid. Marketing research studies have associated blink rate with the modification of processing flow of information (Bigné, Llinares, & Torrecilla, 2016).
2. **Number of Fixations:** Accounts for the amount of times that a consumer sees the specific area of interest. Literature concludes that frequent fixations are related to relevant advertising or storytelling (Pentus et al., 2020).
3. **Time to First Fixation:** Refers to the amount of time that it takes a consumer to look at the area of interest. More salient stimuli are the first to be “selected” (Huddleston, Behe, Minahan, & Fernandez, 2015).
4. **Average Fixation Duration:** Corresponds to the average duration of all fixations included in an area of interest. Advertising literature corroborates that longer fixations might indicate an increased level of processing (Jones & Smythe, 2003).

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5. **Pupil Size:** Millimeters of the pupil and is positively linked to an increase of cognitive processing load and emotional arousal during advertising viewing (Gwizdka & Zhang, 2015).

Figure 3 includes a useful scheme for evaluating the contribution of eye-tracking measures in the field of advertising and storytelling research.

Figure 3. Scheme of analysis in eye-tracking studies within the field of advertising and storytelling
Source: The authors



Main Eye-Tracking Devices

Head-Mounted Eye-Trackers

Head-mounted eye-trackers were first developed to enable participants to move their heads freely during the experiments and interact naturally with the stimulus (Hartridge & Thomson, 1948), while some table-mounted eye trackers required the use of a chest rest to prevent participants from moving their heads. Traditional head-mounted eye-trackers constitute systems for eye recording that determine the line of sight of a user according to the relative position between the center of the pupil and a reference point.

Figure 4. Head-mounted eye-tracker
Source: The authors



Figure 5. Remote eye-tracker

Source: The authors



Specifically, a head mounted display device includes a setting which attaches the device to the consumer's head, a beam-splitter attached to the mount with movement devices, an image projector which projects images onto the beam-splitter, an eye-tracker which tracks a user's eye' gaze, and one or more processors. More particularly, the device uses the eye tracker and movement devices, along with an optional head-tracker, to move the beam-splitter about the center of the eye's rotation, keeping the beam-splitter in the eye's direct line-of-sight.

Remote Eye-Trackers

Unlike more traditional head-mounted eye-trackers, which may be highly intrusive for the experimental participants, remote eye-trackers (also called *desktop* or *screen-based eye-trackers*) record eye movements at a distance and are mounted close to a screen. More specifically, remote eye-trackers allow the participants to rest in front of the device without any kind of attachment. This typology of eye-tracking system is highly advisable for advertising and storytelling research, as it is recommended for observations of screen-based stimulus material in lab settings, such as pictures, videos and websites inserted in advertising.

The company Tobii Tech is the world leader in eye-tracking solutions and services to study human behaviour. On their website, a lot of images of the most common eye-tracking systems can be found (<https://www.tobii.com/group/about/>). Tobii Tech has developed Tobii's world-leading eye-tracking technology for integration into volume products such as computers, computer games, virtual reality and cars. For example, the recently developed Tobii Pro Glasses 2 gives researchers deep and objective insights into human behavior by showing exactly what a person is looking at in real time as they move freely in any real-world setting.

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Table 1. Summary of the eye-tracking studies in the field of advertising and storytelling

Article	Focal Topic	Stimulus and Conditions of Exposure	Number of Participants
(Aribarg, Pieters & Wedel, 2010)	Effects of surface size and brand familiarity on visual attention; relationship between visual attention and memory	Real magazines containing real ads – viewed on a computer screen	185
(Barreto, 2013)	Banner blindness	Real social media website (Facebook) containing real online ads	20
(Boerman, van Reijmersdal & Neijens, 2015)	Brand placement on viewers' visual attention, the use of persuasion knowledge, and brand responses	Brand placement within a TV police series	178
(Bogart & Tolley, 1988)	Viewing patterns for different sizes of newspaper ads and product choice.	Real newspaper containing real ads – viewed as a print copy	12
(Brasel & Gips, 2008)	Effects of fast-forwarding TV viewing on visual attention	Real TV documentary interrupted by a selection of real TV ads	Study 1: 48 Study 2: 48
(Burke et al., 2005)	Banner blindness	Basic experimental display containing news headlines and real online banners	24
(Day, Shyi & Wang, 2006)	Effects of banner animation on visual attention	Basic experimental display containing experimental online ads	29
(Feiereisen, Wong & Broderick, 2008)	Relationship between visual attention and product comprehension	Experimental print ads - viewed individually on a screen	10
(Gidlöf, Holmberg & Sandberg, 2012)	Banner blindness	Wide variety of real websites containing real online ads	39
(Hamborg, Bruns, Ollermann, & Kaspar, 2012)	Effects of banner animation on visual attention	Experimental replica of a newspaper website containing experimental ads	54
(Hervet, Guérard, Tremblay, & Chtourou., 2011)	Banner blindness	Experimental shopping advice websites containing experimental text-only ads	32
(Hutton & Nolte, 2011)	Effects of gaze cues from human models on visual attention	Experimental magazines containing ads – viewed on a screen	32
(Hwang & Lee, 2017)	Effects of gender on visual attention to online shopping information and its influence on attitudes about the products displayed	Experimental website Two products included in a website (screen)	84
(Janiszewski, 1998)	Effects of size and competition for attention on visual attention	Selected pages from a real retailer catalogue	Study 1: 40 Study 2: 54
(Janssens, De Pelsmacker & Geuens, 2012)	Role of divided visual attention in the relationship between ad-webpage congruency, attitudes and click intentions	Experimental websites containing experimental ads	Study 1: 85 Study 2: 66 Study 3: 71
(Kuisma, Simola, Uusitalo, & Öörni., 2010)	Effects of banner animation and ad format on visual attention	Experimental replica of a consumer portal website containing ads	28
(Lee & Ahn, 2012)	Effects of animation on visual attention; effects of visual attention on memory and attitudes	Experimental replica of news portal websites containing experimental ads	118
(Lohse, 1997)	Effects of basic design characteristics on visual attention; role of visual attention in consumer behavior	Experimental replica of Yellow pages - viewed as a print book mounted on a holder on a computer screen	32
(Lohse & Wu, 2001)	Effects of basic design characteristics on visual attention; role of visual attention in consumer behavior	Same as above	64
(Marquart, Matthes, & Rapp, 2016)	Participants' selective exposure to political poster advertisements	On-screen political poster advertisements	57
(Maughan, Gutnikov, & Stevens, 2007)	Relationship between visual attention and attitudes	Picture of a street scene with bus shelter ads – viewed from the perspective of passing car on a computer screen	198
(Pieters, Rosbergen & Wedel, 1999)	Effects of advertising repetition on visual attention	Study 1: experimental magazine ads – individually viewed on a computer screen Study 2: magazine containing real ads – viewed on a touch-sensitive screen built into a table	Study 1: 68 Study 2: 118
(Pieters, Warlop, & Wedel, 2002)	Effects of advertising originality and familiarity on visual attention	Real magazines containing ads – viewed as a print copy fixed to the table	119
(Pieters & Wedel, 2004)	Effects of basic design features, product involvement, motivation and familiarity on visual attention	Real magazines containing ads - viewed on a touch-sensitive screen	3,600 ^b

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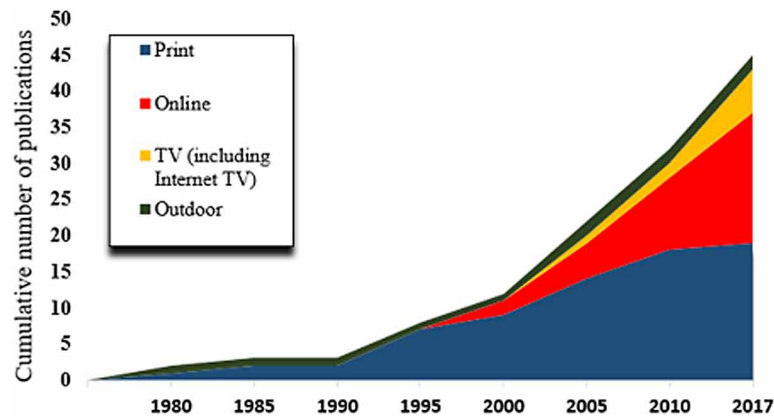
Table 1. Continued

Article	Focal Topic	Stimulus and Conditions of Exposure	Number of Participants
(Pieters, Wedel & Zhang, 2007)	Effects of competitive clutter on visual attention	Real newspapers containing supermarket ads – viewed on a computer screen	9,700 ^b
(Pieters & Wedel, 2007)	Effects of processing goals on visual attention	Real magazine ads - individually viewed on a touch-sensitive computer screen	220
(Pieters, Wedel, & Batra, 2010)	Effects of visual complexity on visual attention	Real magazines containing ads - viewed on a touch-sensitive computer screen	>3,500 ^b
(Rayner, Miller, & Rotello, 2008)	Role of processing goals in visual attention	Same as above	24
(Resnick & Albert, 2014)	Effects of online advertising location and user task on visual attention	Screenshots of a variety of real websites containing ads	30
(Rosbergen, Pieters, & Wedel, 1997)	Heterogeneity of visual attention across different consumer profiles	Experimental replica of a real magazine containing experimental ads for a real brand – viewed as a print copy mounted on a stand	115
(Russell, Swasy, Russell, & Engel, 2017)	Effect of positive facial expressions on consumers' understanding of the mandated health warning	Advertisements for a fictitious weight management drug	223
(Sajjacholapunt & Ball, 2014)	Effects of gaze cues from human models on visual attention	Experimental information webpages containing experimental ads	72
(Siefert et al., 2008)	Effects of fast-forwarding TV viewing on visual attention	Real TV show interrupted by real TV ads	100
(Simola, Kivikangas, Kuisma & Krause, 2013)	Effects of ad-editorial congruency and location on visual attention; relationship between visual attention and attitudes	Experimental newspaper pages with real ads from foreign countries	42
(Teixeira, Wedel, & Pieters, 2012)	Effects of emotional content on visual attention	Real online video ads embedded in webpages in the form of post-rolls automatically playing after a streaming video	58
(Wojdyski & Bang, 2016)	Effects of contextual advertising on online news processing	Online news story on a page containing three display advertisements	99

Source: The author

Figure 6. Evolution of the number of eye-tracking studies in advertising research

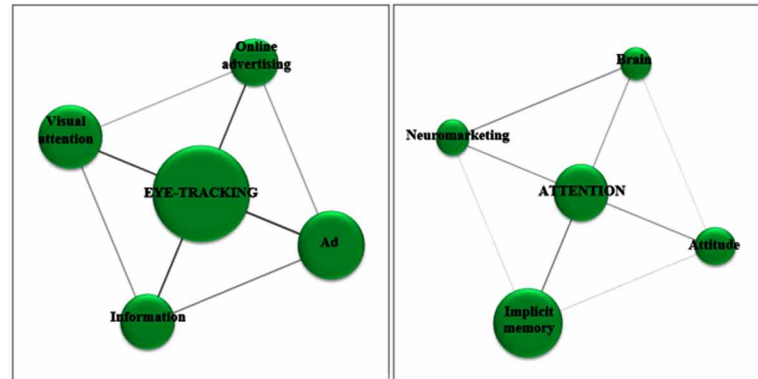
Source: The authors



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Figure 7. Keywords related with the motor-themes EYE-TRACKING and ATTENTION

Source: The authors



Overview of Eye-tracking Studies on the Effects of Visual Attention to Advertising and Storytelling

The current section includes an overview of eye-tracking studies on the determinants and effects of visual attention to advertising and storytelling (Table 1).

MAIN TOPICS IN NEWS MEDIA RESEARCH USING EYE-TRACKING

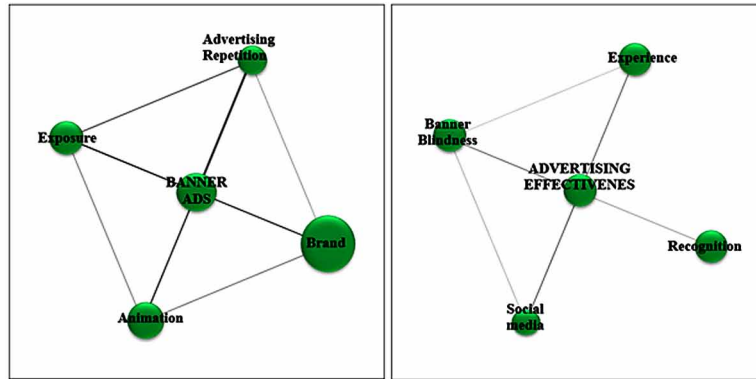
Despite the fact that numerous studies from a wide range of disciplines (marketing, economics, technology, environment, psychology and advertising) have assessed the main ideas in storytelling and advertising research by means of eye-tracking, there is little unanimity about its evolution, as well as about the main topics and relations between them. The current paper, therefore, gives an overview of the evolution of eye-tracking studies in advertising research and then focuses on the main relationships between research topics in storytelling media.

Evolution of Eye-Tracking Studies in Storytelling and Advertising Research

To assess the evolution of eye-tracking studies in storytelling, studies of eye-tracking published between 1984 and 2018 were included in our review, as the first eye tracking and advertising related studies dated back to that year (Young, 1984). Specifically, the investigations included in the review were identified according to their relevance to this focal question after searching the Web of Science database using the key words: “eye tracking / eye-tracking, advertising, advertising effectiveness”. Additionally, the selected studies were all published in peer-reviewed, English-language, Journal of Citation Report indexed journals.

The number of eye-tracking studies in the field of advertising has been growing faster in recent years, with the 2007-2018 period concentrating about 60% of the publications (Figure 6). The methodology has been applied to evaluate advertising effectiveness in the context of a variety of media platforms including print, television and online advertising.

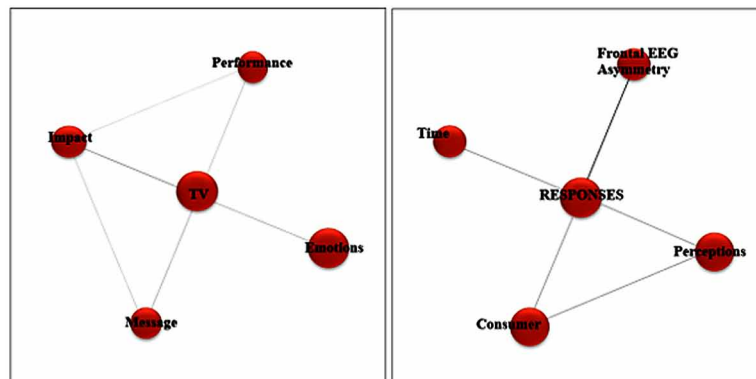
Figure 8. Keywords related with the motor-themes BANNERSADS and ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS
 Source: The authors



Relations Between Research Topics in Storytelling Media

The study then turns to the development of the most relevant thematic networks intended to clarify the relations among keywords and the most frequent themes in the use of eye-tracking when exploring advertising effectiveness. These led to several conclusions as to the most prevalent themes identified by the advertising effectiveness community. In these thematic networks, the size of the spheres is proportional to the number of papers corresponding to each keyword and the thickness of the link between two spheres i and j is proportional to the equivalence index e_{ij} (Cobo, López-Herrera, Herrera-Viedma, & Herrera, 2011). For the identification of the main themes and subthemes, the authors used the same co-word citation methodology and schemes as those suggested by Cobo et al. (2011) by means of the software Scimat.

Figure 9. Keywords related with the transversal themes TV and RESPONSES
 Source: The authors



Eye-Tracking and Attention

Eye-tracking is recently considered a *motor-theme* because of its importance in examining ad effectiveness. Particularly, recent research using eye-tracking has explored visual attention processes toward marketing information and, above all, those provoked by stimuli inserted in the online marketplace. Together with other tools analyzing brain activity or implicit memory (such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging), the use of eye-tracking in exploring attitudes and processes triggered by advertising is included in a recently developed area of marketing so-called neuromarketing or consumer neuroscience (Figure 7).

Banner Ads and Advertising Effectiveness

More specifically, animation stimuli, advertisements exposing brands or social media environments are recently gaining prominence in advertising effectiveness research that explores visual attention, recognition or experiences in consumers (Figure 8). They all are considered as motor themes with a high potential to be developed in prospect studies.

TV and Responses

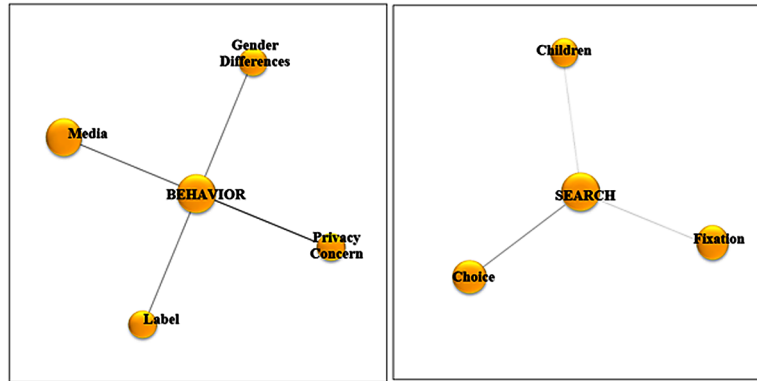
Figure 9 depicts two themes that, in spite of great relevance, have not received a high level of development in the field of advertising effectiveness and are considered basic or *transversal themes*. Most traditional eye-tracking studies have analyzed the impact and performance of messages included in TV commercials on consumer perceptions and emotions. More specifically, a great amount of studies have made use of common eye tracking measures, such as time to first fixation or fixation duration.

Behavior and Search

Due to their low levels of centrality and density, BEHAVIOR and SEARCH may be considered as *declining themes* in the most recent advertising effectiveness research that makes use of eye-tracking. Keywords associated with BEHAVIOR include the *gender differences* (as it constitutes a goal of studies using eye-tracking when examining attention toward advertising); *privacy concern* (derived from the use of eye-tracking to elucidate automatic responses in consumers); *label* and *media* (as traditional elements included in advertising). The SEARCH strategies carried out by *children* when exposed to advertising, their *fixation time* and their *choice* may also be considered as declining themes in this field.

Figure 10. Keywords related with the declining themes BEHAVIOR and SEARCH

Source: The authors

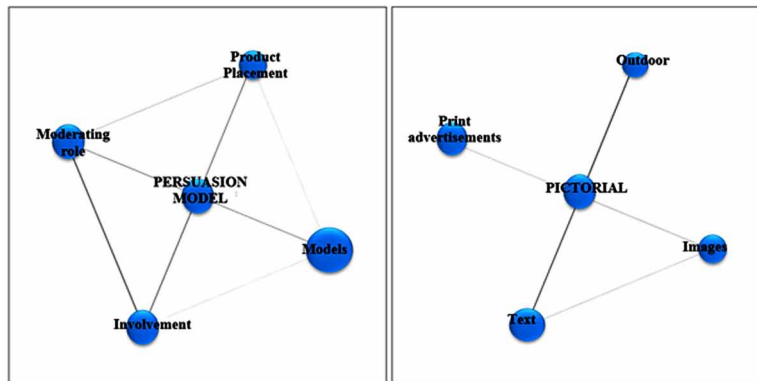


Persuasion Model and Pictorial

Figure 11 depicts two related themes that, in spite of great development, are just starting to gain relevance in the study of advertising effectiveness by means of eye-tracking. On the one hand, traditional literature in advertising effectiveness focused on the PERSUASION-KNOWLEDGE model as a framework that examines how people’s personal knowledge about persuasion agents’ goals affects their perceptions of advertisements. Along this line, eye-tracking experiments commonly investigate the influence of different ways of disclosing brand or product placements on viewers’ visual attention, the use of persuasion knowledge, and the moderator role of variables such as consumer involvement. Eye-tracking techniques have traditionally been applied to evaluate advertising effectiveness in the context of a variety of PICTORIAL platforms including print, television or advertising, apart from the recently investigated online ads.

Figure 11. Keywords related to the traditionally investigated MODEL and PICTORIAL

Source: The authors



FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Which Storytelling Features to Explore?

The outcome of the co-word analysis highlights the consolidation of banners ads and elements of social media as key themes in the evaluation of visual attention through eye-tracking. Eye-tracking research in this respect has evaluated consumer attention to price in social commerce (Menon, Sigurdsson, Larsen, Fagerstrøm, & Foxall, 2016) or consumer' search strategies in social media environments (Luan, Yao, Zhao, & Liu, 2016). These findings are consistent with the research priorities for 2018-2020 proposed by the Marketing Science Institute (2018) based on the huge investments of firms in advertising and an irreversible trend of online advertising.

Most of the traditional advertising and storytelling effectiveness research focused on analysing the effects of media elements inserted in print, or TV advertising on consumer attention, interest, likeability or emotions (Varan, Lang, Barwise, Weber, & Bellman, 2015). Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, (2015), for example, made use of eye-tracking to understand the effects of brand placement disclosure types in TV programmes. Previous studies also resorted to eye-tracking to assess the efficiency of information processing of television advertising during fast-forward viewing (Siefert et al., 2008).

The findings of the co-word analysis also reveal that topics such as the evaluation of visual attention to labels in children are losing prominence in the most recent studies. Along the same line, it appears that topics such as print advertisements, product placement or text constitute are over-studied topics in the field of advertising and storytelling through eye-tracking and, thus, it is no longer worth investigating them. Feiereisen, Wong and Broderick (2008), for example, investigated the relationship between visual attention and product comprehension in a TV environment. Similarly, Brasel and Gips (2008) evaluated the effects of fast-forwarding TV viewing on visual attention.

Limitations

Despite the fact that the current book chapter has shown the great advantages of using eye-tracking in the field of advertising, eye-tracking systems cannot:

1. Explain why respondents are looking at an object. They are capable of telling what they see, but not necessarily what they perceive.
2. Tell whether visual attention is accompanied by positive or negative emotional valence. The webcam-based systems are less accurate than in-lab solutions. They only record the center of our visual gaze (foveal vision), but not the periphery of our visual gaze (parafoveal vision).
3. Record neural or inner psychophysiological states, such as low-order emotions (anger, happiness or ambiguity) or electrical activity. These psychological tools may serve, unlike eye-tracking systems, to offer objective evidence of neural processing of advertising.

Future research is well positioned to use tools such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) or Electroencephalography (EEG) to assess the neural correlates of constructs serving as indicators of advertising message effectiveness, particularly emotion, attention, preference and memory (Langleben et al., 2009); to explore neural predictors of communication-relevant outcomes (Falk, Berkman, Mann,

Harrison, & Lieberman, 2010), or to evaluate the neural processing of media elements included in advertising (Casado-Aranda et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

From the marketing perspective, storytelling involves creating, through advertising and communication strategies, an image of the company, brand and products in order to make them different from those of the competition. Advertising literature has shown that good stories have a way of inspiring, entertaining, explaining and convincing, and can engage emotional, attentional and cognitive customers' schemes. This is the first research that defines and makes an overview of the evolution of eye-tracking systems in the field of advertising and storytelling. Particularly, the current chapter identifies the evolution of topics and relationships between them, within the field of advertising research. The current study therefore advances an agenda for future research and, therefore, constitutes a starting point for advertising academics and professionals intending to resort to eye-tracking techniques.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Consumer Neuroscience: The area of marketing that evaluates the neural and psychological mechanisms that trigger consumer behavior.

Eye-Tracking: A marketing technique that measures the movements of the eyes when following a moving object, the lines of printed text, or another visual stimulus.

Head-Mounted Eye-Tracker: An eye-tracking system that enables participants to move their heads freely during the experiments and interact naturally with the stimulus.

Persuasiveness: A combination of cognitive (attention, memory, and beliefs) and affective (emotional reactions) responses triggered in the individual by marketing stimuli.

Remote Eye-Tracker: An eye-tracking system that records eye movements from a distance and which are mounted close to a screen. They allow the participants to rest in front of the device without any kind of attachment.

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Self-Report Tools: Questionnaires, surveys, focus groups and other techniques employed in marketing to measure conscious reactions in consumers.

Social Desirability: The tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others.

Section 3

Visual Narratives: Showing as Telling

Chapter 10

Food and Mediations: Tales of Culinary Cultures and Punjabi Media Representation

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ABSTRACT

The chapter attempts to look at food and its representation in media with a special focus on Punjab and its cuisine. The work locates important symbols pertaining to the food culture of Punjab in sites such as cookbooks and cinema, which interestingly mix traditional with contemporary representations of material life. The first section looks at the cultural expressions of Punjabi cuisine in cookbooks against the backdrop of the history of Punjab, its ancient ties, and cultural affiliations of the past. Questions of caste, gastro-ethnicity, and stereotyping are also examined. The second section attempts to review select Bollywood films in order to cast light onto the contemporary socio-cultural conceptions of Punjabi culture. The study concludes by observing the ways in which food emerges as a commodity spectacle through stories and ideas on the food of Punjab. The work is carried out in order to exemplify the role of food in the creation of a cultural imaginary and explore the subtle connection that food and food culture share with the multiple intersections of an individual's identity.

INTRODUCTION

It should come as no surprise that food is invested with profound symbolic significance. This is well illustrated in our cultural coding of possible nutrition into acceptable food and subsequent categorizations that structure that food as edible or inedible (see Levi-Strauss, 1966; Mäkelä J, 2000). For, as famously argued by Roland Barthes (2013), food serves as a 'sign'—it is not only a useful lens and a remarkable tool to understand the nuances of a particular society, but is also the means for examining the construction of ideas, values, assumptions, practices, and institutions of a social group. For instance, the general semiotic properties of food as well as its important affective role through its classification in the traditional Hindu society was/is crucial in the examination of the caste system in India. Food transactions,

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much the same as preparation, distribution, and consumption of food, form an integral part of the moral and spiritual universe of the people in India (Appadurai, 1981). Indian food culture has been studied and understood through many parameters. There is a wide range of scholarship on Indian food which has examined food practices in India through the questions of identity, religion, ethnicity, regionalism, nationalism, colonialism, caste, class and gender. This is conspicuous in substantive literature which has examined food practices in India in relation to caste identity (Guru, 2009; Khare, 1992; Appadurai, 1981, 1988; Thorat and Lee, 2005; Freed, 1970; Iversen & Raghavendra, 2006; Mayer, 1997; Parry, 1999; Dixit, 2018; Beteille, 1997) and changes in food habits or dietary acculturation (Mahadevan and Blair, 2009). A study of food restrictions, asceticism, commensality (rules about 'interdining'), and social change has drawn the attention of many scholars like Adrian Mayer (1997), Stig Toft Madsen (1991), McKim Marriott (1968) and Stanley A. Freed (1970). However, a major focus of the literature on the food culture of India and commensality has come from sociology, anthropology and history. How food in its diverse functions can signal powerful social messages (Strauss, 1966) and mobilize strong emotions in different contexts has yet not been examined substantially from the media perspective. As yet, little attention has been given to locate food within the field of study that deals with the mediated experiences of food in the popular media. Therefore, a survey of its media representation as well as 'mediated' knowledge that it produces also forms an important area of investigation in social science research.

The study explores some interesting storytelling methods and techniques in media representation through which *Punjabi* foodways have been popularly discussed. E.N Enderson (2005), in his discussion on the constitution of foodways, talks about the importance of 'biocultural approach,' which incorporates human biology, culture, and political economy, all at once – recognizing that all are crucial determinants of particular food systems. His main argument, however, is that our food preferences are notoriously subjected to cultural and social factors, although our basic nutritional needs are set by biology and regulated by the environment. In agreement with this debate, the present work tries to locate how media invokes an experience of eating food, especially *Punjabi* food, which is dependent not only on the haptic sensitivity of the tongues and mouths but also on our olfactory abilities.

It can be noticed that the specific media uses various techniques—media techniques—like language, articulation, visuals, spatial arrangements, gestures, and performance to deliver the meaning or taste of food. Also, media produces a set of new parameters, ideas, taste, behaviors, etc. to food, which on the one hand is specific to media but on the other hand also relates to the question of consumer culture and production of a new set of values, taste, ideas about people, class, and region. Therefore the study would like to contextualize various food and media practices to understand how media appropriates the ethnic cuisine or a *Punjabi* recipe to induce new ideas about food and its consumption patterns.

This work is primarily about mediations of socio-cultural tropes of Punjab, which has been analyzed through its distinct cuisine and foodways. It further explores the manner in which *Punjabi* food is semanticized in media weaving a complex web of stories on *Punjabi* identity. *Punjabi* cuisine and its representation in two important media sites, cookbooks and cinema, have been chosen as the fulcrum of study. This is mainly because it is in these media sites that the socio-cultural importance of food (traditional as well as contemporary) can be located. Cookbooks tell us about consumption practices and food tastes popularized by the name of *Punjabi* cuisine. Movies tell us about the popular representation of regional identity and issues of stereotyping in media.

The significance of analyzing media platforms like cookbooks and cinema for the discussion on the process of mediation lies in their uniqueness, affordances, and biases, which may reduce or amplify the effect of representation. The study, while explores the mediation of food of Punjab (i.e., exploration of

Punjabi food via particular media), also finds it important to insist that media do have some qualities or formal attributes that also condition their social potentials (McLuhan, 1964). In other words, it is worthwhile to note how the sensory properties of media can influence the patterns of sociality. McLuhan discusses how any kind of medium holds the capacity to alter the patterns of interdependence among people. He mainly argues for our sensory engagement with media (which he calls an extension of man) and their social implications and effects. Therefore, the broader questions that the study would like to pose deal with the production of aspects or specificities in media channels (like visuals, rhetoric, sound, usage of the body, etc.), which contributes to the production of cultural identity and regional subjectivity. A few questions that are critical for this study are: (a) How food emerges as a contested site in its media production and creates the idea of subjectivity? (b) How the assimilation of media technology and cultural signifiers produce new sensibilities for our understanding of food? This paper, for instance, looks at how cookbooks and cinema as a genre, create our knowledge of taste, ethnicity, gender, caste, class, power, and other aspects. How do these channels have appropriated ‘*Punjabi*’ and produced knowledge of the food? How does the appropriation of stories and myths related to India and Punjab, in particular, have attempted to build a narrative of *Punjabi* food? It looks at how media emerges as an inventive or a generative site that brings together notions on caste, class, gender, space, the environment of a studio, body, and bodily gestures to construct a set of knowledge on *Punjabi* food.

Further, when the representation of *Punjabi* identity through food is discussed, its significance is not merely about the appearance of the social groups who evoke a notion about Punjab but also about the substance of ideas, stereotypes, and opinions invoked about that group, community or culture. For instance, the display of food in films or cookbooks on the cuisine of Punjab is also a mental construct produced via a process of perception, using representational features such as visuals, colors, sounds, music, lighting, and shading. The photographs, sounds, color combinations, style of written codes, and quality of printing paper adds to the sensorial qualities of films and cookbooks, which mediate socio-cultural experiences for the audience. We can, therefore, argue that although representations tend to reflect the ideological positions of the times in which they have been created, what is essential to highlight is that they tend to elicit certain stereotypes or give rise to specific socio-cultural ideas held for an ethnic group.

The research follows critical discourse analysis (CDA) and textual analysis in investigating the operations of texts, their constructions, the ways they produce meanings, and what those meanings may be. Apart from looking at some linguistic features under the purview of ‘discourse as a text,’ it also analyzes choices and patterns in text structure, cohesion, grammar, and vocabulary. Data is collected from print as well as digital media, which is analyzed for visuals, rhetoric, and sounds that are used as storytelling methods to weave a narrative around culinary trends in Punjab.

COOKBOOKS ON PUNJABI CUISINE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL MEDIATIONS

Cookbooks on regional cuisines are an exciting new source of information on a particular food system. Not only does it reveal the distinct culinary knowledge of a region but its rich cultural history, which has also expanded the gastronomical tastes of its people. They are thus important ‘social’ texts that describe the dynamics and tensions of culinary culture and particular traditions that are associated with it (Appadurai, 1988). Jack Goody (1982), in his phenomenal *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class* also argues that cookbooks can be the reflection of rooted social discrepancies like class and hierarchy that are exercised via culinary traditions in society. Cookbooks, in this sense, are useful vehicles for the study of the

transmission of information regarding what Appadurai (1988) calls “structure of domestic ideologies,” practiced through the culinary practices of a group.

Popularisation of *Punjabi* cooking in cookery books is extolled as fine art, something that also upholds the complex cultural compass orienting food practices. Even as *Punjabi* cuisine became more diverse and readily available within and outside India, its representation in media is seen to be impregnated with archaic yet insightful motifs. For instance, culinary nostalgia is the chief motif that is quite conspicuous in the food memoirs of those who have been spatially and temporally displaced from the geographical borders of Punjab. Indian migrants’ stories about food are generally inspired by mourning the loss of ‘the way they would eat back home,’ blended with the sense of exile that many experiences in their transplanted home (Baviskar, 2019). Three cookbooks, *The Land of Five Waters, Amritsar: Flavours of the Golden City* and *Menus and Memoirs from Punjab* are plush with photographs of the authors’ families, relatives, friends, and some famous tourist spots in India. The idea is just not to revive some old memories through the selective publication of personal photographs but also the construction of nostalgia through the ‘medium’ of pictures. In simple terms, it just not deals with the materiality of objects (like family bonding) that it represents but the materiality of the medium itself, “the material support, the medium’s embeddedness within particular material circumstances, and its material ramifications” (Brown, 2010, p. 50). The photograph as a medium is not merely a channel of communication, but an object endowed with structural autonomy, especially when seen in tandem with another linguistic structure, namely the text, title, caption or article accompanying every photograph. Their autobiographical musings and anecdotal stories all connected to ethnically coded comestibles, such as *Makki di Roti* and *Sarson da Saag* (mustard greens popularly served with maize flour flatbreads) and *Tandoori Murgha* (chicken roasted in a clay oven known as *tandoor*) are not simply about longing for palatal pleasures, but it’s capacity to evoke a myth about historical Punjab. Now, there are various and divergent contours to the development of this myth, which we will discuss shortly. This section, therefore, tries to look at the format of contemporary cookbooks on *Punjabi* cuisine and cultural signifiers present therein that have not only appropriated the idea of *Punjabi* in building narratives through food but also produced knowledge on ‘authentic’ *Punjabi* food.

These cookbooks, like specific cuisine-based restaurants on foreign land, also have a unique capacity to unify populations on conscious and unconscious, popular, and private levels (Gabaccia & Helstosky, 1998, p. 7). It can, therefore, be argued that food, in this way, becomes a politically charged tool for the *Punjabi* diaspora, both from the gastronomical and culinary point of view as well as ways in which food helps them to assert their ethnic identity on foreign land. Authors and compilers of these cookbooks are active agents in the recasting of culinary traditions to fit new contexts (Gabaccia & Helstosky, 1998, p. 14), thereby recasting new history in the food system of Punjab. Take for instance, Tarla Dalal’s section on pickles, which she calls ‘*Dadi Maa Ke Aachar*’ (pickles from the grandmother) is an attempt to relate the process of pickling with old and traditional. The title of one of the *Punjabi* cookery books, *Bebe di Rasoi* (Mother or Grandmother’s kitchen), written by Oberoi, also pays testimony to the fact that the attraction of regional cooking in Punjab is tied to how grandmothers traditionally prepared food using ‘natural’ ingredients. It is worth noticing how cookbooks record the traditional knowledge of women in Punjab and code them in different semantic codes that indicate the power dynamics between men and women. The written recipes serve in part to fill the gap created by the absence of ‘Bebe’ or ‘Daadi Maa’ (who has been left behind in the village or the town) by giving the possibility of the easy and inexpensive resort to traditional dishes. In fulfilling this function, the cookbooks are also instrumental in extending the range of *Punjabi* cuisine as well as that of a particular individual. The endeavor is to show that the

traditional manner of cooking is antique as well as highly regarded, and writing about it in print media (such as cookbooks) only “transformed the esoteric into the quotidian.”

Coming back to the idea of construction of narratives and evoking a myth in media about the Punjab region, there are some elements that are popularly harped on - the fertility of the land, flourishing agronomy, vibrant and rich food, religious diversity, spirited folk dances, warmth and hospitality, and joyful, carefree attitude of its people. One such yet another notion prevalent in media is that the region is characterized by abundance. The fertility and richness of land accentuated by its five rivers (now divided between India and Pakistan) are also reflected in the representation of its cuisine. An attempt to reify a culture so rich and opulent has been made through the explicit usage of signifiers such as lush green fields, thriving agriculture, abundantly present milk, butter, and *ghee* (clarified butter). Food and agrarian products, perhaps one of the most important components of *Punjabi* material life, find representation in *Punjabi* literature, folklore, art, traditions, and even liturgy chiefly because agriculture has largely been the way of life for people in Punjab. Given how the greater region of undivided Punjab has historically been the melting pot of different cuisines, it's contemporary representation in media is mostly a delicate balance of rusticity and ostentatious living. One may likewise also find instances where cooking in Punjab is shown akin to what Roland Barthes has called ‘ornamental cooking’ where the emphasis is overtly on presentation, glaze, and shine of the printing paper. Such signifiers and symbols of food are also critical pointers to get an inkling of the depth of building a narrative in media around difference and distinction in terms of caste, class, ethnicity, taste, and gender vis-a-vis what constitutes *Punjabi*.

This section analyses some commercial cookery books on *Punjabi* cuisine. These are created and composed by some leading chefs and culinary aficionados like Vikas Khanna, Jiggs Kalra, and Sanjeev Kapoor and many candid writers who simply have a penchant for *Punjabi* food. The genre of these books ranges from autobiographically organized cookery books to traditional recipe books. The authors, who are mainly male chefs, use elements like memories, nostalgia, familiarity, conjugal relations, and ethnicity to weave a story about the richness of *Punjabi* culture through the food. It is interesting to note that cooking, which has traditionally been associated with women in India, is being re-constituted in the domain of ‘professional cooking’ to produce ideas on authority over the representation of *Punjabi* culture. In contrast, the South Asian notion of motherhood and womanhood is closely tied to the ideal of *Annapurna*—the unfailing supplier of food (Dube, 1997, p. 139), which gives a lucid overview of Indian norms on cooking being popularly identified with women. However, the central idea is to recognize how the format of cookbooks dictates on presentation of *Punjabi* cuisine using elements such as gender to weave a story about the same.

The recipes in some books are organized around main courses starting with appetizers and soups, then entrée and a separate section for beverages, condiments, and desserts. The format is slightly unusual because meals in India normally do not have such a sequential dimension - a common feature that is generally associated with European table service. Representation of a full course *Punjabi* meal in cookery books is not without good concerns with the ‘embeddedness’ of economic behavior (Polanyi, 1944; Granovetter, 1985; Bourdieu, 2005). All this points towards how cooking as an economic activity is not isolated from the cultural influences of the Indian diaspora and larger audience in the west, which is the potential audience of Indian food. The packaging of *Punjabi* cuisine in a western *design* suggests probable differences that exist between how meals are generally served in *Punjabi* households and the way it is perceived through media for the consumption practices.

Notwithstanding full European influence on the food culture of Punjab, names of various dishes like *Amritsari Macchi* (fish) enlisted in these cookbooks, however, do reveal their specific local origins.

Punjab's oscillation between its nation-state and global city habitus, together with their symbiotic relationship and resultant cultural ethos, has thus made an authentic identity of *Punjabi* cuisine somewhat elusive. As an example, one may notice that most cookbooks on *Punjabi* cuisine are clearly *designed* for the Anglophone audience as they are written in English and not in the Gurmukhi script of *Punjabi* language. Thus, we see how the symbolic power of the choice of language (English or *Punjabi*), tone of communication (nostalgic, wistful, histrionic, etc.) and literacy has played a strategic role in the production of national imaginary and its values through media. The premise is the same line of thought that is derived from Arjun Appadurai (1988), who argues that cookbooks are a feature of literate civilizations. He examines how cooking derives the quality of expert knowledge, which can be communicated as opposed to trends in oral societies. He further argues that since royal or aristocratic classes could afford lavish cuisines and had access to the special resources required for the production and consumption of written texts, the historical impetus for the development of the earliest cookbooks seem to have come from them.

Similarly, while describing the nature of written recipes, Goody (2008) has argued that cookbooks teach behavioral aspects of the courtly class as well as *bourgeois gentilhomme* by exercising a different kind of "normative pull" upon its readers. An analysis of the character of recipes that are enlisted in *Punjabi* cookery books also highlights the 'classed' tone in which taste for *Punjabi* food has been cultivated through the symbolic dominance of a few food items over other comestibles. Many recipes evoke Punjab as a culture of abundance. The predominance of butter, *ghee* (clarified butter) and cream characterize the *Punjabi* culinary with the public display of richness. Some well-known dishes in these cookbooks such as *Shahi* (royal) *Paneer*, *Shahi Dal* (royal lentil curry), *Shahi Tukda* (a dessert), *Ranjit Shahi Paneer* (named after Ranjit Singh, the prince of Punjab), *Mallai* (creamy) *Kofta*, *Palak Mallai Kofta*, *Malai Kulfi* (a creamy sorbet), *Kulfi Badshahi* (kingly), *Kesarwale* (saffron) *Paneer Kofte*, *Dal Makhani* (buttery lentil soup), *Mallai Masala Murgh*, *Cream Chicken*, *Butter Naan*, *Patialashahi Meat* (from the royal house of Patiala), *Murg Mallai Tikka* and the legendary *Butter Chicken* showcase the indisputable association of Punjab with opulence and supremacy of taste. Usage of *Desi Ghee* (clarified butter) is indispensable to the representation of cooking of Punjab. Its consumption is represented to be affiliated with strength, vigor, health, and prosperity. Repeated reference to *Desi Ghee* and it being regularly photographed along with other dairy products lies in the fact that these are the 'veritable symbols' (Barthes, 1977, p. 22). These food products are excellent elements of signification – firstly, as argued by Appadurai (1986) they have a social life of their own, a physical qualification for a sign, and secondly, they refer to clear, familiar signifieds such as strength and virility.

Apart from that, gender, ethnicity, caste, class, and status, are examples of issues that prominently, albeit indirectly, contributes to the production of knowledge on *Punjabi* cuisine through media. As we discussed previously that while cooking at home has historically been done by women in India but never seen as a 'real job,' professional kitchens are mostly male-dominated who are recognized as chefs and not 'home cooks.' The practice is even conspicuous in the large number of cookery books on *Punjabi* cuisine authored by males and very few by female connoisseurs. All of this discussion, however, is not without an element of power, which is exercised in a subtle manner. Absorbing Foucauldian insights, the analyses argue that the reverberations of the dominant culture can explicitly be felt in the media representation of *Punjabi* food, where eating trends of the marginals (like tribals and religious minorities) do not find even the slightest recognition. A study of the social background of authors who have composed a majority of the cookbooks on *Punjabi* cuisine will also corroborate this logic. It was observed that almost all writers either by descent or through their marital status belong to the upper strata - the lineage

of *Hindu Khatri*s, *Brahmins*, or *Jat* Sikhs. The art of exquisite cooking has traditionally been associated with ‘cultural capital’ for upper castes in India. These aspects of food, mainly the ones concerning social relations and sociality around food, are important in our discussion on how media produce connotations conducive to stories about *Punjabi* food culture. The construction of culturally specific meanings of foods in India and its fundamental interlinkage with the principle of purity and pollution is deeply embedded in the caste hierarchy (Marriott, 1968; Dumont, 1970). How the substance of food can signify caste order is evident in the selection of recipes put together under the banner of the cuisine of Punjab.

There is only a single reference to pork curry, ‘Raadhiya Hoya Shikhar’ in Lali Nayar’s *Taste of Punjab: Famous for Tandoori Dishes* (1995, p. 45) leaving which it is unusual to cite pork in *Punjabi* cuisine, as usually seen. While it is not uncommon for many marginal communities in Punjab to consume pork, it has rarely been attributed to Punjab’s culinary lore. Cheaper meats such as beef and pork, generally speaking, are proscribed for upper-castes in India (Baviskar, 2019). Slaughtering of pigs and especially cow is considered a stigmatized practice among the upper-caste Hindus who can be reprimanded for it. Similarly, hunting and eating of quails and other game birds was/is quite prevalent in the villages of Punjab (Nayar, 1995, p. 41). But it is not very often now that we find its representation in media or even a slight mention of it in connection with famous foods of Punjab, especially after the state put a ban on its hunting. Therefore, one can see how social meanings inherent in the acts of cooking, consumption practices as well as their representation in media is majorly derived from the institutionalization of certain food practices and foods of the dominant caste groups and the royal aristocratic class of Patiala dynasty of Punjab.

Lastly, there are symbols of foods that are culturally loaded and can reasonably be instrumental in the construction of connotations. A lot of delicacies enlisted in these books show a clear link with the Arab world, Iran, and Central Asia. *Tandoor* (clay oven), *Pindi Channa* and *Cholle* (chickpeas), *Roomali Roti* (a bread which is handkerchief thin), *Kebābs* (roasted minced meat), *Tikka* (boneless pieces of roasted meat or cottage cheese), *Pulāo* (rice with assorted vegetables and dry fruits) and desserts like *Halwa*, *Phirni*, *Morabba* (fruit preserve) and *Faluda Kulfi* (Noodle Sorbet, *Paloodeh Shirazi* in Persian) are the prevalent gastronomic gems of *Punjabi* cuisine which reflect historical shades of assimilation with the Middle East and Central Asia. The dishes prepared in a clay oven called *tandoor* has a Semitic origin as its archaeological remains have been found in the Middle East, Central Asia, Northern India, North Africa, and along the Mediterranean coast (Pasqualone, 2018). The foods and signifieds carefully chart how the historical exchange between cultures has shaped the process of culinary inclusion from far-flung places to the manufacturing of de facto ‘authentic’ *Punjabi* cuisine.

The cookbooks are also infused with a reminiscence of undivided Punjab and the emergence of *dhaba* culture. The long-standing contribution of Pakistan in the enrichment of present-day *Punjabi* cuisine is reflected through the ‘choice of words’ used to refer to *Punjabi* food items in these cookbooks. For instance, *Meat Belli Ram* is a lamb delicacy that has derived this distinct name for being a tribute to one of Lahore’s famous chef, Belli Ram, who once created the dish (Kalra & Gupta, 2017, p. 96). The *dhaba* culture is also believed to have originated from undivided Punjab. The phenomenon of ‘restauratization’ was popularized by the opening of a string of *dhabas*, especially when thousands of *Punjabi* Hindus and Sikhs scampered towards India after partition (Kalra & Pant, 2004, p. xiii). These refugees set up small eateries on road highways catering to the nourishment needs of travelers and drivers by serving them home-like food at an affordable price. The post-partition phase in India seems to have transformed the *dhaba* culture if not propagate its origin.

Punjabi, like other regionalities in India, belongs to a certain axis of ethnicity, and in semiotics, the reconstitution of such axes will only be possible if a massive inventory of the systems of connotation has been carried out (Barthes, 1977). *Desi Ghee*, for example, signifies *Punjabi* by metonymy, and it is metonymy that furnishes the image with the greatest number of its connotations through the usage of different substances such as language and images. For the sign, *Makki di Roti* and *Sarson da Saag* gives not simply the name of the dish but also, by its assonance, an additional signified, that of *Punjabi*. Similarly, there are some more such signifiers that symbolize opulence and abundance in relation to Punjab through food. The menu card presented to the diners who visit the kitchens and dining area of Baradari Palace in *Patiala* (an erstwhile princely state in India) has an implicit photograph of King Bhupinder Singh dining with a group of aristocrats. The picture is accompanied by the text “The Royal Glutton,” – picturizing the king as a hefty eater that he was. It further says that “he would have twenty-four egg omelet for breakfast with four to five liters of milk. Then for lunch, he ate soup made out of the stock of twenty- five snipes. Forty to fifty boneless quails formed his pre-dinner snack with his infamous Patiala Peg!”

The acts of gluttonizing and holding grand feasts surely had a clear association with abundance and royalty. The princely performance is not very different from what Dipesh Chakrabarty’s work on the culture of British jute mill managers in Bengal shows. Jayanta Sengupta (2010) mentions in his paper that Dipesh Chakravorty has suggested that to maintain physical superiority over the Indian workers, the British contained an element of spectacle as an important aspect in their eating rituals. Such ostentatious eating habits practiced by the British and the erstwhile aristocratic class were deployed as the cultural markers of class superiority over the commons. Appadurai (1988) argues that the ‘high’ cuisines have always have tried to distance themselves from their local food culture through the usage of spectacle and ostentatious display of food. This is perhaps a powerful way through which the difference between ‘high’ and ‘low’ cuisines, between court/elite food and peasant food, was maintained (Appadurai, 1988, p. 290). Apart from the latent endeavor towards the maintenance of class and status through elaborate food practices, these also served as a metaphor for masculinity (especially through flesh-eating) and physical superiority of the elite. The phenomenon is very much in consonance with Bourdieu’s (1984) related claim in *distinction* that engagement in symbolic qualities associated with dining seeks to establish an exclusive and superior taste. These qualities were quite discernible as the food culture, dietary habits and table manners of the elite in Punjab seemed to have valued symbolism more than anything else.

The concept of power can lastly be explored through the structural dimensions of cookbooks, which describe them as ‘instructional texts’ because they give not only a detailed account of the ‘correct’ way of cooking but also consuming the food. Cookbooks are, after all, the voice of authority for a literate audience, and recipes are the directions for detailed behavior (Neuhaus, 1999, p. 547). The argument discusses how the ‘scientific spirit’ (Goody, 2008, p. 87) of cookbooks where each recipe accompanies exact measurements and precise directions offers less scope for substitution and improvisation in its components and procedures. The ethnographic reading of these texts also points towards how cookbooks proceed to develop *various styles* that legitimize our way of thinking, feeling, and believing about *Punjabi* culture. This leads us to suggest a genre of the power play that the content of cookery books exercises upon its audience.

Lastly, these cookbooks are also infused with the ‘civilizational attributes’ (Sengupta, 2010, p. 97) of food and associated ‘veritable symbols’ (Barthes, 1977, p. 22), which are unique elements of signification. The idea majorly flagged off is how media representation of cooking and eating of *Punjabi* food can transcend their basic functionality and become cultural practices with strong ideological content.

TALES OF FOOD ON THE BIG SCREEN: ARTICULATING *PUNJABI* IDENTITY

The discussion which follows explores the story of *Punjabi* cuisine as constructed in Bollywood cinema. Scenes which were related to food like the ones shot in kitchen, cafe or on dining table were of utmost concern to this section. While the signifiers of food were studied in tandem with its symbolic relevance, the issues of stereotyping, their representation and mediation of ideas that they possibly incite were also looked for. Some pertinent approaches which have built the foundation for cinematic interpretation in this section include the nature of communication that takes place among characters over food, their consumption pattern and the types of food that they eat.

Bollywood cinema is infused with the depiction of food, its signifiers, and symbolization. It represents not only Indian culinary traditions but also multinational, multicultural and diverse dietary range which exists for different people in different social settings. Every symbol or sign associated with food is impregnated with wider political, historical and socio-cultural ideas in its implications. A conversation which is shown to have happened over beverages like tea, coffee or beer varies not only in its genre but also mood and emotion that it wants to convey to the audience. Purpose of building a narrative around drinking of tea, coffee or beer is just not to make representation seem more quotidian but also suggest deeper meanings that the consumption of a particular beverage adds to our understanding of the social world. For instance, *Punjabi* men are generally shown to have a drink either alone or in the company of other men, the idea which is tethered to their public leisure and brotherhood (Sehgal, 2018). The cinematic representation not only reflects specific gender role socialization that occurs through consumption of liquor but also reconfirms to the idea that it is not conventional for women in *Punjabi* culture to drink alcohol. Representation of alcohol consumption presumably mediates to add different meanings to the existing phallogocentric cultures. Food and beverages, in that sense, navigate to add different socio-cultural meanings to the representation. Take another example of drinking tea or coffee which often mediates to lighten the atmosphere and facilitate conversation about complex yet important things. It mediates provision of time and space for people to come together on a common platform where they can talk and communicate their ideas or simply contemplate. Representation of coffee has relatively been lesser than *chai* (tea) in *Punjabi* households. Drinking of coffee and its representation in cinema comes with a context to a particular class and status. Vijay (Rajkumar Rao) calls Rani (Kangana Ranaut) to a cafe to inform her of his decision to call off their wedding in movie *Queen* (2014). He confidently tells her that his upgraded status and lifestyle is no more compatible with her 'unpolished' living. In that particular scene, Vijay drinks 'black coffee,' puts on sunglasses and abandons her with total impunity. The scene is symbolic of his newly acquired tastes and an attempt to move up in a class by discarding older manners.

Although cultural significance of food items in cinema and subjective vision of spectators define the verisimilitude associated with perspectival construction among the audience it is also interesting to observe the capacity and ability of cinema as a medium which can arbitrate to bring forth something new, unusual and striking through the depiction of food items in Bollywood films. For instance, the technicalities of cinema like sound, image, lightning arrangement and representational techniques or effects further add to the logic of mediation and storytelling methods. As commonly depicted, beating of *dhol* (a barrel shaped drum) and playing other folk instruments like *algoza* (wooden flutes), *chimta* (a percussion instrument made with two long and flat pieces of metal) and *tumbi* (a string instrument) acts as a prologue to the display of *Punjabi* culture on screen. It is in this context that we will study how the identity of *Punjabi* cuisine is constructed through representation of food in films, and argue that memories of *Punjabi* culture become an essential component of the visual perception of the spectators.

One may observe that films commonly depict *Punjabi* people as bold, large hearted and happy-go-lucky. Such typecasting of characters to recreate an imagined world depicting *Punjabi* culture is carried through specific visual narratives, something that tries to emulate (also recreate) popular perception about the community. As an example, to have served *lassi* (a beverage made with yogurt) or put an extra dollop of *ghee* (clarified butter) onto one's *roti* (flatbread) or *daal* (lentil curry) which is considered a mark of hospitality in *Punjabi* culture, is a recurring and also stereotyped theme in films. Depiction of *lassi*, *ghee*, etc. is popularly represented in the cinema where emotions concerning purity in love, care, warmth, and generosity have to be communicated.

Contemporary cinema uses different visual and narrative techniques to re-constitute cultural notions about *Punjabi* community through means/ indicators – such as name, skin color, body, accoutrement, occupation, language, accent, housing, eating style, choice of foods, and behavior in general. Inclusion or exclusion of these aspects in cinematic representation of an identity can play a significant role in the preservation and reproduction of the collective historical consciousness and memory of the spectators (Parayil, 2014). How Bollywood cinema as a ‘pedagogical resource’ is able to communicate and mediate ideas concerning gastro-politics, ethnicity, multiculturalism, nationalism, and stereotypes through the agency of food is therefore an interesting area for investigating the formation of a generalized cultural memory. For instance, the way a camera discerns infinitesimal cultural signs that would allow us to glimpse through the things which go unnoticed in our day to day lives is a meaningful mediation through cinema. Drinking morning tea, chopping vegetables, setting the dinner table, packing a lunch box, rolling *chapattis* (flatbreads), serving food and cleaning of dishes are some usual practices associated with culinary traditions of a society. Sometimes the exercise becomes too banal to be noticed. It is normally seen that for women in India, in particular, it is a part of their everyday routine to cook and serve the family – something which is widely represented in cinema and exist in the cultural memory of the spectators too. It is in this context that the potential of cinema is recognized to have not only sculpted human emotions by doubling the intensity of the spectator's intellectual and sentimental gaze but also redefine the cultural and social norms upon which its portrayals are based. By corroborating to the existing culinary traditions and associated socio-cultural realities, it reinforces the authenticity of representation and propels the continuation of the same. The representation is both the record and an active process of struggle to reactivate the past from the fragments of an available image. In other words, images exist to corroborate socio-cultural accounts but also to push continuation of the social structure that cultivates those accounts. How *Punjabi* identity has been re-formulated through the depiction of culinaria in cinema is commonly done by insertion of culturally validated signifiers such as *tandoor* and *dhabha*, is one such example. *Dhabha* is an important culinary site to represent accessibility of simple, homemade food often cooked in a *tandoor*. It is also used to mediate qualities such as simplicity, traditional and rusticity over luxurious dining. *Tandoor*, and its popular use in *dhabhas* is actually a cultural symbol for those who migrated from their land when Punjab was divided in 1947. As previously discussed, popularization of *dhabas* in contemporary India is a corollary to the expansion of national highways. Many roadside restaurants, *dhabas*, motels, and inns have sprung up along NH routes. They cater to the basic needs of travelers, truck drivers, and other motorists. *Dhabas* situated on highways are mostly truck stops and specialize in serving local homemade food at an affordable price. *Tandoor*, on the other hand has historically marked a cultural space for the women in villages of Punjab. In the past, they would come together at the community oven, called *Sanjha Chulha* to get their *rotis* (flatbreads) baked and chitchat with fellow matrons. In present times, *tandoor* is a striking feature of *Punjabi* cuisine although historical evidence suggests that it was transported from Central Asian countries (Pasqualone, 2018).

Food and Mediations

Its popular representation in media and assorted *Punjabi* delicacies made in the furnace is symbolic of rustic yet exquisite food developed from rich culinary traditions—a creolized outgrowth influenced by Iran, Central Asia and the Arab world.

Further, we will look at some sites such as breakfast and dinner table which allows us to look into the ideas about food culture and society of *Punjabi* people. Garrick Mallery (1888) argues that a well-organized dinner which is thorough in cookery, esthetic appliances, and culinary chemistry affords the strongest evidence of high civilization. He says, “Brutes feed. The best barbarian only eats. Only the cultured man can dine” (Mallery, 1888, p. 195). What he means to say is that dinner is not just a meal but an institution which reveals the cultural sophistication of a particular society. To start with he cites examples of how regular hours for meals were not observed in ancient times. “The avocations on which subsistence depended were spasmodic, at least in success, or periodic, in terms of seasons, not hours” (Ibid). He argues that the invention of tools to eat and division of the day into regular eating hours, as well as the division of labor to cook, can be traced in the history of civilization. Mallery’s argument is predominantly Eurocentric but contextually essential to our discussion of *Punjabi* cuisine, as the analysis of the manner of eating and the food being consumed reveal a wealth of meanings, values, and messages about its folklore. For instance, the popularity of *tandoori* cuisine in Punjab and its depiction in media also indicates the historical and gradual shift of *Punjabis* from hunting and harvesting to agriculture. From the cultivation of cereals to its transformation into flour and finally, baking of the flatbread in a *tandoor* or hot plate over the skillet also marks the culinary sophistication of Punjab.

Regular hours of eating organized around breakfast, lunch, and dinner are articulated through the choice of foods made by characters in films. Analysis of arrangement of breakfast table and genre of conversation that takes place over the meal reveals much about social structure and family values absorbed by the characters in films. However, having breakfast with family, especially on a table, is not depicted in films whose plots have been set in rural Punjab. The portrayals tell us that it is mostly an urban phenomenon. One of the most common breakfast meals in *Punjabi* households is *parantha* and curd. It is so archetypal of Punjab that in the film *Singh is Kinng* (2008), Happy (Akshay Kumar) tells Sonia’s fiancée (Ranvir Shorey) to have *paranths* as these are the ‘national breakfast of Punjab.’ In *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, Anjali (Kajol), while talk big of Indian culture, serves her husband (Shahrukh Khan) a *parantha* for breakfast. A neighbor’s daughter, who is English and shares a breakfast table with them, is purposely given cornflakes. The breakfast table, in this case, is an interesting site in the film because it marks how a *Punjabi* diasporic family negotiates with their traditional values in an English city like London. The eating of *parantha* has generally been represented in association with older or middle-aged people. Be it *Daadi* (Sushma Seth) in *Kal Ho Na Ho*, *Dadu* (Rishi Kapoor) in *Kapoor and Son*, Rahul (Shahrukh Khan) in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* or *Bauji* (Rishi Kapoor) in *Patiala House*; they are either shown to be eating it with curd or demanding one for it. But in *Rang De Basanti*, Daljit Singh alias DJ (Aamir Khan) and his group of young friends savor the traditional *Punjabi* breakfast at Mitro’s (Kirron Kher, DJ’s mother) *Punjabi dhabha*. She prepares *paranths* with *desi ghee* and serves *lassi* to all of them. The nature of the conversation that takes place over their breakfast is of specific interest because it talks about the *Jallianwala Bagh* Massacre, *Punjabi* culture, and the spirit of being *Punjabi*. Playing upon motifs of *parantha*, curd, *lassi* or buttermilk, *ghee*, *dal*, *roti*, and *sabzi* as quintessential *Punjabi* and their representation in media is closely been tied to the idea of peasant’s food in Punjab and rusticity.

Dairy products have a special significance in the culture of Punjab. Milch animals like cows and buffaloes are especially domesticated by some people at their dairy farms. Milk, butter, curd, buttermilk, *lassi*, and *ghee* are considered rich foods, also staple to many people’s diet in Punjab. It can be argued

that the political economy of dairy foods in the region of Punjab is possibly the primary factor that has put these foods on a pedestal.

To serve the guests an extra glass of *lassi* or to put an extra dollop of *ghee* onto one's *roti* or *daal* is considered a mark of hospitality. This is even represented in the cinema where emotions concerning love, care, warmth, and generosity have to be communicated. In movies such as *Jab We Met*, which showcase a grand and splendid display of *Punjabi* culture, we see how Aditya (Shahid Kapoor) a guest to Geet's (Kareena Kapoor) family is regally fed. An extra glass of *lassi* is thrust upon as a sign of hospitality. Even so, when their wedding is fixed, in the end, the beverage swirling in the washing machines is possibly an exaggerated depiction of its popularity. In *Namastey London* too, Punjab is represented by large and generous families, all of whom reside under one roof in their big houses or mansions. The host family runs an agriculture business, which is why there is no shortage of food and milk at home. When Manmohan (Rishi Kapoor) visits his friend's house in Punjab along with daughter Jasmeet alias Jazz (Katrina Kaif) and wife, they are welcomed wholeheartedly. *Lassi* and buttermilk are served as a welcome dish followed by vegetarian lunch doused with *ghee*. The friendly and warm reception of guests in Punjab is mediated through food products such as *lassi* and *ghee* in cinema. This is again manifested in *Veer Zaara* when Zaara Hayat Khan (Preity Zinta) visits the Punjab region of India to scatter the ashes of her governess (Zora Sehgal) in the village of Kiratpur as her final wish. While singing glories of his country in the song 'Aisa Des Hai Mera' (This is my Land), Veer (Shahrukh Khan) takes great delight in showing Zaara the beauty and ethos of *Punjabi* people. Veer and Zaara, at one point, share food on their way to Kiratpur village, where a family serves her *roti*, *sabzi*, and *lassi*. The churning of fresh butter in veranda is another typical portrayal that is usually carried by women, like Saraswati Devi (Hema Malini) in *Veer Zaara*. The second half story of *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jaenge* is also set in Punjab, where the wedding between Simran (Kajol) and her childhood friend, Kuljeet, has been arranged. *Lassi*, again a prototype for hospitality, is quite conspicuous in the wedding house where it is served to guests along with sweets. Raj (Shahrukh Khan) tries to carve out a niche in everyone's heart by being a helping hand while serving *lassi* to the guests. The prominent position that milk and its products have in the lives of people of Punjab is well documented in the film *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*. Picturized on Milkha Singh, an Indian athlete, the film has two crucial scenes in which the protagonist displays extraordinary courage and strength to not give up on milk and *ghee*. While he is under training in the Indian army, he takes the extra mile to complete the arduous race to get one glass of milk as a reward. He is reminded of his childhood when his sister (played by Divya Dutt) would offer her share of milk to him. The second scene pertains to the heyday of his youth when to not let a crooked policeman seize his cans filled with *ghee*, he gulps down the entire content and defies the despotism of police. While he revels in *ghee*, a crowd soon gathers and lifts him in exhilaration. While analyzing food items such as *ghee*, butter and milk it is generally observed that these have connotations akin to purity, strength and care. Since these are shown to be served mainly to the men or Gods, the media practice is also a precise representation of how women in *Punjabi* families have traditionally been deprived of such strength giving, pricy foods (Dube, 1997).

In our discussion so far, we identified some culturally specific meanings and connotations associated with some food items branded as *Punjabi*. Such an analysis, the idea of 'gastrosemantics' (Khare, 1992), is combined with culture's distinct capacity to "signify, experience, systematize, philosophize, and communicate with food" (Khare, 1992, p. 44). While we discussed the construction of narratives about *Punjabi* cuisine through the motifs of certain food items in cinema, it is pertinent that we also recognize various sites and spaces that are infused with culturally loaded meanings for *Punjabi* foodways. The kitchen and dining table are such relevant sites that reveal the arrangement of social and kinship

relations in *Punjabi* households. Culinary spaces such as the ones catering to street food are also critical in our discussion of the depth of the social, economic, ceremonial, and nutritional implications of food that are tightly interwoven to formulate culturally defined meanings in *Punjabi* gastronomy. The culture of street food also mediates some precise ideas concerning spatiality, which allows for savoring food in open spaces. It debunks the idea of ostentatious eating or eating in a confined space as a private affair. For instance, in the film *Queen*, the site of street food is significant because it allows Rani's (Kangana Ranaut) admirer (Rajkumar Rao) to approach her while she is eating out with her friends. In *Vicky Donor*, the identity construction of Dr. Baldev Chadha (Annu Kapoor) and Vicky Arora (Ayushmann Khurrana) is often done through stereotypically savoring *Punjabi* street foods such as *cholle bhature* (chickpeas and puffed fried bread), etc.

Next, the cinematic representation of eating afternoon meal with the family members is not very common as it is with breakfast and dinner. The lunch is therefore packed particularly for men in the households who are shown as breadwinners in the family. Tanni (Anushka Sharma), a distraught wife in *Rabb Ne Bana Di Jodi* (2008), prepares lunch and regularly packs it for her husband (Shahrukh Khan) who goes out for work. An act of cooking and serving food is mostly carried out by women in films – something which mediates to shed some light on the economy and division of gender roles in *Punjabi* society. In *Bend it like Beckham*, Jess's (Parminder Nagra) mother is constantly uptight about her daughters' questionable skills in the kitchen. Krish (Arjun Kapoor) in *2 States* (2014) suggests Ananya (Alia Bhatta) to help his mother in the kitchen and impress her with cooking. It is only in *Luv Shuv Tey Chicken Khurana* (2012) that young *Daarji* prepares chicken curry for his sick wife. It is to be noted that in such fewer instances where men are shown to be cooking is when the wife or mother is unwell or away from home. In the same movie, Omi (Kunal Kapoor) is regularly helped by his childhood friend Harman (Huma Qureshi) without whom he could not have prepared his version of 'Chicken Khurana.'

A look into the representation of table settings and table etiquettes also exhibits nuances in the building of *Punjabi* food culture and its implications at large. Almost every cinematic representation of dinner happens over the table and not on the floor, which is the traditional way to eat in Punjab. The food is ideally prepared and served by women and also male servants in a few cases. Actors usually eat either with hands or spoons. Next, the order of sitting is another crucial aspect that explains hierarchy and social status in a household. It has been noted that a guest or a person with higher social ranking in the family gets to sit on the center seat. Omi, in *Luv Shuv Tey Chicken Khurana* (2012), was the center of attraction on the dinner table when he returns from London. Similarly, Mr. Kohli in *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) is given special attention because he is Lalita's (Aishwarya Rai) suitor. In *Vicky Donor* (2012), Ashima's (Yami Gautam) father sits on the center seat and tries to influence his daughter's decision not to marry a *Punjabi* guy in a dictative manner. Whether the host should be in the center, left or right, and the order in which food is served reveals much about the socio-cultural intricacies of Indian households. The arrangement of members on the dinner table is usually related to their social or official importance. Lastly, the manner of eating reveals the level of cultural sophistication which society follows. Eating with fingers is still maintained by many cultures as a cleaner and convenient manner of eating food, whereas, in many countries, especially European, there is a custom to use a fork and a knife. Mallery argues that although the knife was of great antiquity, the fork was invented in the twelfth-century, which gradually began to be used in Italy and later in England around the seventeenth century. However, in the films that have been studied, there is a rare depiction of eating with a knife and fork in *Punjabi* households. Mr. Kohli in *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) is a U.S. return NRI who acts sophisticated and high class. But his barbaric and savage like demeanor is revealed on the dinner table not only through the type of

conversation that he strikes but also his manner of eating. There is an attempt to create an aura around Mr. Kohli through his eating manners, which is exceptionally shoddy. Happy, in *Singh is King* (2008) and Khurana family in *Luv Shuv Tey Chicken Khurana* (2012) use their hands while eating - a marker of 'desi' (local) outlook. However, the *Punjabi* families, which are located in an urban setting or settled outside India, are shown to use spoons while eating. Take families in *Kapoor and Sons*, *Bend it Like Beckham*, *Namaste London*, *Vicky Donor*, *Patiala House*, and *2 States*, for instance. In *Namste London*, when Jazz and family visit a village in Punjab, they are shown to have used their hands for eating while sitting cross-legged on the floor, but in London, they would always have their meals on the table using cutlery. All such food practices and symbols of food convey certain cultural values about the food culture and eating habits of *Punjabi* people. What the construction of *Punjabi* foodways in contemporary cinema shows is that not only has both English and historical local mixing of flavors enriched the haute cuisine of the day, but also *Punjabi* cuisine was and continues to be enriched by adopting the culinary cultures beyond its threshold. The types of foods and their motifs, culinary spaces and manner of eating have seamlessly been integrated in cinema to weave a story about the identity of *Punjabi* cuisine and construction of cultural memory among spectators.

FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The variety of messages and meanings to food, cuisine, taste, eating, and culinaria that we found assigned in cookery books and Bollywood films further attests to the complexity of what is commonly known as "gustatory semantics." Because eating and cooking is a daily necessity, its representation in media is quite common, which attracts a variety of symbolic attachments that are suggestive of deeper meanings. The connotations are not just pointing to potential signification but also play a vital role in the cultural construction of meanings. Further research in this direction should recognize how the media incorporates legends, fables, and local stories associated with the foodways of a particular community in its construction of cultural imaginary. The narratives of eating in media and the way their construction/development is woven intricately through cultural motifs and such storytelling methods is an exciting area of research. One can possibly also take into consideration the contrast between how the representation of a specific cuisine tells a story in Bollywood Vs. Hollywood movies.

CONCLUSION

Food is one remarkable tool that can be used to weave a story about certain ideas and notions held by people in society. As many anthropologists have shown, food, in its diverse contexts and functions, hold the capacity to signal social elements like caste, class, gender, status, rank, solidarity, community, identity, exclusion, intimacy, or rivalry (Firth, 1973; Geertz, 1960). This semiotic virtuosity has two general sources. One is the fact that unlike other signifiers like architecture, furniture, kitchenware, or clothing, food is a constant need but a perishable good – something that makes it well suited to bear the load of everyday social discourse. The second fundamental fact about food is its capacity to mobilize strong emotions. It is in connection with this perspective that food was chosen for its socio-cultural analysis in tandem with its representation in these two media sites. We also saw how certain sounds, words, sights, signs, and images related to food are used in media to circulate an impression or stories

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about *Punjabi* culture. For instance, in the cookery books, we observed that photographs, language, shade, and hue of presentation of food items were some of the techniques to disseminate an idea of the food culture of Punjab. In cinema, representation of different food items, the manner of eating, and the sights and sounds of various foods have notably mediated some diverse ideas on *Punjabi* culture. Both the two sites are not just disseminating cultural ideas on '*Punjabi*' but also constructing the mediated realities for the audience. The study of mediations through the analysis of food and food practices is, therefore, an attempt to heighten the understanding of politics around communication through the food. Hence, exploration of an element of 'reconstitution' or 'restructuring the reality' was important in this project. Besides, the study of embedded aesthetics of food in two media sites has produced distinct notions about the region, ethnicity, family, identity, nostalgia, royalty, hospitality, etc., which holds the promise for further investigation.

Another issue that needs to be flagged here is the idea of food emerging as a commodity within the domain of mass media and culture industry. It emerges as a 'commodity of spectacle,' in cookbooks and cinema which is used to mediate specific ideas about *Punjabi* culture and *Punjabi* identity. Guy Debord (1995) argues that we live in a world of the spectacle of commodity ruling over all lived experiences: "The spectacle is the moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life" (p. 29). Media representation of popular signifiers of the food culture of Punjab like '*Makki di Roti*,' '*Sarson da Saag*,' and '*Tandoori Chicken*' enables the food to emerge as a commodity, which also mediates a particular taste besides cultural notions defining '*Punjabi*.' Representation of *Punjabi* cuisine in media has made the culture and society of Punjab 'spectacular,' – organized by spectacles (as seen in cookbooks and cinema) of '*Punjabi*.' In this context, we can argue in line with Debord that with the proliferation of media and the saturation of more and more aspects of *Punjabi* culture by media, we are locked into a fascination with "image, falsity, insubstantiality, unverifiability, 'noisy insignificance,' and consumption" (Bowman, 2012, p. 30) of notions of what is called '*Punjabi*.' This is, in a way, also a means used by media to perpetuate capitalistic consumption of food culture of Punjab in which food becomes a commodity to advertise ideas concerning '*Punjabi*.' When we analyze images of *Punjabi* food culture and *Punjabi* society in media in terms of consumption and mediation, we observe how viewers are shown and taught about a model of '*Punjabi*' that is at once formulaic and the transformation of a certain complex understanding of '*Punjabi*' into a cinematic genre. And what Adorno and his counterparts were ultimately worried about is that the consumption of mass media production and mediated notions of a particular experience softens the reader or primes the consumer to be susceptible to political and ideological manipulation of all different sorts. They argued how in a consumer society, through the things that it offers us, the things we get into cause us to regress.

The present work encourages the readers to reopen the problem of mediation and capitalist model of food cultures in media, to explore the possibilities and predicaments that constitute our perceptions of '*Punjabi*' and stories on the food of Punjab via particular media.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Bollywood: Hindi language film industry of India situated in Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay), which produces almost twice as many mainstream films as Hollywood.

Commodity Spectacle: A concept which examines how reality has been reduced to commodifiable fragments identified by social relations that are increasingly mediated by spectacular images and commodities.

Cookery Book: Also known as cookbook or recipe book, this is a kitchen reference dedicated to the preparation of certain dishes or a particular cuisine.

Gastro-Politics: Coined by Arjun Appadurai, this term implies definite conflict or competition arising through the medium of social transactions around food.

Mediation: A concept which argues that cultural construction of meanings is not atomic or independent of its relation to something else.

Punjab: Located in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, the undivided Punjab region was the cradle for Indus Valley Civilisation and formulation of rich culture by incorporating diverse ethnic and religious communities from Central Asia and the Middle East.

Taste: Here, a metaphor for aesthetic sensitivity, a 'social weapon,' which is maintained by the dominant groups to establish a symbolic hierarchy.

Chapter 11

From Overlay to Interplay: Subverting the Message and Creating the Surreal With Augmented Reality

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the unique characteristics of AR as a visual communication medium while also considering the diverse and potentially powerful meanings that can be created by using it in conjunction with established visual communication devices such as posters. The chapter evaluates a number of current projects that have utilised this type of digital narrative. It also explores the theories of visual communication to understand how posters communicate in order to leverage the same techniques for AR. Using three case studies, the authors examine how AR, when used in conjunction with a printed poster, can subvert the original meaning of the poster to create a new meaning for the viewer and ultimately create the surreal.

INTRODUCTION

Semiotics and other visual communication theories are used daily by creatives during the execution of their design briefs. The practice has become so intuitive that many creatives do not realize they are using them. Augmented Reality is an experience that supplements the real world with a virtual layer of information (Lowry, 2015). While still finding its feet somewhat, this technology has the potential to be a powerful communicative tool of the future. The virtual layer has the untapped potential of a visual communication medium in its own right. But when it is used in conjunction with print, it can have a number of different effects, from expanding the meaning of the printed text, to bringing animation to static images. The possibilities are only limited by what we can imagine or want to communicate.

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From Overlay to Interplay

This chapter looks at the unique characteristics of AR as a visual communication medium while also considering the diverse and potentially powerful meanings that can be created using the medium in conjunction with printed media. The chapter will evaluate a number of current projects that have leveraged this type of digital narrative while also exploring three case studies where we have created examples of minimalist posters and examined how AR can subvert the original meaning to create a new meaning for the viewer.

BACKGROUND: DESIGN IS STORYTELLING

We live in an increasingly visual, image-based culture. The digital age has brought with it a growing expectation of pictorial instruction, signs and symbols (Salisbury & Styles, 2012). The design of information is nothing new. From the earliest cave paintings to modern-day data visualization, humans have always utilized graphic depictions as a means of representing information (Lankow, Crooks, & Ritchie, 2012). Visual storytelling is a pervasive and powerful way to share ideas, educate and communicate (Cherry, 2019). As with all types of storytelling, in order for visual storytelling to be effective, it must communicate and resonate with the intended audience. Visual storytellers must convey emotions and ideas, feelings and personality and bring characters and settings to life to tell their story. In fact, visual communication is a long established discipline in which visual communication has been used to stir emotions, illustrate facts and sway opinions. Designers as storytellers use a myriad of mediums and tools to create meaning and tell stories that resonate with their audience.

Meaning Making

Let's consider the matter of creating meaning. "Visual communication in its widest sense has a long history. When early man hunted for food, spotted the imprint of an animal in the mud, he was looking at a graphic sign. His mind's eye saw the animal itself" (Hollis, 1994, p. 7). Visual communication is the process of interpreting different signs to have meaning. Some we have learned from being taught at a young age or from experience and we now intuitively understand without consciously thinking about them, since they have become like muscle memory. One example is the letters of the alphabet and how words are constructed; another is simplistic visuals such as dark clouds in the sky meaning rain.

The study of signs has developed a great deal in the 100 years since the terms semiotics and semiology were first coined to describe this area of study, with many people taking up the mantle from those early semiologists. These include Barthes who expanded on the original theories of Saussure & Pierce (Chandler, 2007) on how different signs interact with each other to create new meaning. Barthes' analysis and evaluation of cultural signs and symbols and how they interact expanded the subject from linguistics to include visuals and people, society and body language. Further work by van Leeuwen and Kress looked at the visual combination of signs and symbols to such an extent that they have departed from the original landscape of linguistics and now focus solely on visual elements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Kress and van Leeuwen evaluate how a sign or symbol is structured and the elements that make a sign or symbol communicate. They have identified different elements in the construction of meaning, which are: text, image, illustration, and color, and which are referred to as "modes of communication" (1996). They recognize these graphical elements individually and together, how they can be used to create and communicate meaning, as well as how each mode can affect the overall meaning of a composition.

The complexities of visual communication and graphic design go beyond identifying and assigning meaning to individual objects, signs, and symbols. Barthes' evaluation of the front cover of the Paris Match edition no. 326 in July 1955 (Barthes, 1972), is a deconstruction and explanation of the different signs and signifiers at work to communicate a message through every aspect of its composition. His analysis delves into the construction of interaction between the multiple signs and symbols. Moreover, this evaluation identifies how a sign and/or symbol can be anything once it has a cultural context and is understood by society. Then it can be used to communicate and make meaning. With this in mind, the construction of graphic images, as well as the images themselves "are more than descriptive illustration of things seen or imagined. They are signs whose context gives them a unique meaning, and whose position can lead to a new signification" (Hollis, 1994, p. 7). This description by Hollis illustrates the depth of semiotics within graphic design. Graphic designers actively use semiotics to create meaning every day. The graphic elements (i.e., Kress and van Leeuwen's modes of communication) are manipulated and arranged by designers to create meaning. The format in which a composition is realized vastly influences the construction of the message being communicated. For instance, posters have a one-shot message and less time with a viewer to convey an idea than a book or a website. The latter two have space and time to build and present a narrative in the viewer's mind. Posters need to connect and communicate instantly. Well-constructed posters have a long tradition of being powerful communicators with a clear message that comes across succinctly.

POSTERS

Posters have been employed as a visual communication medium and a marketing device since the late 19th century. They have been used to attract audiences or buyers for goods, to drive awareness and spread ideas. In fact, the communication value of the poster has been used by many for many reasons and with various applications.

Posters in the form of posted bills have existed since the invention of the printing press. These early forms were purely text-based and were used for advertising purposes and by governments or authorities as a way to communicate with the populace. A revolution in poster design came with advances in technology that reduced the cost of poster production but also allowed greater freedom in creation. The introduction of color printing by Jules Chéret (Presbrey, 1929) saw artists and designers experiment with the medium which gave birth to the discipline of poster design (Lyons, Smith, & McCabe, 2018). This new discipline saw posters transform purely from text-based layouts to fully illustrated designs. Posters were transformed into a truly visual form and were able to communicate on a level beyond the words used on the paper. Utilizing visual elements (modes of communication): text, image, illustration, color and typography, posters have been transformed from a mere posted bill to an attractive and communicative art form and visual communication medium.

While the poster has endured a rise and fall, a resurgence and decline throughout the last century, it is a medium with a rich history of success as a visual communication medium. From its use to spread ideas, form opinions, rally nations, promote events, lifestyles and products, posters have been the staple of mass communication from the mid-19th century to modern times. Even in a world where digital reigns, posters are still used and are very much part of visual culture in our society.

Posters as a Visual Communication Medium

Posters in most cases have a one-shot message and less time with a viewer to convey an idea than a book or a website does. Posters need to connect and communicate instantly; they do not have the luxury of time to build a narrative in the traditional sense. Depending on their purpose and environment, they will have different communication expressions. “As graphic design, posters belong to the category of presentation and promotion, where image and word need to be economical, connected in a single meaning, and memorable.” (Hollis, 1994, p. 11). Therefore, to be effective they need to be eye catching and the single meaning needs to be understood and memorable.

Posters work best when they are visually stimulating, using designs and artwork that trigger emotional responses in the viewer. To communicate effectively, posters, like all graphic design, aim to create an emotional response and thereby connect with the viewer. As Lupton describes it, “to connect is to communicate” (Lupton, 2015, p. 20). In her essay, “Vision is a Process” (Lupton, 2015), the author goes on to make the argument that “withholding connection can be as compelling as sustaining it.” She uses Waldemar Swierzy’s 1973 film poster for *Midnight Cowboy* (<http://bit.ly/W-Swierzy>) to analyze how the lack of detail and the image treatment starkly translate the emotional conflict of a grim film (Lupton, 2015, p. 20).

Posters have a number of established visual rules and devices that work together to make their storytelling comprehensible. The constructed image is one of these visual devices. Swierzy’s poster is an example of this constructed image, whose very creation conveys a specific idea. Once the image is placed into the poster, text is applied and there is an interplay (Barthes, 1972) between the text and the image to either complete or further the meaning.

Combining text and image can give meaning to an ambiguous image (Hollis, 1994). Barthes formally titled this *anchorage* (Barthes, 1972). According to Kress and van Leeuwen, Barthes maintained that images are too polysemous, too open to a variety of possible meaning and that to arrive at a definite understanding, language (e.g., speech or text) must come to the rescue (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). In fact, Barthes (1972) spoke of interplay, of image-text relations to give meaning. He identified three possible image-text relations:

1. Text supporting image - anchorage,
2. Image supporting text - illustration,
3. And the two being equal – relay

For Barthes, both text and image play a role in how we understand visuals. In terms of anchorage, the text supports the image to help us understand the meaning of the visual composition, while illustration is the visual that helps us understand and interpret a given text. Throughout his work, Barthes explores the ways in which anchorage guides the viewer in describing and interpreting an image (Martinec & Salway, 2005). Barthes says, “In all these cases of anchorage, language clearly has a function of elucidation” (Barthes, 1977, p. 40). For Barthes, relay was mostly found in film. “While rare in the fixed image, this relay-text becomes very important in film, where dialogue functions not simply as elucidation but really does advance the action by setting out, in the sequence of messages, meanings that are not found in the image itself” (Barthes, 1977, p. 41). In more recent times, relay has played a greater part in the constructed image, where both the image and text are equal and only together the message becomes clear.

Using the example of Swierzy's poster for the movie *Midnight Cowboy* the image and the text, in this case the film title, create meaning together. Separately, neither convey the message accurately but together they create meaning. For example, the word cowboy, in the context of a movie poster, suggests an action film of heroism, the all-American hero synonymous with actors such as John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, the hero/anti-hero for whom the audience is rooting. The use of the word "Midnight", changes this, taints it almost. Actions in the night are generally underhanded, unreliable, not the actions of a hero.

The image shows an overworked, stylized silhouette of a figure from the shoulders up with the unmistakable shape of a Stetson hat. This silhouetted together with the title might still convey a Western, however, it is the image of the bright red lips that seals the conveyance of the message, letting the viewer know that this is not an American Western full of the usual heroism of American cowboys, that we as a society have come to associate with the word cowboy and the image of a Stetson hat.

The interplay between the constructed image and the text creates the full meaning. A very different meaning. It is through this level of relay that the full meaning is conveyed. Image construction of this level is visual communication at its best. Where the deconstruction of meaning can lead to the creation of new meaning. Where the original meaning has been subverted to create a new message. This is building a complex narrative and expands on Barthes' original thinking. Instead of the text rescuing the image for the message to be fully understood, the image can communicate on its own and the text can communicate on its own; when composed together they can support each other in the same meaning or create an entirely new meaning. There is interplay between the image and text, but the interplay is playing by new rules. It sees past the linguistic landscape to graphical elements, their presentation and composition to create meaning outside of the words themselves. This is a layered approach, a counter approach, to creating meaning, to creating narrative, where multiple "modes of communication" (Kress, 2010) combine to create new meaning and to communicate a different message.

Social semiotics moves within this space, to help see, evaluate and deconstruct images and understand them, not only by their aesthetic and expressive dimensions, but also by their structured, social, political and communicative dimensions (Van Leeuwen, 2005). This type of communication is widely used in modern society, especially by modern advertisers who use this counter approach, whereby instead of confirming meaning with text they often create new meaning. The image is constructed to have one meaning and the accompanying text carries another meaning altogether. This contrasting combination is contradictory and, as such, creates a further new meaning, that is separate from what either sign says individually. The interplay between the text and image has a counter effect on both, instead of the text confirming the image to solidify meaning, it changes the meaning.

Within this context, AR could have an effective role in visual communication at this higher level of manipulation and play on meaning. In poster design, as with any method of visual communication design, message construction is vital. The choices involved are based around the visual elements available and how they are arranged to make meaning. AR offers a new layer of communication to an established narrative device. AR has the ability to be a part of this complex narrative, to add or detract from the original meaning presented. It can use and manipulate the discourse between the virtual overlay and the printed artefact, ultimately leveraging many facets to create meaning within a print/digital graphical context.

AUGMENTED REALITY

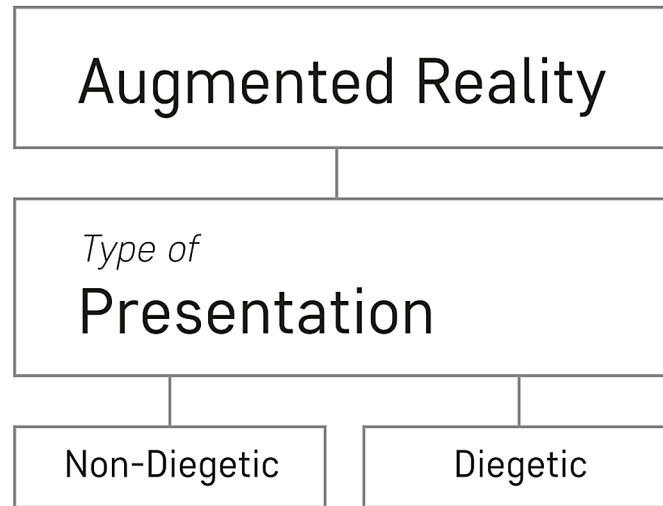
Augmented Reality (AR) is commonly described as an experience which supplements a real-life experience with a virtual layer of information (Lowry, 2015). AR is meant to enhance our experience of the real world through integration of digital content (McCoy, 2018). Current applications in training (Little, 2018; MacPhedran, 2018), health care (Ingram, 2017) and retail (Sandler, 2018) all use AR to enhance the users' experience. In recent years many mainstream publications and commercial articles have been published about the use of AR for storytelling with particular emphasis on products for children (MillevaMarch, 2020; Craig 2019; Burch, 2019). These AR applications, such as AR Reads, the Bookfull app and many more, are used to enrich the books by adding interactive animations and enhancements to the story to create new storytelling experiences. These applications highlight the communicative power of AR. Pairing the physical printed stories with AR to add interactive animations and enhancements creates a new experience for the users and shows how AR, when used in this way, can lend itself to new interactions and user experiences. While these examples are used to extend the storytelling and enhance it, they also highlight how AR has the capacity to build new narratives and new interaction points into our environments, ultimately showing how well-suited AR is for storytelling.

However, the use of the word "layer" in most descriptions of AR can sometimes be detrimental, to our way of thinking in general, and this analysis in particular. The usage of this word suggests that one creates a 2D visual for this medium and then simply adds a virtual layer, which can be audio (e.g., music, effects, speech) or haptic (e.g., device vibration/movement). This presupposes that the distinction between 2D and 3D is not well-defined, and that the visual assets can be used either in 2D or 3D interchangeably. The use of the word 'layer' brings with it a set of connotations which can limit one's way of thinking. Changing the wording from 'digital layer' to 'virtual overlay' can help remove the connotations and expand thinking on how to use the virtual overlay as a visual communication medium, not just a static digital layer.

A multimodal artefact, which utilizes a combination of the different modes of communication (Kress, 2010) can be anything from a poster, to a book or a website. The virtual overlay of AR makes use of the same modes of communication – image, sound, text, video, illustration, layout, line and color – when presenting content, therefore, the virtual overlay of AR is multimodal. Thinking about a virtual overlay in the same communication terms as those of a poster, book or website changes how a designer thinks about AR and how they would approach designing for the medium.

When presenting content, AR has the unique advantage of being able to use two channels (Figure 1). Using film and gaming terminology, these are designated as **diegetic** and **non-diegetic**. Non-diegetic content (Peacocke, Teather, Carette, & MacKenzie, 2015; Nunez, 2007) is the traditional virtual overlay for which AR is known, where the virtual overlay is quite obviously separate to the view. It is used to give information about the view in an objective, demonstrative way (Figure 2). Taking advantage of these two channels AR has the opportunity to create very different narratives. A nuanced form of visual communication can be achieved by presenting the virtual overlay as part of the object in view, so that the virtual overlay becomes part of the real-time view. This is diegetic content (Peacocke et al. 2015) where content embedded in the view takes visual cues from and characteristics of the real-time view to make it look and feel like a tangible part of the real world. This diegetic approach is only now starting to be explored in the creation of content for AR.

Figure 1. Channels of presentation in AR



Until recently, AR has very much been presented in the non-diegetic channel. The overlay was obvious, there was no attempt to hide that a digital overlay was present as the narrative was generally instructive or descriptive and relied on being recognized as extra, digital information. But as AR begins to evolve as a visual communication medium in its own right, the opportunities for narrative have become more relevant as they have increased with the enhancements in the technology. Improvements in the graphics that can be added to the virtual overlay means that narrative can move to a diegetic channel, creating more opportunities to communicate in a more nuanced way.

How AR Works

For the virtual overlay of AR to appear, it needs to be triggered. There are currently four types of trigger mechanisms:

- Marker-based
- Markerless
- GPS
- Sensor

Marker-based AR uses a visual trigger, called a marker, which can be an image or a 3D object. When the AR app is focused on the image or object, the AR experience is triggered and the virtual overlay launches. Marker-based AR experiences have been used in industry for training and troubleshooting machinery, where the AR recognizes the piece of machinery (Figure 2) that is being worked on and gives in-view instructions to aid the user (Regenbrecht, Baratoff, & Wilke, 2005). A markerless AR experience is one that is launched by the user. As the word suggests, markerless AR does not depend on a marker or GPS. Once launched, it displays objects around the user. An example of this type of AR is the IKEA AR app, where the user can see and add different 3D models of IKEA furniture in different

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locations around their home. GPS-based AR uses GPS coordinates to trigger the AR experience. One example of this would be the Pokémon Go AR game (Figure 3), where different Pokémon are located at different GPS points globally. The final type is sensor-based AR, which is only starting to be explored now as part of the Internet of Things. Sensor-based AR is triggered when the AR device is near a sensor that will launch the AR experience or where sensors gather data and that data is fed to the AR app to be displayed to the user (Buntz, 2016). As we are exploring how AR could potentially work in conjunction with printed posters, we are using marker-based AR where the posters themselves are the markers.

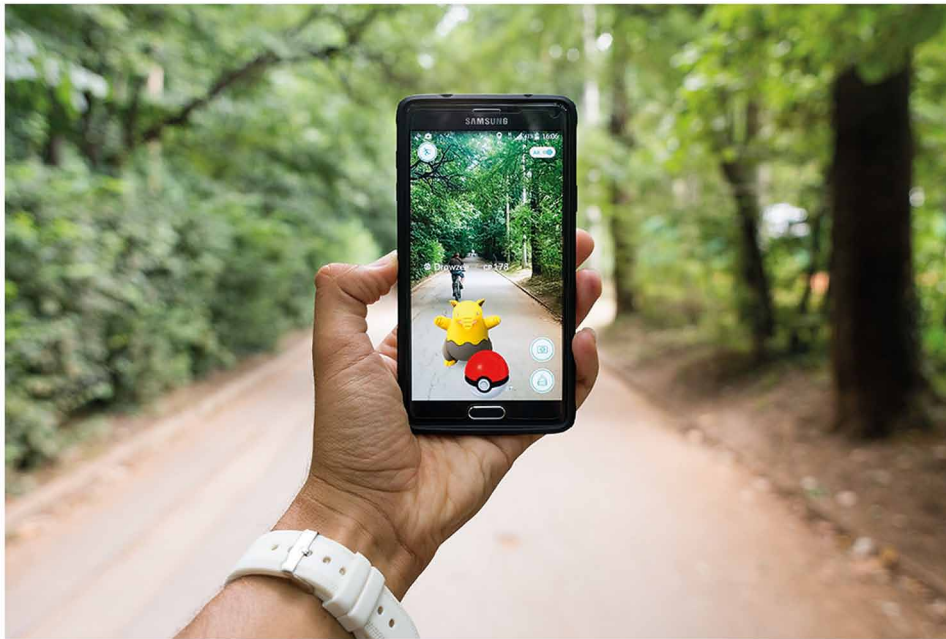
Figure 2. Example of traditional AR non-diegetic presentation



AR as a Visual Communication Medium

Traditionally, in its non-diegetic presentation format (Figure 2), AR has always extended or replaced its marker, where the virtual overlay has been used to give extra information about the object in focus or the environment seen through the real-time view of the device. The virtual overlay held digital content that related to the view in some way and was presented in a non-diegetic manner. Two recent projects that have leveraged this type of digital narrative are the New Yorker from the Innovators Issue during May 2016 (Mouly & Kaneko, 2016; Georgieva, 2016) and the Prosthetic Reality art project (Sutu, 2016).

Figure 3. Pokemon Go AR game



From the cover of the Innovators Issue during May 2016 of *The New Yorker* magazine, we can see evidence that designers were starting to play with the idea of diegetic content. However, it was only the initial few seconds of the experience. The cover shows the illustration of the back of a woman entering a subway carriage. We, as viewers, have the point of view of a by-stander on the platform. When the AR layer is triggered, the virtual overlay changes our point of view, we are now in the subway carriage and see her entering. The animation remains in this diegetic form for a few milliseconds as the train starts moving and our view becomes the windows of the train as the tunnel whizzes by. It then launches into a more non-diegetic form of presentation. This has elements of a diegetic idea, but it was still very much non-diegetic in execution where the presentation was obviously superimposed upon the view. This edition of the magazine was published four years ago and while much development has occurred technology-wise in the meantime, experimentation with AR as a visual communication medium seems to have stalled.

Prosthetic Reality is an art project that “invited artists to explore the possibility of AR Art: an art form that allows digital art to super impose physical art.” (Prosthetic Reality Catalog, 2016, p. 1). While the organizers spoke of AR Art as digital artwork that superimposes upon physical artwork, some of the explorations and experiments by the artists in the creation of the project fell into the diegetic channel of presentation. The detail overlay fitted into the physical art and did not look like an obvious overlay, but instead became part of the image. With this approach, AR as a visual communication medium moves into the disciplines of graphic design and visual communication and can be used as a medium for creating meaning.

Potentially, the diegetic presentation of AR in conjunction with printed posters could create meaningful, expressive, educative and enjoyable experiences. When used with a poster it could play with meaning – add, extend, subtract and subvert the meaning of the poster. In particular, subverting meaning,

From Overlay to Interplay

a favorite tool of graphic designers, could be used to great effect. With AR subverting, meaning could take on a new life in an effort to connect and communicate with users.

ANALOGUE MEETS DIGITAL

Physical posters are analogue, in that they are not digital. They cannot respond to interaction or input from the viewer. Despite being an analogue, one-way visual communication medium, they can and have a long history of influencing thought and behavior. Posters, as previously stated, work when all the elements within the design, images, line, type, color, illustration, layout, framing, all combine to work cohesively to create a single meaning that connects.

Taking the definition of “augment”—make something greater by adding to it, AR can add or detract from the printed media through the digital channel, depending on the purpose of the digital overlay. AR and the virtual overlay can potentially bring an entirely new dimension to the original message being communicated. AR has the ability to extend posters into a digital playground. The virtual overlay of AR can extend the posters, giving viewers the ability to interact with them. It has the potential to bring a new level of interplay between the elements of the constructed image. As stated above, it can add, reinforce, detract from and subvert that message to bring a new level of meaning and new interactions to a printed medium that can resonate with the viewer.

In the two of the three case studies that follow, we look at opportunities for adding diegetic presentation to simple poster compositions. The compositions are minimalistic, having been stripped of any visual clues to create meaning. We look at how the virtual overlay of AR can be added diegetically to create meaning, whether this means adding or changing the meaning through the interplay of the virtual layer and the printed medium of the poster. In the third case study we look at a simple illustrated poster and explore how the diegetic presentation of the virtual overlay subverted the meaning and tone of the poster.

CASE STUDIES

The aim of the composition of the different design elements or modes of communication is to catch the eye. The composition needs to be strong enough to stand out from neighboring posters or other distracting elements and be able to intrigue and hold the viewer in order to communicate its message. As Lupton (2017) explains, “our gaze is drawn to points of intrigue, from a dark hole in the middle of the road to a black cat lurking in the shadows.”(p. 120) She furthers this by adding, “these visual disruptions mark potential stories embedded in a scene. Change is the basis of narrative, and change motivates the act of looking.” (Lupton, 2017, p. 120). The virtual overlay of AR is primed to add this visual disruption to create intrigue, to create new levels of interplay and subvert meaning in the printed poster.

Through the use of graphic elements, posters are created using a number of design techniques to visualize and communicate different messages. For the case studies presented here, we investigate how diegetic presentation can be added to three different composition types. The first case study will utilize layering, also called overlap, which is a basic technique of layering two or more elements to simulate depth in a flat two-dimensional medium such as paper. “By partially blocking one shape with another, the design produces an imaginary space between the figure and the ground” (Lupton, 2015, p. 116). It is in this imaginary space between the elements that the virtual overlay can be embedded to create a

diegetic presentation that will further the illusion and strengthen the message, or subvert the original illusion and therefore subvert the original meaning, in order to ultimately create something that is surreal. The second case study works with the composition solely, while the third case is a fully illustrated poster that utilizes layering again to subvert the original message of the poster.

Figure 4. Case study composition 1

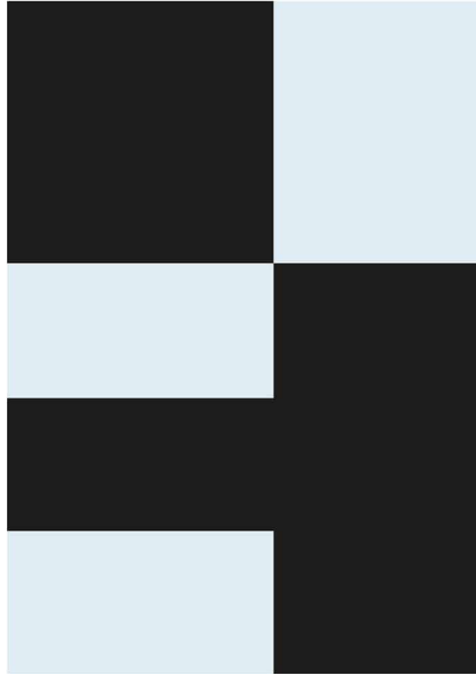
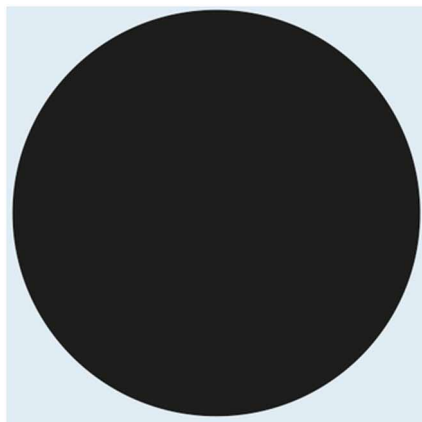


Figure 5. Case study composition 2, “Japanese Flag”

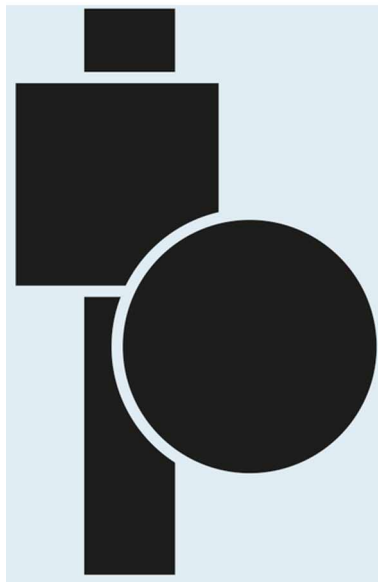


From Overlay to Interplay

The composition of a poster leads the viewer through the poster. We investigated two types of composition, the first is one which breaks the page up into different sections, (Figure 4), the second is one that has a dark disk centrally positioned within a white field. Note the background does not always have to be white but a contrasting color (Figure 5). And the third poster utilizes an illustration partially featuring the disk composition as well.

The first composition is a basic pattern. Munari (1971) describes the composition as one that is “cut up into separate sections. The eye wanders over the surface and is continually forced to follow the dividing lines between the light and dark sections. These lead it out and away from the poster” (Munari, 1971, p. 87). In case study one, we examine this composition, while also making use of the overlap technique (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Overlap / Layering technique



The second composition of the dark disk held centrally within a white field is known as the “Japanese Flag” (Munari, 1971) (Figure 5). The composition successfully attracts the eye because the disk is isolated within the space that surrounds it, making it a focal point. Where the first composition leads the eye around the poster along the dividing lines, the disk endeavors to trap the eye. Munari explains that the effectiveness of this composition lies solely with the isolation of the disk within the white field. “The disk holds the eye with no way to escape. When viewed with other posters in close proximity, the disk stands out because it is surrounded in white space” (Munari, 1971, p. 85). It can be seen over the visual noise of other competing posters. Over the decades this composition has been utilized and the disk replaced by a variety of objects.

The third composition is an illustrative poster that brings together a version of the composition from case study 2 and the illusion technique from case study 1.

Introducing an element into the image, (via the virtual overlay), an element that does not float in front of the poster but is actively part of the poster, is a point of intrigue. An AR experience in which

the virtual overlay is floating separately implies that this is separate information which is connected to the poster only by the fact that it was this that triggered the AR experience. This is where the visual relationship ends. However, embedding the virtual overlay into the poster, so that it looks like it is part of the poster, creates a different visual relationship. It implies that the AR is part of the printed poster. This simple idea is the starting point of a new narrative for AR and of a new method in which we design for this technology, as a new visual communication medium.

Through the three ensuing case studies, we explore how AR can be added diegetically to create intrigue. We investigate the treatment of the virtual overlay in a number of ways; firstly as an illusion technique, secondly as the main component in the composition of the poster, and thirdly using a combination of the two, to see if the virtual layer of AR can be presented diegetically and to examine the effect it can have on the creation of meaning.

CASE STUDY SET-UP

As part of these investigations we have set up three case studies upon the same visual basics. The first two posters are black and white graphic translations. Removing color and texture, we have reduced the communication ability of the poster to a low level. In so doing, we have removed any visual aids that could be used to help the virtual overlay. By reducing the elements to graphic translations, the study has a solid base from which to make observations, and then to analyze if diegetic presentation in this basic form can affect perception and meaning. These two case studies utilize a red sphere as the virtual overlay. It is a 3D object animated to move around each poster. In the third case study, we have created an illustrative poster that combines elements of the first two case studies in order to explore if the original message of the poster can be subverted. The virtual overlay in this case study is an animated black disk. All case studies were built using Unity and Vuforia and are viewed using a laptop.

Case Study 01

What We Created

In this case study, we took inspiration from an image of a concrete exterior stairwell (Figure 7). It is reminiscent of Brutalist architecture (Honour & Fleming, 1999), as signified by its large interconnected concrete slabs. With a photograph or image, depth of space is created as light falls on a 3D shape. To recreate this in a 2D graphic form, designers create depth between the elements through the use of shading and overlapping or they layer elements on top of one another. We created the first composition based on the stairwell, translating each element into a flat, solid color graphic shape. We removed all shading, which in turn removed the sense or illusion of depth, creating a graphic translation of the image. The flat graphic becomes an abstract shape (Figure 8), and no longer resembles or visually communicates as a stairwell. As flat solid colors, the layers no longer appear as layers. In fact, the landing sections and the elevations of the stairs have merged into one indiscernible shape that no longer resembles a stairwell or communicates any meaning. The poster looks to simply be a solid abstract shape.

From Overlay to Interplay

Figure 7. Exterior concrete stairwell used as inspiration for poster 1



What We Investigated

By diegetically presenting the virtual overlay, an animated red sphere, into the poster it is possible to break that solid abstract shape into its different layers by allowing an object to move in and out of view and through the abstract shape. Moving in and out of the shape and interacting with the different layers that make up the larger shape, we investigated if the layers start to re-emerge again (Figure 9). We then added a path of movement similar to how a person would move through a staircase, to see if this added to or changed how the viewer perceived the abstract shape.

Figure 8. Poster 1 graphic translation

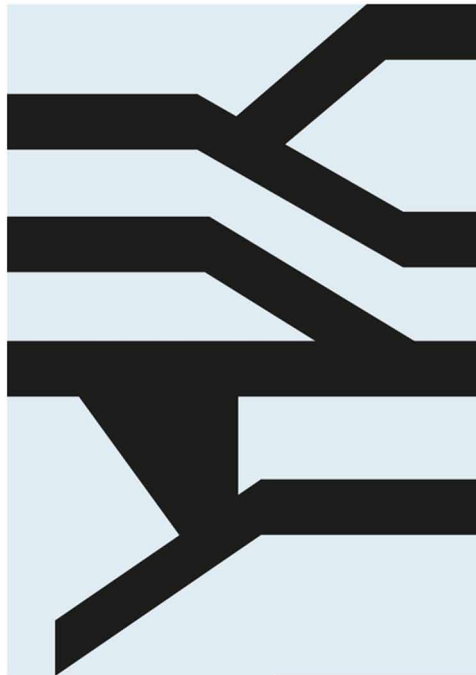
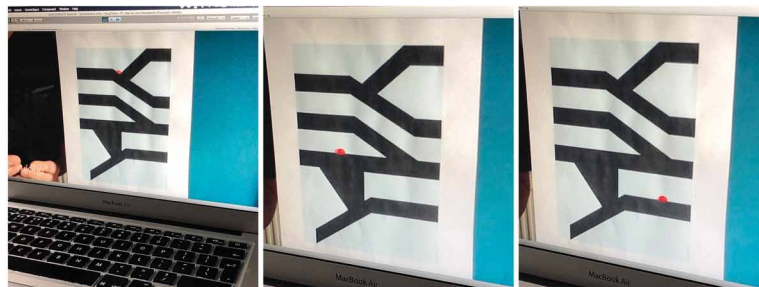


Figure 9. Poster 1 with the AR virtual overlay active and presenting the red sphere diegetically



The Outcomes

With the aid of AR, the viewer could clearly see the red sphere moving through the poster. As the red sphere moved in and out of the abstract shape and interacted with each of the layers that make up the larger shape, the individual layers did start to re-emerge. Placing the red sphere on a path similar to how people move through a stairwell further changed the perception of the viewer. The flat graphic of the poster had not changed or been physically edited, but the diegetic presentation of the virtual overlay changed the viewer's perception and started to reverse the communication that was undone by the removal of texture and shading that initially communicated an image of a stairwell. The introduction of the red sphere moving within the imaginary space rendered the abstract shape as something more recognizable.

From Overlay to Interplay

The virtual overlay was not floating in front of or adjacent to the poster. It instead looked to be part of the poster. It moved in and out of view as it ascended the abstract structure in the poster through the use of the horizontal and elevated plains that made up the flat graphic.

What We Learned

We learned that the virtual overlay can inhabit the imaginary space between the elements and that it is created through the use of overlap or layering. We also confirmed that it can be embedded diegetically and can give even a graphic translation an illusion of depth. This would mean that when implemented into a fully presented poster, this added layer could introduce new meaning that will further the illusion and strengthen the message or subvert the original illusion or message. Either way, the virtual overlay changes the original message, adding intrigue to a static medium.

Case Study 02

What We Created

In this second case study, we started from the basic composition that Munari (1971) called the Japanese Flag. As previously described, it is a dark disk that is positioned centrally within the poster (Figure 5). Over the years in the history of similar posters, the disk has been replaced by static objects that have become the focal point of the poster. Designers have substituted the disk for everything from a tomato to a plate of soup (Munari, 1971) and have utilized the simple form of the disk itself as a dot or circle or patch or spot that is itself a focal point. As a simple shape, it can transform into a window, an escape hatch, a hole, a viewpoint or even a bruise when other elements are introduced in order to build meaning and narrative.

Combining this simple composition with AR can potentially bring another dimension to the poster's meaning. In this case study, we explored the opportunities within this composition. We investigated the nature of the disk and its interplay with the white space. When other elements are introduced, we also investigated what meaning the dark disk can create.

What We Investigated

While there are a number of ways to interpret this composition in AR, we investigated the form in isolation. The disk, being isolated within the space, has no other elements near it and, as such, has no visible opportunity for interplay to create meaning. Therefore, only the graphic treatment of the disk or the addition of other elements such as text could add and build meaning. For the purposes of this case study, we focused solely on the disk and how it can be utilized in the diegetic presentation of the virtual overlay to create the interplay between elements and establish meaning. This approach is not uncommon for this composition. As mentioned earlier, it can be used to communicate the idea of different types of viewing holes. For instance, a cropped view of a landscape within the disk would create the illusion of a window looking out. Similarly, a cropped view of a seascape would create the illusion of a porthole on a ship. If these views are swapped out for the moon and stars, it conjures the idea of looking through a telescope, while the idea of a peephole could be created if we were looking at a tightly cropped image of an intimate scene. Each scene provides context and communicates what the disk has become. The

treatment of the disk throws up numerous possibilities for communication, which is why it is the most common and widely used composition. Creating this viewing hole diegetically with the help of a virtual overlay has the potential to create and subvert meaning with endless possibilities.

To build on these view hole paradigms, presenting the red sphere diegetically would mean that the virtual overlay would exist within the disk. And so, we would hope that the disk would cease to be a disk and communicate as a sort of viewing hole. And yet again, we used just graphic forms to see if diegetic presentation is achievable in this most basic form.

The Outcomes

Looking at the poster through AR (Figure 10), the viewer could clearly see the red sphere moving in the space within the disk, the imaginary space. The disk comfortably cropped the view of the moving sphere to display that the sphere was only observable through the disk, thereby communicating the original circle as a viewing hole of some sort, either a window, microscope, telescope or whatever the viewer imagined.

Figure 10. Poster 2 with the AR virtual overlay active and presenting the red sphere diegetically

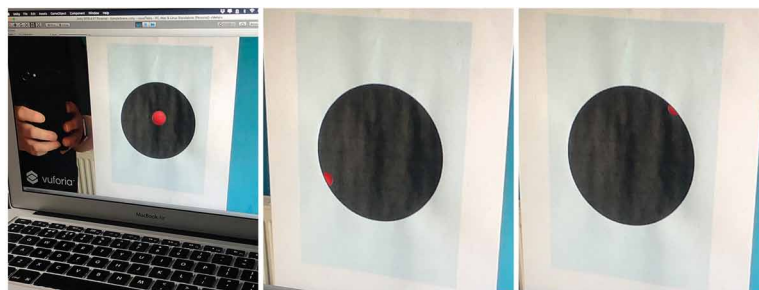


Figure 11. Poster 2 with the AR virtual overlay active and presenting multiple red spheres diegetically



In the second iteration of this case study, we introduced more red spheres floating independently of each other (Figure 11). One breaks with the path of movement and escapes through the disk into the realm of the viewer and then disappears. This plays at the edges of non-diegetic presentation. But the red sphere originating in the imaginary space within the disk and then escaping from the disk and floating away to transparency creates a new interplay between the elements and changes how we view the

From Overlay to Interplay

disk. The initial circle has gone from being a viewing hole to an actual hole that the sphere can escape through. And thus, AR conjures the illusion of another dimension within the disk. This small change subverts the meaning that was originally created and changes the viewers' understanding of what they are looking at. It presents a surreal reality.

Figure 12. Poster design for case study 3



What We Learned

We learned that the virtual overlay can inhabit the composition. It can, like traditional visual design, set context and dictate how the viewer understands the form of the composition and the message being communicated. In this case study, the imaginary space exists solely within the disk. Being contained by the disk and providing a view of the imaginary space within the disk, AR created meaning through the illusion, just as traditional design would. The diegetic nature of the presentation means that the virtual overlay needs to be part of the composition, but we have also learned that even this can be manipulated to further subvert meaning and create new meaning.

Case Study 03

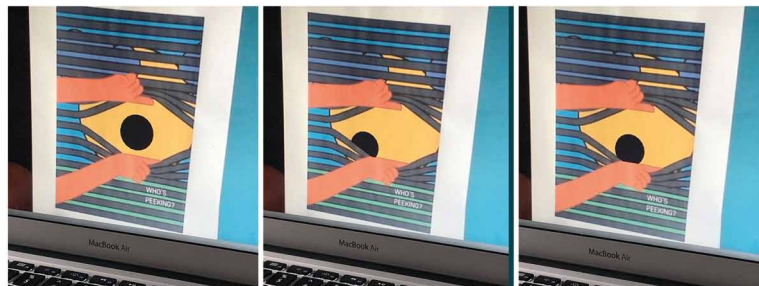
What We Created

In this final case study, we decided to test our theory on a constructed image with a color illustration & typography. The poster design is a simple flat graphic colored illustration (Figure 12). It is a cropped view of a person peeking out of a window through Venetian blinds. The illustration is cropped so that it does not show the person, only their hands as they hold the blind open to view the outside, which simply shows ground, sky, sun and clouds. The typography of the poster simply poses the question; “Who’s peeking?”. This could suggest that we are asking about the identity of the owner of the hands or it could be a general question about the culture of curtain-twitchers.

What We Investigated

For this case study, we changed the content of the virtual overlay to a black animated disk. The virtual overlay was then presented diegetically by placing the black animated disk into the poster. The disk only appeared within the area of the view created by the Venetian blinds. With the disk in place and moving around, the bending shape of the Venetian blinds now suggested the shape of an eye, thus subverting the original image of a person looking out and creating instead an eye that is looking in (Figure 13). With this new visual, the tone of the typography changes too; the type and the text have not changed but the meaning has, signifying the oppressive surveillance of the individual.

Figure 13. Poster 3 with the AR virtual overlay active and creating the illusion of an eye



The Outcomes

In this situation more than in the others, the viewer’s perception is completely changed through AR. As the pupil of the eye roves around the eye shape created by the curve of the Venetian blinds, the person who was originally looking out has become the person being watched. The interplay between the illustration and the virtual overlay has successfully subverted the original meaning and has created a surreal version of it. The diegetic presentation of the virtual overlay is key to the communication that is being executed at a high level. Prior to the virtual overlay being added, the curves of the Venetian blinds looked like nothing more than that. But the virtual overlay was able to make use of these shapes to create the perception of the white of the eye.

From Overlay to Interplay

The virtual overlay only consists of the black disk that reads as the pupil of the eye. The initial features of the poster have not been edited in any way and yet, because the virtual overlay works seamlessly within the poster diegetically, the poster and the virtual layer become a single visual entity with which the typography can now interplay. The individual components that create the interplay or, in this case the relay to create meaning, have been altered. Changing the message of the image, in which the watcher now becomes the watched, also shifts the meaning and tone of the typography. The written text goes from seemingly asking about curtain-twitchers to questioning a larger Big Brother entity who is watching everyone.

What We Learned

We learned that the virtual overlay can inhabit the imaginary space between elements that is created through the subtle shapes made by these other elements. We also learned that the virtual layer when presented diegetically can subvert and create surreal messages when used in conjunction with printed media such as posters. This case study showcased how the virtual overlay, when presented diegetically can subvert and create new meanings while adding intrigue to a static medium.

FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The virtual overlay of AR as a visual communication medium is still in its infancy. These case studies provide an initial insight into how and what types of visual communication can be achieved. The third case study, in particular, illustrates the power that a virtual overlay can bring to a static poster and in doing so, poses questions about the interplay between the different graphic elements involved. In particular, when the diegetic presentation of the overlay and the poster became one visual entity, a new interplay with the unchanged text was created. Having seen this, we would argue that the main avenue for further detailed research would be to expand Barthes' theory, so that it might be able to cater for the virtual overlay of AR. The original theory accounts for text and image in a variety of roles. We initially thought that relay would cover AR, however, after conducting these case studies we now believe that relay cannot be applied to the virtual overlay in the same way as it is to film. As such, the original theory needs to be expanded to cater for a number of possibilities, such as:

- AR image supporting image
- AR image supporting text
- AR text supporting text
- AR text supporting image
- AR animation supporting image
- AR animation supporting text

While we have identified these initial six categories, we have only just begun to explore the area and are aware that there may be more viable additions. Even at this stage, more case studies and experiments would consolidate the conclusions we have drawn from our case studies. And in the future, once the virtual overlay is made interactive and allows the viewer to interact with the poster, further visual explorations and development of categories would be warranted.

CONCLUSION

The case studies have shown that the virtual overlay can be an effective medium in visual communication. They have shown how it can be part of the constructed image and how an interplay can be created between the virtual overlay and the constructed message of the poster design. The case studies have also shown how the virtual overlay can add and subvert meaning, and how through the interplay of even a few basic elements it can create surreal visuals that play with the viewer's perception. Ultimately, these very basic visual experiments show how the virtual overlay of AR has the potential to create complex narratives when used with an established narrative device. It is clear to see that a virtual overlay interacting with an analogue medium such as a printed poster will change the viewer's perception as well as the message being communicated, particularly if the diegetic channel of presentation is used. This form of presentation brings greater depth of meaning and a higher communication value to both the virtual overlay and the poster. Moreover, the virtual overlay transcends the role assigned to it in recent years as simply informative or illustrative and becomes a true communication channel capable of complex narratives. It is a hugely flexible means of conveying information and telling stories, a fact that appears to have been forgotten in recent years. In its storytelling, AR can be as obtrusive or nuanced as the message requires. Using the virtual overlay in this manner adds depth and richness to the viewer's experience and, perhaps most importantly, it further pushes and develops the boundaries of AR as a technology and a means of visual communication.

And finally, it is now clear from the case studies presented here that the virtual overlay of AR expanded the meaning of each poster and changed how each could be perceived by the viewer. These changes also showcased AR as a viable and exciting visual communication method, a rich medium for storytelling, limited only by what we can imagine or want to communicate. And last but not least, the case studies displayed how the virtual overlay of AR could be used to add and subvert the meaning of the story told by these posters, in order to create something new and surreal.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Anchorage: A term coined by Barthes in order to define the process of applying text to an image in order to fix the meaning of the image.

AR: A technology that superimposes computer-generated content on a user's view of the real world through an AR enabled device, creating a composite view.

Diegetic: A term defining the elements that are presented as part of the scene. For instance, music playing on a radio in a film scene. In game design, Fagerholt and Lorentzon (2009) categorized diegetic user interface elements as those part of the fictional world presented in the 3D environment.

From Overlay to Interplay

Interplay: A connection of shifting meaning between two different elements. Here, the inter-connected relationship between the visual and the textual elements.

Non-Diegetic: A term defining the elements that are presented as not being part of the scene. For instance, a voice over in a film, where the characters do not hear the voice. In game design, Fagerholt and Lorentzon (2009) categorized non-diegetic user interface elements as those not part of the fictional world presented in the 3D environment.

Overlay: The addition of Augmented Reality features to a non-digital medium.

Relay: A semiotic term to define the complimentary relationship between text and image. Through their relationship, their unity, a message is realized.

Chapter 12

Gif as a Narrative Tool

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ABSTRACT

This chapter centres around a new type of creative and artistic expression, namely the gif. Positioned somewhere between an image and a video, the gif provides an interesting sense of narrative, since it presents itself on a never-ending loop. Although this type of moving image is currently associated with contemporary social media and the internet, its roots go back to the beginning of cinematic history, when the first recorded moving images were displayed repeatedly in front of the viewer. As such, starting from these cinematic roots, the present chapter will deal with the intricacies of the gif's narrative pattern and the status of art on the internet, before delving into the analysis of a series of gifs which were part of an art exhibition.

INTRODUCTION

To narrate means to show, to make known, to mean. This requires time, perception and meaning. The instant makes narrative impossible, since it itself is subjective. It becomes almost impossible to propose a zero degree of narrativity since subjectivity can use affective memory to create a narrative from any element. However, narrativity is more correlated to representation: the less significant elements, the more difficult it is to create a logical sequence. Even if the narrative does not develop in time, in duration, it can exist in space, on the surface of the work.

In the 19th century, with the increasing research in perceptual processes, many optical devices were created and displayed before the public. Because such a device presented a few pictures at its core, it usually stuck to basic questions of movement, without a narrative concern. Despite a link between cinema and these devices, their kinetic characteristics were denied and banned from history, probably due to the narrative issue that cinema embraced soon after. This transformation from cyclical to linear, supported with films, led to a change in production and narratives. The very notion of narrative comes into discussion with a constant return and in relation with micro duration. This attraction cinema basically used a small movement repetition mechanism.

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The repetition these devices proposed often works as a break in the fourth dramatic wall, where the narrative itself is exposed, like a metanarrative. It is possible to refer to a greater intention of repetition, which is to turn attention to the mechanism. Once the image is already seen and memorized, the observer is lost in other ramblings or contemplations. It can be an internalized reflection-trance; it can be an external reflection, directed to other things that affect you; or directed to the mechanism and its functioning, intra-object. This thought in the device comes from the metalanguage often operated by the *mise en abyme*, which refers to the total form, or to the internalization mechanism of the form, namely to the pondering about why and how the idea was inserted there. From that point on, the viewer's thought goes to the way the device works, which will be the last step of the process; and since it is the most mechanistic / external / specialized, here the attention of the viewer is dispersed in the narrative.

BACKGROUND: NARRATIVE IN DIGITAL TIMES

According to Metz (1972), the narrative will be: a closed discourse that “unrealizes” a temporal sequence of events. In this case there is a notion of temporality, but also one of similarity in relation to reality (showing what happened or what was imagined), but above all, there is the “event”. Something happens. Action. Movement. This action, if narrative, must comprise: a beginning and an end - that is, to be located in time, according to a reaction of happening. Time is understood twofold: there will be a time of the narrated and one of the described, or read; the “unrealization” of the story through its awareness (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990). But it is possible that this event develops not through the narrative, but through the sensoriality, the presentation of some mimetic element either lived or imagined. The memory in the body can make this a carrier of non-discursive narrative, and the same occurs with new digital technologies, when they recreate events and elements through graphics or sensory representations.

When the consumption of films is detached from an absolutely isolated absorbed visualization (in the dark, at 24 frames per second, in a narrative order and without outside interference), narrative cohesion starts to be pressured by external discourses. But digital spectatoriality also affects the internal structure of the narrative: sequences can be easily skipped or repeated (Mulvey, 2006, pp.27-28)

These moments are characterized by the cessation of the narrative, and can thus be called moments of pure spectacle, in which the reception persists only for the sensation, not for the legibility of the story. Thus, a materialized image is created, which will have more impact than the narrative structures that make up most films.

The more it coincides with the narrative motivation, the more the materiality of the image can go unnoticed; its excess, however, entails a suspension of the logical and causal plot, since the excess implies a gap or a delay in motivation. (Thompson, 1977, p.54)

When it comes to digital possibilities, perceiving or not the abandonment of the narrative by this materiality of the image, through the tools of pause, delay, overlap and repetition of images, will depend on the change in the state of attention or on some latent subjectivity in the viewer. These processes modify meanings and suggest a more reflective way of relating to images.

Narratives are much less about predicting the future than influencing it. Narratives promote values that are passed down from generation to generation, like the stories and myths of world religions and nations preserve and promote certain values over time. That is why civilizations and their values persist for centuries. However, according to author Douglas Rushkoff (2013), the narratives are collapsing due to the acceleration of our daily life, before Moore's Law, which was developed in 1965 by Gordon E. Moore and which states that every two years the speed of computer processors doubles:

Along with that, however, everything seemed to double as well - our stock indexes, medical bills, internet speed, cable TV and social networks. We were told that we were no longer adapting to individual changes, but to the accelerated rate of change itself. (Rushkoff, 2013, p.11)

Modern society has undergone a radical transformation. We do not have time to see the elongated linear story unfold, unless we take into consideration series that endlessly develop without ever ending, or micro stories that can already be accessed by small devices anywhere at any time. At first, TV zapping ended the narrative (or multiple narratives were created by assembling images from other channels, in what was perhaps the beginning of the hyperlink?), and then the cell phone, which is always at hand, started interrupting our narratives. Just as the films which were seen in the cinema first had a narrative which was linear and which later became multifaceted, so too TV and smartphones have left their mark on contemporary narratives. This would not be the collapse of the narrative as the author predicted, but the multiplication and development of narratives in other forms which were little used until now. And editing will be the focus of this new type of narrative. Random montages obtained by zapping, or hypertextual constructions from images interconnected with *Whatsapp* messages or nudes recently sent by smartphone. Other possibilities of connecting imagery and narrative lie ahead. Like a new Atlas Mnemosine project, festivals and compilations of micro narratives are constantly appearing, and narratives bend their shape to keep up with them. One of the main communication applications in these times of social networking, Twitter, is based on these quick narratives / texts of up to 150 characters, with little time dedicated to expressing and also reading. The moving image follows the same pattern. In these modern times, it accelerates, it becomes instantaneous. On the one hand, gifs have the power to tell a narrative within a minimal time frame, on the other hand, they can unfold in the eternity of a looping like a television series that never has its final season.

According to the abovementioned author, another symptom which signals the collapse of the narrative in modern society is the appearance of 24/7 news channels which present reports as they happen, including news series which have their individual narratives. Thus, the role of reality, with its little emotional linearity, is displaced for an ever greater narrative spectacularization. The author also uses neologisms to try to explain these changes brought about by technology, such as *Fractalnoia*: that would be the ability to connect anything as a means to satisfy "our need to find patterns in a world without lasting stories ... We cannot create context in time, so we create links "(Rushkoff, 2013, p.199). These links may have a connective logic or not, so that there is currently a need to create fictions that connect us to another reality. The current identity crisis can be identified with the height of social media's autobiographical fiction, which, according to Hall (2004), is also possible under the optic of spatial dislocation.

Also in a time when reality is constantly questioned due to the appearance of fake news and post truths, network users can also create a new personality through avatars which allow them to interact differently in the virtual space. Thus, they are not liable to guilt or punishment in the real world. At the present moment, there is an expansion of identities, which supports a heterogeneous proposal initiated

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in globalization. Currently, this expansion or lack of definition of identities (moving towards trans, almost) suggests an expansion of cultures. In the same way, the internet becomes a place for instant creations and exchanges of identities. It is possible to have a page pleasing each tribe, you can create fake profiles, it is permissible to use several avatars, one in each network which can be associated with opposite notions. In this way, it is possible and increasingly likely to invent new fictions, new biographies. Two neologisms specifically created to explain this extreme presentification clearly explain this contemporary contradiction:

Narrative-drive: the belief that life without stories is not worth living. Ironically accompanied by the fact that most people do not attribute stories to their lives. De-narration: the process by which someone's life stops being felt like a story. (Basar, Coupland & Obrist, 2015, p. 46)

Currently, the uncertainty caused by changing these perceptions leads to two main possibilities: static shock, anxious immobility; or the constant, eternal movement to displace without creating roots, increasing the capacity for escape and deterritorialization. Inertia presupposes security, since movement means to take risks, to try other positions; it's fail, fall, change. This is a verb, while 'static' is a state of mind, an adjective. If, at present, the result of every effort / work is directed towards comfort, there is nothing more normal than ending up comfortably inert, without moving or advancing. The deserved rest, or the desired inertia, is constant. It is possible to compare this with the end of the great narratives proposed by authors in the 90s (Canclini; Lyotard; Fukuyama; Danto), since one can see the overflow of micro narratives and biographies spread over traditional media and the internet. According to Benjamin (1994), the birth of the press was responsible for the decline of the narrative. He proposes that the art of narrating has never been more difficult (the text is from 1936), one of the causes of this phenomenon being the low importance of experience and the gradual extinction of wisdom.

The first sign of the death of the oral narrative is the emergence of the novel at the beginning of the modern period. What separates the novel from the narrative (and the epic, in the strict sense) is that it is essentially linked to the book. In addition to the novel, the press was primarily responsible for the increase in information. Every novelty was printed and sold in modern cities. If the excess of information was then responsible for the decline of the narrative, today information returns as a form of narrative. However, not in an epic way, but in a subjective and personal way. That is, each internet user can have their own page or social networks that will allow them to create their own narratives / information. The advent of aesthetics proper to the new media considers a binary logic, through codes, which is more like a database, or a process of cataloging, than a narrative. There is no duration, neither beginning nor end, only the process of searching and relating information. In this manner it is possible to propose that the current Information, which is not necessarily true (fake), is a subjectification of the real, where each subject can display his or her image / information as being the real one, thus creating his or her own narrative. When fiction takes over from everyday life, the sense of truth is lost, hence the so solemn post-truth of the present age. In this context, looping can emerge as a non-narrative element par excellence, reviving the instant and what causes the effect, in works created with circularity at its core. The form would be strictly linked to representation and thus at the service of contemporary poetics.

The gif is inserted in the current time as a quick illustration for some instantaneous event, created daily by the media. The purpose is no longer only to inform, but also to entertain. The information which becomes flexible expands the understanding of the public / private, real / invented, knowledge / entertainment. This intermediate state of the gif affects a whole sphere of pure and endless mediality, since

it has no specific objective (it is not contemplative, it is not informative, it is not narrative). Rather, it operates as a current language corresponding to a culture of distraction at the same time. Artistic time.

THE STORY OF ART ON THE INTERNET

Since its opening to the public in 1992, the internet has been shaping a whole new configuration of perception and production of objects in the connected world. In relation to art, this paradigm shift could not be different, whether it is related to originality, historicity, the authorial or material aspects. There has always been an idea of presence which permeates the artistic characteristic of a work. However, with the advent of the internet, this presence becomes constant, a situation in which you are constantly connected and informed about everything that happens. This being always “online” (sometimes even offline is programmed cybernetically) entails a need for constant updating. Several contemporary authors (Bourriaud, 2009; De Certeau, 1998; Augé, 2005; Castells, 2002) insist on the indifferentiation of the author and the public, since on the network there is always a post-production, or an appropriation of files (images, sounds, ideas). Thus there is also the permanent search for a notion of observer / creator, or a figure as the semionaut (Bourriaud, 2003). However, observing what really happens on the network, a large majority of passive internet users are perceived to, at most, republish such files without really dedicating themselves to creating or adding any novelty to them.

It is a “cut and paste” manifestation, an appropriating of existing files. According to the artist and critic Marisa Olson, the work of professional surfers transcends the art of found photography in that the act of finding is high performance at its core, and the ways in which the images are appropriated distinguishes this practice from a citation practice by taking them out of circulation and reinserting them with new meanings and authorship (2015). This post-internet art will be an art that can be done on the internet but can and should also exist offline (Olson, 2015). In this new system, all artists should become aware of the internet (Beard, 2008). The current art will be as much part of “the new media” (Manovitch, 2001) as any creations that cross the network, when we take into consideration creation or distribution. The art of the post internet can be understood as “the digitization and decentralization of all contemporary art via the internet as well as the abandonment of all specificities of the new media.” (Doulas, 2011) As such, Post-Internet appears not as a category, but a condition, namely a type of contemporary art which is, through digitalization, redefined along with its participants (Doulas, 2011). Certainly not all digitization has the same intention, and it can either be a work created on the network, created offline with images from the network, the digitization and later computerized editing of images, or the digital dissemination of a simple physical exhibition in any gallery.

Just as the perception of cinema changed with the advent of the digital, with a greater possibility of frame-by-frame modification, so too has the massive distribution available with the internet created a new cultural remodeling. Gutenberg’s printing press led to an entire information revolution and new worlds were discovered, but what will come after the internet and its expanded knowledge? When thinking about writing, how many centuries did it take to introduce the illiterate into literate culture? And how many more for them to use writing in an innovative way? The wide dissemination of images, as well as the dynamic form of texts, makes their consumption on the internet reach standards never seen before. This ease of access builds a huge collective imagination, often keeping the local specificities of culture, and taking advantage of still open virtualities and of a greater possibility of interaction.

Gif as a Narrative Tool

Art critic Boris Groys (2016), for example, believes in the internet as an amplifying space for art, and proposes that the use of the internet as a way of producing and distributing art leads to a de-conceptualization, since the observer does not abandon everyday reality, he or she is immersed in it. Among news, weather and art pages, everything becomes an expanded reality. Since the 20th century, the artistic avant-garde has tried to reveal the non-fictional dimension of art, bringing it to everyday life (the Bauhaus school of art). “As there are no limits on the internet, the demarcation is deinstitutionalized and the framed fictionality is de-conceptualized.” (Groys, 2016, p. 196) Moreover, artistic production is perceived as a real process and the work of art as a real thing (Groys, 2016), so today we see an enormous amount of videos showing the process of the work, how it was done and a multitude of tutorials teaching anyone to reproduce the artistic work. Many works will only be viewed because of the internet, which democratizes access, amplifying the aesthetic possibilities (usually falling into a fetish of hyperrealism). Current art acts fall in this field of uncertainty, using / validating quotations, fragments, creating accumulation and the repetition / editing of pre-existing images.

McHugh contends that the internet acts as a specular space, and that it constitutes not necessarily a novelty, but a banality (2011). We live with a need for constant novelty, instant updating. In our time, when the internet acquires an omnipresent and omniscient character, the important thing is to appear, so, the individual acts more like a businessman, having to advertise himself constantly, which means that there is a collapse of the individual in favor of a commercial identity. The body becomes the information center, an advertising sign, but the body is dematerialized, inserted in the internet, in social networks and viralized in the form of a meme. It is no longer the designation of the individual as an agency (Giddens, 1984), but as a company, administrator and, above all, marketer. Thus, the internet user gains the power to validate images and styles, depending on their acceptance on the network, that is, depending on the likes he or she received. Contemporary art necessarily passes through the internet, and every day there is an increase in digital art in galleries, but in museums this expansion occurs in a more timid manner. Bishop (2012) proposes the idea of a fascination with analogue on the part of the artists, in addition to an ease of control of the works by the market, and above all, a difficulty in understanding the true digital logic, which proposes a new dematerialization, without authorship and without being marketable, as a reality of collective culture.

Since photography was only accepted in the 1920s (more than 30 years after its discovery) and video in the early 70s (10 years later), how long will web art delay? When low resolution is taken as an important feature in the dissemination of images on the internet, it is possible to find another emerging aesthetic today, something that the artist Steyerl (2009) calls Poor image, namely images that are born from the lack of time, the need for immediate sharing, the visualization on small devices, the lack of attention characteristic for today’s society, in short, which contrast with the fetish of the high-resolution image. This low definition of image quality provides greater diffusion and opens the door to a new objectivity of the image, since it is supplanted by editing. It can happen because of this digital change: a poetic subjectification (in the case of experiments); a post-truth (in the case of documentary images); or the cliché, since this wide circulation of images can lead to a pauperization of it. In this context, where can attention be focused, when at every moment the eye is distracted by new images? “Attention has always contained within itself the conditions for its own disintegration, and has been haunted by the possibility of its own excess - which we all know well when we try to look at or listen to something for a long time.” (Feenberg, 1991, p. 47) There is an information overload and a loss of control over the ability to maintain “productive attention”. In this way, the contemporary subject can be viewed as a passive consumer, transformed into an unproductive automaton, but remaining an assiduous user of

the internet. The gifs that are so popular on the network act as training for vision / perception, enabling a consumer / user to notice and consume as quickly as possible anything he or she is given. If attention was previously described as organization, isolation and selection, nowadays it is increasingly turning to an idle moment of procrastination.

GIFS

The modern-day gif raises the issue of distraction, contrary to the products of those early cinematic devices, where observers had their perception affected by a directed vision (and in this way a more productive vision, which worked better for the productive system at the time). The problem of attention is intricate within the history of visuality at the end of the 19th century. At the time there was an increasing concern with the autonomy of vision, which was understood physiologically, through the sensory apparatus and less as resulting from external stimuli. Thus it was more conditioned to the will of the modern subject. “The perception was put into a state of perpetual transformation and adapted to the needs of a system in constant renovation.” (Crary, 2013, p. 13) Virtualization brought a new scheme of possibilities, but it seems that there is only one end of this project that is constantly uploading. Exactly as if it were a small gif, a sample of what may come next, but that often is not allowed to continue, either due to the delay in loading, or the possibilities of new information in other windows. On the one hand, there is a sense of impatience for the updated information and, on the other hand, the reassuring action of the repetition of the redundant and distracting gif.

Today, distraction reigns supreme. Recursive automata are created not only for images, but every day there is a risk of humans becoming automated beings. Modern society is consumed with an eternal presentification of the moment, and, at most, there is a jump to another moment, without duration, without any thought about the passage of time. The path no longer matters-what matters is reaching an image and then jumping to another, which is absorbed just as quickly and often just as shallowly as the first. This immediacy is intrinsically related to a permanent lack of time: the agitation of everyday life, the rushing, and the constant possibility of delayed meetings and deadlines.

One begins to live in a 24/7 world, in which the regulatory machine reduces the subtleties of human nature to a plane of sameness and repetition. Sleep is considered abandonment, and it is less and less privileged in favor of eternal vigil. However, constant novelties are necessary to maintain the attention that becomes limited by repetition. And in this context, a question arises: how to make the looping interesting, in order to create new relationships with the image and, above all, with the concepts implicit in it?

A NEW TYPE OF TEMPORALITY AND THE LOOPING NARRATIVE

This world surrounded by images saturates the senses, causing a state of continuous attention that requires occasional distraction mechanisms to avoid an overload (continuous attention is impossible in the same way eternal distraction is impossible). The current economic system requires a great deal of consumption, be it of attractions or distractions. The internet itself is in charge of inserting information that entertains or informs. Or both at the same time. Culturally, gifs and these new types of images call attention to the continuity of the movement and to the illusion about duration: eternal in duration, but instantaneous in the message. A real change in narrative content is often not perceived by the modern

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consumer/user, but rather only a repetition on other screens. This multiplication of images tends to lead to the saturation of the image, of which the gif often becomes an active device, sending erroneous / unnecessary information. Continuous movement can function as a creative and artistic form, but it often also acts as a distraction. If we were to leave the digital and personal world aside, we could observe the same principle to the modern city - with its billboards, amoled signs and LED advertising. Everything that is perceived in the city moves, so the eye remains focused on advertisements and the commodification of everyday life. However, this commercial characteristic, aimed at immediate perception, has raised a much more interesting point, namely the inertia of the image-movement in other non-market fields.

In this way, art, authorial cinema, photography, begin to rethink the image that moves in the opposite direction, multiplying the examples of perceived duration in photo-films, in films produced with very slow sequence plans or even photographs taken from videos. This temporality, different from that of cinema and photography, creates a hybrid interface, in which it is possible to comprehend the moment in a more perceptible way. There are many examples of exhibitions with authors who use this new temporality, especially in the last twenty years, among which we can mention: *The Luminous Image* (Stedelijk Museum d'Amsterdam, 1984); *Passages de L'image* (George Pompidou, 1987); *Cinema situation* (MAM RJ, 2007); *Unlikely movements, The cinema effect in contemporary art* (CCBB, 2013); *Neverending Stories* (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2017). For cinema, with the use of digital cameras, the change in the duration of the scenes becomes more executable, not only with the increasing use of sequential shots, but also through tricks that allow for delay, flickering and super slow motion. The extended time can also be seen in the various overlapping photographs or in the films where there is practically no movement, only the passage of time between several similar frames. In short, constant technological innovation allows the creation of other forms of perception of time, and the gradual increase in the audience that uses these technologies allows devices to run applications that produce such effects, disseminating this new temporality in spaces other than cinema and photography, but above all on the internet, in an abundantly fast way. This abundant current production leads to a reflection on why this type of image causes so much attention.

Other elements stand out, such as the creation of a repetition aesthetic, where digital devices can enter an eternal loop without the danger of physical alteration due to wear and tear. Analogical information is linear in nature, it follows a sequential path, like writing and film making. And it can also lead to a wear of the support, through a loss of energy. Entropy only occurs in the digital realm when this needs physical support. This wear, however, can appear as noise, an element of language. Hence a question arises: what stands out as a characteristic of the looping, the silence or the noise? The repetition that distracts like a trance, or as excessive moments? There is a poetics of a non-materiality of the work that would culminate in a virtual image, much easier to be reproduced and repeated over and over and more likely to be overlaid thanks to technological facilities. (However, there is the possibility of altering the definition of the image, which could be understood as wear and tear due to its proliferation in other media and social networks.)

At all times, the creation of aesthetic and language is perceived based on technical innovations, with specific supports for specific languages as referents. Currently, new media propose a hybrid image that is neither photography nor video. The gif presents itself as that image decoded in a digital, hybrid pattern. Its aesthetics is based on instantaneity, repetition, and above all the reproduction of existing images, but it is intended to think of a characteristic form of this language, from its creation. This is why it is necessary to think about visual parameters in order to decode this creative process. Currently, the linear notion of time and space is deconstructed through binary codes, while aesthetics seeks inspiration in

this new visuality / concept. In this context, the gif is a recent creation, but the loop which characterizes it refers to much older roots, as we have seen in the introduction of this chapter.

The visibility of the movement often starts from an effect within the inertia in the moving image. The question is no longer of what moves is called video or what is static is only a photo. Currently the hybridization of these devices is what needs to be taken into consideration. (Bellour, 1997) This same hybridization is recreated through new applications and devices: Photolive, where a photograph records a few moments before and after the movement; Boomerang, where an instant is moved back and forth creating a constant looping; 360° photography that allows an extra-visual update on the devices; or, the ever-increasing update of the animated gif, which appears as a static image for some programs but moves in an eternal looping in others.

The looping, which can be characterized by an atomization of the natural repetition time of an action, appropriates in the digital medium the same automated code for its reproduction. Still, in analog devices it depends on the materiality of the shape itself. When images as well as everyday acts tend to repeat, then the viewer is left to dare and reinterpret the repetition, which becomes an interpretation beyond perception. Once an ideal point is reached in the gif, this is repeated in the hope of achieving the same effect. Each visualization carries its own time and thoughts that permeate the work. "Repetition changes nothing in the object that is repeated, but something in the spirit that contemplates it changes." (Deleuze, 2011, p. 45) When repetition is contemplated, it can give rise to other impressions, chief among which, the emptying of the meaning of the image itself, when faced with a constant loop. However, repetition could also help to perceive the gif's real meaning, either through the perception of small details not previously observed, or through the trance caused by repetition, assuming a subjective character in the observer. It may even tend to an abstraction of form, going deeper and deeper into the thought or body itself.

In this way, the instant is transformed into contemplation, when the observer finds concentration in a form of meditation. Repetition is no longer considered as eternity, but as immediacy. The looping starts to be thought of as contrary to the eternal return, it is the materialization of saturation.

Based on the representation of the real, the return breaks this mimesis by changing the looping time. It is an unconventional time. There is no perfect looping in nature. It is an artificial creation, and it is clear that some machine or even man is responsible for this forced return. In practice, looping is almost impossible, since the organic and the handcrafted presupposes change. Only the machine assumes the copy, only it does exactly the same. Man's hand presupposes error, chance, a micro change. If something changes, then can it still perform the looping? The eternal looping is only of the gods. Ex-machina. Computers are machines of an advanced generation, they are electronic. They work more with the virtual than with the mechanic / material. In this way, a semantic load averse to repetition is created. The real is the opposite of repetition, looping. The unrealistic looping effect itself is a way to deviate from the real.

A SERIES OF LOOPING IMAGES

The current era requires more elements than linearity, repetition, etc. New forms are created, especially in the process of approximating differences or that of breaking barriers. This traumatic return in the arts then occurs as a sublimated form, presenting a light, bearable version, slightly modified to be accepted by society and culture. If it presents itself as a shock, it becomes more difficult to comprehend. On the other hand, it draws more attention, that is, it is likely to remain in the media before being exchanged for the new art of fashion.

Gif as a Narrative Tool

What follows is a collection of popular gifs, and the analysis of the stories associated with them. In this series, most gifs were developed from everyday images. Scenes that were repeated many times in various places in the cities of Petrolina / Juazeiro, small icons of the place (Sertão): people walking with an open umbrella, horses in the middle of the city, kids eating what they see ahead in the street, a dog sleeping in the hot sun. The series was selected and exhibited at Galeria Lunara, Rio Grande do Sul and featured 30 gifs displayed on monitors, two large format drawings from the overlapping images of two works and a QR code painting, where it was possible to access the images over the internet. This enabled the expansion of the exhibition space that remained open indefinitely, accessible to the public, by creating a transit between the physical and the virtual, but also with the aid of the materiality of the works (drawing and painting) and the virtuality of the instant on the monitors and on the internet itself. A nod to kinetic art, swirling on its own axis, using figurative elements, but isolated from its natural universe, these forms recreate movement in the small space where they are inserted.

The first gif to be taken into consideration in the present section (which is available at <https://wtristao.tumblr.com/image/120717336220>) has as subject a looping animated image of the famous Japanese actor Toshiro Mofune. The initial image changes into another, changing with it the perception not only of the object but of the intention itself. Toshihiro Mifune draws his sword to attack. But who? The other or himself? He performs on himself a haraquiri that removes him from this world and inserts him into the representative world. A cartoon, just over 20 pictures that retain the act in these two possibilities which modify the image: he attacks the narrative by inserting himself in the eternal or he kills himself, removing a fragment of a climactic moment in the film from the real image. This is another gif from the Morel Invention Series, based on the 1961 film *Yojimbo*, directed by Akira Kurosawa. In the film the hired samurai, a kind of mercenary, is a soldier who is not linked to any specific master or government and therefore can be controlled and hired in isolation. In the story and in the gif, the character returns to the starting point since there is nothing to hold on to a linear objectivity. He returns forever to the act, never stopping to think about what he does. In the case of the gif, it is only the movement that counts, not its understanding at first. The gif is created with the internet and seems to be hostage in this space where it spreads with great speed. When proposing insertion in other artistic medium, it became necessary to put these gifs in a framework that separates them from the cybernetic symbology of memes. The form found for this exhibition was the reproduction of these on old televisions that protected an aura of antiquity, thus creating a short circuit with the contemporary image. Tablets with small wooden frames were also used, in the form of moving picture frames. The works however left a virtual space with unlimited visibility for a small physical space with a limited number of observers and exposure time. This mechanism that worked before for artistic exhibitions does not seem to be suitable for this type of works (until the appearance of new image diffusion technologies), which still have their natural habitat on the internet and where the notion of gif resides.

Other gifs deal with scenes of everyday life. On a 40-inch monitor a dog is lying down and sleeping peacefully until the moment he suddenly wakes up and starts barking at another dog in front of him, also barking, on another monitor in the same dimensions. In this small video installation (Big dog fight), a newer work fought with the old one (The dog that barks doesn't bite). For a better understanding, both the gifs in question here are available at https://wtristao.tumblr.com/post/182785992835/dialogico?is_highlighted_post=1 and https://wtristao.tumblr.com/post/182803109005/invencaodemorel?is_highlighted_post=1.

Just like the looping that always comes back, the production process of these works is also characterized by the return of a theme, a figure or even a concept. It is worth remembering that the loop concept

is a type of closed circuit, a ring, and that the looping activity refers to the continuous repetition of one and the same motif. The dog waits impassively and inertly observes the viewer who appears in the counterfield. Acting suddenly, it moves, scares, barks. Inert / movement, attention / movement, lying / standing. Dualisms that give digitality a certain processing speed. But there is always a return to its movement, without a definite beginning, since the dog is always either barking or lying down. In the search for a beginning or end, the linear would be created by putting the person before it. When it sees the person, it gets up and barks. The other way designates a certain mortification of the image: the dog barks, is strong, then lies down and is silent, mortified by fear or shame.

In another scene, a lady walks with her parasol protecting herself from the hot weather of the Sertão, an arid area in Brazil (<https://wtristao.tumblr.com/image/182110240455>). She walks seemingly forever, her back turned to the observer, without ever getting anywhere. The line is coarser, it carries something of the filth of everyday life. These heavy lines clash with the real lady, who was recorded in previous days and who didn't even realize she was eternalized in the simple act of walking. On the surface, this might seem a micro narrative, but there is no development, neither time nor any characteristic that tells us more about the image. The description does not suggest a narrative, it only serves as an allusion to the image.

On the other hand, "The rain of each one" (available at <https://vimeo.com/102557448>) was the first attempt to impute a narrative in these gifs. The image was replicated and transformed into rain through editing programs, thus changing the original idea of walking under the sun to a stroll in the rain. As soundtrack there is music from cylinder, which had already been used in two other video works (*Cilindric music*, 2011 and *Predictions*, 2015). However, music was used here in a different way, by starting from the sound and then creating a visual structure that matched the sound. For instance, in the video *Predictions*, the music was created a posteriori, from the images found in the shells and drawn in a music box, creating an atonal music, based on the image.

The gifs are used in these works, which were presented in artistic spaces, as devices in an attempt to build a zero degree of the narrative, especially in the figurative moving image, present in the creations. The narrative is a closed concept, that is, every narrative has a beginning and an end, it works as a closed structure, even when it seeks to leave ellipses or more open formulations for a more subjective appreciation. This narrative discourse must be ordered by an author, a narrator who selects the order and duration of each sequence, be it linear or not. Then, It presupposes a temporal sequence, which always contains two temporalities, that of the narrated story and the time of the narration itself. In this way, the narrative works like a real speech and also fictionalizes the thing which is told. In the specificity of the cinematographic narrative, the process implies several modes of meaning, either through staging, framing or developing the plot. The construction of this filmic narrativity will be carried out by ordering these categories, divided into plans whose assembly aims to acquire a complete sense of the work. At the beginning of cinematic history, the action always happened in front of the camera, without a defined extra field, thus delimiting a determined action, place, and time. According to Gaudreault and Jost (1990), to reflect on the cinematic narrative is to think about the narrator of the film. "A closed speech that unrealizes a temporal sequence of events." (p. 35) The existence of this narrator can be implicit or explicit, as in the case of the voice off.

In the gifs described here, there is an absence of plot, since there is no necessary temporalization for this- the instant does not allow a narrative continuity. It is possible to refer to an atomization of time in today's society and to propose a revocation of the narrative in vogue at the heart of the current era. As there is no longer a linear, but rather an instantaneous time, it is impossible to write a story, there is no narrative chain, but only fragmented selections of instants. In the same way that the anonymity of the

characters makes it difficult to relate to historical representations. Only when concatenated with other works does a more fluid narrative become more feasible, as in the case of animated films created from the works. This instantaneous time is a reflection of the current era. Desynchronization is not the result of forced acceleration. Rather, the main force responsible for desynchronization is the atomization of time. And this is also due to the feeling that time passes much faster than before, but also due to the fact that temporal dispersion does not allow experiencing any type of duration. (Han, 2006)

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

With the constant advancement of technology, it is impossible to constantly keep up to date. The specifics of each newly-created device can innovate a new interface of interaction between producer and observer, which causes a change in the perception and creation of an image. But these new modes of comprehension and dissemination are essential in the production of new narratives, which always accompany a structural reorganization. Thus, the narratives used in cycles and loopings in our time reaffirm the languages and devices present at this moment, in the same way that new devices are needed for new approaches. In this sense, further research will be needed to analyze the effects of the ever-changing flow of technology on art and narratives.

Moreover, as we have seen, the superficiality which is typical in accelerated times, tends to renew itself, further reducing the time of perception. This phenomenon is multifaceted and has only been discussed tangentially in the present chapter. As such, further research is also needed in regard to some of the visible characteristics of this phenomenon, which influence the nature of narratives in contemporary society. Among these, we could mention the continuous appearance of lists, enumerating without deepening and diffusing aphorisms; the prevalence of hyperlinks, which raise issues about connection / disconnection; the loss of memory and loop thinking, namely the return to the starting point and fragmentation through jumps; breadth of thought, or the attempt to connect as many things as possible, generating paradoxes and more hyperlinks, as well as leading to hyper interpretations; lie and post truth, a situation in which there is no explanatory chain or concatenation of in-depth ideas, in order to facilitate the invention of new possibilities, realities and narratives; community and virtuality, as the virtual space is so large and complex that it is necessary to produce in a network, with several collaborators; the end of binarism, created through the emphasis on more entres and trans in which so many nuances appear that the opposites are lost; a sense of unpredictability due to the jumps and the lack of linearity which make the thinking accidental (however the digitization and the Intelligence Artificial proposes predictability through codes).

This chapter has supported the notion of an acceleration of time. However, the extremely recent events of 2020 have raised new issues about the way in which we understand the time of narration. With the appearance of new ways of thinking about the present in terms contrary to acceleration (slowness, contemplation, creative leisure, quarantine, new pandemics), the symptoms of superficiality should give rise to proposals for the perception of a continuous, slower time, making this topic more amenable to further reflection.

CONCLUSION

The infinite amplitude of the virtual causes an increasing number of disconnections and reconnections. Cognitively, when someone stops to connect some broken end, a different part is broken elsewhere. Thought, as well as memory, is forgotten in their linearity, since jump operation disables possible continuous lines. This random thinking creates new connections, but in a more superficial and faster way. It contributes to the creation of a new perspective and

perception. As if it were an infinite dream world with other possibilities of connections. These reconnection enclaves function as hyperlinks, which promote the discontinuity, progression, and even completeness that until then guided society. In this way, it brings a compliment to superficiality, since it makes it difficult to go deeper into a certain theme: stopping at disconnections and entering hyperlinks through too many connections.

When it comes to the image, the symptoms of superficiality appear in the form of pixels that are updated all the time, carrying new information and graphic resolutions. Changing in the form of the same. The speed of production / enjoyment of gifs generates a saturation of the image, however, some artists try to subvert this logic by proposing poetics / concepts with the gif as language and the looping as a form.

Gifs are created as digital instants, but looping can appear as two-dimensional or three-dimensional or even virtual. It has the same specificity as the looping return, but digitalized; it is eternal in time, not only in the represented space. The digital moving image proposes an automatic return without wear, unlike the analog image. From the moment the image is digitized, its shape has no problems with repeating the movement without major energy expenses. When associated with this reproductive movement, the analog displays imperfections that cause a sense of wear and tear, which, in turn, presupposes or foresees an end to the movement.

The gif works presented in this chapter seek a way to not fictionalize everyday life and are based on animations in rotoscopes inspired by reality. As mentioned previously, gifs are used as a device in an attempt to build a zero degree of narrative in the figurative moving image, recognizable though instantaneousness, but not through characters or places.

Gifs currently fulfill the function occupied by optical toys at the end of the 19th century, which made up the concept of cinema of attraction. This anachronism comes from technology that amplifies perceptual change, since it is affected by too much information. The circularity of optical devices at the end of the 19th century mirrors the looping of gifs. These small modules of animated images relate the revolution of the machines and the digital return when the images end at the turn of that century.

The current fictionalization propagated by social networks updates a new narrative panorama, since they use the cyclic narratives of digital programming and games or seek new narratives in forms which fictionalize everyday life. The creation of reposted micronarratives among users redefines the sense of reality / truth. There is a need for elements to create symbologies and identifications. Narrating can mean identifying, creating empathy, living the somebody else's life. When there is no experience for the other, a non-narrative work is produced, with conceptual elements more important than the narratives

Due to its short duration and repeatability, the gif does not presuppose the narrative, being more prone to shock and the concept. The shock time doesn't always allow identification, since it presupposes knowledge and development, which takes place over time. But despite the increasing occurrence of nanometers and micro-reports, it is still necessary to have a minimum length of time to develop the narrative, which may not occur in a minimal gif, with only two frames, which presupposes only movement or the overlapping of images.

Gif as a Narrative Tool

The return to the investigation of the cinematographic language now becomes necessary, because of the new consumer interfaces (internet, streaming). In this way, the early days of cinema act as the founding elements of a moving image. Due to their non-narrative, handcrafted, non-modular and therefore non-industrial characteristics, these initial forms of cinema materialized everything that goes against hegemonic cinema, that's why they were left out of the history of cinema all this time. But nowadays these concepts are resurfacing in the form of gifs, carrying similar characteristics but enjoying a greater dissemination capacity.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Digital: A adjective used to refer to the new forms of electronic technology.

Gif: A new form of expression, usually in a digital format that supports both static and animated images.

Looping: Here, a term which refers to the continuous repetition of narrative content.

Mise en Abyme: A neological term borrowed from French which is used to describe the placing within an image the copy of itself.

Network: Here, a term synonymous with the internet.

Post-Internet: A term coined by Marisa Olsen and referring to the consequences of the internet on culture and art.

Social Media: A new type of internet site or application which allows users to socialize and share content.

Section 4

Storytelling in Film and Literature: Old and New Narratives

Chapter 13

The Viewer–Participant Performing Morality in Interactive Storytelling in *Bandersnatch*

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ABSTRACT

The present chapter wishes to interrogate the capability of interactive cinema to test, unveil, exercise, and challenge the viewer-participant's moral layout. Looking at Netflix's Black Mirror: Bandersnatch, the chapter mainly explores the implications and outcomes of performing morality in a digital space mediated by a new mode of telling and receiving stories. The analysis looks at possible obstacles in exercising—in a genuine manner—moral imperatives and looks at the nature of the story as well as the format as catalyst for self-reflection and moral awareness. The chapter then explores the possibility that moral conduits are the product of active practice, and that interactive cinema embodies such practice.

INTRODUCTION

In the short history of cinema, audiences went from experiencing movies in public spaces—a performance in and of itself—to engaging with them in the intimacy of 'one's home, where social roles and responsibilities make way for genuine behavior. Alongside social performance, the viewer experience was—and still is—largely mediated by the venue itself, and not the format of the content. Between theaters and streaming platforms, audiences have been exploring stories as finite products mainly because the technology still makes difficult any kind of viewer participation within the narrative, while people need time to adjust to new ways of consuming entertainment. Furthermore, producers need to understand how to market interactive movies, because of the paradox of our times. As such, on the one hand, 'people's arguably slow familiarization with new technologies can lead to their distrust in the potential of new forms of entertainment. But on the other hand, digital markets are flooded with new

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apps, platforms, and content, which may overstimulate and ultimately reduce 'consumers' active interest in anything new. However, interactive movies are now produced and offered—in limited number, still—on streaming platforms such as Netflix, where viewers can insert themselves in the flow of the story and presumably decide one character or 'another's life trajectory. Even when the viewer chooses not to engage and simply witness the story as a regular movie-goer, the experience of watching is akin to a slow reveal of a cubist performance that allows for at least a marginal engagement with the idea of interactivity. As such, even in the absence of choices made by the viewer-participant, audience members still experience multiple timelines and are able to see more than one ending or one set of permutations. In *Bandersnatch*, for example, there are several abrupt endings that force the viewer into a loop, where the movie resets to a previous, sometimes seemingly randomly picked scene. Therefore, the viewer is able to observe the plot unfolding into ramified realities, all happening at once. This absence of a linear time is supported in particular by 'Colin's interventions throughout the movie, when he seems to pull together all the timelines, breaking the fourth wall in the process. Therefore, with this form of digital storytelling come a few considerations about the moral implications and performance of choices viewers make to shape the story to their liking, albeit in a quite controlled manner.

In the pages that follow I will focus on Netflix's *Bandersnatch* (2018), a choose-your-own-adventure type of digital content, a movie—or standalone episode, the distinction at this point being irrelevant—of the British science-fiction anthology *Black Mirror*. With roots in performance art, interactive texts, and video games, this type of movie experience might just be the dawn of a new form of telling and consuming stories. While I am not setting out to design a morality chart or propose a universal set of moral values or rules, I am attempting to inquire into the possibility that such content may exercise or unveil the moral fiber of an individual. I begin by looking at modalities of performing morality upon viewer engagement with the story in *Bandersnatch*, and by questioning what exploring the story means for the viewer's moral journey. I then approach the ethics of the form, questioning whether the movie's self-awareness affects the viewer/participant's moral strategy and the extent to which the viewer still remains an active participant in the story. I continue to explore how morality is mediated by architectures of story reading and story delivery, ending with a short overview of the didactic nature of interactive cinema in the viewer/user's exploration and practice of morality.

BACKGROUND

This present paper is placed in the broader context of digital narrative and new media forms of entertainment, where, according to Ciccoricco and Large (2019), fiction must "balance familiarity (pattern recognition and representation) and novelty (defamiliarization by means of its distinct interface) just as it, and its interface, must balance simplicity and complexity in its aesthetic treatment of narrative" (p.58). The paper is further predicated on the assumption that this new form of entertainment validates the prediction of a heavily technologized commercial era, where the lines between the human now and what comes after are blurred by humanity's increasing reliance upon technology, but where we, as civilization, maintain and in fact increase our sense of accountability and community (Braidotti, 2013, p.49). As such, this paper flirts with the horizon of posthumanist entertainment consumption, in a future when moral practice could potentially distinguish human from machine.

Quite a few articles, books, and chapters have been written on *Bandersnatch* already. They engage topics such as free will, agency, trauma, and marketing possibilities in light of Netflix's capabilities to

almost precisely map user preference—its algorithm is apparently responsible for 75% of viewer activity (Vanderbilt)—and measure behavioral patterns (Damiani, 2019), which definitively places digitally produced interactive films in the realm of consumerist practices, thus potentially hindering their reception as works of art. Along these lines, Nada Elnahl (2019) published a paper titled “*Black Mirror: Bandersnatch and how Netflix manipulates us, the new gods*” in *Consumption Markets & Culture*, where she looked at how new media use newly (induced and) emerging consumer behavior to expand the entertainment market. Closer to the research topic of the present chapter is Terrence McSweeney and Stuart Joy’s 2019 chapter “Change Your Past, Your Present, Your Future? Interactive Narratives and Trauma in *Bandersnatch* (2018)”, which looks at interactivity in conjunction with trauma as a shared experience between the characters and the viewers.

I will also extensively use a slightly problematic term, which wishes to comment on the nature of the consumer of interactive content, and as such throughout the paper I employ a combination of viewer-participant/player or viewer/user to refer to the consumer in as much of a comprehensive manner as possible.

‘WHO’S THERE?’, OR ON MORAL EXERCISE IN INTERACTIVE CINEMA

It’s Your Right Not to Choose, but Not Choosing Is Also a Choice

Moral Accountability

July 9th, 1984, 8:29 a.m. Stefan Butler does not know it yet, but he may not be real. As the nineteen year-old’s deep sleep inches forward into a startled awakening, somewhere, in another dimension, anticipation grows. A minute later, his morning starts. He takes his pills, shortly examines himself in the mirror, and stumbles over his dad in the hallway non-mysteriously locking a door. Then, shortly after Mr. Butler’s weak attempt at conversation, Stefan loses about 10 seconds of his life between watching his father shake two boxes of cereal and hanging in an inexplicable choice arrest, a sudden disconnect from his consciousness, for the invisible hand of fate to decide upon his breakfast: Sugar Puffs or Frosties? Stefan’s eyes glaze over for a moment, while several realities away somewhere, a faint blue light illuminates a confused but surely very real forehead. Very quickly, Stefan’s bowl will be filled with anxious, floating cereal and soon enough, an audible gulp announces Stefan’s breakfast. As the *Bandersnatch* main character enjoys his meal, the Netflix subscriber agonizes over their choice, wondering what catastrophic repercussions this unassuming decision, this sugary, industrial butterfly wing flap will have on yet unsuspecting Stefan.

This worry, which may well accompany the majority of interactive cinema consumers, announces a difficult moral relationship between the viewer and the type of content embodied, in this analysis, by the *Black Mirror* episode *Bandersnatch*. Interactive cinema works best - for now, with the available technology, at least - in the confidentiality of one’s home, and is not necessarily intended for engagement in a group. It is, therefore, worth inquiring how morality is performed in the intimacy of one’s home - where arguably, and if one subscribes to the general principle of virtue ethics, social restrictions are meaningless, since their public relevance is temporarily arrested, as are concerns about social opprobrium then these (un)written rules are being transgressed. It is worth exploring, then, the possibility that moral awareness comes from active and continuous exercise, and that new forms of storytelling, specifically

those that employ the sometimes vilified digital media, do, in fact, have beneficial characteristics, such as stimulating the viewer's moral apparatus.

Bandersnatch is not the first interactive movie. The honor goes to Radúz Činčera's 1967 *Kinoautomat*, "the world's first interactive cinema system" (Mansky, 2019) that debuted at the Czechoslovak Pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal, where "The Czechs, largely the same team as that in Brussels, outdid themselves with further technical wonders in the service of theater and cinema" (Freeze, 2012). However, it could be argued that *Bandersnatch* is the first of its kind: it addresses a mature audience by prompting the viewers to make – at best – morally ambiguous choices, and it entertains a philosophical debate over fate, the nature of reality, and the possibility of multiple timelines.

It also prompts an interesting conversation on the modalities of exploring the concept of free will, and further proposes that moral agency is non-transferrable and can, in fact, coexist with an absence of decision agency. This apparent conflict of conditions is explored in the movie for the first time in one of Stefan's therapy sessions. There, he confesses to Dr. Haynes that he feels like he is not in control of "Anything, little things, tiny decisions, what I had for breakfast in the morning, what music I listen to, whether I shout at dad or..." (Slade & McLean, 2018) and equates this feeling with an impulse, thereby conflating this mysterious foreign force with an inner drive triggered by something other than himself, creating an inter-dimensional hybrid that can navigate through states of awareness. However, Stefan feels that his decisions are not simply commanded by someone else, but rather guided, a distinction that indicates Stefan is capable of acknowledging the morality and ethics of some of his choices, quite evident later in the movie. Therefore, just as Chris Lay and David Kyle Johnson (2020) also point out, inscribing Stefan's condition into an Aristotelian conception of morality, Stefan's intention to do no harm outruns, in terms of moral responsibility and accountability, his inability to act according to his wishes (p. 225). Still during this particular therapy session, the viewer is prompted to make Stefan either pull on his earlobe or bite his fingernails and upon making a choice—or not,—Stefan resists it. Of course, this is not indicative directly of Stefan's ability to overthrow external pressure, but it does suggest that free will is possible even when one operates in a constrictive environment.

This possibility further explores the viewer's strategy when they force Stefan to make brutal choices, such as murdering various people. Here the viewer must come to terms with not only a quite self-aware Stefan, but also with the character's comprehension of his condition: upon murdering his father, the nineteen-year-old explicitly asks "someone" for directions as to how to dispose of the body. Here the argument about moral trajectory is not necessarily weaved around the choices themselves, but rather around the viewer's empathy: if the viewer immerses themselves into the story and resonates with the character, then the viewer realizes Stefan knows he is not in control, wishing to (re)gain full autonomy over his own person. Therefore, the moral course of action would be to release Stefan from the destructive external pressure, granting him freedom over his decisions, and removing oneself from the narrative. Upon that first interaction with the first relevant choice in the movie, between the two types of breakfast cereal, it is interesting to note how long it takes before the viewer resonates with Stefan, and how many attempts at uncovering as many pathways as possible are necessary until the viewer steps into Stefan's realm and grants him his freedom. In other words, the proposition here is that the more time the viewer spends with Stefan, the more inclined he or she is to test multiple moral implications. However, the more familiar the viewer becomes with Stefan, the less likely they might be to make choices that hurt him. As such, if free will—insofar as it indicates the desire to make moral choices paired with the awareness of the one's objective inability to do so—can exist in a seemingly fateful universe, an interesting perspective over the nature of responsibility and accountability arises. If Stefan does not wish to do harm, but

the viewer forces him to, is Stefan's morality dependent upon the viewer's own moral choices? How much of Stefan is left to put together one moral entity? Or are the two moral blueprints separate from each other, with the distinction that one operates under the other's control? In other words, is morality a consequence of action, or of intention? If Stefan is able at times to exhibit self-control, can the case be made that ultimately one's will has the power to break through? If that is the case, if even in a controlled environment one's spirit still has the capability of self-awareness and self-determination, then perhaps the overarching moral imperative under which any being operates could be boiled down to the struggle to break free from patterns and become a fully aware, meaningful, and volitional entity.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the audience's moral participation in the movie is informed by their decision of whether or not to perform morality at all. The viewer may choose not to seriously engage with the story and with the character, but instead to purely enjoy the interactive content by exploring how the plot adapts to the viewer's choices. With five endings and about one trillion permutations (Roettgers, 2018), such explorations are bound to take place sooner or later. However, if the viewer—regardless of their previous experience—emotionally and mentally engages with the plot and immerses themselves in the experience of interactive content, then it stands to reason that the choices that follow, as well as the considerations around them, might weave a pattern of the viewer's moral intricacies. Viewers who do not have gaming experience, most of whom participate in this type of interactive movie for the first time, might sweat profusely over the first real choice in the plot, namely the aforementioned breakfast cereal. The concern that this choice might unleash some horrible events over Stefan's life cannot be alleviated in ten seconds, but this timeframe is all the viewer gets to decide a course of action, before that choice is taken from them and the movie simply goes automatically until the next choice. Here, a short analysis of the nature of that fear might provide some interesting insight into the dimensions of interactive cinema. When prompted to choose between Stefan murdering his father and backing away, perhaps most viewers choose the latter. Although no statistics could be found to confirm this supposition, Carla Engelbrecht, director of product innovation at Netflix, stated that:

We're Netflix, we know what percent of folks are taking one path or another. Most of the time we think choices are generally going to fall in this 40 to 60 range but that there's moments where having it be a bigger split could actually be a great thing for the title. And so on Bandersnatch, there is a moment that I predict is probably going to be more like a 90-10 split. Where the vast majority of people when they encounter that choice are not going to want to make the decision. And I promise you, you will know that moment when you encounter it. (as cited in Strause, 2019).

There are a few instances where this reluctance to make a choice might apply, one of which is the aforementioned scene where Stefan—along with the viewer—is confronted with the decision of whether or not to kill his father. However, even if viewers decide to back off and let Stefan's father live, the movie goes into a loop, prompting the viewer to make yet another choice at an earlier point in time, ramifying into several endings. Moreover, if one wishes to explore all endings, then one must eventually make Stefan kill his father. And this is when three discernible viewer attitudes emerge, three main manners of reacting to the task of choosing, all three mapping out slightly different moral pathways. Firstly, the viewer might immerse him or herself in the role of the author, becoming concerned that they might destroy Stefan's life, hurting him in some unimaginable manner along the way. This viewer empathizes with Stefan and analyzes the implications of the choice at eye level, refusing to personally hurt Stefan, and identifying the consequences as part of Stefan's universe. Acknowledging that inaction is in itself a

choice, the viewer might disassociate from the act of choosing, removing themselves from the equation and temporarily suspending the meaning of the physical act of choosing. This viewer thinks: 'I do not want to hurt Stefan'. Here, morality is performed as a profoundly humane act that is dependent upon a person's ability to observe and recognize pain in others. The moral imperative here necessarily rests upon one's social exercise.

Secondly, the viewer might internalize the act of choosing, confusing the game with an actual choice, bringing the decision much closer to his or her reality, thus transplanting themselves in Stefan's shoes but in a different manner than the first viewer. This viewer's moral objection does not stem from the concern that Stefan might become hurt, but rather from the viewer's descent into the performance of choice. Therefore, this viewer thinks: 'I do not want to make this choice because I think the choice is horrible'. Here, Stefan's life is temporarily suspended, while the viewer confronts the enormity of the choice but from a purely personal perspective. The moral challenge here is indicative of the manner in which a person defines themselves relative to the world outside them. Here, the moral exercise is purely personal and is not predicated upon social interactions, but on self-reflection. It begins by observing the outside world, but continues with the person meaningfully engaging with their inner moral compass, listening to instincts, filters, experiences, and probing the depths of their conscience outside social rigors. Morality is acquired by interacting with others, and borrowing and integrating various moral models, but it can also be achieved through self-reflection (at least in part). A person can begin to question themselves, and find a moral path in a more spiritual way, accounting, of course, for the fact that morality is a value relevant only insofar as it defines a civilization – so it needs the human element.

Thirdly, the viewer might remove themselves from the context of the movie and observe the situation from a vantage point. As such, this viewer thinks: 'I do not want to be responsible for the decisions in someone's life' and might choose not to interact with the content at all, and simply let the movie unravel in an automatic way, coming closest to the regular manner of consuming cinema. However, it is arguable that this type of viewer could exist outside moral responsibility. After all,

Even a viewer who makes no choices still acts voluntarily. By watching the entire episode, it's clear you expressed a real intention to see what happened: you could've always turned the episode off if you found it to be too objectionable. But you didn't. So even in this situation, you're responsible. All in all, the choices you made as you watched the episode were voluntary, in the Aristotelian sense. And that mean that the source of everything that happens in Bandersnatch is you. (Lay & Johnson, 2020, p. 225)

Moreover, here the moral imperative to allow room for any being to exist within their own standards might be slightly tainted by the knowledge that *Bandersnatch*, what with being a *Black Mirror* episode, cannot end well. Therefore, the viewer's instinct is to disengage from any unpleasant consequences.

It could be argued, therefore, that the hesitation, or lack thereof, to choose functions as a meta-commentary on the viewer's morality. Moreover, the nature of digital content involves a certain type of continuous surveillance, which means the viewer might resent humoring whatever monitoring entity, or becoming a number in Netflix's statistics, for example. However, it is worth exploring the possibility that the moral blueprint thus revealed might be relevant upon the viewer's conceptualization of the experience and nature of the story. If the viewer sees the experience as testing a new form of delivering cinematic stories, the case could be made that an inquiry upon the viewer's morality is meaningless. However, if the viewer engages with the story and, implicitly, with the character, the ease of choosing or the reluctance to choose are indicative of one's moral experience and predilections. Moreover, because of the possibility

of testing new scenarios in Stefan's life, the viewer can explore different levels of emotional engagement with the story and the character, and thus meaningfully contemplate the implications of their choices, prompting them to tap into their moral awareness, and not simply fulfill certain storylines left uncharted.

Finally, navigating the seemingly never-ending possibilities of these multiple plots might reveal hidden aspects of viewers' personalities. But perhaps a danger rests within the exercise in morality that comes with exploring storylines and bonding with the character. Could this act of endless choosing run the risk of desensitizing the viewer relative to difficult or ethically ambiguous choices? While one may see this experience as morality in practice or even practicing morality, there is an undeniable possibility that the questions that until now remained suspended in the realm of uncertainty—"What would you do if..?"—finally have an answer much closer to reality, thus unveiling potentially and surprisingly dark inclinations. Whatever the case may be, though, it is worth grounding the analysis conducted so far in the invasive and misleading nature of the form of such content, accounting both for the technological limitations that had to confine the plotlines within a limited number of choices, and for the diegetic meta-narrative of the story, mainly embodied by the character of Colin Ritman.

"I'll Skip It for You", or the Ethics of Form

As if the choices that must (?) be made were not enough to confound the viewer, the creators of the movie—or episode, if one watches it in the *Black Mirror* universe—surreptitiously, but only up to a point, included in the development of the story meta elements that disrupt the viewer's automatic moral pathways. Therefore, the ethics of form are called to interrogate the possibility that because the viewer might not have much choice after all, they find themselves in a situation similar to Stefan's: they know someone is controlling their choices, because they pick up on foreshadowing elements, on meta speeches or utterances enacted even by Stefan, are often turned into a loop upon making certain choices, and, the most obvious of them all, they only have two options to choose from.

Fair is fair, so it must be revealed that upon the very first screening—and only the first—the viewer was made aware of the nature of this movie-episode and allowed to practice decision-making before the start of the movie proper. To boot, a certain category of viewers, namely gamers, are well used to making decisions for their characters, inserting themselves, to some extent, into the flow of the story. As explored above, the awareness that these choices are merely a game might cause the (inexperienced) viewer to rationalize these choices in the realm of entertainment only, and not really give them serious thought, or engage with them in a meaningful and personal manner. After all, the viewer is not necessarily expected to spend time uncovering the moral and ethical underpinnings of the story... perhaps. However, what if the viewers themselves do not operate these choices by their own volition? Colin Ritman, in his meta-speech delivered to Stefan, albeit under the influence of mainly LSD, announces that "When you make a decision, you think it's you doing it, but it's not. It's the spirit out there that's connected to our world that decides what we do and we just have to go along for the ride." (Slade & McLean, 2018). Why should Colin's warning be only applicable to the universe inside the movie? After all, *Bandersnatch* is so filled with meta elements, that it almost feels like it has its own awareness. And fans of the parent show, *Black Mirror*, already know that the overarching commentary of the stories warns against not only the problematic and potentially destructive nature of technology (when abused or used incorrectly or immorally), but also against the automatic, untested belief in the status-quo. So how can the *Black Mirror* fan, or any keen observer of sub-text, for that matter, be certain that they are the ones in control, that they are the final link in the chain of choices over Stefan's life? Perhaps they would

be well advised to exercise caution in that respect. Perhaps the true power lies elsewhere, if not in some mystical, magical space, then at the very least in the form of the movie itself. After all, the choices one must make are limited, and one might even argue, guided. So then, are these choices genuine at all, or are they placeholders designed to give the viewer the illusion of control, just as the viewer gives Stefan the illusion that he is in control of his own life?

Entertaining the possibility that the viewer-participant is more viewer and less participant, living in the illusion of choice, the distinction can still be made between “playing a creative role within an authored environment and having authorship of the environment itself” (Murray, 1997, p. 152). Under these considerations, when the viewer/user is not burdened with the task of supplanting for the author, and upon tracing the labyrinth that the viewer constructs for Stefan, is the performance of morality affected in any way? If the viewer is restricted by a certain number of choices, how well is the moral exercise represented? Perhaps not that much can be revealed about the viewer when the paths they make Stefan take are predetermined themselves. Therefore, if one ignores Murray’s distinction between two types of authorship—creative and creator—the viewer could be construed as a witness rather than a participant in the story, and because the choices are guided, they cannot be taken at face value. Participation, then, and the moral exercise, belong to an extreme dimension of desperate choices—murder dad or desist, dismember dad’s body or feed him to the flowers, kill Colin or let him get away, and so on. They are not only desperate, but also limiting, thus ending the viewer’s ability to even try and find a middle ground, even though research suggests that, on the whole, viewer satisfaction with the level of engagement and agency is medium (Roth & Koenitz, 2019). But perhaps this constricting environment could be used as practicing moral awareness in the direst of contexts. However, they are still predicated upon the idea that the viewer is unable to mediate between two damaging situations, therefore limiting the viewer’s experience, but at the same time, absolving them of the added guilt of only considering two routes.

Thus the ethics of presenting the public with a finite set of choices, surreptitiously manipulating the outcome while maintaining the ruse of free will, points to the responsibility that producers and creators of interactive films have when operating with nuanced content. If the experience of the interactive movie is mediated by the creator’s own construction of the narrative, then the moral compass of the viewer is also misleading. For example, when Stefan is about to uncover the truth about his condition, sitting at his desk and becoming frustrated with his work, the viewer is prompted to make him either destroy his computer or pour tea over his computer. Stefan is under a lot of stress, and about to lash out in some way. Were there no options for the viewer, but simply a prompt to fill in, or ten options to choose from, the viewer might draw on their own experience in order to complete the task. Stefan might run out of the room, or cry, or scream. As is, the options are limited, remain the same with every rerun, and thus cannot offer a complete overview of the viewer’s moral exercise. No matter how many times one runs the plot, the viewer can, at most, become frustrated with the obligation that Stefan is under, thus leading the viewer into a closer relationship with the character. On the other hand, the brilliant aspect of *Bandersnatch*, which also points to the wonderful possibilities of interactive cinema, as well as to the ability of this type of content to sketch a life of its own, is that, according to director David Slade, “There are scenes that some people just will never see and we had to make sure that we were OK with that. We actually shot a scene that we can’t access” (as cited in Strause, 2019). If not even the creators can find all of the plotlines, and according to the same article cited above, creators, producers and the director cannot even agree upon how many endings there actually are, then it is possible that the limited choice options are not as limiting after all—albeit this is quite a subjective perspective and deserves to be contextualized in the grand and complex nature of the interactive movie genre.

The Viewer-Participant Performing Morality in Interactive Storytelling in Bandersnatch

It is now time to explore the meta elements in the story and see how they affect the viewer's decisions, as well as the viewer's connection to the story and the character. The meta elements act as guide to unveil the various endings, but also, through Colin, as assurance that regardless of the choice, it will not matter, proposing a straight path to absolution. Therefore, if one can anticipate the ending(s), is the moral exercise useful or relevant at all? Colin, who is himself a sort of fourth wall, reveals to Stefan that:

People think there's one reality but there's loads of them, all snaking off, like roots. And what we do on one path affects what happens on the other paths. Time is a construct. People think you can't go back and change things, but you can, that's what flashbacks are, they're invitations to go back and make different choices (...) Mirrors let you move through time. (Slade & McLean, 2018).

The viewer might take it to mean that, regardless of their choices, the characters are content, since they are aware of their condition. In one timeline the viewer chooses Colin to jump over the balcony instead of Stefan, and in another, the viewer makes Stefan kill Colin instead of letting him go. That characters might become casual about their trajectory is especially apparent with Colin, who takes his own deaths rather lightheartedly. When Stefan kills him, Colin chooses the murder weapon and sends Stefan off with "See you in the next life, yeah?" (Slade & McLean, 2018).

Going back in loops where Colin is alive again reveals that, indeed, Colin might live outside the walls of the story, when for example, he not only recognizes Stefan upon their "first" meetings, but reminds him he had told Stefan they would meet again. Colin's self-awareness might prompt the viewer to treat his murder less seriously, reasoning that death, in this case, is less relevant. The oversight here is that Stefan has to commit the act, and so the viewer might be temporarily blind to the responsibility that they have towards Stefan's morality, in addition to Colin's life. Furthermore, when, in one of the time loops, Colin literally propels Stefan a few scenes ahead by simply clapping his hands – "Skip to the next bit. Oh, for [profanity]'s sake, I'll skip it for you" (Slade & McLean, 2018) — he is a guide not only for Stefan but also for the viewer, because he interferes with the viewer's moral exercise, implying that since this whole story is just make-believe, no consequences will follow. In a sense, the producers cheat when using the Colin character, thus creating a false protective space where morality and consequences are presumably suspended.

Furthermore, Stefan also breaks the fourth wall, adding another layer of intensity to the relationship between the viewer and the character. When Stefan realizes that he is being watched and controlled, he demands to speak to the entity that is doing that to him and there are a few options here, depending on the previous choices. From the perspective of the viewer, a bond has been created in the crucible of these choices already. But when Stefan demands to speak to him or her directly, one might argue that the confrontation has the role of bringing Stefan closer to the viewer/user, to a more real dimension. Stefan thus emerges, even a little bit, from the removed realm of digital stories, and comes quite close to a proper apparition - even if only in the viewer's field of thought and consideration. It could be thus argued that the viewer-participant/player and the character join their paths in a tormented camaraderie: the viewer must follow the directions of the movie creators, while Stefan must follow those of the viewer, and by extension, of the creators as well. Therefore, from this point onward, the moral path must account for the viewer's imminent betrayal of Stefan. So how can the viewer circumvent the brutality of these choices and reward Stefan? One might argue that the ending where Stefan goes back in time and joins his mother on the train that killed her is Stefan's wish, thus ending his suffering, guilt, and longing. By

searching pathways and accepting the pain that comes with them, the viewer is finally able to redeem themselves for the control they held (?) over Stefan's life.

Moreover, when the creators placed story elements in anticipation of possible revelations, the viewer became trapped in a web of suppositions that arguably affect the viewer's choices or in the very least, their interactions with these choices. The suspicions that arise might impact the motivation behind a decision or another, thus potentially rendering that choice disingenuous. For example, at some point Colin (!) gives Stefan a video documentary on Jerome Davies, the author of the book Stefan based his game on. When the young game developer plays the video, he finds out that

After his arrest he [Davies] told police: 'We exist within multiple parallel realities at once. One reality for each possible course of action we might take in life. Whatever we choose to do in this existence, there's another one out there in which we're doing quite the opposite. Which renders free-will meaningless. Nothing but an illusion.' (Slade & McLean, 2018).

The viewer is thus warned that since people exist in multiple timelines at once, and all choices exist at once, no one makes in fact any choice at all. Therefore, performing morality itself is meaningless, since no matter how well one exercises and maintains one's moral apparatus, at the same time, that person is also, by default, an immoral, as well as amoral individual. As such, people function automatically, just as Stefan does when controlled by the viewer, albeit with a little bit more inertia. Perhaps the most beautiful meta-commentary here is that the (real) world is like an interactive movie: it consists of infinite possibilities, potential timelines, plot loops, and permutations, and the choices people make are necessarily contextualized in a group dynamic, where every personal choice functions within a web of foreign personal choices.

Power Structures in the Architecture of Interactive Storytelling

An Informed Choice Is a Moral Choice (?)

It is true that creators of interactive cinema are dependent upon the limited, for now, technology, and thus must use a limited number of choices that they can offer the viewer-participant/player. Even if these limitations could influence the viewer's moral journey, as explored in the section above, the viewer-participant/player still has the possibility to construct their own space of exploration. Thus, there are a few considerations in the architecture of experiencing interactive cinema that inform the moral performance of the viewer.

Discussed in the section above is the relationship formed between the character, Stefan, and the viewer, predicated upon the realization that both are limited by the creators' allowances. In this section, however, when analyzing this relationship, the focus shall be on the viewer's ability to intentionally extract meaning from the bond, and open a two-way street between their real (?) life experiences and the implications of certain choices in the movie. As such, if the viewer-participant/player decides to side with Stefan, even if the choices they must make are morally problematic, such as when they have to decide whether Stefan or Colin must jump to their death, the viewer-participant/player can decide to go on a quest, namely to find a happy ending for Stefan. Of course, it is arguable whether or not this quest and the decisions that come along erase any of the potential pain caused to one or multiple of Stefan's iterations, however, the moral exercise here is dependent upon previously imposed restrictions. What

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matters, it could be argued, is the intention of the viewer to make amends for the horrible experiences Stefan must live through.

Furthermore, since this type of content is predicated upon user interaction, and even accounts for user inactivity by making automatic choices (that are always the same, regardless of how many times a user revisits the movie without interacting), it is also designed to allow time for processing the options. Not only that, but the movie allows the user to go back to previous bifurcations and select other options. When, for example, Stefan is made to refuse talking about his mother in Dr. Haynes's office, the viewer can opt to go back to the choice and select the other timeline. This allows the viewer-participant/player to explore at their own pace and build their own response to the choices and events subsequently developing. This is an interesting avenue to explore in terms of the viewer/user reclaiming even a little bit of agency, namely the possibility offered by the interactive technology itself. Marie-Laure Ryan (2006) places this viewer/user freedom in the context of rewards, incentives for the users to keep "playing" or keep engaging with the content:

The success of interactive drama depends on both medium-free and medium-specific rewards. (...) The medium-specific rewards lie in the replayability of the project, which depends on the active part of the system in the construction of the story, and in the sense that the system truly listens to the user. (...) It is only by replaying the program several times, by seeing different story-variants develop, and by receiving intelligent responses to her input that the user will be convinced that she exercises true agency. (p. 179)

Beyond seeking validation of their agency, however, the viewer might keep interacting with the story simply due to the possibility of revisiting the story altogether. How the viewer re-experiences the story once it concludes for the first time is also noteworthy in performing morality. Do the choices the user made affect in any way the joy of going through the story a second, third, fourth time? What might be the drive of viewers to experience the same premise multiple times, knowing that the possibility of a happy ending is slim? One might assume this ability is an incentive to keep trying to make good choices. Further, it could be argued that this "replayability" and adaptability in making different choices is also an exercise in accepting and learning from failure. Thus, a possible outcome of reengaging with the story is that the viewer/user is able to test new moral pathways and truly comprehend the consequences of both unethical choices, as well as ethical but difficult decisions. It is noteworthy that in *Bandersnatch*, at times, the first choices made, or the order in which the choices are made, affect the unveiling of the plot. Regardless, the user has time, albeit truncated, to mull over any moral implications and any ethical dilemmas. Which in turn supports the principle of virtue ethics which posits that morality is not so much a set of rules, or even an act in and of itself, but rather a continuous exercise, a performance, one might add, dependent on the audience. Here one could argue that while the user goes back to certain choices, the act of viewing and enjoying the story is irreversibly disrupted, and the whole experience becomes a secondary act to that of simply choosing, deciding, and analyzing. The question remains, however, whether the act of interrupting the plot affects in any way the user's ability to connect with the characters on a personal level, or properly engage with the story, thus affecting one's concentration on the potential consequences of one choice or another.

By involving the user/viewer in the creative process, interactive media reshapes storytelling and story production and reception but it also only allows for limited and controlled user agency, which in turn reorganizes users' moral awareness. Until recently, the user was simply a viewer, and their agency was only limited to discussion boards and social media, where they could - and still can - expand the story

into a universe. But the moral immediacy is circumvented by the delay in conversation. Moreover, in discussion boards users rely on other participants' input and, oftentimes, approval, turning the processes of imagination and moral agency into a group endeavor. Then, such public spaces are only inhabited by fans, whereas an interactive movie allows anyone to participate, without feeling compelled to be part of any fandom. The universes thus created are individual and personal, and participation in the process of the story, however limited, reflects how one stands relative to ethical conundrums. Despite the viewers not truly affecting the outcome(s), due to pre-given choices and set endings, they still engage their imagination and morality, transplanting the story in other dimensions, where controlled narratives are irrelevant.

Public spaces, even virtual ones, affect the performative aspect of morality. Thus the exercise of morality in interactive cinema is mediated by the architecture of the medium. If watching such content alone leaves space for the development of moral awareness, what might be the outcome of an interactive movie being experienced in group, or even at the cinema? The Swiss company CtrlMovie produced an interactive movie in 2016 called *Late Shift* and played in theaters with the aid of an app that allowed viewers/users to make their own choice, but the scene on the screen was a result of this silent vote: the majority decided where the story would go (Hoguét, 2016). This democratic practice works in a cinema, but in a smaller group of friends, for example, the group's relation dynamics are more likely to dictate the course of the story. So the individual moral responsibility is temporarily arrested and the group acts as one, but lopsided: the choice to say, kill Stefan's father may not even belong to the majority, but it is enough for the group to perform under a dysfunctional hierarchy in order for the moral exercise to be disingenuous at individual level. Of course, when one allows for Stefan to be made to yell at his father, or stab Mohan Thakur, despite one's own personal preference, the moral imperative to voice one's opinion and change the course of events is still there. Therefore, in a sense, it could be argued that the moral exercise is never truly suspended, and moreover, it mirrors Stefan's condition of being forced to continue to participate in the absence of agency. The cinematic experience transcends the physical boundaries where previous forms of new cinematic expression dwell, such as 3D and 4D, and goes beyond what a simple screening can offer. By engaging the dynamic of the group, the cinematic experience turns into an experiment. Naturally, the question remains: to what extent is the pure pleasure of watching a movie interfered with?

In a sense, interactive movies resemble a cubist work of art, since all the faces of the movie already exist, all at once. In a group experience, the cubist dimension of the movie is emphasized by the different, concomitant choices, the viewers. The interactive movie acts like an art installation, proposing multiple ways to explore and interpret the story, particularly in a collaborative effort that adds a social dimension to the performance of morality.

Ethical Lessons in Interactive Storytelling

Storytelling has always had a didactic dimension, where morality could be performed by proxy. If the listener did not have to make choices, to actively engage with the story modifying it, they were nonetheless able to anticipate decisions made by the author. The listener was thus able to explore moral possibilities and engage with their own moral process.

Therefore, interactive cinema's didactic dimension might very well begin with Barthes's thesis on the death of the Author (1977), where he artfully makes the distinction between two ways of referencing literary creators and points to the loss resulting from the insistence of conflating the creator with the meaning of that which they create:

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The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now (p. 145).

By extrapolation, the same simultaneity between the creator's intent and the product of interactive cinema might be argued for when counting the multiple endings and the millions of unique permutations—in *Bandersnatch*, anyway. It is true that, as demonstrated above, the author, the show's creator, still inserts himself in the form of the story. But the medium in which he tells his story comes into its own and grows into its own entity. Thus, because the authorial intent evaporates to some extent in the end, there is no need for the reader to kill the interactive movie Author, because there is no need to interrogate him about the meaning of the story.

Moreover, if viewers operate with no authorial oversight, are they aimlessly floating in a morally ambiguous artistic element? Even if art isn't necessarily meant to educate, at least it acts as a sounding board for one's own musings. If the author is no longer present, what meaningful and purposeful voice is there to receive one's thoughts and witness moral growth? If no one guides the viewer through *Bandersnatch*'s moral maze, a wealth of conversations and moral explorations could be lost, because interactive cinema allows audiences to explore inconvenient choices unchallenged. If the author is no longer there, the viewers now converse with an algorithm that they control in part. There might be merit in exploring unethical choices if they occur in a safe space, but practiced outside authorial interpretation or intention, it might reveal one's hidden or repressed instincts. However, Barthes's dead author is zombified in *Bandersnatch* and, arguably, in all interactive movies so far. As explored previously, creative control manifests throughout the movie but not as freely as in a classical film. Audiences are contaminated by the author's presence. One such example is the creators' decision to simply ignore the user's choice: when Stefan gets to Colin's apartment, the user can choose not to take the LSD patch that Colin is offering. However, if the user chooses to refuse, Colin then slips it into Stefan's drink, thereby nullifying any illusion of control over the narrative. The author's invisibility is thus betrayed by both an unwillingness to relinquish control, such as Stefan's book that he used as inspiration for the game and that belonged to his departed mother, and technological limitations exemplified by the number of choices available.

As such, interactive cinema is situated at the intersection between individual moral growth, and a collaborative effort to practice morality. Thus, the didactic, but perhaps unintended, dimension of interactive cinema, directly engages (young) viewers who experience the concepts of cause, effect, and responsibility in a space surrounded by immediacy. By essentially practicing cause and effect, and by forming bonds with the characters, the viewers, young and old alike, also practice moral awareness. *Bandersnatch*, as exemplified above, also allows viewers/users to explore morality through a couple of philosophical lenses, such as free will and fate, and multiple realities. If this movie were age appropriate, the choices children might potentially make are filtered not just through social interactions - bonding with the character - but also through the realization that reality is a subjective state whose conceptualization radically changes how one performs morality. And this in turn might help children understand why some people make seemingly bad decisions, why the world is decidedly a confusing and often paradoxical place, and why different moral conduits do not necessarily cancel each other. Some of Netflix's other interactive content, such as *Puss in Book: Trapped in an Epic Tale* makes sure that children know what Puss in Boots wishes to do: "Fighting a god sounds much more exciting than fighting a tree. Maybe too

exciting, eh?” (Burdine, Castuciano & Langdale, 2017). It is a more straightforward approach than when Stefan resists the urges induced by the viewer’s choice, because Puss in Boots voices his intention, as well as his opinion regarding the choice: “Wait! I have to fight a god? What if I do not want to?” (Burdine, Castuciano & Langdale, 2017). So the moral exercise is gradual and more obviously empathetic.

Moreover, learning to meaningfully create or adapt stories and storytelling has become a technological imperative in today’s increasingly digitalized world. More and more people pour out digital content and so storytelling has become a job for most of these people. As such, storytelling is not morally relevant just to the consumers, but also to creators. Therefore, interactive content might teach emerging storytellers how to create meaningful and impactful stories. It is much quicker to learn from producers, directors, actors, playwrights— from how and what they put out in the story. It is convenient to learn from their conception and production mistakes, and to learn to create morally significant works, which have a real life application. As such, by experiencing multiple endings of the story, viewers learn how to truly become storytellers: which plot twists work and which do not, what combination of choices that a character is allowed to have makes the most sense, what kills a story. In *Bandersnatch*, the viewer might learn how not to rush into the story, how to ease the audience into the plot, and how to properly introduce characters while still leaving room for mystery.

A final thought on the genre’s didactic dimension looks at its function in today’s urgent pace and saturation with media distractions. Thus, practicing morality alongside storytelling and story consumption might be a way to make up for this age’s seemingly short attention span, engaging younger audiences in content they can model and experiment with. This new form of storytelling, encapsulated in digital form, is an indication of current times, when one might argue boredom and restlessness lead to a need to interfere in the story and make it personal or different. Then, if the learning process allows for a discovery of moral possibilities and patterns, the risk remains that the door is open for darker traits to emerge from this experience. Ultimately, therefore, do these digital choices and experiments reveal anything about who one is, or about what one may become? Or are they simply a game in a digital labyrinth?

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This short analysis of how morality is performed in interactive cinema could be further substantiated by a research study that looks at how viewers perceive their involvement in the authorial process, whether they see themselves as viewers, players, users, or participants. The study could also be accompanied by perspectives on whether and how viewers engage with any moral imperative while experiencing the movie, therefore if, for example, they intentionally make certain choices to reach certain endings. Such data could initially be collected from Twitter #hashtags and Youtube comments.

Moreover, an interesting avenue for future examination of the audience as a moral entity begins with the uncertain placement of interactive cinema in the realm of art. As art is becoming increasingly political, and spreading to other forms of representation, is a future at all possible where art is a truly shared and unmediated experience? If moving pictures climbed up the high-brow ladder and (a part of) cinema is now a form of art, the jury on digital content is still out, although digital pieces manage to slip by, in art’s natural process to flourish with new forms of expression.

Finally, interactive media preface a world where VR technology takes center stage in how people understand and produce stories. It is exciting to speculate and maybe anticipate what a full and true immersion in the work of art will mean for the exercise of imagining and interpreting stories.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the chapter, my main focus has been on exploring how the practice of morality is mediated by interactive cinema, using the *Black Mirror* standalone episode/movie *Bandersnatch* as frame of reference. Firstly, I looked at how the viewer/user performs morality unencumbered by social cues and I traced possible interpretations resulted from the interaction between viewer/user and the seemingly unmediated story. Then I explored the ethics of meta-narrative presence in a content intended to give the viewer the illusion of complete control and contemplated this surreptitious insertion of authorial intent in relation to the moral trajectory(ies) of the viewer/user.

I further looked at the architecture of story participation and storytelling and proposed that even though true agency might not be accomplished in *Bandersnatch*, it is nonetheless possible to recuperate some of it by peeling, at one's own pace, the layers of possibilities, meaning, and ethical dilemmas in the story. I then concluded the analysis by looking at the formative aspect of interactive cinema, in other words, at how stories are avenues of practicing morality and ethics.

Stories used to live on people's tongues, a breath away from the safety and comfort of the communities they held together. They have been uniting spirits since times immemorial, keeping alive heroes and villains alike. They have been burying civilizations and birthing others still and continue to shape visions of the future. Today stories permeate our minds, our walls, our clothes, our screens. They breathe with us and raise us. Stories help us learn how to navigate confusions of times and places and people, and then they show us how to be kind and how to transgress. They have evolved into new forms of expression that allow us to become part of the worlds they open for us, if only we dare.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Digital Cinema: Form of cinema expressed through increasingly new technologies. The focus is on the change of location of the cinematic arts.

Digital Narrative: Story produced by digital means. The focus is on the process of storytelling transformation and abstraction.

Interactive Cinema: Form of cinema where viewers interact in some form with the story, usually by making choices that directly affect the outcome.

Meta: The quality of being self-referential; higher level of self-awareness; rational acknowledgment of one's categories.

Morality: Set of arguably subjective principles acquired through practice, social interaction, self-exploration.

Posthumanism: Conceptualization or realization of the human element in a state of equilibrium with one's nature, surroundings, and technological capabilities. The term is debated over, as there are several definitions in use.

Viewer Agency: The capacity of the viewer/user of interactive content to access some degree of distance from the authority of the content creator.

Virtue Ethics: Perspective over the ethical or moral body as qualities acquired through lifelong practice.

Chapter 14

“Nothing Spreads Like Fear”: Narrative Immersion in Soderbergh’s *Contagion*

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ABSTRACT

The present chapter looks at the way fear is depicted in Soderbergh’s 2011 thriller Contagion and how the onlooker is dragged along into feeling the fear. Without using a studio to shoot the scenes, without insisting much on characters, employing hyperlink narrative (scenes change quickly, playing with geographical distant places and interweaving storylines between multiple characters) and using few words, the movie’s main character is not the invisible virus but the fear it spreads into the characters, growing and turning into mass hysteria. The aim of this chapter is to analyse how narrative immersion works in Contagion through visual, auditory, and emotional elements, which are used by the director as vehicles for instilling fear in the audience.

INTRODUCTION

There are movies that eerily anticipate events from the future. *The Truman Show* (1998) ushers in the era of reality TV, whose emblematic representatives are the Kardashians; *Minority Report* (2002) envisages how personal data can be collected and used by authorities and commercial companies; *The Net* (1995) predicts the rise of online identity theft, while *The Matrix* (1999) lets us catch a glimpse of what it may mean to have both a “real life” and a virtual one. Yet, none of them seems to have come closer to real life than *Contagion* (2011), especially in the context of 2020’s most impactful and most terrifying event—the rapid and global spread of the new SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Contagion is one of those movies which have managed to catch more attention years after its release, though it was praised from the start for its realistic scenario. 2020 has rekindled the interest in the movie

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and important TV channels and platforms began to re-broadcast and stream it: AMC, HBO, Netflix, Amazon Prime Videos, etc. The realistic portrayal of a then fictional global pandemic, together with its play on a basic human emotion—fear—have turned this movie into a cult classic, albeit belatedly.

The mechanism which keeps the onlooker involved to the degree of physically feeling the characters’ fear is called narrative immersion. Narrative immersion is a concept borrowed from the field of virtual reality, specifically from the study of computer games. Yet, immersion can be used to describe any type of mental simulation (Currie & Ravenscroft, 2002) induced by various props (Walton, 1990), such as verbal, visual and acoustic elements, or a combination thereof, as is the case in cinematographic representations. The ultimate goal of any story, regardless of its medium of transmission, is to fully immerse the audience in its universe. This goal is more difficult to achieve in the case of written fiction—it takes a very good storyteller to engage the audience with a tale that requires them to re-create its universe in their minds—and is supposed to become increasingly easier once the written medium is exchanged for the visual, auditory or virtual one. Yet, this is not always the case and, even in game design, immersion is one of the most difficult responses to instantiate (Björk & Holopainen, 2004). Success is not a guarantee either for games or movies, and a film which strives for ‘scary’ but manages only ‘boring’ causes the viewer “to fall out of the immersive ‘There’ and arrive in the disenchanted, non-immersed ‘Here’ ” (Hanich, 2010, p. 70).

Complete or partial failure of immersion in the story may have various causes, from an uninteresting storyline, to blunt exaggerations of the scenario. But major faults in the construction of the text are sometimes not the only reasons why the audience cannot be fully immersed in the story. Sometimes, a situation, plausible as it may be, is too much of a stretch of the imagination for the largest part of an audience, at a particular time. Either because the prospect is too frightening, too depressing or too removed from his/her personal reality, the average viewer cannot engage emotionally with the story. Or at least not until truth becomes stranger than fiction and reality begins to imitate art. This is arguably the case for what happened with the release of *Contagion*. The tools which facilitate the immersion of the viewer were in place from the very beginning, which ensured that the critical reception was mostly positive, with a score of 85% on Rotten Tomatoes. But, unlike critics who valued the strengths of the script written by Scott Z. Burns, the general audience did not feel so appreciative, giving *Contagion* a score of 63%. This is not because the film is somehow poorly constructed, but perhaps because, in 2011, the scenario it proposed was not sufficiently close to reality as to garner fear in all the audience. At the time of its release, the movie seemed remote from what might happen in real life and had the flavor of a larger-than-life blockbuster disaster movie of the mid-90s, of which *Outbreak* (1995) is an illustrative example. Yet, the director, Steven Soderbergh, took great pains to do his job properly and confessed to having researched into the matter of air-borne deadly viruses and being told by scientists that “it’s not a matter of if, it’s a matter of when. We had started the movie and then about 3 or 4 months into the research is when H1N1 happened. That became a really interesting tracer bullet through the system for us to follow some of the issues” (Soderbergh, 2011). Nevertheless, he could hardly envisage at the time how well his movie would portray future global crises.

As immersion is not only a matter of text but also a matter of context, in 2020, viewers have rediscovered *Contagion* and watched it with different eyes. Its position on various lists testifies to this—from number 270, as listed by Warner Bros. at the end of December 2019, this movie has managed to jump to the second place on the same list in the first months of 2020, being bested only by the *Harry Potter* series (Sperling, 2020). It is clear that the 2020 pandemic was another chance for a film which was, in the authors’ opinion, well-written, well-acted and well-directed, but which did not enjoy the high level

of commercial success it does now. And as such, the aim of this chapter is to analyze how narrative immersion works in *Contagion*, through visual, auditory and emotional elements which are used by the director as vehicles for instilling fear in the onlooker.

BACKGROUND

Generally disregarded by literary studies (not even reader-response criticism acknowledges its existence), the phenomenon of immersion has been approached by other fields of study, sometimes under different names. In cognitive psychology, Gerrig (1993) speaks about the theory of transportation into a narrative script and Nell (1988) analyzes the psychological state of being “lost in a book”—or reading entrancement—when the reader is so entrapped in the textual world that s/he ceases to perceive the “real world” as well as the fictitious character of the world s/he is immersed in. It is in this mode that language truly disappears (Ryan, 2001). In possible worlds theory, reading fiction is an act of imaginative “recentering” of the universe of possibilities around a new actual world (Ryan, 2001; Dolezel, 1998; Ruth, 1994; Pavel, 1986). Because these fictional worlds are non-actual possible worlds, they need recentering to be experienced as actual, and this represents the first step towards immersion. Advocating an empirical approach to literature, Walton (1990) considers that immersion in the fictional worlds shares the same mechanism with the childhood games of make-believe, whose single purpose is to create worlds in which to play:

In order to understand paintings, plays, films, and novels, we must first look at dolls, hobbyhorses, toy trucks and teddy bears. ... Indeed, I advocate regarding the activities [that give representational works of art their point] as games of make-believe themselves, and I shall argue that representational works function as props in such games, as dolls and teddy bears serve as props in children’s games. (p. 11)

Although not directly, all these theories speak about narrative immersion as a leap of imagination and an act of active engagement with the text.

In the phenomenology of reading, immersion is regarded as “the experience through which a fictional world acquires the presence of an autonomous, language-independent reality populated with live human beings” (Ryan, 2001, p. 14). According to Ryan, the concept of *immersion* is tightly connected to the concept of *textual world* (the world projected by the text, mentally constructed by the reader in the case of literature): “For immersion to take place, the text must offer an expanse to be immersed within, and this expanse, in a blatantly mixed metaphor, is not an ocean but a textual world” (Ryan, 2001, p. 90). Immersion in the “cool medium” (McLuhan, 1996, p. 162) of literature takes effort and time: the textual world opens up only after the reader has made “a significant intellectual and imaginative investment” (Ryan, 2001, p. 348).

Literature’s dream of complete immersion seems to have come true with the advent of cinematography and its creations, since “no other form of representation will approximate their ability to combine the spatial extension and fullness of detail of still pictures with the temporality, narrative power, referential mobility (jumping across space and time), and general fluidity of language” (Ryan, 2001). Immersion in “hot media” (McLuhan, 1996, p. 162) like movies is effortless precisely because of the richness of their sensory offerings (Ryan, 2001). Films, too, construct worlds—cinematic worlds—and, just like fictional books, they “do not *re-present the world* but first of all *pre-present a world* (if an irreal one)” (Hanich, 2010, p. 67) in which the onlooker is invited to immerse. And the connection between written

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and cinematic worlds has become so tight that Fischlin and Taylor (1994) compare the immersion in a book to a “cinema in your head” (p. 13)—a simulation of the story through a flow of mental pictures. By including visual and auditory elements, movies—the modern form of make believe (Kroeber, 2006)—have moved immersion to an unprecedented level. The cinema in your head has moved in front of your eyes: the viewer is directly transported in the cinematic world through images and sounds which give him/her the illusion that s/he is “watching something that has been conceived and brought to birth directly in visual terms” (Hitchcock, 1937, p. 8).

CONTAGION: A NARRATIVE OF FEAR

A bio-threat movie, in the category of *Outbreak* (1995), *12 Monkeys* (1995), *Flu* (2013), *The Cassandra Crossing* (1976), or *93 Days* (2016), *Contagion* instills fear in the audience from the first scenes: a woman reaches out for a snack at an airport before handing in her credit card to the waiter; a business meeting starts with people shaking hands; a sick-looking man coughs on a bus full of passengers. One touch, one breath, one instant and an unknown deadly virus is passed on, and on, and on. And the viewers already find themselves entrapped in the cinematic world of *Contagion*. Fear is fed slowly but surely to the spectator, while characters, at first ignorant of the threat, move through the dangerous and infected space. Dread is so pervasive that it manages to create “an intense fearful stillness in which we hardly dare to breathe” (Hanich, 2010, p. 161).

“We misunderstand the reality of emotions evoked by art because they do not provoke physical behavior—they only intensify imaginative activity” (Kroeber, 2006, p. 50). In fact, these illusory feelings are just as real as those we feel in actual life (Vygotsky, 1971). Emotional immersion can be explained as a blurring of the real and the fictional through various mechanisms, and cinema possesses an arsenal aplenty. A good movie should draw the audience “right inside the situation instead of leaving them to watch it from outside” (Hitchcock, 1937, p. 9), to the point where the characters’ emotions should become theirs. Think only of a situation like the following:

When a movie camera is mounted on a moving object—roller coaster, racing car, or airplane—the spectator is projected as a passenger of the vehicle and becomes a potential victim of a crash. The purely imaginative possibility of smashing into the ground creates a sensation closely related to the thrill of riding a roller coaster: an adrenaline rush that represents both fear and a very physical form of pleasure. (Ryan, 2006, p. 153)

In *Contagion*, fear “infects” the spectator precisely because the camera manages to make it a strong immersion-inducing vehicle. Without using a studio to shoot the scenes, without insisting much on characters (though the actors that play them are A-list only), employing hyperlink narrative (scenes change quickly, playing with geographically distant places and interweaving storylines between multiple characters) and using few words, the movie’s protagonist is the invisible virus and the fear it spreads into the characters, and which is constantly growing and turning into mass hysteria.

According to Hanich (2010), fear in the cinema consists of five components: intentionality (fear is about something in the world), appraisal (something we are confronted with is assessed as threatening), action tendency (tendency to flee the threatening object), physiological change, and phenomenological experience (a change in our relation to the world). Filmic fear is an umbrella term covering several

manifestations: direct horror, suggested horror, shock, dread, terror (Hanich, 2010). The type of fear the spectator experiences while watching *Contagion* is close to *dread*—“an intense, but quiet anticipatory type of cinematic fear in which we both feel for the endangered character and fearfully expect a threatening outcome that promises to be shocking and/or horrifying to us” (Hanich, 2010, p. 156). There are, however, scenes in which dread becomes direct horror, like Gwyneth Paltrow’s gruesome autopsy in which the camera lingers on the corpse’s fixed eyes, as well as on the color and gory texture of the scalp the coroners have removed. The brutality of the scene, together with the fact that it occurs at the beginning of the movie, creates a dual sensation in the viewer: on the one hand, s/he feels repulsion, on the other hand, s/he is pulled towards it, experiencing mixed feelings of “pleasurably frightening, fascinated immersion and displeasing overly frightened extrication” (Hanich, 2010, p. 82). Sometimes horror is merely suggested, as in the scene with the mass grave where Dr. Mears is laid to rest, when two men in white biosafety suits discuss the fact that they have run out of body bags and that a shipment from Canada should arrive shortly. The scene relies on “intimidating imaginations” (Hanich, 2010, p. 109)—the spectator knows that the plastic bags are for the already numberless dead bodies.

Dread as the pervasive form of fear in *Contagion* allows for the strongest form of immersion in its cinematic world through various techniques: auditory elements which expand the narrative world by enhancing its three-dimensionality and by sucking the viewer in; visual elements that create a sense of fragmentary and alienating space (movements through large spaces, from the boardrooms in Washington to poor villages in China, the camera never lingers too much on a character or event and, once the viewer seems to get accustomed to a place or a situation, s/he is immediately pulled out) and disrupted time (flashbacks that create suspense and incite the viewer to rush back through the scenes in search of retrospective omniscience, namely the identity of patient zero and the source of the disease); as well as emotional immersion (something dreadful is expected to happen and the anticipatory fear keeps the viewer glued to the screen).

The following sections will analyze the manner in which sounds, images and the construction of characters contribute to the feeling of fear throughout the movie. The involvement of bodily sensations—hearing and sight—leads to the spectator’s psychological investment in the cinematic world of *Contagion*. As argued throughout the theoretical sections, all these elements (sound, visuals and fear as the pervasive emotion) intertwine to generate the complete effect, but they will be treated separately in order to provide a more detailed analysis.

Auditory Immersion

Cinematic fear depends on the skillful manipulation of visual elements—*Contagion* employs rapid visual change, scenes flow quickly, mimicking the rapid spread of the virus—and the viewer’s emotional involvement in the state of affairs the movie presents, but, first and foremost, it depends on sounds. Auditory immersion is vital to all movies, but especially to thrillers like *Contagion*. One reason is because sounds are processed faster than images by the human brain. While the eye needs more time to peruse the space, sounds are felt as more immediate and intruding: “Sounds *come* from outside the body, but sound itself is near, intimate; it is an excitation of the organism; we feel the clash of vibrations throughout our whole body... It is sounds that make us jump” (Dewey, 1980, p. 237).

The movie starts off not with a jump, but with a black screen and the sharp sound of a cough. As the black screen suddenly gives way to an image, the audience sees a sick-looking woman coming into focus. Her conversation is grounded in the reality of a modern Western lifestyle—she is talking to her

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lover over the phone. As it goes on, the discussion becomes more tantalizing, with the description of a short interlude and the suggestion that only a certain email address should be used, as it is the only secure option. These verbalized tidbits, superimposed to the image of the woman holding her phone with her right hand, which is very clearly sporting an engagement ring and a wedding band, should engage the full attention of the viewer, but the coughing which persists among the white noise of the airport bar is a constant reminder that the woman is sick. What is also interesting, and will be a focal point in the ensuing section, is the play of different types of light in the shot. The background is delineated with warm light, but at the forefront of the scene, the woman is inundated with grey, artificial light, making her appear sicker, emphasizing her ashen and clammy skin, as well as focusing on sunken eyes and hollowed cheeks. The *mise-en-scène*, along with the pronounced sound of her coughs, seems to suggest the end of a good, “warm-lighted” era and the beginning of a completely unknown one.

Just as important as the first cough, which functions as an auditory preface to the story and which will be a recurring audio theme throughout the film, the following three-minute montage of sequences functions as a complex and dynamic establishing shot. The role of an establishing shot in any movie is to set the scene from the beginning and to communicate both important details and the atmosphere or mood the film will follow. This montage gives spatial and temporal details which will be crucial for the understanding of the plotline, but what is perhaps more interesting than the visual is the music which plays in the background. The images provide information, but the alert, suspenseful tech-like music engages the viewer on an emotional level, helping to strengthen the immersion level through the dread it induces in the audience.

Throughout the unfolding of the narrative, this remains the only musical pattern. Drum-like at times, the music mostly appears superimposed on montages of short, curtly edited scenes. This repetition mimics the effects of adrenaline flooding the human body in critical situations. The rapid flashing of short images, along with this alert, wordless music, convey a sense of panic in the viewer, especially since s/he has come to associate this combined audio-visual pattern with the progression of the narrative. In this case, the music aids in the immersion process of the viewer through the creation of adrenaline-filled fear. But absence is just as important as presence when it comes to the soundtrack of this film.

Another method of creating dread and, thus, of completing the level of immersion, is the absence of any soundtrack in crucial moments throughout the film. The dialogue between characters is never doubled by music, and the lines or sounds seem to take centerstage. In an episode reminiscent of the film’s dramatic start, forty minutes in, the viewer experiences the auditory shock of another cough, emphasized by the obvious silence and the image of gray morning light coming in through almost closed curtains. The slight discrepancy between sound and visuals, achieved in post-production by an L-cut, creates the opportunity for a suspended moment of panic. Unlike in the initial scene, in which both the character, Gwyneth Paltrow’s Beth Emhoff, and the viewer were somewhat unaware of the full implication of a severe bout of coughing, this time, the consequences of the sound do not escape either the viewer or the character—Kate Winslet’s Dr. Erin Mears. The following moments see the same emphasis on the ordinary sounds of the doctor’s fevered waking: the rustling of sheets, the light switch, the clank of the thermometer case against the sink and, over everything, the sighs, labored breathing and frantic whispered appeals of someone who knows the turn events will take: “Please, God, please... No, no”. The mixture of barely contained desperation and constant attempts at professional behavior, achieved here mainly through the exaggeration of these sounds, ensures that the feeling of fear seeps in even deeper. Towards the end of the scene, a trickle of soft, almost undetectable music appears along with Dr. Cheever’s promises that he will take care of this and that everything will turn out fine in the end.

Due to the highly realistic soundscape of this scene, the episode dealing with the onset of Dr. Mears’ symptoms comes across as genuine and gives the audience another reason to feel the panic of the situation. In contrast, another similarly constructed scene, dealing with Alan Krumwiede’s online announcement, uses the same sound mechanisms, but gets different results. Krumwiede, played by Jude Law, vlogs from a darkened living room that he has contracted the disease. The approach to the soundtrack is the same—the over-emphasis of background noises (the creaking of the armchair, the clink of the pipette against the bottle of holistic medicine, the sound of the glass against the table and the breathing of the character), the spoken lines are soft, but the panic of the previous scene is nowhere to be felt. The lighting in the scene is similar, but does not quite resonate. In retrospect, or perhaps after a second viewing, it becomes clear that the different effects on the audience are the result of the different situations in which the two characters find themselves: while Mears is truly sick, Krumwiede’s disease proves to be merely a publicity stunt.

The music in *Contagion* seems to serve a clear purpose: to enhance fear in the audience. The film’s soundtrack was composed by Cliff Martinez, who blended classical orchestral elements with electronic sounds to convey both fear and hope (towards the end of the movie). He confessed in an interview: “One of Steven’s biggest concerns that he wanted to address with music was pacing. Another mission was to magnify the fear factor. I tried to create the sound of anxiety. And at key, strategic moments I tried to use the music to conjure up the sense of tragedy and loss” (Kasman, 2011).

Visual Immersion

A novel invites the reader to mentally construct characters, plot and settings. The degree of immersion in these “mental geographies” (Ryan, 2006, p. 121) depends on a number of factors, from individual mood to the evocative power of the textual world. The cinematic world works with images and their constant mobility makes the “story-space highly elastic without destroying the crucial illusion that it is in fact there” (Chatman, 1980, p. 101). By creating the illusion of presence, the visual medium instantly transports the viewer into its space.

The fragmented time and space in *Contagion* should apparently preclude an immersive experience. If a philosopher like Bachelard (1984) reflects upon a sense of space and conceives spatial immersion in terms of security induced by familiarity and rootedness, *Contagion* prevents any intimate relation to a specific location or even to a certain character. Details flow apparently without coalescing into a sense of stability, but rather create a sense of spatial and temporal disorientation, storylines interweave, spaces are constructed just to be deconstructed several frames later, flashbacks intertwine with scenes from the present. All the contrivances of postmodern hyperlink cinema are there. The immersive quality of *Contagion* relies not so much on the extent to which the viewer is absorbed by the events that take place in front of his/her eyes, but on the lingering effect of the fear s/he feels throughout the movie and long afterwards.

Spatial Immersion

In the theory of game design, spatial immersion occurs when players feel that the simulated world is perceptually convincing and that they are really “there” because the world looks and feels “real” (Björk & Holopainen, 2004). The spatial component—“a habitable environment in which objects and individuals exist and act” (Hanich, 2010, p. 68)—is fundamental to immersion.

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As emphasized above, *Contagion* forces the audience to juggle with multiple geographical locations spread throughout the world. From Hong Kong to the Ukraine, from Switzerland to the UK, and from Japan to the United States, the viewer is almost instantly transported in a rapid succession of frames. What makes this dizzying array of spatial changes manageable are the captions of the screen, which provide details about the city, country or location where that part of the story unfolds. In fact, these captions also reinforce the mechanisms of visual immersion. As unfamiliar as Asian villages may seem to the Western eyes, or irrespective of how strange American suburbia may appear to a viewer from the opposite corner of the globe, the fact that these spaces are clearly located through captions on the screen helps audiences identify them as “real” (Björk & Holopainen, 2004), thus providing the right premise for visual immersion. But perhaps this strategy becomes more apparent in contrast to similarly-themed movies, such as *Outbreak*, in which the locations which would be unfamiliar to the Western audience are portrayed as dark and mysterious, intrinsically associated with the deadly virus. In this vein, *Outbreak* creates a dichotomy which is absent from *Contagion*. In the latter there is no contrast between savage-civilized or primitive-technologically advanced societies, just different facets of the same contemporary world, in which the microscopic viral threat is the same. A much more dread-inducing thought for the global citizens of the twenty-first century.

Another mechanism which supports the sense of familiarity for modern audiences and enriches the sense of space in this movie is the constant and sometimes sudden alternation between wide-angle shots of buildings or cityscapes, and lingering close-ups of architectural or domestic details. A short episode at the very beginning of the story provides a good example of this shift in perspective. When Mitch Emhoff, played by Matt Damon, comes to take his step-son from school, the initial long shots are of the man entering through a fully glazed glass wall, but, as the camera follows the character’s progress, the shots change from long to medium shots and then to medium close-ups. Throughout these scenes, the child, who appears slightly disoriented, is one point of focus, while the other remains the expanse of surfaces: the long front desk and then the door which the little boy opens. The focus of the camera remains on these spatial details—the desk and the door. The teacher who brings the boy to his stepfather is soon relegated out of the frame, while Emhoff and the child blurrily exit the building, leaving the camera to linger a few long seconds on the closing door. In this scene, as throughout the film, the main focus is clearly on surfaces—door knobs, counters, the bars on public transport. This strategy is meticulously realized and its effects are twofold. On the one hand, it enhances the spaces and gives the viewers a deeper sense of reality, while on the other, it maintains the sense of paranoia related to the spread of the virus.

What is also interesting to observe in connection with the visual immersion into spaces is the subtle use of color and lighting in order to achieve a sense of realism and maintain the complexity of emotional responses from the viewer. As in other outbreak movies which seek to be as realistic as possible (see *93 Days*), the colors scheme in *Contagion* is brimming with drab shades and darker tones. Either under light bulbs or bathed in natural light, the colors are generally leached of vibrancy, providing a constantly underwhelming effect on the eye of audiences. By contrast, the colors of high-level biosafety equipment portrayed in the film are saturated with color. The yellow of the tubes and the orange of the suits almost leap off the screen and provide a shock to the senses; there can be no doubt for the audience that this is something unnatural and dangerous. And it is precisely moments such as these which, by their violent contrast to the norm, give an additional jolt of panic to a viewer who is already watching anxiously a reality not very dissimilar to his/her everyday life.

The contrast between light and shadow is a constant and efficient tool for the mise-en-scene of all movies, but in *Contagion*, what is perhaps even more interesting to note is the interplay of various and

clearly delineated types of light. Much as it would happen in real life, the spaces in this movie gain a different sense and, thus, invite a different interpretation, under either natural or artificial light. Natural light presents a wide array of hues and sources of artificial light, in turn, can be cold, that is with a visibly white halo, or warm, in which case the shade is more pronouncedly yellow. *Contagion* seems to endow the different types of light (which are constantly intertwining especially in indoor spaces) with a different symbolic meaning, meant to mirror the complexity of the situations depicted at various moments in the plot. The gray light of dawn is used for moments in which visceral fear rules supreme, such as in the case of Dr. Mears talking on the phone about her symptoms or in the scene where the silhouette of a biohazard suited Alan Krumwiede walks down a street littered with trash bags—one of the scenes which is most reminiscent of the cinematic tradition of the post-apocalyptic genre. In the cold light of day, the horrible realities of the pandemic, such as the city looting or the mass graves, become not only undeniable, but part of the mundane course of life. In the dark, fear of violence springs to life. The robbery and possible murder Mitch Emhoff witnesses, the attack of Cheever’s fiancé or the repressed aggression of Krumwiede’s mass online deception, all happen in the dark. Moreover, the overall character of natural daylight shifts from the beginning to the end of the story. In the throes of the initial panic and amid the unknown elements of the virus, the natural light is gray and almost bluish in hue, but as the narrative unfolds and the situation becomes less muddled, the light seems to progressively become clear and warmer.

Similarly, cold artificial light is predominant in scenes when critical events are shown or discussed, such as in Dr. Mears’ meeting with the Minnesota Department of Health officials, or the predictions made by RADM Haggerty about the undisclosed location of the American president and the quarantining of entire cities. At the opposite end of the spectrum, warmer tones of natural light are present in scenes which are meant to offer a momentary feeling of safety or to emphasize the hope of a possible positive ending to the crisis. As such, although it might seem counter-intuitive, the images of professor Dr. Ian Sussman (Elliott Gould) in his office or those of virologist Dr. Ally Hextall (Jennifer Ehle) experimenting vaccines on monkeys have the distinct presence of warm artificial light. For the most part, the above mentioned examples are one-dimensional, but the majority of scenes in the film are characterized by a constant interplay of various types of light, in order to show the complexity of the situation. The key light will shift depending on the desired effect and message, but the co-existence of these types of light will always be conspicuous. Illustrations of this strategy abound—from the initial shot of Beth Emhoff under the gray light of the airport lounge and sitting with her back turned from the comforting warm light in the background, to the rapid succession of initial darkness, the cold light of the bathroom, and then the blue and gray tones of natural light in the scene where Dr. Mears realizes she has contracted the disease. However, one of the most complex scenes comes towards the end of the movie, during Lyle Haggerty’s (Bryan Cranston) press conference announcing the public release of the vaccine. An undefined white artificial light shines through the lottery balls to be drawn for the vaccine, then the camera changes angles and the figure of the speaking Haggerty is inundated by overhead clear natural light, and, as the camera ascends and then follows Cheever, the focus is on spots of linearly arranged warm artificial lights, which suggest the path towards a reassuring conclusion.

Temporal Immersion

Featuring international flights, cell phones and widespread surveillance cameras, *Contagion* clearly depicts the reality of the twenty-first century, but is nonetheless somewhat limited when it comes to precise dates. The viewer knows that events start in late autumn, because of the few initial references to

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Thanksgiving, but a specific year is never mentioned—making audiences in 2020 all the more anxious. The narrative does not need such a fixed point, since the accoutrements of contemporary society make it easier for modern audiences to become engrossed in the action. Still, as in the case of spaces and locations, the timeline of events is closely and meticulously documented in the film. *Contagion* may dispense with dates and years, but in relation to the unfolding of the pandemic the film needs to be precise in order to create a sense of dread and mounting suspense. As such, with the aid of red-lettered captions detailing the order of days, the audience is always aware of the passing of time and is always anticipating what might happen. As Hanich (2010) contends, a narrative film needs suspense, as “an absorbing timespace art enhances immersion: the viewer is immersed both in the spatial world of the film and its temporal flow” (p. 68). According to Ryan (2001), “Temporal immersion is the reader’s desire for the knowledge that awaits her at the end of narrative time” (p. 140). In other words, temporal immersion creates suspense, “an emotion or state of mind arising from a partial and anxious uncertainty about the progression or outcome of an action” (Prince, 1984, p. 94). The viewer anticipates a frightful outcome, but still hopes for a positive ending.

Taking this into consideration, the timeline of the narrative emerges as a crucially important element when it comes to the successful temporal immersion of the audience. *Contagion* proposes a linear and closely managed chronology which seems to follow the unfolding of a global pandemic from an initial point, through the increasingly frightening stages of the disease and, finally, to a point where a resolution appears in sight. However, this chronological order is disturbed by two major aspects—the constant appearance of flashbacks and the setting of an intriguing starting point.

On the one hand, the smooth and easy progression of the narrative is interrupted about half an hour into the movie with flashbacks of Beth Emhoff’s activity before she reached the airport. Prompted by the arrival of WHO representative Leonora Orantes (Marion Cotillard) in Hong Kong and the subsequent investigation into the origin of this new pandemic, the flashback sequences of Emhoff in a casino start appearing at random points in the narrative. Their only link to the main storyline seems to be the discussions and international tensions they engender between Orantes and the somewhat hostile Chinese officials. On the other hand, the film begins, as the screen captions promptly inform the viewer, on Day 2, i.e., after Beth Emhoff has arrived in the United States. Throughout the movie, and despite the flashbacks, the mystery of Day 1 lingers among the characters, as well as in the mind of the viewer. But unlike the many characters affected by the pandemic, the viewer is given the explanation of Day 1 at the very end of the movie, in an epilogue-like scene which serves not only as an elucidation, but also as a warning and a reaffirmation of fear.

By choosing to break up the storyline with flashbacks and by positioning the explanation of the original trigger of at the end of the film, *Contagion* fosters a permanent sense of suspense—suspenseful anxiety, to be more specific—among its viewers, which, as Ryan (2001) emphasizes, is at the core of temporal immersion. Moreover, with its unique ending, the film also ensures that the fear created in the film lingers long after the narrative has ended.

Emotional Immersion

Simply being spatially immersed into another reality, regardless of what the cinematic world is about, is an experience which may be pleasurable in itself. If spatial and temporal immersion transport the audience onto the scene, emotional immersion blurs the ontological boundaries between the real and the virtual. The negative flow of events which the audience expect to unfold in *Contagion* means that

they are open up to respond fully—i.e., fearfully—to the movie. In turn, being emotionally involved reflects back on the spatial and temporal immersion: the audience become involved with the cinematic world and its inhabitants: “Certain emotional experiences attach us much stronger to things, people and events than, say, mere perceptions” (Hanich, 2010, p. 69). The fear that rapidly spreads among the movie characters hooks the viewer onto the screen before it contaminates him/her as well.

Due to the complex nature of the narrative, the film is forced to put before its audience a large number of actants who drive the story forward on so many geographical planes. And, in order to engage the viewer’s response, these actants need to be relatable. Therefore, with a dizzying array of characters played by renowned international actors, *Contagion* gives its viewers a taste of recognizable people in recognizable situations: a working mother, a blended family and a skeptical newspaper editor speaking with a savvy freelancer, all appear in the first ten minutes of the film.

The minor characters seem shallow, flat even and lacking psychological depth, like the person who never covers his or her mouth when coughing in public. Moreover, certain characters, like Marion Cotillard’s Dr. Orantes, could arguably be considered as mere prompts for the narrative, since without her trip to Hong Kong, there would be little opportunity for the movie to explore either Beth Emhoff’s backstory or the handling of the pandemic in Asia.

By comparison, the lives of the main characters in the story seem more complex. Sometimes, their internal struggles unfold before the audience, like in the case of Cheever’s anguish over disclosing inside information with his fiancée. At other times, the arc of a main character is not entirely predictable, as it happens when Lorraine Vasquez (Monique Gabriela Curnen) disregards her own logic and principles and seeks help from Alan Krumwiede. But despite this, the main characters ultimately remain as uni-dimensional as the minor ones. They come to the viewer’s attention as representatives of general human categories: the straying wife (Gwyneth Paltrow), the everyman (Matt Damon), the self-interested influencer and conspiracy theorist (Jude Law), the altruistic doctor (Kate Winslet), the dedicated official (Laurence Fishburne) or the brilliant epidemiologist (Jennifer Ehle). Their lives are brought to the limelight not because they are exceptional in any way (although viewers may admire the dedication, strength and humanity exhibited by these characters during the pandemic), but because their destinies come to be bound to the virus and are thereby ended or altered forever.

Following set lines, in their confrontation with the MEV-1 virus, the main characters behave according to their predominant behavioral pattern: the brilliant epidemiologist shows her dedication to scientific research and tests the vaccine on herself, the altruistic doctor dies trying to hand her jacket to a fellow infectee whose fever makes him cold, while the conspiracy theorist escapes the concrete legal repercussions of his forsythia fraud, partly due to his fans who post bail for him, and continues his online efforts, this time by telling people not to get vaccinated.

But this stereotyping of characters is not detrimental when it comes to the viewer’s engagement with the story. On the contrary, with a fast-paced narrative and little time dedicated to each character’s development, the audience’s emotional responses need to be elicited through familiarity. If the audience can easily recognize the human types in the movie as reflections of reality, they will feel more immersed in the plot, because their fear will be anchored in something real. They are afraid because, perhaps, when the next crisis comes, they too might fall victim to the falsehoods a Krumwiede promotes on his internet blog.

Another explanation as to why the characters are not fully fleshed out in the film is, ultimately, that they are not the focal point in the narrative. Their personal stories, with the major problems encountered or the tedium of life during the pandemic, may deepen the sense of emotional immersion through fear, but the virus, and the dread it engenders, remains the focus of the narrative: the constant, if invisible,

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true protagonist of *Contagion*. As it was emphasized in the sections above, both the frames and the soundtrack of the movie place it at the forefront of the viewers’ attention. Moreover, the characters’ predictable structure makes the spread of this microscopic entity the true star of the story.

This is perhaps why the final scenes of the movie are dedicated to the mystery of the virus’s origin. Somewhat unexpectedly after a moment of tenderness, calm and hope in which Mitch Emhoff’s daughter enjoys a prom dance with her love interest in the safety of her own home, the images shift suddenly to bulldozers felling trees in a forest at dusk. The music which was lulling before changes as well into the same drum-like techno beat which was first associated with the spread of the virus. Against a sky which is completely blue, some bats fly off and one of them drops a bit of its food on the floor of a pig farm. One piglet eats the bat’s leftovers, and is then sacrificed and brought on the table of a chef who prepares the meat for a luxury casino. Wiping his hands messily on his apron, the chef goes to meet an important guest and poses with her for a picture, their hands clasped together in a salute. The woman is Beth Emhoff and the last seconds of the film reveal the red lettered caption “Day 1” before the flash of the photographer’s camera transitions the screen to black. After the end of the storyline, which promises the future wide release of the vaccine and a slow return to pre-pandemic normalcy, this final episode refocuses the viewer’s attention on the virus and rekindles the feeling of fear, thus making sure that the audience’s immersion lasts a bit longer than the allotted 106 minutes of the movie.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The analysis of any film through the lens of narratology can be quite limited, either in terms of thematic allowances or theoretical possibilities. As such, three main future avenues of research on the topic can be construed: further inclusion of the theory of game design, the choice of the narratological concepts best fitted to the analysis of film, and the benefits, or disadvantages, brought about by the advancement of cinematic technology.

The theory of game design can be further applied to film studies. Tactical immersion, or what game players refer to as being in the zone, or being in the groove, is immersion in the moment-by-moment act of playing the game; it is produced by challenges that allow the player to solve them in a fraction of a second (Adams, 2004). In detective movies and thrillers, whose plot involves the solving of a mystery, usually the discovery of the murderer, tactical immersion could be used to describe the viewer’s involvement in discovering the identity of the criminal. Sometimes, the viewer even gets the feeling that s/he is in a competition with the sleuth and, if s/he wants to outsmart the latter, strategic immersion in the cinematic world can lead to success. Like in games, when “you’re strategically immersed, you’re observing, calculating, deducing” (Adams, 2004) and a faulty or illogical storyline may prevent strategic immersion.

The field of narrative immersion in cinematic worlds lacks theoretical tenets; they are either borrowed from the phenomenology of reading or theory of game design. The concept itself has partly lost its initial convincingness and has become vague and common-place—it is used to describe emotional involvement in any kind of aesthetically pleasurable activity. Narrative immersion is, indeed, regarded as the viewer’s response to aesthetic and visual elements. Narratology, which is mainly concerned with the study of literary works, also employs similar concepts, like narrative transportation, absorption, narrative involvement, identification, optimal experience (or flow). Not all of them can be employed to describe the viewer’s involvement in the cinematic worlds as there is a clear-cut distinction between

mental imagery (the textual worlds of literature) and visual imagery (the cinematic world of films). Therefore, certain theoretical concepts should be fine-grained to fit movie studies.

The advent of 3D cinema has moved cinematic worlds to a new level of immersion by creating the illusion of three-dimensional solidity. Despite their maximized immersive quality, the success of 3D movies remains modest. An analysis of their failure could lead to interesting conclusions—for instance, the human brain may not be equipped for the complete immersive experience of 3D cinema. There are studies that point to damages to health—55% of viewers in a study were found to have experienced different levels of headaches, nausea and disorientation (Solimini, 2013). This could prove that immersion is more about the director’s mastery of the traditional affordances of movies—Christopher Nolan (2010) maintains that all cinematic imagery is three dimensional, as “95% of our depth cues come from occlusion, resolution, color and so forth, so the idea of calling a 2D movie a ‘2D’ movie is a little misleading”—rather than the employment of the latest technologies. In other words, immersion is more a state of mind (after all, literary works do not require any technological advancements to call textual worlds into being) and less a miracle of technology, though one cannot possibly deny that watching a thriller such as *Contagion* inside the multiplex will offer a deep immersive experience.

CONCLUSION

Speaking about movies, Hanich (2010) distinguishes between immersion (aesthetic involvement) and enthrallment (aesthetic appreciation) as forms of passive attention. The viewer feels enthralled when s/he looks “at the movie spellbound” (Hanich, 2010, p. 65), appreciating its general makeup (a good plot twist, spectacular special effects, outstanding cast and impressive acting, good soundtrack, etc.). In immersion, the viewer looks so “deeply into the filmic world” (Hanich, 2010, p. 65) that s/he seems to get lost in it, spatially, temporally and emotionally.

As this chapter has put forth, despite the lackluster financial achievements of Soderbergh’s film at the time of its release, *Contagion* needs to be understood and viewed as a well-conceived piece of cinematic work. The director, screenwriter, the actors, the music composer, the cinematographer and the entire team which helped give this story a concrete filmic shape have constructed a believable and scientifically accurate world. The attention to spatial and temporal details, the dramatic score and the performances of the actors, all complement one another and strengthen the feeling of immersion which almost overwhelms the present-day audience.

While it is true that the global health crisis of 2020 has skyrocketed this film in terms of revenues and public appreciation, *Contagion* exhibited from the very beginning all the elements which make for a highly immersive narrative—a fact which was observed by several film critics at the time, including Roger Ebert, who remarked on the “skillful” rendition of the story (2011). As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, immersion is a question of both text and context. *Contagion*’s meticulously constructed ‘text’ was conducive to the spread of fear among its viewers, but perhaps it just needed a better ‘context’, one which could fully display its artistry.

With text and context perfectly aligned in 2020, immersion in *Contagion* is so profound that, at a certain point, it becomes claustrophobic for contemporary audiences—the onlooker would like to escape its dystopian world, but s/he cannot. Fear seems to have taken a strong grip on him/her, leaving them almost paralyzed. S/he keeps watching not so much for the denouement, but for the paradoxical

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aesthetic pleasure of fear, because once real-world frames have begun to match its scenario, the movie has become even more immersive.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Auditory Immersion: A movie’s play with sounds in order to maximize the impact of visuals on the audience; in thrillers, it may sometimes be a sudden passage from relative quietude to loudness, apprehensive or brooding music in the background, etc.

Cinematic World: An intuitive concept-metaphor borrowed from Possible Worlds Theory to describe what the viewer constructs using as a guide the visual and auditory elements and adding information provided by real-world knowledge.

Dread: A feeling of apprehensiveness caused by expectations or anticipations of some as-yet-unseen doom.

Emotional Immersion: The audience’s psychological response to the events and characters in the cinematic world, close to Aristotle’s definition of catharsis in tragedies.

Hyperlink Cinema: Films which display complex, multilinear yet interlocked narrative structures, metaphorically resembling the act of Internet browsing through hyperlinks.

Key Light: The primary source of light for a particular scene.

L-Cut: Also known as delayed or split edit, is a film editing technique by which the audio and the visual do not start at the same time.

Long-Shot: A filming technique in which the frame is wide and tall enough to show the character completely. This can be understood in opposition to medium-shot, in which a character appears from the waist up, or a close-up, in which certain details of the character are in focus.

Narrative Immersion: A term borrowed from virtual reality which designates the player/reader’s investment in a story to the degree of being absorbed by it.

Visual Immersion: Various visual techniques employed by movies which make the spectator experience the cinematic world as if it were “real”, effacing the boundary between the physical and the virtual space.

Chapter 15

No More Drama: Genres and Subgenres of TV Series

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ABSTRACT

The undeniable development of the television series sector in recent years has resulted in viewers having access to a large amount of television content, thanks largely to the development of technologies such as the internet and the emergence of video on demand. Given the scarcity of academic works that categorise these television contents, this chapter comes to conceptually delimit the television drama genre, as well as its different sub-genres. With this, the authors seek to centralise in a single academic work the main characteristics of each dramatic sub-genre that causes a series to be ascribed to a certain category, serving as a guide for potential academic works related to this growing sector.

INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of humanity, people have felt the need to listen and transmit stories to others. The capacity to give meaning to our surroundings through stories serves as a mechanism to transmit life experiences to others in order to make sense of common experiences (Robledo Dioses, Atarama Rojas & Palomino Moreno, 2017). Nowadays, television and TV series play an important role in the transmission of these narratives.

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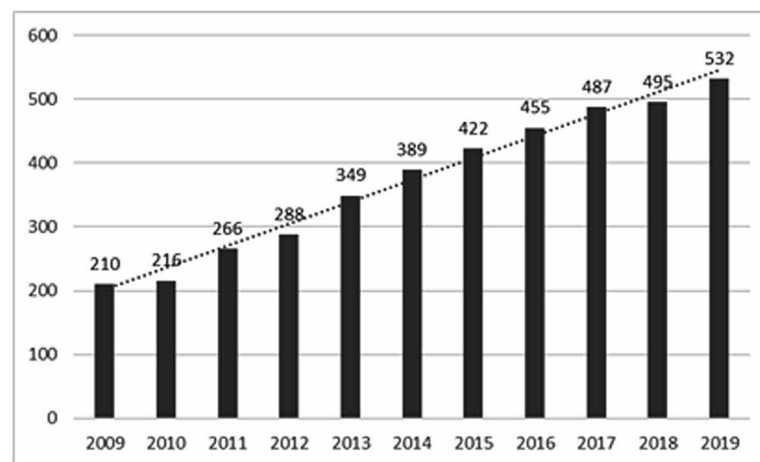
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In the 1980s, scriptwriters began to explore new narrative forms, with long-format stories that were not self-contained, i.e., they were not resolved at the end of each weekly episode (Nandakumar & Murray, 2014). Therefore, there is a tendency to create continuing stories, covering several seasons, with each season's series broadcast over a short period of time (Bost, Labatut, Gueye & Linares, 2018).

In the current era of abundance of TV programmes, with television series growing consistently year after year (see Figure 1), a wide variety of themes, stories, production and distribution techniques have been introduced (Lewis, Calvert, Casey, Casey & French, 2007). The drive for innovation has brought television series closer to the film industry, with bolder story lines and greater attention to both aesthetics and production (Cascajosa, 2005; Gordillo, 2009). As a consequence, since the 1990s, television series budgets have increased considerably (Dunleavy, 2005). In fact, according to the National Association of Broadcasting, the significance of the television and radio broadcasting sector contributes 1.18 billion dollars, representing 6% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

Figure 1. Evolution of the number of television series 2009-2019

Source: The authors' elaboration from Statista (2019) and The Hollywood Reporter (2020)



The entertainment industry and their audiences use genre to categorise the various audiovisual products (Kim & Long, 2012). Moreover, they classify the different programmes according to similar characteristics, reducing complexity and uncertainty because they are, thus, associated with previous expectations (Schlütz, 2016). Various authors maintain that this is a repertory of common elements or established conventions, such as: narratives, aesthetics, formats, style and type of characters, etc. (Gough-Yates, Osgerby & Yates, 2013; Neale, 2015). The assignment of a given audiovisual content to a certain television genre implies a production oriented to the essential characteristics, determining the visual appearance of the series or the volume of dialogue (Valaskivi, 2000).

After having analysed the specialised literature, the present chapter has come to the conclusion that there is no standard categorisation of television series. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is the conceptual delimitation of the television genres, with a focus on drama. Different sub-genres are associated with drama: crime fiction, mystery, detective fiction, action, young adult fiction, medical fiction, historical fiction, science fiction and fantasy. After an in-depth review of literature, the authors seek

to bring together the main characteristics of both television drama and its sub-genres. Further research will help determine and understand the essential characteristics assigned to each genre and the specific sub-genres of a particular television series.

BACKGROUND

According to Marta-Lazo (2012), genres serve to establish different taxonomies in keeping with the discipline in which they are integrated. The word genre (from Latin *genus*, *-ĕris*), means categories or classes in which artistic works can be ordered, according to common features of form and content. Genres are, therefore, cultural categories created through a creative process (Miller, 2017) that takes place in a changing social context, where they are shared and consumed, thus being a socially constituted concept (Yew, Shamma & Churchill, 2011). Genres have been part of our culture for two thousand years (Busni, 2015). The use of genre to categorise artistic elements dates back to Ancient Greece. Aristotle was one of the first to divide artistic categories into poetry and theatre. He defined comedy, tragedy, epic and ballad based on a series of common characteristics and functions (Creeber, 2015).

The entertainment industry uses genre as a basic concept in television industry to categorise audiovisual products based on similar characteristics between its members (Cohen, 2002; Kim & Long, 2012). Amongst these characteristics, some authors argue that there is a repertory of common elements or established conventions, such as character type, narrative, aesthetics, formats, and style. (Gough-Yates et al., 2013; Neale, 2015).

The assignment of a television product to a particular genre causes the production to be oriented towards the prevailing conventions of each genre, determining everything, from the visual appearance of the series to the volume of dialogue or doses of realism (Valaskivi, 2000). As a result, it allows different products with formal similarities to be classified under the same category, making it possible to distinguish television products on the basis of their formal characteristics, without referring to the content itself (Carrasco-Campos, 2010). Television genres also allow the production of series more routinely, and the success of a product can be estimated on the basis of how previous productions of the same genre have worked (Cohen, 2002).

On the other hand, genre also implies the involvement of different agents, including both the creators of television programmes and the audience or critics (Miller, 2017). Accordingly, the genre becomes a social contract between the parties, the creator of content and the audience. As a result, the viewer will have a certain predisposition towards each genre and the elements it contains (Gordillo, 2009; Kim & Long, 2012), influencing the reception by the audience and promoting different social actions (Valaskivi, 2000).

The importance of television genre goes beyond the mere creation of the audio-visual products. It also affects the composition of television schedules and incorporates expectations and values associated with each audiovisual product, thus making it easier for the audience to choose, based on their previous experiences (Gough-Yates et al, 2013; Kim & Long, 2012; Park, 2005). This concept applied to the media includes social, historical, cultural and subjective factors (Montagnuolo & Messina, 2009).

Television genres have the peculiarity of being difficult to define and delimit as a result of the dynamism and intertextuality of audiovisual products (Gough-Yates et al., 2013). Moreover, the television genre is not a rigid concept, being very susceptible to change as adaptations occur and new genres appear, reflecting the changes in taste and preferences of the audiences (Park, 2005).

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In this regard, one can talk about the concept of hybridisation, which, as in biology, refers to the crossing of species, in this case television genres (Marta-Lazo & Abadía-Urbistondo, 2018). The hybridisation between genres has served as a mechanism for the renewal of television series (Marta-Lazo, 2012), with the emergence of a vast variety of new television series and programmes that are moving away from pure traditional genres, incorporating great narrative innovations (Guarinos & Gordillo, 2011). However, there are series that are attributed to one genre but incorporate characteristics of another (e.g., crime series that incorporate humour, as in the case of *Castle* (2009-2016)). This new typology of series, characterised by hybridisation of genres, causes viewers to make an extra effort of understanding, thus losing the established references for each genre (Marta-Lazo & Abadía-Urbistondo, 2018).

Ultimately, the television genre has evolved from the division into traditional categories or genres to a crisis of this model in the new television era, bringing about a substantial expansion of the audiovisual market (Raya-Bravo, 2016). As a consequence, after analysing the literature, it becomes clear that there is no agreed classification of television series. There have been some attempts in this direction to obtain a classification by applying a cluster analysis. Specifically, Kim, Pyo, Park and Kim (2011) conduct an analysis to obtain an automatic recommendation method for programming, based on the viewers' preferences and other demographic characteristics. In this case, they obtained 8 genres and 47 sub-genres, these genres including, in addition to the series, other television programmes. These genres are: sports, news, information, drama, films, children series, education, entertainment and others. Zhang et al. (2015) use cluster analysis to group various television programmes by preference. However, they do not specify the genres they obtain, and include sections oriented towards other television programmes.

According to the research of Barroso, Giarratana, Reis and Sorenson (2016), several clusters have been obtained that group series according to the description, as well as summaries obtained from *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network TV Series: 1946-Present* (Brooks & Marsh, 2003). These clusters are made in accordance with different words and synonyms contained in these summaries. They also recognise the existence of genres and sub-genres, such as comedy and, within it, adult comedy, family comedy and high school or teen comedy.

Finally, Carrasco-Campos (2010) considers that television series are mainly divided into drama and comedy, with some variations depending on the format of the series in question (see table 1).

Table 1. Main characteristics of drama and comedy

	Drama			Comedy	
	Drama TV series	Telenovela	Soap Opera	Sitcom	Dramedy
Regular issue schedule	Prime time	Preferably late, after dinner and even prime time	Daytime	Daytime, prime time	Daytime, prime time
Regular periodicity	Weekly	Diverse but regular	Daily	Generally daily	Weekly
Number of plots	One main and several secondary per chapter (long-haul plots are not necessary, although frequent)	One main plot	Multiple	One main and several secondary per chapter (long-haul plots are not necessary)	One main and several secondary per chapter.
Characters of the main plot	From the self-closing chapter; long-term continuity elements are gradually incorporated	Closed	Open	From the chapter, self-conclusive	Combination of open long-term plots with self-closing plots in each chapter
Number of characters	Numerous cast susceptible to variation	Closed cast: a leading couple and several fixed secondaries.	Numerous cast susceptible to variation	Numerous cast, although few characters, and closed (occasionally there may be some addition or variation)	Numerous cast susceptible to variation
Paradigmatic contents	Various: Action, suspense, mystery, emotions, personal conflicts	Love stories with a happy ending (love as a reward, triumph of good over evil)	Human relationships based on feelings	Tangles, misunderstandings and committed situations taken from everyday life	Humorous review of the contents of the soap opera
Target	Adult	Adult	Women	All audiences, although segmentation is increasingly frequent	All audiences, although segmentation is increasingly frequent
Average duration of each chapter	45-60 min	35-50 min (habitual emissions of double chapters)	50-60 min	20-30 min	50-75 min

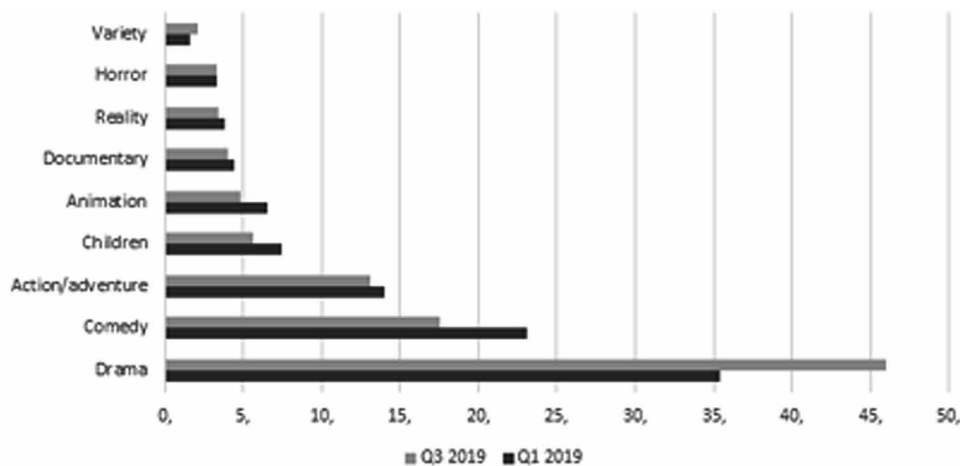
Source: Carrasco-Campos (2010)

Creeber (2015) suggests in his book *The Television Genre Book* a series of television genres divided into more specific sub-genres according to their content. He makes the distinction between drama, soap opera, comedy, children television, news, documentaries, reality, animation and popular entertainment.

TV DRAMA

Drama is one of the most popular genres today, reaching 46% of audience demand in the United States by 2019 (see Figure 2). In addition, it is the genre with the largest budgets used for its creation and distribution and the one that achieves the highest percentages of audience thanks to the international media market (Kim & Long, 2012; Park, 2005). This has led to an increase in interest and literature related to television drama in recent years (Nelson, 2015).

Figure 2. Percentage of audience by television genre in the United States in 2019
Source: Statista (2020)



Since the early decades of television to the present day, the Golden Age of television has extensively been characterised. Television drama in its long-format variance has been the predominant genre that has accompanied the evolution of the television sector (Dunleavy, 2005). Thus, in parallel with the growth of the large American television channels, television products have been evolving from live dramas to recorded serial formats in order to obtain greater efficiency and economic profitability (Gough-Yates et al., 2013).

Following Zagalo and Barker (2006), TV drama series are based on three main elements:

1. **Multiple plots.** Several plots are developed in each chapter, with inter-connecting information and characters between each of them. This makes it more complex for the viewer to understand the series (Johnson, 2005). Nowadays, however, those series with a concept of multiple plots are more successful than those specialised in only one.

Drama series are also characterised by plots that can be extended indefinitely, with seasons of around 13 episodes as opposed to the more than 20 in comedy (Gordillo, 2009). These episodes have an average duration between 45 and 60 minutes and are generally aired in prime time (Carrasco-Campos, 2010; Gordillo, 2009). The different episodes of the drama series stand out for the inclusion of several sub-plots of a usually self-concluding nature, establishing similarities with the classic theatrical structure

(introduction, node and denouement). However, they do not forget the established main plot that can occur at the level of one or several seasons. This makes it possible to provide continuity to the television series, allowing viewers to empathise and get to know the characters, as well as the different relationships established between them. All these serve as a mechanism for gaining the loyalty of the viewer thanks to the familiarity it achieves (Carrasco-Campos, 2010).

2. **Multiple characters.** The appearance and development of several characters increases the range of possibilities for scriptwriters. This allows the increase of relationships and conflicts between them, so that there are characters with a similar importance that allow for the extension of the life of the series. Additionally, the wide presence of characters entails a greater effort for the spectator, who will have to pay more attention to the television product they are visualising. By maintaining a stable number of characters, the viewer becomes familiar with the television series. The characters serve as a thread between episodes and in relation to the multiple plots present in the dramatic series. This enables the audience to get to know the characters (Gordillo, 2009). However, the use of a large cast allows for changes in the cast, with the addition or removal of characters during the development of the series (Carrasco-Campos, 2010).
3. **Seriality.** The use of different simultaneous plots and various characters can be developed over several chapters and seasons. The commitment to the serialisation of audiovisual products has increased since the 1990s, as a result of the interest of television channels in encouraging audience loyalty (Dunleavy, 2005). Scriptwriters usually play with so-called “cliffhangers”, which consist of ending an episode by sowing uncertainty about the future of the plot or characters. This is intended to strengthen the loyalty of the audience and to assure the viewing of the next episode to resolve this uncertainty (Valaskivi, 2000; Kim & Long, 2012). Seriality of dramas helps the viewers to get involved with the story, imagining the possible consequences of the different plots and sub-plots around the main characters (Gordillo, 2009; Kim & Long, 2012). This way, by leaving -unsolved elements chapter after chapter, they generate a long-term impact on the viewer, postponing the gratification of viewing to a more complex ending (Johnson, 2005). Nevertheless, the sub-plots are progressively culminating with the advance of the seasons. Television channels managed to create a viewing habit with their dramatic series, reaching segments of the population that were more desirable to advertisers, for which they paid more money and compensated for possible audience reductions through audience segmentation (Dunleavy, 2005).

Moreover, competition in the audiovisual sector is undoubtedly high, causing companies to pay more attention to the number of people watching their television programmes. In addition, the type of programme predicts the size of the audience, as well as the potential quality of the programme (Park, 2005). The wide proliferation of viewing options for the viewer leads to the fragmentation of audiences. This causes audiovisual companies to decide to take fewer risks with regard to the concept and form of their products from the strategic perspective of attracting viewers (Dunleavy, 2005). As in other production sectors, television companies tend to replicate or imitate star products from their competitors, as well as successes from the past. However, innovation is essential for the presentation of a new product, Variations in television genres, therefore, emerge, minimising risk taking on entirely new ideas that could more easily fail (Dunleavy, 2005; Park, 2005). Dramatic series break the spectator’s familiarity with their contents, looking for innovative narrative formulas capable of attracting the audience (Carrasco-Campos, 2010).

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The influence of the audience in the creation of new seasons and television series has also grown considerably in recent years thanks to the Internet, where the audience is often mobilised by requesting the renewal or recovery of a cancelled series, or by influencing the development of the series (Gordillo, 2009). This has happened recently with *Lucifer* series (2016-present) which, after being cancelled by FOX, was recovered by Netflix.

Drama is a highly complex genre. It stands out for its ability to specialise in more specific sub-genres, where the audiovisual products are assigned according to various more specific subjects related to the main plot. Hence specific sub-genres arise, such as crime, police, action, science fiction, fantasy and professional series amongst others (Carrasco-Campos, 2010; Creeber, 2015; Gordillo, 2009; Park, 2005). Such a wide range of sub-genres allows viewers to find the one that best suits their interests (Rojas-Lamorena, Alcántara-Pilar, Sánchez-Duarte & Rodríguez-López, 2019). Each of these sub-genres presents a series of main characteristics (see Table 2), which define the allocation of the dramatic series to each of them and which are detailed in successive sections.

The Crime Series

The downfall in the Western genre in the late 1950s allowed for the entry of new television genres. The emergence of *Dragnet* (1951-1959) and *The Intouchables* (1959-1963) served as a breakthrough for detective and crime series using elements of Western's narrative structure and visual style (Gough-Yates et al., 2013).

Specialised crime drama has been a basic audiovisual product of television since the 1950s (Miller, 2017), claiming to be one of the sub-genres with the greatest baggage in the history of television. After the emergence of crime and police sub-genre with the *Dragnet* series, it became the most popular form of entertainment of the decade, largely because of the simplicity of production (Gever, 2005; Marta-Lazo & Abadia, 2018). With *Dragnet*, the basic structure of the crime and police drama is established, characterised by being episodic and self-contained (Cascajosa, 2005). Years later, this genre began to boom thanks to the development of action series in the 1970s and 1980s. These series adopted certain characteristics of that style and advocated curiosity towards violence and crime. At present, it remains a basic and dominant sub-genre of television, although it is constantly evolving (Tasker, 2016).

IMDb defines the sub-genre of crimes as one in which the protagonists or antagonists are criminals and the plot revolves around characters participating in or planning criminal acts (Hunter & Breen, 2017). Criminal activity thereby becomes the backbone of the plot that remains the dominant feature throughout the series (Jenner, 2015). These series therefore move in an area of complicated management in terms of viewers' tastes and values, given that dealing with issues related to crime, drugs, violence, death or sexuality generates controversy and this may be risky for the channels that depend on advertising (Tasker, 2016). The predominant act is homicide, although it is sometimes complemented by other criminal acts such as abuse, kidnapping, rape or extortion (Tasker, 2012). Following this criminal act, a process of resolving the crime or offence through the analysis of evidence and interrogation is conducted, and the case is then prosecuted (Cooke, 2015). In this sense, crime dramas tend to be nationalised, based on literature, film and television, as well as on the social reality of the country where they take place, adapting to the corresponding national legal system (Jenner, 2015; Tasker, 2016).

Table 2. Main characteristics of dramatic sub-genres

	Characteristics	Episode Type	Examples
CRIME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime as the backbone of the plot: murder, drugs, terrorism, etc. • Crime resolution process • Usual nationalization • Various related sub-genres: Police, Detective and Action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent and self-contained • Some serial subplots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Sopranos</i> (1999-2007) • <i>Breaking Bad</i> (2008-2013) • <i>Money Heist</i> (2017-present)
POLICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police activity = common thread of the argument • Police station and employees as protagonists • Regular use of forensic procedures, interrogations, etc. • Scheme: crime scene, investigation of the suspect and resolution of the crime • Closely related to gender "CRIME" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-contained • Some serial subplots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CSI</i> (2000-2015) • <i>Bones</i> (2005-2017). • <i>Criminal Minds</i> (2005-2020).
DETECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally independent character of the police. • Eccentric behavior and superior mental capacity • Dose of humor for breaking social norms • Scheme: discovery-investigation-resolution. • Closely related to gender "CRIME" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent and self-contained • Some serial subplots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Mentalist</i> (2008-2015) • <i>Castle</i> (2009-2016). • <i>Sherlock</i> (2010-2017)
ACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater importance of action rather than characters • Presence of villains and heroes • Visual effects to enhance movement • Closely related to gender "CRIME" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent and self-contained • Some serial subplots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>24</i> (2001-2010) • <i>Hawai Five-0</i> (2010-2020) • <i>Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.</i> (2013-present)
TEENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenage problems as an argument (maturity, sexuality, truancy, bullying, etc.) • Importance of the place: high school, home, etc. • Use of current music as a formal and expression element • Development parallel to the school year • Multiple parallel plots and cliffhangers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serialized • Some autoconclusive plots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Glee</i> (2009-2015) • <i>The Vampire Diaries</i> (2009-2017) • <i>Riverdale</i> (2017-present) • <i>13 Reasons Why</i> (2017-present)
MEDICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and hospital procedures • Action and emergency scenes • Social and labor problems • Reduction of medical procedures • Usual inappropriate procedures for spectator entertainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent and self-contained • Some serial subplots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ER</i> (1994-2009) • <i>House M.D.</i> (2004-2012). • <i>Grey's Anatomy</i> (2005-present) • <i>The Good Doctor</i> (2017-present)
HISTORICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptations of historical novels, among others • High levels of production • Set in History, although not always real 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serialized • Some autoconclusive plots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Downton Abbey</i> (2010-2015). • <i>Vikings</i> (2013-present). • <i>The Crown</i> (2016-present).
SCIENCE FICTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular use of special effects and technology • Reflection of current social and political problems • Plots on other planets or in an uncertain future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different plots with starts and ends at different times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Black Mirror</i> (2011-present) • <i>The 100</i> (2014-present) • <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> (2017-present)
FANTASY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation of fantastic events • Worlds that differ from ours, but with a certain realism • Connection between viewer and series, as viewers learn the rules of the fictional world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serialized. • Some autoconclusive plots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Game of Thrones</i> (2011-2019) • <i>American Horror Story</i> (2011-present) • <i>Stranger Things</i> (2017-present) • <i>The Witcher</i> (2019-present)

Source: The authors

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The large variety of series that fall within the sub-genre of crime allows us to find dramas with high complexity, such as crime dramas that serve as a background for the development of their characters, as it happens with *Castle* (2009-2016) (Tasker, 2016). Nonetheless, it is usual to include a procedure for solving a criminal act like the one proposed by other series such as *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) or *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) which would be directly framed within the sub-genre of crime. In these series, serious, highly violent and realistic crimes are represented, despite being committed outside of police procedure (Jenner, 2016; Kort-Butler & Hartshorn, 2011; Tasker, 2012).

The series of crimes can therefore focus on the commission of criminal acts as is the case of *Money Heist* (2017-present) or on the investigation related to some crime (Jenner, 2016) such as *Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-2015) or *Bones* (2005-2017). The crime sub-genre is therefore related to the police and detective genre, as both include police procedures that attempt to represent the activity of the police or the detective during the course of a case, including forensics, evidence processing, or interrogation, among others (Hunter & Breen, 2017). Police and detective series are therefore closely related to the television sub-genre of crime, which realistically describes the daily work of the police or detectives in a given city (Cooke, 2015; Jenner, 2016).

The crime series and their different close related sub-genres such as the police or detective, usually take place in large American cities as New York, Las Vegas or Los Angeles (Miller, 2017), and follow the activities of a police officer, detective or coroner trying to solve a crime or mystery, as well as of the American police agencies, such as the FBI or the CIA (Kort-Butler & Hartshorn, 2011; Tasker, 2016).

The Police Sub-genre

The police sub-genre is characterised by its permanence among television options, remaining to this day as one of the genres with the greatest presence in the audience rankings (Marta-Lazo & Abadía-Urbistondo, 2018). Television programmes and series based on police activities and procedures have been growing since the end of the 20th century (Huey & Broll, 2011), and this genre is omnipresent in television grids (Bollhöfer, 2007).

In this type of series, the main plot involves different people in a police station. These characters accumulate evidence about a murder, arms and drug trafficking, crimes of passion, theft of military technologies or terrorist actions, that allow the arrest of a suspect to submit him to judicial proceedings (Cooke, 2015; Tasker, 2012). Consequently, the procedure to be followed in this type of series begins with the description of a crime scene, the subsequent investigation of suspect characters in search of personal motives and the resolution of the crime (Bollhöfer, 2007).

The narrative structures of crime drama and its variants are based on the investigation of a criminal act, often establishing a forensic perspective and reflecting different social and political concerns about the judicial and police system (Tasker, 2016). Police series are characterised by the inclusion of self-contained episodes, that is, the emergence of a problem that is solved in the same episode, with homicide being the element to be solved in the large majority of these television series (Tasker, 2012). In addition, serial sub-plots are included, developing the relationships between different characters and creating continuity (Guarinos & Gordillo, 2011; Marta-Lazo & Abadía-Urbistondo, 2018). This allows the personal and professional lives of the protagonists to be merged.

In those series that incorporate forensic elements, the episodes revolve around a body, the intelligence of the investigator, and the exposure of data related to the cause of death of the body (Steenberg, 2013). The normalisation of forensic images in crime dramas is also common. However, this situation is far

from that which prevailed in the 1980s and 1990s, when forensic laboratories appeared to be overloaded, as opposed to the efficiency and high resources of more current series such as *Bones* (2005-2017) or *CSI* (2000-2015) (Tasker, 2016).

Police dramas have also attracted the attention of the academic world, considering that the acts reflected in audiovisual products affect society's perception of the police (O'Sullivan, 2005). This type of drama has the capacity to create expectations about police rules and activity, changing society's perception of reality (Davidson, 2015).

The Detective Sub-Genre

The detective sub-genre is one of the most stable of those related to the crime sub-genre (Jenner, 2016). For the development of these detective TV series, a variety of necessary elements are presented: a victim, one or several suspects of crime and an intelligent and observant detective accompanied by an assistant who manage to catch the killer (Castañeda, 2012).

These audiovisual products are characterised by structured chapters that follow the scheme discovery-research-resolution. As a result, there is generally little development of the characters from episode to episode. These are self-concluding episodes that allow the viewer to continue enjoying the series even if they do not watch an episode (Jenner, 2016).

These dramas feature a detective or consultant as the main character who solves different crimes with the help of one or more colleagues, like in *Castle* (2009-2016) or *The Mentalist* (2008-2015). The crime investigation is often done without following the established police procedure, sometimes even by breaking laws (Jenner, 2016).

Detectives are not usually attached to a police force or public agency, working independently or semi-independently on cases (Cerezo, 2005; Jenner, 2016). However, some of these detectives have a friendly relationship with police agencies as the CIA, the FBI or some police force (Jenner, 2016).

These detectives often present a distant and non-conformist personality, with outstanding intellectual capacities that integrate extensive knowledge, mental agility or capacity for observation and deduction, living apart from the world because of their fears (Castañeda, 2012; Cerezo, 2005; Jenner, 2016). On some occasions, they even present personality disorders or eccentricities that affect their social development and give a certain comical tone to the drama (Jenner, 2016).

To sum up, today's crime dramas generally rely more on reason and deduction, through witnesses and interrogations that support narrative development, than on action itself (Tasker, 2016).

The Action Series

The origins of action series date back to the 1950s, a time when the American television was developing. Action series present technical and visual characteristics that find their origins in this first era of television, with influences from Westerns and police dramas, given their capacity of adaptation (Gough-Yates et al., 2013).

Action has long been a feature of the crime sub-genre programs (Tasker, 2016), producing a process of hybridisation of sub-genres in which action is largely integrated into crime, police and detective series. The desire to reach more lucrative segments of the population for advertising companies led to the development of action series with the appearance in prime time of police, traffickers and spies, reaching a young audience with purchasing power (Gough-Yates et al., 2013).

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In the late 1960s, the first television series to use action as a primary part of its development appeared, *Hawaii Five-0* (1968-1980) and, later, *Starsky and Hutch* (1975-1979), which regularly used action sequences through chase, fights or shootings (Tasker, 2016). On the other hand, the action dramas of the late 1990s promote the hybridisation of genres by developing interpersonal relationships between characters, as in the case of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) in order to improve their appeal to audiences (Lotz, 2006).

The action series, therefore, incorporate visual effects that enhance the movement of the various objects involved in the scene, as well as the characters. Sound also plays an important role in the audiovisual production, which helps to emphasise and convey the urgency and necessity in action (Tasker, 2016), paying more attention to the action than to the characters themselves (Miller, 2015). Consequently, the audiovisual production is a determining element of the series that opt for the incorporation of action related to espionage, military actions or terrorism, or through the pursuit of common criminals, shootings and explosions developed closely with series belonging to the crime sub-genre (Tasker, 2016).

Teen Drama

Almost half of the world's population is now under 25 years old, some 3 billion people (UNICEF, 2020), an important demographic niche. UNICEF sees adolescence as a period of transition to adulthood, with three stages of development: early adolescence (10-13 years), middle adolescence (14-16 years) and late adolescence (17-19 years). Currently, youth does not only refer to age as a socio demographic characteristic, but it also refers to people's lifestyle, by taking a psychographic perspective applicable to older individuals (Guarinos, 2009).

Teen television is a reflection of the adolescent Hollywood cinema that emerged in the 1950s, later moving to television in the 1960s and incorporating these characters and music of the time (García-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011). These series have been extended to the present day, including formal and stylistic elements, as well as common narrative spaces and themes (Moseley, 2015). However, it was not until the 1980s and especially the 1990s that young people became the main characters in television fiction (Fedele & García-Muñoz, 2010; García-Muñoz and Fedele, 2011). Over the last decade the term adolescent has mutated into a shared lifestyle and cultural tastes, reaching a more affluent demographic group than that centred on biological age (Mathis, 2017; Wee, 2008). Adolescence is consolidated as a social construct that takes shape based on one's age, cultural influences or family and friendship relationships (Guarinos, 2009). Aired in 1990, *Beverly Hills 90210* (1990-2000) was about the life of a group of young people and their experiences. For the first time, a series was emitted in prime time and was aimed at this specific target, which meant a significant change in the way television was conceived (Jones, 2011). This helped to establish conventions and expectations for the audience, serving as a precedent for new series in this sub-genre (Mathis, 2017). Consequently, teen drama emerged and developed as a result of the fragmentation of audiences (Jones, 2011), since teenagers are part of a demographic segment for which television is a central means of generating identity (Davis & Dickinson, 2004).

The current adolescent television sub-genre can be defined as being made up of television series whose main characters are in the adolescent phase and are in transition to adulthood, dealing with social aspects in relation to those around them (Mathis, 2017). These series thus manage to position themselves as an outstanding format in youth culture capable of attracting this target audience (García-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011). However, despite the serialized nature of these fictions, they usually present independent, self-concluding narratives in which the plots are resolved in the same chapter. There are also continuous or

serialized narratives that cover several chapters and develop the relationships between main characters (Berridge, 2010). To do this, they use the so-called cliffhangers in a recurring way, a dramatic fact that creates expectation in the audience for the next episode (Moseley, 2015). This continuous character with some smaller parallel plots can be seen in series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Riverdale* (2017-present) or *13 Reasons Why* (2017-present).

These series are characterised by an average duration of 40 to 60 minutes, like other series of the dramatic macro-genre. They emphasise the place where the plot takes place, as well as the characters and the relationships between them during the course of the school or university (Berridge, 2010; Fedele & García-Muñoz, 2010; García-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011; Guarinos, 2009). In addition, they often represent the different concerns associated with adolescents during their maturation process (Bingham, 2014). In this type of series, different environments such as the home and the school where one or several main characters learn are usually reflected, focusing the development of the series more on interior than on exterior settings (García-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011). They are generally developed mainly in a high school and, secondarily, in the family home and the teenager's room, with each scenario serving a different social function. Corridors or classrooms serve as sites for confrontation or humiliation, while, at the same time, they serve as a place for fantasy. The cafeteria serves as a representation of the school's social diversity, while the student's home serves as a source and solution of problems, as well as a space for expression through newspapers or blogs (Moseley, 2015). For this reason, other secondary characters from outside the school or different study years usually appear, as well as adult characters, such as family members and teachers (Berridge, 2010; Moseley, 2015).

The pilot episodes of the series usually begin with the first day of a new school year, while the successive seasons correspond to each school year. They are generally shown from September to May, allowing the incorporation of new characters, along with adaptation to real-world events such as Halloween, Christmas or the end of the school year graduation (Berridge, 2010). They include an amalgam of archetypal characters that usually include sportsmen, cheerleaders and popular girls, together with the "nerd" or "geek" (Moseley, 2015).

Popular and modern music also serves as a cultural reference, acting as a mechanism of attraction for the target audience (Feasey, 2009). Music allows teenagers to express their identity, while accompanying the development of the plot and guiding the emotions of the audience, associating characters to different musical styles and introducing new singers (Moseley, 2015). With this, the teen genre stands out as it goes beyond television and combines the enjoyment and follow-up of the series.

The Medical Drama

The interest in medicine has led to a greater development of audiovisual products related to this field, becoming the medical sub-genre (Al Aboud, 2012). In recent years, it has been one of the sub-genres with the highest audience and popularity rates (Chung, 2014). As a result, it generates great interest in various fields of research, such as the study of the effect on attitudes or behaviour, or the accuracy of practices reflected in television series (Lee & Taylor, 2014).

Medical dramas are defined as series whose script focuses its plot and activity on a medical location, such as hospitals, health centres or ambulance services (Al Aboud, 2012; Lee & Taylor, 2014). In addition to the key location, they also tell stories about the working and personal lives of fictional characters dedicated to medicine (Record, 2011). The main themes of the series are the diagnosis and treatment of certain health-related diseases or situations (Lee & Taylor, 2014).

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Medical TV fictions have been a staple of TV drama for decades, focusing on the patient and an unambiguous resolution by the doctor (Hofmann, Shensa, Wessel, Hoffman & Primack, 2017). Since the beginnings of television, medical dramas have been popular, making hospitals the setting for the development of various television programs and series, generating audience expectation (Weaver, Salamonson, Koch & Jackson, 2013). The first medical series date back to the 1950s in the United States, emerging with the broadcast of *City Hospital* (1952-1953) by CBS, *Medic* (1954-1955) or *Emergency - Ward 10* (1957-1967). These series were based on independent episodes around central characters, the doctors (Jacobs, 2015).

Jacobs (2015) considers that medical dramas have undergone an evolution of three phases from their origins to the present: (1) paternal phase, (2) conflict phase and (3) apocalyptic phase (see Table 3).

Table 3. Phases of the medical drama

Phase	Concept	Years	Characteristics	Examples
Paternal	Blind trust	1950-1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive attitude towards medicine • An infallible and authoritative doctor • Win over disease • American Medical Association Seal of Approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>City Hospital</i> (1952-1953) • <i>Medic</i> (1954-1956) • <i>Dr. Kildare</i> (1961-1966).
Conflict	Rebellious spirit	1970-1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical team (surgeons, nurses and administrators) • Almost totally positive attitude. • Incorporation of cutting-edge techniques. • Public hospitals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Interns</i> (1970-1971)
Apocalyptic	Nihilism	1990-present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical errors with serious consequences • Conflicting hospitals • Incorrect and unethical doctors. • Patient-doctor decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ER</i> (1994-2009) • <i>House M.D.</i> (2004-2012) • <i>Grey's Anatomy</i> (2005-present)

Source: The authors' own elaboration following Lacko (2011)

In the early stages of television, medical dramas used to portray doctors in a very positive light, obviating possible errors and defects. Originally, these series revolved around the patient as a combination of physical and emotional problems, without any regard to medical costs (Strauman & Goodier, 2008). During the 1950s and 1960s, doctors appeared as characters full of compassion and fully dedicated to treat their patients (Quick, 2009). During this first stage of the medical sub-genre, medical institutions were authoritative and respected. They were looking for a paternalistic perspective that would generate the trust of the general public, even getting seals of approval from various public bodies such as the American Medical Association and the British Medical Association (Jacobs, 2015). *Dr. Kildare* (1961-1966) is considered the first medical drama on television to achieve considerable success and served as a precursor to a new television sub-genre that has become popular over the years.

In the late 1970s, the paradigm of perfection in the medical profession changed and the difficulties associated with this work, such as stress, began to be portrayed (Quick, 2009). The idealisation of physicians began to diminish by incorporating doses of realism, making physicians more humane, with a personal perspective. At this stage, each episode presented a medical case which was resolved in the end by a dramatic incident, operation or, on rare occasions, the death of the patient (Strauman and Goodier, 2008). In the 1990s, series such as *ER* (1994-2009) appeared, incorporating medical techniques and procedures in a large way, but without losing the objective of entertainment. This was done by employing medical advisors who collaborated in the development of scripts and incorporated diagnostic technologies (Branea and Guguianu, 2013; Hofmann et al., 2017). *ER* involved the recurrent introduction of wound and blood, in addition to the specific vocabulary or jargon of the medical profession (Goodman, 2007). Since the mid-1990s, television series in the medical sub-genre have proliferated significantly (Jacobs, 2015), gaining popularity in recent years (Beullens & Rhodes, 2015).

Today's medical series have progressively evolved, as has society and television. They have been incorporating more rare diseases while presenting greater ethical dilemmas and procedural errors (Valenzuela-Rodriguez, 2012). The stories currently presented in the medical series tend to be one-sided and unrealistic. Exceptional or unusual medical cases are presented to a greater extent compared to more common health problems (Chung, 2014). As such, in a battle between medical accuracy and viewer entertainment, television series often tip the balance towards entertainment, incorporating de contextualised procedures or exceptional and impossible treatments (Goodman, 2007).

Current medical dramas are developed in episodes of 45 to 60 minutes (Al Aboud, 2012; Lacko, 2011). They are developed quickly and visually in search of the resolution of two or three exceptional medical cases that serve as the basis for the social relations of the characters within narrative arcs structured by episodes (Beullens & Rhodes, 2015; Goodman, 2007; Strauman & Goodier, 2008). They are led by doctors who fight to cure illnesses and save patients in each episode, with illness and death being notable elements that are often exaggerated (Beullens & Rhodes, 2015). They, therefore, stand out for their high doses of "realism", although they usually abuse the use of miraculous recoveries or experimental and sophisticated treatments (Pintor Holguín, González Murillo, Gargantilla Madera, & Herreros Ruiz Valdepeñas, 2013). As a result, they are closer to a function of entertainment and profit-seeking than to transmitting real medical knowledge (Record, 2011). In addition, these series reduce the number of medical procedures and people involved in patient care, as physicians perform a wide variety of tasks such as blood sampling, laboratory tests or surgery (Goodman, 2007). However, it is common for these series to be produced with the support of medical experts and specialists who guide health decisions and procedures. The aim is to measure the clinical accuracy of the procedures, although sometimes inappropriate procedures are portrayed in order to surprise the viewers (Jacobs, 2015; Record, 2011).

Parallel to the medical procedure, these series often develop personal relationships of both friendship and enmity, as well as romances between co-workers, contradicting or challenging different ethical standards and codes (Goodman, 2007; Lacko, 2011).

This type of series has been attracting large audiences since the late 20th century, with *ER* reaching 47 million viewers per week in 1998 and series such as *Grey's Anatomy* currently reaching the position of most watched series by 18-34 year olds (Hofmann et al., 2017). *House* (2004-2012), on the other hand, achieved great success worldwide, with its distribution in over 66 countries. It became the most watched programme in the world in 2008 (Al Aboud, 2012). One of the most recent series pertaining to this genre is *The Good Doctor* (2017-present), one of the most watched series in 2018 (Nielsen, 2018). Some of the reasons for their appeal to the audience are the marked dynamism of the characters, the risks

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associated with a medical environment, and the complicated interactions between characters (Record, 2011; Turow, 2010).

The Historical Drama

Historical drama is another sub-genre of drama with a remarkable presence (Bite, 2009). The origins of the historical genre go back to the creation of cinematography. It was dealt with for the first time by George Méliès, in 1897, in “Neron essayant des poisons sur les esclaves” (Salvador Esteban, 2016).

Historical drama refers to those television fictions that deal with subjects related to history. They explore specific historical events and characters within a fictional plot or script, while referring to adaptations of classic novels (Bite, 2009; Guo, 2012). Historical dramas stand out for the incorporation of data from a thorough investigation of the situation, with the author or screenwriter being able to mix real history and fiction without losing credibility (Bite, 2009). This is done to entertain the audience, to the detriment of historical accuracy in many cases (Salvador Esteban, 2016). History and fiction have been increasingly combined for several decades (Teo, 2011). In addition, television has become an important source of information about the past for audiences, transmitting knowledge about history (Pajala, 2017). It has the ability to relate past and present through fiction series (Degeyter, 2016), and there is a risk that the lack of knowledge about historical facts on the audience’s side may mean that fiction is taken for something real by the viewers (Donahue, 2014).

There are two types of historical dramas, those that represent historical events and figures accurately and those that are based on a few facts, but develop freely (Guo, 2012). The former refers to historical series that are created around real historical events or characters, although they have elements of fiction to tell the story. The latter, or period series, do not seek historical accuracy, but rather seek to entertain the audience from a current perspective and not from the perspective of the represented historical moment (Salvador Esteban, 2016).

In this regard, it is essential for a historical fiction to tell lies, that is, to take licenses closer to entertainment in order to involve the audience without distorting the real story through substantial changes (Bite, 2009; Donahue, 2014). As a result, television series producers often represent historical facts with large material means in order to create quality and be more entertaining for the viewer (Pelaz López, 2007). In addition, historical series need to include fictional elements that narrate and explain the facts and motivations behind a given historical event (Salvador Esteban, 2016).

The characterisation, description and performance of fictitious characters involves their representation as if they had really existed (Bite, 2009), with the historical facts serving as a stage for the characters’ development (Pelaz López, 2007). At the same time, music also plays an important role in intensifying conflicts and in adapting to a specific period of time (Degeyter, 2016).

Currently, audiovisual products related to history have increased in television culture (Pajala, 2017), growing significantly thanks to cable and premium television networks. Thanks to their ability and interest in differentiation, their high budgets and complex narratives, they have achieved significant success with series such as *The Tudors* (2007-2010), *Mad Men* (2007-2015) or *Downton Abbey* (2010-2015) (Donahue, 2014). The mixture between real and fictional events is very palpable in very recent series such as *Outlander* (2014-present) or *Freud* (2020), in which the war between the Scots and the British or the life of the famous psychoanalyst are mixed with elements of fantasy or paranormal.

Fantasy and Science Fiction

We are currently seeing a huge increase in science fiction and fantasy series (Raya-Bravo, 2016). Although telefantasy, which refers to science fiction and fantasy programming, was already broadcast in the 70s and 80s, it was in the 90s that this type of television began to dominate prime time in the United States, with the appearance of various quality series (Johnson, 2005). This marked a turning point in the treatment of these genres as quality products, with *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-1994) as the standard bearer (Howell, 2017). The boundaries between fantasy and science fiction are blurred, often mixed with other more plausible content (Raya-Bravo, 2016). However, although they maintain similar elements, both genres maintain some differentiating characteristics.

The science fiction genre is one of the most applauded by critics and the general public in recent years, having its origins in the industrial revolution (Hernández Pérez & Grandío Pérez, 2011). This genre is currently experiencing a boom (Telotte, 2014). It is one of the genres that gets a bigger audience in a widely fragmented market (Raya-Bravo, 2016). This is due to the hybridisation process, as audiences for this genre have increased with more open and heterogeneous audience leading to increased profits (Hernández Pérez & Grandío Pérez, 2011). In addition, the boom in these series is also largely due to the growth of television channels and online platforms.

The science fiction genre is characterised by the creation of environments that are certainly credible and possible in our reality (Hundley, 2007). Special effects and the use of technologies are essential elements in this type of television genre. These series are developed with technical care so that the viewer can attend events impossible to see in other genres or in reality itself. This is achieved through the presentation of characters, spaces, objects or events that are unusual today (Hockley, 2015; Raya-Bravo, 2016).

The large number of topics covered by science fiction and the narrative techniques used, make the audience want to know more about the contents viewed, as this is one of the genres with greater narrative fluidity given its wealth of content (Hernández Pérez & Grandío Pérez, 2011). However, there is a belief that the science fiction genre stands out for being highly commercial, lacking in artistic ability and geared exclusively towards young people (Howell, 2017). In addition, it is considered by some people, along with the fantasy genre, as suitable for children or immature adults, being relegated from the regular programming of television networks (Neale, 2015; Telotte, 2008).

Science fiction series have the ability to function indefinitely, by developing different narrative plots with different beginnings and endings over the course of the series (Hundley, 2007). These plots are usually developed on another planet or in an uncertain future of our world (Jones, 2003), attracting audiences by their ability to show what science and technology could offer in the near future (Telotte, 2014). These series are often characterised as reflecting current social and political issues in a world different from ours (Hockley, 2015).

The fantasy genre, meanwhile, constructs and explains different stories based on marked differences from reality (Johnson, 2015), building new worlds or taking references from the real world to develop different possibilities associated with our world (Hundley, 2007). Thus, we find two levels of categorisation of the fantasy genre: high and low. While the high level of fantasy refers to those stories that are completely developed in an imaginary secondary world, the low level refers to those that incorporate supernatural intrusions in our world (Wolf, 1986). Among these inclusions we find elements such as transformations and magic, monsters and dragons, or the supernatural world (Mendlesohn & James, 2009). *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) is characterised by a high level of fantasy developed in a second-

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ary world, while *Stranger Things* (2016-present) presents a low level of fantasy, as these supernatural or fantasy inclusions are placed in the United States in the 1980s.

These series create links between the viewer and the series, with viewers learning the rules of the fictional world (Johnson, 2015). The extraordinary favours the participation of audiences, made up of legions of fans who participate and generate content, influencing the development of television series (Raya-Bravo, 2016).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The future lines of research could conceptually delimit the other television genres and sub-genres, in order to find out and define which characteristics are mainly associated with them. Once all the sub-genres defined, a directory could be created for each of these genres and sub-genres, with each television series and programme associated with them serving as a technical guide.

CONCLUSION

The undeniable boom in television series in recent years is largely due to the emergence and expansion of video-on-demand platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney +, more recently. This has led to an increase in interest and literature related to the phenomenon of television drama in recent years (Nelson, 2015).

The television drama, currently the most popular genre (Statista, 2020), is fed by the international media market, achieving larger budgets for both its production and distribution (Kim & Long, 2012; Park, 2005). Given the large monetary investments that these audiovisual creations involve and the growing impact they are causing at different levels, it was necessary to conceptualise and categorise this phenomenon. For this reason, the authors have delimited the television drama in this chapter, through the revision of literature on this concept. In addition, they have highlighted the usefulness of using the dramatic genre and its different sub-genres in order to serve as a social pact with the audience about what to expect from their favorite television series based on the plots it includes, the number of characters or the seriality.

This chapter has also analysed and categorised various dramatic sub-genres. They are specialised in specific plots such as detective, medical, teenage or historical, among others. This way, drama covers a large area, from the resolution of crimes, thanks to smart policemen and detectives, involving large doses of action and ingenuity, to the miraculous medical treatment of various conditions, from the historical events that frame the plot, to the adolescence problems that mark teens' personal stories, without forgetting the fantasy and science fiction worlds that serve as a reflection of current social problems.

Accordingly, it has been possible to see how the series are created and organised on the basis of certain common elements that largely determine their development, aesthetics, narrative and even their distribution and broadcast, as well as marking their potential duration in some cases. This chapter, therefore, serves as a meeting point and reference for the main characteristics associated with this genre and its various sub-genres. This will help future research related to television series that needs to understand and contextualise the different series broadcast based on some basic characteristics, understanding what type of series they are and what can be expected from them.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Broadcasting: The airing of TV programs or series from a television station. **Plot:** Also called storyline, it is the sequence of events that guides the series through its development.

Prime Time: Usually between 8 and 11 p.m., it has the largest audience of the day.

Seriality: TV series broadcast at regular intervals that continue the story episode by episode.

TV Drama: TV series whose script depicts dramatic events. They are characterized by having multiple plots and characters.

TV Genre: Different types of television programs and series grouped according to common characteristics.

TV Series: A set of episodes of a television program broadcast at regular intervals. There is usually a long pause between each group of episodes. The episode group encompasses a common story.

Chapter 16

New Perspectives on the Annals of R.K. Narayan: Reflections and Ruminations

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to examine new perspectives on the annals of R. K. Narayan, with specific emphasis on Malgudi Days. It primarily attempts to examine how modern television/media has changed dramatically ever since Malgudi Days was first aired on Indian television during the eighties, what the viewers' expectations from television entertainment are today, how television viewers perceive the difference in television broadcasts since the 1980s until the present date. To this end, the author employs online reviews to assess the impact on viewers' choices through a number of paradigms, such as star ratings, the nature of the review content, the number of reviews, and the source of review.

INTRODUCTION

R. K. Narayan is among the most widely read and well-known Indian novelists of all time. He is often associated with the American writer William Faulkner—both explore the conflict between the personalities of characters arising out of conventional demands (Oliver, 2001). Their works are rooted in sensitive humanism, extolling the charm and vivacity of daily life. Narayan's first book, *Swami and Friends*, and the following one, *The Bachelor of Arts*, located in Malgudi's enchanting fictional territory, are only two of his twelve novels based there. Illustrating the genesis of Malgudi (see Figure 1), Narayan evokes:

I remember waking up with name Malgudi on Vijaydasami day, the day on which initiation of learning is celebrated... Malgudi was an earth-shaking discovery for me, because I had no mind for facts and things like that, which would be necessary in writing about Malgudi or any real place. I first pictured not my town but just the railway station which was a small platform with a banyan tree, a station master, and

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two trains a day, one coming and one going. On Vijaydasami, I sat down and wrote the first sentence about my town: The train had just arrived at Malgudi station. (Putatunda, 2012, p. 104).

Malgudi's imaginary world is, therefore, a reflection of the classic Indian community or a town filled with kaleidoscopic hues. The place is imbued with Indian sense and sensitivity.

Figure 1. Genesis of Malgudi

Source: Gupta, 2020



Narayan's writings prove the novel's remarkable longevity as a typical cultural form, long after its partial replacement by more recent styles of literature (Allen & Walder, 1995). His narratives depict real and authentic scenes that give a sense of the true meaning of life. Very few Indian authors have the penchant and the style to express themselves the way Narayan did. Narayan's creative visualization brought to fore the real side of Indian tradition, which otherwise is hard to understand for the layman. An excerpt from *Swami and Friends* asserts that: "To Swaminathan, existence in the classroom was possible only because he could watch the toddlers of the infant standard falling over one another, and through the window on the left see the 12:30 mail gliding over the embankment, booming and rattling while passing over the Sarayu Bridge" (Biswas, 2019, p. 127). These and many such vivid depictions run through the mental imagery of any school child of Swami's age, but are rarely articulated or explained by contemporary researchers. How often do we find students being attentive in the class? Barring a few, most of them are lost in their own worlds—pondering what their fellows may be doing, marvelling at who comes late to the class, what welcome address the late comers would receive upon arriving at the eleventh-hour, what the reactions of their fellows would be, how poised or timid the teacher is, when the school bell would ring indicating that the class is over, and so forth. Narayan is one of those atypical authors who has detailed the psyche of a school child as observed in *Swami and Friends*. Like any schoolboy, Swami spends his day coping with schoolwork, lessons, being a mischief-maker with his

friends, idling under the heat during broad daylight and crafting strategies to persuade his parents to allow him to stay away from school, and play.

Narayan explains how, in India, the writer must merely look out of the window to pick up a character and, thus, a plot. This led to the making of the famous *Malgudi Days*—composed of strong, mystical portraits of all kinds of people, consisting of stories written over 40 years, and portraying a fictional city in full colour. It reveals the essence of human experience: “The train had just arrived at Malgudi station” (Putatunda, 2012, p. 104). Words as simple as these laid the founding stones of India’s literary tradition.

The success is evident from the fact that, in 1986, R. K. Narayan’s plain, effectively written short stories were beautifully essayed into a tele-series titled *Malgudi Days* on Indian television, spanning several episodes and retaining the same aura one gets after reading the novel. Late producer T. S. Narasimhan’s decision to adapt it for the screen ended up revolutionizing Indian television for the next two decades. A tribute, therefore, seems more befitting to the show’s legacy. It was a very popular series then, since media influence was not as extensive as it is today. Unlike present day television series, which often introduce new tracks based on viewership and fluctuations in target rating points, *Malgudi Days* received worldwide recognition for its exciting storyline and fascinating execution of characters by some of the most celebrated Indian actors.

Malgudi Days is an unparalleled piece of art and not least so because it salves our yearning for moral balance. R. K. Narayan has woven magic in nurturing a bittersweet narrative that serves its characters effortlessly. The true genius of late director Shankar Nag and co-director Kavitha Lankesh lay in reproducing the exact narrative without moving a brick. They breathe life into the imaginary town of Malgudi. One must not forget that the series is of triumphing technical brilliance. Shot in Agumbe (Karnataka), it is speculated to be the first of long-form television shows in India that was simultaneously shot in Hindi and English. It boasts of brisk angular shots that had never been used in television. Thanks to *Malgudi Days*, Indian artists like Girish Karnad and Arundhati Nag exhibited legendary performances, which continue to rule the hearts of the audience even today. If the series were re-telecast on the small screen today, it would still garner high viewership.

Malgudi’s idea of a quaint place in southern India seems to have taken root in mainstream imagination. Arasalu railway station in Karnataka’s Shivamogga district is all set to be integrated into the Malgudi Museum as the major filming of the television series was undertaken there. Many restaurants that sell South Indian fare go by Malgudi’s name or extensions, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Reflection of Malgudi in 'Malgudi Tiffins' Restaurant in Pune, Maharashtra, India

Source: Author, January 10, 2019



This chapter aims to examine new perspectives on the annals of R. K. Narayan, with specific emphasis on *Malgudi Days*. It primarily attempts to examine how modern television/media has changed dramatically ever since *Malgudi Days* was first aired on Indian television during the eighties; what the viewers' expectations from television entertainment are today; how television viewers perceive the difference in television broadcasts since the 1980s till present. To this end, the author employs online reviews to assess the impact on viewers' choices (Jong, 2019) through a number of paradigms, such as star ratings, the nature of the review content, the number of reviews, and the source of review.

BACKGROUND

Malgudi Days is an anthology of 32 amusing short stories written by R. K. Narayan. Bound by his contract with *The Hindu*, a Madras newspaper, Narayan contributed numerous short stories within the confines of word count and column length. The unique aspect of his style is the brevity, the excitement, and the climax he retains in each of his stories. Each standalone narrative, though not connected in the trendy parlance of today, is fundamentally entangled with the other plots. Since short stories have restricted space, he does not detail everything in the plot. He does not squander away the pages and allows the characters to arrive in dribs and drabs, briefly explaining the backstory of every character. Narayan extracts the maximum potential of each sentence, such that his stories seem bound by a subtle structure, corresponding to the rhythmic and finite boundaries of poetry. For instance, in *An Astrologer's Day*, Narayan skilfully drops pieces of the backstory of the character in the plot rather than dump them all on the reader at once. He presents the characters to the reader as if they knew them for real.

In the story *The Career*, Narayan dexterously portrays how the law of karma comes to act through his depiction of Ramu. Ramu, a self-proclaimed orphan and victim of his stepmother, walks away from his hometown to Malgudi in search of a haven. There he meets a merchant, Mr. Sheshadri, who is doing well for himself. Ramu narrates his personal history to Sheshadri and seeks food, accommodation, and compassion from the latter. After much reluctance, Mr. Sheshadri admits Ramu to his home and

business. Ramu gradually develops association with the family and wins everyone's hearts by lending a helping hand in domestic chores and business affairs. To reinforce their faith in him, he refuses to be paid by considering himself a part of the family. The Sheshadris fail to take lesson from the Vedic quote, *Ati Vinayam Dhoortha Lakshanam*— extreme modesty is an attribute of the roguish. After winning the family's trust, Ramu gets the consent to look after the entire business—purchase and sale of merchandise, receiving and making payments, managing deliveries and other related commitments. On one occasion, when Sheshadri is away from Malgudi for a business engagement, Ramu launders all the valuable possessions and flees on the pretext of attending to his ailing father. Upon returning, Sheshadri finds his entire shop empty. He further learns how Ramu ripped off all the money by forcefully extracting payments from clients without transferring them to his employer; he failed to make payments to business partners by retaining the cash to himself; and he also borrowed huge amounts from different sources for self-gratification. This compels Sheshadri to leave Malgudi and takes him years to recover the losses and bring his business back to its original splendour. After many years, while he is visiting a temple, he sees a defaced man begging alms on the steps of the temple. He recognises Ramu and learns how Ramu, although affluent at some point, was left impoverished and helpless through the vagaries of nature. When he attempts to strike a conversation with Ramu, the latter escapes, leaving the audience ponder about the fruits of evil karma. The story rightly highlights the Golden Rule that coincides with the Mosaic Law: whatever is hurtful to you, do not do to any other person. Narayan never misses a message or a lesson for his audience.

In *The Missing Mail*, the responsiveness, attentive efforts, and deep commitment of Thanappa, a postman, towards a local village girl struggling to get married, is explicitly shown. The postman chooses not to deliver mails conveying the illness (followed by death) of the bride's uncle, fearing that it might interfere with the wedding. It reveals Thanappa's empathy for others. The postman's willingness to forego professional obligation to sustain moral commitment regardless of possible disciplinary action is skilfully exhibited by Narayan.

Narayan is also at his best when he mixes satire with humour—especially when he chooses to illustrate a situation, which in no small measure affects the daily routine of the common man. On these occasions, he puts in a tale of not much length a lot of substantial detail. He does not feel the burden of lingering on some trivial fact. He is completely carried away by the themes that the picture is enabled to present itself. In the story titled *The Lawley Day*, Narayan humorously narrates the activities and actions of the municipal council. Malgudi's municipal president tries to give the town a contemporary look to celebrate the fifteenth independence of the country. Narayan's humour is at its best when he describes how Sir Frederick Lawley's statue is put on sale in an amusing and interesting way. The massive statue is hacked away with considerable cost and effort and eventually destroyed with the help of dynamite, only for the chairman to discover that Frederick Lawley was, in fact, a noble governor who had championed independence for India and died in an effort to save villagers from drowning in a flood. The statue is then restored in a new location whose name is changed (from Kabir Lane) to Lawley Road, as decided by the town council.

Malgudi encounters the sudden changes at various points in time that characterize the orthodox Indian community with its old culture and customs, values, delusions, and irrational beliefs. Like the pickpocket—the central character in one of Narayan's stories—who virtually struggles to make ends meet, most Malgudi residents lead lives that are tough, although not fully impoverished, labouring hard to make a living. Characters caught in the pressures and strains of these sudden transitions are seen in various witty demeanours. The story *The Gateman's Gift* exhibits the journey of an unsullied and loyal

gatekeeper, Govind Singh, who, upon rendering dedicated service for 25 years, requests to be relieved from duties with an appeal to receive pension to sustain post-retirement. Eventually, during his leisure time, he develops a passion for making figurines and gifts one to his employer with an expectation of praise—accompanied with the fear of adverse consequences—should the employer not like it. Few days later, he receives an envelope from the office which he does not open for several weeks, assuming he must have offended the employer because of the gift. These pointless imaginations and fears ultimately drive him crazy and engage him in weird acts of madness, until he accidentally meets one of his officers who opens the envelope to declare that the employer, impressed by Govind's creativity, has actually rewarded him Rs. 100/-. Although it liberates Govind from the relentless emotional torture endured over the days, he decides never to make figurines in his life. This story shows the character of the gate-man—his simplicity and fidelity, his modesty, his blameless life, his talent to make toys, his alarming fears, his misfortune, and his liberation.

Narayan's goal in his short stories is to give his readers an image that represents daily life—by careful material selection—while taking off the material that is inappropriate for comic treatment (Pal, 2018). These stories were later adapted to national television in 1986 with the same title. Andre Lefevere refers to this as “refraction” (Parmar, 2019). Lefevere (1984) maintains that, when a literary work attains recognition, it is likely to persist in more forms than the one created by its author, before it leaves his hands to be printed, or to be edited, as it is more common in modern times. The work, once in print, is also likely to be exported from one culture to another, again in more forms than one. Many who read it are further likely to know it or interpret it differently than its original form, for which the author is not responsible. In other words, there is a vast process at work here, resulting in what we might call literary text refraction. Refracted texts exist neutrally of the original, even though they are still connected to it. They nourish in a sphere away from the control of the original writer, though not essentially its publisher, at least in contemporary times.

For Indian television, *Malgudi Days* was the post-colonial decolonizing movement that sought to remove the foreign frontage and sustain Indian cultural heritage. The need to decolonize the Indian mind and establish the glory of Indian ethos, language, ideals, illusions, texts, and playwrights were adequately addressed.

THE UNPARALLELED GLORY OF NARAYAN'S WORKS

Indian television has undergone steady evolution marked by silent or radical phases of transformation (Dash, 2015). When television was introduced in India in 1959, two opposing views were voiced: first, if television were allowed to dissolve into an entertainment platform, it would wreak havoc on the valuable resources of the country; second, television could be used as a resourceful instructive tool to educate the masses and alter the attitudes of the people, contributing to social and economic development (Ninan, 1995). Gradually, television was used not only as a source of entertainment, marketing, newscast, information sharing, but also to promote sustainable growth of strategic programmes such as rural education and alleviation of poverty. The early 1990s witnessed the proliferation of this medium due to the use of satellite devices by commercial media (Rodrigues, 2010). This led to debates on different forms of storytelling such as soap, serial, and series, although there is a slim difference between these three.

Table 1. Rating by demographic of *Malgudi Days* by IMDb users (June 7, 2020)

	All Ages	<18	18-29	30-44	45+
ALL					
Rating	9.5	9.7	9.5	9.4	8.2
Number of respondents	3,061	3	794	1,143	68
MALES					
Rating	9.5	9.7	9.5	9.5	8.4
Number of respondents	2,094	3	755	1,077	63
FEMALES					
Rating	8.6	-	9.0	8.3	6.9
Number of Respondents	105	-	36	52	5

Source: (Malgudi Days [TV Series 1987–2006] - IMDb, 2020)

According to Munshi (2020), in the case of *soaps*, events are never fully resolved and are projected into an inexistent future. Soap stories do not encourage ultimate resolution. A lack of narrative conclusion is quintessential to soaps. A series, by comparison, is distributed over several episodes but in continuity it tells a full story. It can use a hook device, sometimes also called a cliff-hanger, to cajole audiences back to the next episode. They differ from soaps because their narratives are wrapped-up or have a definite conclusion. On the other hand, the series format offers a set of characters and often, a specific place the audiences are familiar with. In general, however, the narrative structure is such that the main story is solved in a single episode—half to one hour long. Thus, a satisfactory resolution is offered to the public each time a series is aired. Each television series is complete (Munshi, 2020).

The early glory of Indian television, Doordarshan (DD), remains unparalleled and etched in the memories of the audience as a stint of big families staying home and spending quality time with each other. No matter the disparity in ages or leisure pursuits of different family members, DD time was dedicated family time, when everyone was known to be viewing the family-entertainment shows together (Jha, 2020). Then came the colour TV in 1982, launched as a matter of national prestige to host the prestigious Asian Games. It was an early opportunity to watch a continuous entertainment program for the handful of urban middle-class households that had TV sets (Dash, 2015). In fact, several shows—*Ramayan*, *Mahabharat*, *Chanakya*, *Malgudi Days*, *Byomkesh Bakshi* (not in the exact order in which they were aired)—emerged as cult classics, stirring remakes and revivals, and continue to stay favourites until this day. The audience’s fervent reaction to the new entertainment-oriented programs intensified advertisers’ competition to support DD for commercial promotion. Thanks to its monopoly, DD was able to reach the audiences around the country, and the prime-time show *National Programming* gained prominence (Dash, 2015). *National Programming* was a post-colonial venture of the political elites striving to build up a nation. It was during this time that the author R.K. Narayan brought his books to life for television audiences with the famous *Malgudi Days*.

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Table 2. Audience reviews for *Malgudi Days* by Google users

Rating	Reviews	Base Date/ Reference Date (June 7, 2020)
*****	"Malgudi Days, wow...wow... what an excellent direction and production. Each and every episode is so interesting. I started watching recently in this COVID-19 lockdown. I watched 3 seasons so far, all are fabulous and it's realistic. All are short stories with an important message we receive at the end of every episode. Direction so good, viewers themselves feel that we should visit Malgudi, but this is fictional place. I suggest everyone to watch, now it's available on Amazon Prime both in English as well as Hindi language."	3 weeks prior
*****	"Ahh! Reminds me of my childhood. We used to watch it once a week, in the only TV of our village. Golden days, kids call it nostalgia. Most beautiful series. I bet if Shankar Nag was alive, Kannada cinema would be at the peak. Thank you, Shankar Nag, and R.K. Narayan for making our childhood memorable."	A month prior
*****	"This is a masterpiece. It reflects life and daily chores faced by rural India in a subtle, simple & a charming way. Nothing comes close to perfection as Malgudi Days. Shankar Nag's direction coupled with Girish Karnad's brilliant acting & beloved Swami make this an all-time great TV series."	4 months prior
*****	"This show is beyond ratings. It invokes a nostalgia. The show is a fragrance of those good old days when Vedic traditions and culture drove human life. We want to go back there. Though time travel is still not possible, yet Malgudi Days transports us there for a short time. Nostalgic reminiscence."	A month prior
*****	"Best TV show; the beauty of simple life lived, warmth, emotions, people, behaviour, religion— everything in harmony. I am blessed to witness the episodes, really very, very touchy and nostalgic. Hats off to the artists, director and entire team behind making this dynamic series."	A month prior
*****	"The title track is still fresh in my head. And whenever we friends talk about our favourite old TV serial, Malgudi always comes in our head. I am still watching on Amazon Prime like have not done before."	2 months prior
*****	"As much as R. K. Narayan deserves respect for his literary skills, Shankar Nag does deserve equal respect too. Nobody would have been able to bring the characters on the screen better than him."	A month prior
*****	"Malgudi days is all about memories of my childhood. Even today if I watch a single episode, tears shed from my eyes. Such a simple life and a marvellous drama."	5 months prior
*****	"No competition. I have read this. It literally takes you to Malgudi. It's so simple and beautiful story. I loved it."	3 weeks prior
*****	"Awesome show. Great acting, great writing, great direction, great background music, simple story but immensely soothing."	3 weeks prior
*****	"It reminds me of my childhood... specially that title music a Masterpiece."	6 months prior
*****	"Everything about this is right from location, star cast, direction and acting. Excellent teamwork."	A week prior
*****	"I watched every episode more than 30 times. I liked the episodes. New generation should watch."	A week prior
*****	"1000 times better than today's Bollywood movies, simple story yet strong character."	5 months prior
*****	"Can this be aired on television again so that new generations can watch those days of nostalgia instead of always grabbing the mobile and watching some videos?"	3 months prior
*****	"The best ever serial in Indian History."	3 weeks prior
*****	"Nothing more to say. Simply the best!!!"	3 weeks prior

Source: (*Malgudi Days—Audience Reviews, 2020*)

The script was adapted from many collections, novels, and short stories of Narayan, such as *Malgudi Days*, *Swami and Friends*, and *A Horse and Two Goats*. The nostalgic tales set in Malgudi's fictional village took viewers into the backyard and were described as a slice of authentic India. The show was set in Agumbe, a village in Karnataka, which was transformed into Malgudi through the captivating work of the sculptor, art director and town planner John Devaraj (Jha, 2020), well-supported by the directo-

rial efforts of Shankar Nag and Kavitha Lankesh. From carriages, sculptures, roads, stores, bus stands, and even Swami 's school, the creators imagined Malgudi's detailed information, which was supposed to be an idyllic town set in British India. But when asked where Malgudi was, Narayan once mentioned that if he had to clarify that Malgudi was a small town in South India, he would only convey half-truth, since Malgudi 's characteristics appear universal.

To understand the impact and influence of *Malgudi Days* (the television series), the author of this chapter employed online reviews for gauging the ostensive paradigm shift in Indian television. As of June 7, 2020, *Malgudi Days* enjoyed a viewer rating of 9.5/10 on IMDb considering 3,061 IMDb users (Malgudi Days [TV Series 1987–2006] - IMDb, 2020). The rating by demographic (considering the age and gender-based profile only) of IMDb users is given in Table 1.

Likewise, the series enjoyed an audience rating summary of 4.9/5 assigned by 405 Google users. Table 2 lists few of the reviews given by Google users for the series *Malgudi Days* (as of June 7, 2020). These reviews are indicative, not exhaustive. Only a small number of reviews which were descriptive, included ratings, and/or were deemed helpful by other users, have been considered. Moreover, these reviews have been presented anonymously, and minorly modified to check errors in language, if any.

Table 2 exhibits the viewers' reviews for the television series *Malgudi Days*. Since all the reviews considered are recent, they indicate that despite a transition—or rather commercialization—of Indian television over the last three decades, people demonstrate their preferences and choose to follow television shows that comprise great plot, remarkable performance, suitable environment, thorough camerawork, editing, lighting and decent sound treatment.

In recent years, particularly since the 1990s, soap operas have grown in popularity on Indian television, although they are known to be flouting logic and reasoning (Mathur, 2018). Here melodrama is played out by characters trapped in situations that push their emotions to extremes. Soap operas allow the construction of a world that doesn't match up with reality. As this is an overt feature, it is not interpreted by the receiver as a deception, but rather a result of imagination. A fiction's reading contract anticipates the recipient facing a commodity that is a fantasy (de la Barrera, 2008). Mathur (2018) lists bizarre scenes from Indian soaps: for instance, there are scenes where the female protagonist takes nearly one minute to fall and the man, her saviour, slides from about 10 feet to catch her in the most unusual fashion. Another strange trend in daily soaps is the wild leaps in time. The moment the lead couple gets married and has an offspring, the series is quick forwarded to a minimum of 20 years. Their child is in a flash twenty years old, but the rest of the cast does not age one day! Also, going to bed wearing weightily embellished saris and elaborate jewellerys, then waking up with an impeccable makeup is unique to Indian soap operas. Actor Stewart Stafford once pointed out: "Soap operas have the same hypnotic power as witnessing clothes turning in a washing machine—if you don't look away quickly, you'll be watching until the end" (Stafford, 2020).

García (2016) claims that, in order to frame the idiosyncrasy of television narrative, it is worthwhile to consider two features that make it rare in comparison with other types: the format rigidity and the fundamental possibility of long, serialized stories. Relative to film and contemporary literature, television fiction has very strict structural constraints that shape and unify the way its stories are told, though there are differences from one country to another. In the case of India, there is a sea change in the way television has taken shape in recent years—dominated by reality shows that run over several seasons and the typical *saas-bahu* (mother-in-law—daughter-in-law) sagas, which go on for years together. Critics accuse the *saas-bahu* sagas of being dramatic, disconnected from reality and sometimes conservative. They reinforce, often imperceptibly, gender roles and stereotypes as well as hierarchies in the family

system. Some of the stories have been very regressive—showing men spanking women. There might also be wicked in-laws in the family who exercise immense control over their timid daughter-in-law (Pandey, 2014). Indian television has, thus, taken a turn backwards in terms of content, particularly the soap operas (Kaur, 2008; Sen, 2019).

Nonetheless, criticizing the television producers and channel administrators for the quality of the shows is unreasonable. One must bear in mind that they produce only such shows that viewers are keen to watch. They do not produce the shows guided by their own preferences, but in order to establish and retain high viewership. These shows are popular as they represent, in part, the realities of today's society (especially among rural communities), and, therefore, the audience can relate to them. The making of the shows involves no moral obligations on the part of the television producers. Their goal is to realize commercial gains, and the way they realise these gains is through viewership. Therefore, if viewers dislike the shows' content, they can vote with their remote and change the channel. Else, they may watch content that they think reflects "right" social ideals and boost their ratings.

It is equally important to note that there is a corresponding universe of demanding calendars, sleepless nights and harsh deadlines behind the glitz and ersatz cries of television shows in India. The nation's glittering television industry rightly exemplifies that all that glitters is not gold. It has evolved into a marketplace where a 12-hour session counts as a normal day, directors address themselves as daily labour and a month comprises 45 working days—including night shifts—for all those involved with some or the other show (Khan, 2007). Every effort is directed towards keeping the television rating points (TRPs) high. It is time to rethink the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu: "Enslaved by audience ratings, television imposes market pressures on the supposedly free and enlightened consumer. These pressures have nothing to do with the democratic expression of enlightened collective opinion or public rationality" (as cited in Oakley & O'Connor, 2015).

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Soap operas are an instrument for entertaining and educating people. Entertainment and education are not mutually exclusive. It is worth highlighting the educational potential of this type of medium. Soap operas, as mass products, serve as an influential tool; they have a wide outreach, irrespective of gender or societal class, with an appealing entertainment proposition. What looks merely amusing and enjoyable at first glance, often reaches the individual in a didactic way, without even realizing it. No one sits in front of a television set to learn through a soap opera, as they do with the news, podcast, or some biopic, for example. Soap operas, therefore, send veiled educational messages, and the audience learns, almost inadvertently. It is imperative for television production houses and channel administrators to carefully organize and present their content in a responsible manner that run for shorter time spans (such as series) rather than running them for years and axing them after a decline in viewership by fatigued audience.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Understanding viewers is crucial for service researchers and those linked with television industry. Viewers are becoming more and more active online today, and useful information about their thoughts, perceptions and activities can be accessed from several online platforms. Future studies may employ

netnography to examine the preferences of the audience for diverse types of shows aired on television in the past. Customer knowledge online provides new possibilities for customized, high quality service.

CONCLUSION

Considering the unfortunate and unprecedented events India witnessed in its making, a victimized glow on a pre-independent village was no uphill task. While Narayan's books managed to bravely scotch that route, media coverage and public research sprouted around the nation's socio-economic woes. They had all the reason to. Albeit, right in the middle of all outcry, *Malgudi Days* hit the satellite in 1986. A generation of Indian viewers would tune in to the national television, Doordarshan, to catch an episode of the series *Malgudi Days*—eyes affixed to TV screens and ears listening for the gentle, basic flute sounds that prefaced each episode. An adaptation of both *Swami and Friends* and *Malgudi Days*, the tele-series, came across as a gust of fresh air. Families were clustered around the TV set, eagerly waiting for a guileless Swami take on the adventures of life. The stories were simple and appealed to the audience.

Critics across the spectrum praise Narayan's simple and unambiguous style of narrative. He is the one who made India reach overseas—he gave a window to foreigners to peep into Indian culture and sensibilities. *Malgudi Days*' characters are endlessly adored. More so now, than ever in the past. Part of the reason can be ascribed to its regard for cultural sensibilities, while the rest owed to the very design of these characters. R. K. Narayan makes no attempts to tame their morality. These people are seminally aware of their own limitations, yet never shackled to them. People are so liberated in Narayan's world that they follow their reason, make mistakes, and choose whether something needs to be learnt.

However, the 90s saw Indian television take a dramatic turn and transformation wherein reality shows and soap operas attained dominance. Although these shows caught attention in their early days, the fame and fervour faded eventually. This further led to a drop in their ratings and most of the shows had to be concluded and replaced with new ones, which, although they had a different plot and cast, were not distinct in their representations from those aired earlier. Modern-day television is different. Its curse is apathy. Its production reeks of glamour while its direction remains steeped in sensationalism. Its characters lack empathy while its story lacks story. Therefore, to truly appreciate the incredible complexity *Malgudi Days* reserved, an insignificant chunk of its screenplay feels enough. It is a sequence from the short story *The Vendor of Sweets*. As Jagan ji (played by an extraordinary Anant Nag) walks home on a moonful night, he encounters his son amongst his college friends, hyped and impassioned over a cricket match. Still while contemplating the time gone by, he is both pleased and rattled. He is unsure of the missionary values that his son is so keen on. He pretends to be sure of the future, but not for long. Soon, he breaks a smile as he realises the cycle of life, gazes skywards and continues to walk.

Television is a source of entertainment that constitutes an active part in the life of the viewer. The shows aired on television have an inestimable educational quality: their message stretches beyond the exact delivery period and impacts the viewers' life in various spheres. They should, therefore, be valued as an excellent medium for conveying morals, knowledge, and observations, and promoting mindful reflection.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Doordarshan: Autonomous public service broadcaster set up by the Government of India.

Golden Rule: So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12).

IMDb: Digital knowledge base for films, TV shows, home videos, video games and web content sharing.

Mosaic Law: Alternate term to the law of Moses.

Netnography: Comprehension of social interaction in present-day digital communications; it is an online research method originating in ethnography.

Refraction: The adaptation of a literary work to an audience, with the goal of changing the way the audience reads the work

Television Rating Point (TRP): A metric used in promotion to denote the percentage of target audience that a television broadcast strikes through a channel.

Chapter 17

The Story of the Unborn: Fetal Narrators in Pascal Bruckner, Chinghiz Aitmatov, and Ian McEwan's Novels

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on a relatively new kind of narrative, concerning storytelling from inside the womb as it offers an inner perspective on both outside social matters and on the first stage of life as well. The author of the given chapter aims to explore the specific features of such a narrative, by comparing the novels of three writers, Pascal Bruckner, Chinghiz Aitmatov, and Ian McEwan, that belong to three different cultural spaces, French, Kyrgyz, and English. The basic elements of a story (plot, setting, characters, point of view, theme, symbolism, conflict, and resolution) are taken into account and their contrastive analysis is meant to reveal some key concepts that define an innovative way to approach literature.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary literature has witnessed an array of changes and experiments, which sought to shock and radically change the reader's understanding of society and the world. Irrespective of their social background, many writers have expressed an interest in and have brought to the fore similar issues, in the case of this chapter, the status of the fetus. For instance, the works of Chinghiz Torekulovich Aitmatov, who stands as one of the most representative figures in Kyrgyzstan's literature, are strongly linked to the concept of social realism. His literary career spans three fundamental stages, but, in the 1990s, *Cassandra's Brand* epitomizes current issues of modern society, which tend to worsen due to an acute increase in technological use. Thus, new conflicts arise not only on streets, but also at the level of conscience. As a prototype of the universal soldier, the *Cassandro-embryo* lacks memory and freedom, but he becomes aware of this fact and ends up denying his right to live, preferring not to be given birth rather than to condemn himself to a tormented existence, full of emotional pain and spiritual deprivation.

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Standing undoubtedly as an archetypal impersonation of a Parisian intellectual, the second writer who delved into the issue of fetal narration, Pascal Bruckner was raised in a deeply cultured and religiously-rooted background, his mother being a conservative Catholic and his father—a Protestant. Bruckner's works, as well as his own life, push empiric experiences “to the extreme in lucid, provocative and occasionally shocking” fictions (Golsan, 2007, p. 2). *The Divine Child*, published in 1992, is the story of a mother pregnant with twins, that teaches her children various things, while they are still in the womb. This novel resembles to a certain extent McEwan's *Nutshell*.

The third and last writer to be discussed here is Ian Russell McEwan, whose own life reveals that he himself went through quite tough times and in his own words his writing is strongly related to this biographical background. McEwan's works deal with “a wide range of human experiences, including the effects of losing a child, religious fervor, psychological obsession, the numerous intricacies of relationships” (Roberts, 2010, p. 69), which has led to him being labeled as ‘Ian Macabre’ or a ‘literary psychopath’ (Heidari & Talif, 2012, p. 56). In *Nutshell*, the author's prose fully depicts the clash of distinct characters, by thoroughly analyzing the dominant versus submissive household relationship.

The main objective of this chapter is to compare the works of Bruckner, Aitmatov and McEwan, in an attempt to identify and highlight some of the dominant issues of contemporary literature. In doing so, a number of tasks are taken into consideration. First, the chapter aims to familiarize readers with theoretical concepts related to storytelling, then to apply as many of these theoretical concepts to each of the three novels (*The Divine Child*, *Cassandra's Brand* and *Nutshell*), in pursuit of both concrete common ground and different interpretations, able to illustrate various perspectives on life, society, technology and so on. The conclusions that are drawn allow for future research to develop, merely opening the way for further exploration of this topic.

BACKGROUND: ESSENTIAL THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

In terms of *narrative techniques*, two essential items are the *point of view* and the *narrative mode*.

The point of view (in its broad sense, as Jaap Lintvelt mentions) or the *angle of vision* (as Wayne Booth calls it) refers to the narrative perspective from which events are reported. Its particularly important role is revealed by Lintvelt (1994) in whose opinion “firm control over narrative perspective, as well as its motivation, ensures that the given literary work is not only coherent, but also deeply credible, a fact that intensifies the illusion of reality” (p. 5) and supported by Mark Schorer (1968), who notes that narrative perspective and its *modus operandi* “allow the writer to explore and develop a topic, to convey its meanings, and eventually, to assess them” (p. 39).

In their approach to the matter in question, Jean Pouillon, Tzvetan Todorov and Gerard Genette distinguish three types of what they address to as *vision*. According to Pouillon (1946), the next features should be taken into account: *vision from behind*—when there is either a “Demurge or privileged spectator, who knows well the depths of the problem”, *vision from without*—dealing with “the behaviour and physical appearance of the character, as well as the environment in which he lives” and *vision with*—if in the center of attention is only one character, usually described from an inner perspective (pp. 74-103).

Tzvetan Todorov (1968) summarizes the classification suggested by Pouillon in the following way: the *vision from behind* corresponds to a narrator who knows more than the character, or says more than any of the characters know, *vision from without* means that the narrator says less than the character knows and *vision with*, when the narrator says only what a certain character knows.

Like Todorov, Genette (1972) also organizes his classification on the grounds of Pouillon's taxonomy, but he uses his own terminology, assigning to each type of vision a certain type of focalization: *external focalization* (or from the outside), *internal focalization* (corresponding to vision with) and *focalization zero* (in the case of vision from behind).

The *narrative mode* is the second important component that should be discussed in the given chapter. From this perspective, the two main guidelines are those of *presentation* and *representation*, that Jaap Lintvelt (1994) calls *summary* and *scene*. Inspired from Platon's binomial structure—*diegesis* versus *mimesis*, they have been reflected in literary criticism under various labels. For example, in Anglophone space (or the Anglosphere) there was the antinomy between *telling* and *showing* (see the works of researchers such as Henry James, Percy Lubbock, Wayne Booth or Norman Friedman), *panoramic narrative* or *scenic narrative* (also Percy Lubbock) or *summary* versus *scene* (Wayne Booth and Norman Friedman). In the Francophone space, the last distinction was kept as such, but there were also brought forth two new concepts—those of *presentation* and *representation*. There was also introduced a clear distinction between the verbs *dire* (*to tell*) and *montrer* (*to show*), as Pouillon argues. A significant difference between these poles consists in the way the events unfold—either in their extended version, which allows the reader to picture every step, or in a summarized manner, when picturing all sequences is no longer possible.

If we take into account the basic elements of a story, *plot*, *setting*, *characters*, *point of view*, *theme*, *symbolism*, *conflict* and *resolution*, then the following assertions should be made: first of all, the plot varies not only from one literary work to another, but often inside the same work, if there is more than one *narrative plan* (as it usually happens in the case of novels). A detailed taxonomy of *conflicts* from various literary works is that elaborated by Friedman (1955), who on the basis of three criteria establishes the following types of plots: plots of *fortune* (when the focus is set on one protagonist, whose destiny and evolution are investigated, with circumstances that may change due to manifold events), further subdividing into the *action* plot (if the story is sequential), the *pathetic* plot (when the protagonist is weak and loses what he wants in fact to achieve), the *tragic* plot (if the one that fails to achieve his goal is actually a strong character), the *punitive* plot (when the anti-hero eventually gets precisely what he deserves), the *sentimental* plot (if an otherwise weak character wins through, gaining the reader's empathy) and the *admiration* plot (if the victorious one is an ordinary person); plots of *character* (involving a change in protagonist's behavior, due to some life lessons he experiments), which include the *maturing* plot (in the case of a *bildungsroman*, when a person goes through various stages of life – childhood, adolescence, adulthood and lastly old age), the *reform* plot (when a fallen or disgraced hero manages to restore his initial status), the *testing* plot (when the protagonist's ethical values are tested in a rather drastic manner) and the *degeneration* plot (if an attractive character commits a certain transgression, consequently falling from grace); plots of *thought* (that focus primarily on protagonist's thoughts, emotions, feelings and reactions), that encompass four subtypes of plots – the *education* plot (with the protagonist being forced to reassess his beliefs and values), the *revelation* plot (where truth is eventually revealed), the *affective* plot (building up deep tension due to inner struggling between reason and emotions, duty and desire) and the *disillusionment* plot (with an inevitable loss of ideals and associated consequences). As for the three aforementioned writers, their novels focus on fetuses that seem to “have remained psychologically trapped in their intrauterine reality” (Dorfman, 1987, p. 170), thus turning their works into a “pseudo-bildungsroman of individual development” (Barco, 2018, p. 4).

Second, concerning *the setting*, it is necessary to mention that, according to David Lodge (1992), this term refers to the historical, cultural, social as well as spatial-temporal framework in which the events

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of a literary work take place. In other words, the *setting* is a very broad concept, comprising numerous items, related not only to the specific of the epoch, but also to national identity, cultural specificity, set of moral values and social laws. As for the types of setting, according to Roberts and Zweig (2014), there are three categories: it may be either an open space, like *the natural environment*, with its inspiring landscapes, that play an important role in a narrative, almost as if they were a character of its own, along with various animals, different seasons and weather chart or an artificial place, created by human beings in search of their own comfort, as well as the cultural and historical context of the given narrative (in reference to *when* and *where* its action takes place).

Third, the *characters* from a certain literary work are also listed in accordance with some particular criteria, such as their role and their quality. If taking into account the role they perform throughout a certain literary work, a character may be either the *protagonist* (that is the main actor, who has a positive role), the *antagonist* (the villain counterpart of the protagonist), a *deuteragonist* (the secondary character, usually the sidekick of one of the aforementioned characters), *tertiary* (a character who makes his way in and out of a narrative, a kind of an *episodic* character), *confidant* (in the form of a close friend or a mentor for the protagonist), *love interest* or *foil* (a character whose existence draws attention to and highlights certain traits of another character, without necessarily creating opposition or conflict). If the criterion is the character's quality, then he can be a *dynamic*, or on the contrary, a *static* one, considering how much he evolves or changes along the way or if he rather proves resistant and "stubborn" when faced with the need to adapt, a *symbolic* or *archetypal* character, that represents all his kindred spirits, standing as a prototype of a whole group of people with similar moral traits and finally a *stock* character (a recurrent presence in the literary work, without having the spotlight all for himself).

The symbolism of a literary work resides in almost each and every of its internal components, be they archetypal characters, certain places, household objects, colors or various life guidelines in the form of myths and folktales. Related to the notion of *symbolism* for the three aforementioned writers (Pascal Bruckner, Chinghiz Aitmatov and Ian McEwan) is the concept of *heterotopia*, which is in fact a word that comes from Latin, whose meaning is that of other-place, a unit that stands out as significantly distinctive from the rest of the system. The one who introduced this term in philosophy and later in literature is Michel Foucault, who actually "borrowed" it from medicine, where it was used to label "a particular tissue that, though normal, grows in a different place than the usual" (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, pp. 41-42). But for Foucault (1977), heterotopia became a name for diverse spaces that exist inside various cultures, "real places that are formed in the very founding of society and that later turn into counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (p. 125). When dealing with this concept, one must always bear in mind that "the real world is only a reflection, or even the reflection of a reflection, i.e. fiction. Thus, layers of fiction proliferate and multiply to eventually cover the territory of the real" (Bădulescu, 2012, p. 8). A detailed analysis of Foucault's definition of heterotopia provides an irrevocable interpretation of how the perception of space itself has evolved and changed. According to the French philosopher, in traditional societies both space and time were seen as hierarchical values, placed on a vertical axis, ranging from celestial to mundane and from sacred to profane. In such circumstances, heterotopia was a mere localization, meant to fulfill the function of a place where a certain crisis could take place. Though, in the modern world, which was no longer endowed with a vertical axis, but rather ruled by a horizontal one, these binary-balanced sites were substituted by other types of constructions, thus no more being conceived as locations, but as extensions of social space, that enclosed numerous deviations from the rule of reason. Stating that modern heterotopias are such extensions, Foucault saw

space as a connection of places, a thing that changed the way people conceptualize their location within more complex representations of spatial patterns. Furthermore, while Foucault was writing at a time when space had not been completely unsanctified and it still fostered a number of inviolable oppositions (like private vs. public, spiritual vs. material), the 21st century brought about

the complete dispersion of places into fluid space, with virtual social networks dissolving reminiscent borders and distinct territorial margins. As globalization increasingly made the sense of rootedness and memory agonize, humanity was moving fast towards a new geography in which belonging and remembrance were about to be reinvented, basically leading to the third stage of heterotopia enacted. (Boboc & Ivan, 2014, p. 100)

The point of view (a concept that has been previously mentioned) may often multiply and vary in a novel, ranging from two or more perspectives on the same event to a personal depiction, in the shape of monologue or as independent memories that lead to the emergence of a rightful story within a story.

The main theme for the three writers that are taken into account in the given paper is the way a fetus perceives outer life from within the maternal womb, while evolving from embryo to fetal stage, with little enthusiasm for being born, if not even a congenital fear of whatever fatal challenges may await him outside.

The conflict is usually also structured on a binary configuration—inner space vs. outer space, tradition vs. modernity, youngsters vs. elders, childhood vs. adulthood, spiritual vs. material values, duty vs. love and so on. As for its resolution, it rarely comes as a happy end, since these writers aim to depict real life in a faithful manner, with its biological, ethical, social and cultural implications, that eventually form the underlying network of a fictional world that perfectly mirrors human existence.

In their attempt to discuss the status of the fetus, Bruckner, Aitmatov and McEwan

explore conception, gestation, and birth as points of origin for humanity and citizenship alike by giving voice to lives that cannot speak for themselves. They employ metafictional techniques and postmodern aesthetics, interrogate history in order to express their political commitments and link textual production and human reproduction in order to posit national futures. (Barco, 2018, p. 1)

The “gestational structure” of their novels deals with the intrauterine development of embryonic narrators, for whom their mothers’ body converts to a screen able to display “their visions for both themselves and their nations” (Barr, 1995, p. 142). The narrative mode fluctuates, shifting from the voice of the fetuses to first-person plural, that turns out to be an opportunity to speak for this new kind of “alliance of the unborn” (Nance, 2006, p. 52). Moreover, the fetal narrators, who become one of the many collateral casualties of both society and history, proclaim the womb as their own legit enclave, reinstating it as a sacrosanct space. Thus, “by rendering the womb and the fetus as emblematic for the future citizen, the maternal body becomes the necessary precondition for their very existence, since fetal narrators are only imaginatively possible within the context of a maternal medium”. (Barco, 2018, p. 5).

In 20th century literature what may be called ‘fetal personhood’ stands as a very useful concept in the attempt to comprehend the propensity for fetal narrators, since “as a result of reproductive imaging technologies, the commodification of babies, and other social changes, the attribution of personhood can now precede biological birth. The result is a new, unprecedented category of fetal persons.” (Morgan, 1996, p. 59). Susan Merrill Squier (1996), Brill Professor Emeritus of English and Women’s, Gender,

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and Sexuality Studies, also identifies and supports this literary trend, stating that “a parallel explosion of global interest in embryology embodied in a number of fictions exploring fetal life emerged, from Salman Rushdie’s ‘Midnight’s Children’, Ariel Dorfman’s ‘The Last Song of Manuel Sendero’, and Carlos Fuentes’s ‘Christopher Unborn’ to Kenzaburo Oe’s ‘A Personal Matter’ and Pascal Bruckner’s ‘The Divine Child’, each of which can be understood as drawing on embryological models to articulate a new, national fetal subject” (p. 151).

Apart from literature, in medicine itself the image of the fetus is sometimes placed in direct opposition to that of the mother, as this dual complex seems to keep on living based on a strange biological symbiosis, while egoistically struggling for survival. As the novels of the three writers prove, “some describe the fetus as a parasite who takes over the mother’s body, others describe it as a prisoner of the mother’s psychological and physical pathology”, but all these depictions do have a common pivotal line, in the sense that “they are based not on a model of cooperation or union between mother and fetus, but on a model of maternal-fetal antinomy” (Adams, 1994, p. 143). So, regardless of it being crucial for the future of humanity, under such circumstances the image of the fetus eventually alters to “an icon that represents our fears of an abject other within, that threatens our identity as humans and at the same time has become definitive of human life, the most innocent and pure citizen in need of legal protection” (Oliver, 2012, p. 248).

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THREE NOVELS

Pascal Bruckner’s *The Divine Child*

Basic Information on the Framework, Story Line and Viewpoints in the Novel

This novel was first published in 1992 and it deals with the intrauterine life of two fetuses (supposedly twins), a boy and a girl—Louis and Celine. The narrative perspective varies, in accordance with the events that are reported, also depending on who exactly is speaking—the novel comprises many narrative voices (there is monologue, dialogue, third person narrative and first person narrative), as it is divided into three parts (like the trimesters of a pregnancy) each of which consists of three subchapters, as follows: Part I (The uterine republic, To be born or not to be born, The Pedant Child), Part II (A Storm in the Cradles, The Cerberus of the Alcoves, The Garden of Delight), Part III (Louis the Concupiscent, The Barbarian Paradise, A Child in Retirement), all this preceded by a Prologue and ending with an Epilogue.

The Prologue begins with a third person narrative opening the plot by showing the intention of a young mother, Madeleine Kremer, to educate her children as early as possible, even in this embryonic stage, so they don’t waste time while growing in her womb:

Instead of waiting till the age of six to send her children to school, she will teach them from the first days of pregnancy. She had to act immediately, without waiting for birth to come (...). She just won’t tolerate a stinky little child lounging inside her womb for nine months, just doing nothing. She will be a mother and a teacher at the same time, she will turn her belly into a classroom. (Bruckner, 1992, p. 8)

This particular passage is the reflection of a mother’s perception of her own baby in that adversative manner that Adams and Squier argued about (see the Introduction), the grounds for her behaviour

residing in the fact that she herself was raised to be very aware of the costs of life, having to compensate the expenditure for her education soon after turning 18 years old: “It was a family custom: one doesn’t simply give life to anyone, one lends it to them. Each and every child had to redeem his life from his own parents, to relieve himself of a burden that would invariably fall on his descendants” (p. 5). Thus, life in itself becomes pure merchandise—growing up, learning, getting married, having a family of your own, all is just business, or so it seems to be for Madeleine, who in her attempt to prepare her kids for such a ‘career’ is determined to improve their skills as much and as fast as she can. As a consequence, she makes use of all available technology and resorts to a complex system of microphones connected to a recorder able to render simultaneously information from seven different fields (algebra, geometry, English, German, history, geography and literature).

Her first interaction with her children occurs in Part I—The uterine republic, when one evening she “hears a feeble voice – More, more!” (p. 15), then the same call is resumed by two voices, summoning the mother to continue her reading.

With the help of her doctor, Mr. Fontane, Madeleine manages to teach her children how to speak when she was three months pregnant and she then instructs her unborn babies by means of computer science, even if they could easily fit into “a nutshell [see the title of Ian McEwan’s novel] and their little heads were the size of a greengage” (p. 17). The effort proves to be quite a success, since in the seventh month, in full daylight, when Madeleine was still in dr. Fontane’s office, a cooing voice is heard asking for supplements, appendixes and updates. Further the dialogue goes on between the doctor, the mother and one of her children, who specifically states that “Of course you heard me, since I’m the one doing the talking” (p. 18), but gives them no clue regarding its particular gender. From now on a phone is set inside Madeleine and a large number of interactions between her and the babies (mostly Louis) are mediated by this device. There are also sequences of intrauterine dialogue between the fetus and his sister, Celine, that focus on their relationship as twins who avoid “the silly rivalry of opposing sexes” (p. 23). But the more erudite they become, the less interested they feel in chatting and doing small talk with anyone outside the womb. Moreover, the aversion for their parents is the perfect reflection of Madeleine’s own repulsion – she thinks of them as “small microbes” and in turn – in Celine’s words – “a mother and a father are mere trampolines to be used as springboards when taking off” to conquer the world (p. 26).

At first, after learning so many things, the twins are eager to be born and, once they enter the world, to get to work, but their enthusiasm is soon tempered and even annihilated by the information they gather from newspapers full of horrors such as “murders, attacks, famine, nuclear and biological warfare, pollution, deforestation, shortly put – nothing else but terror and chaos” (p. 29). The solution suggested by Louis when fear takes over both of them is not to be born and to continue to live in their mother’s womb, an idea that Celine dismisses as impossible, while Louis sees it as the only escape, arguing in a dense tirade that “This life they propose me isn’t attractive at all. Believe me, I’m not tempted anymore. Really! What the hell, eighty billion beings were born before us! It’s such a banality! Everything has already taken place: what good is it to start over? Our future will be nothing more than a repeated past, a time that has already been spent before by others, everything we will receive will be marked by previous societies and centuries. No, we’d better postpone our birthdate. Maybe next year, if the situation improves. They say we only have one life. Well, I’d rather keep it for myself!” (p. 30). On the other hand, Celine—too ambitious to stay safe, secluded in the uterus—shows herself as still willing to be born, thus breaking their solid bond. Louis, however, remains steadfast in his decision and publicly communicates that he does not intend to get out of the womb, threatening pediatricians not to try anything or else he will kill his mother by ripping her organs on his way out. Although his actions are cruel, there seems

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to be a point in his reluctance to be born since his sister, Celine, now has a severe disability caused by traumas to her brain during birth.

Another significant dialogue is the one that occurs between Louis and God Himself, since Madeleine resorts to prayers in order to solve the strange and difficult dilemma she finds herself in. For the fetus this is an opportunity to disseminate his ideas, but they are not the simple ideas of an excessively zealous child, they are the cornerstone of an authentic Nihilist, who refuses to see the usefulness of life. “What is, in fact, the man?” he argues, “Only a talking digestive tract, a bunch of guts full of hypotheses, a parasite that pollutes everything it touches” (p. 55). Resigned to her fate, convinced that she cannot win there, where God Himself has lost, Madeleine agrees to shelter Louis in her womb as long as he wants and so a new kind of life begins.

Character Typology and Symbolism

In establishing and discussing the typology of the characters compounding the so-called “personnel” of the novel should be taken into account not only their status (that is, the role they play along), but also their portrait (the description of how they look and how they act). From this point of view, Pierre Fontanier’s classification of various means of description provides an important guideline in this process. According to Fontanier (1977), there are eight types of description:

expolition – which reproduces the same thinking in different forms, in order to make it more relevant and interesting; topography – a description of a certain place [a concept linked to that of heterotopia]; chronography – focused on the dynamism of the events and on the whole context of its development; prosopography – the description of a person’s appearance, body, physical traits, posture and so on; ethopoeia – if the description aims to display the behaviour, vices, virtues, talents, flaws, shortly – some moral characteristics of a real or fictional character; portrait – a description in both moral and physical terms, a combination of prosopography and ethopoeia; parallel – that is the comparison of two descriptions; picture – the description of a whole range of various passions, actions, events or phenomena. (Fontanier, 1977, pp. 382-387).

Concerning the portrait in itself, a Romanian researcher suggests the following typology, based on no less than eight criteria:

1. In accordance with its affiliation to reality, a portrait may be based either on a) resemblance or on b) analogy; 2. If the criterion is its formal unity, the distinction should be made between a) compact images and b) diffuse images; 3. In reference to the author and the model, there is a) self-portrait or b) portrait; 4. According to the author’s attitude towards his model, the portrait may be: a) neutral, b) caricature, c) encomium; 5. If the image is taken into consideration, then the portrait is either a) direct or b) indirect; 6. Based on their focus there are a) individual, b) simultaneous, c) collective portraits; 7. According to their place / position portraits may be a) initial, b) medial, c) final; 8. If stylistic features are the main criterion, then the portrait is to a certain extent a) substantivized, b) adjectivized, c) based on a complex of comparisons, d) euphemistic, e) based on internal conflict or f) equivocal. (Angelescu, 1985, pp. 80-82)

The most important characters of the novel (or the Top 10, as it may be called) include: Louis and Celine (the two twin fetuses), Madeleine and Oswald (their parents), Adelaide and Andre Barthelemy (the parents of their parents, or the twins' grandparents), dr. Fontane and his sister—Marthe, Damien—the supporter of Louis and Lucia—the one Louis feels deeply attracted to.

Louis and Celine, the twin fetuses, are for a while the central duo of the novel, with the boy playing the role of the antagonist and the girl as his confidant. Their portraits start as the opposing image of their parents and later evolve as a caricature of how they were in fact projected. The apparent encomium of “the Fontane babies, who were supposed to be the prototypes of a baby elite, able to go directly to university, rather than to the nursery and by the age of three to be already efficient employees of various companies” (Bruckner, 1992, p. 21) turns out to be a caricature—since both twins are ridiculous in their later appearance, that is stunningly different from their intellectual capacities. Their initial description is that of a new kind of human being, born as skilled as possible and ready to plunge into work, their medial (and intrauterine) portrait is to a certain extent antithetic (while Louis is interested in philosophy and humanities in general, Celine's passion are exact sciences, he is unwilling to be born, while she is eager to start her life as a child), but however they get along really well, despite the difference in their gender. The final portrait is for both of them a true parody, showing Celine in the shape of “a horrible human being, covered with mucus, with a very wrinkled face and covered in hair, that had even grown inside her ears” (p. 39) and Louis as a wrinkled abortion, a methusalemic baby with a prematurely aged mask. His cracked skin was glowing and a gray mass came out of his skull, a kind of pudding dripping down his cheeks. Louis made one think of a combination between an octopus and a downspout, he was only the draft of a vague form. (Bruckner, 1992, p. 138).

Unlike Louis and Celine, Madeleine and Oswald are characterized as focusing more on their behavior than on their appearance, with young Madeleine shown as very frightful, cautious to everything that surrounds her, quite conservative in her manner of speaking and dressing. Her physical traits are mentioned only in those cases when they highlight substantial changes, such as her deformation due to an unusual pregnancy, as well as her crucial transformation at the end—when she is no longer referred to as Madeleine, but as Laura, a woman ready to begin a new life. Her status is a complex one, she is undoubtedly a dynamic character, able to adjust and evolve and she may even be perceived as the protagonist, since the story begins and ends with her in the spotlight, despite being, at a certain point, only a “shelter” for the more important Louis. Her portrait is mostly based on internal conflict, starting from her youth and up to motherhood. Moreover, the parallel between her and her son brings forth that strong (but far from flawless) bond, that keeps them both “prisoners”, dependent on each other.

By contrast, Oswald, the father is a tertiary character, whose portrait is depicted by means of expolition and ethopoeia, with little concern about his exterior. Oswald Kremer is an accountant, whose passion for numbers keeps Madeleine on track with her debt to her parents. He seems to be a pragmatic husband, that does not stand out as an impressive personality. He easily passes as an ordinary person, with nothing to distinguish him from the common man. He later dies alone and is found only 24 hours after his death.

Andre and Adelaide Barthelemy, Madeleine's parents, are a strict couple, who raise their daughter in a mercantile manner, constantly focusing on material matters, that eventually lead both of them to a dead end. Separated from Madeleine, because due to her pregnancy both she and Louis insist to keep away from them, Adelaide is very affected when her son-in-law dies. Her reaction to all that happens is a desperate attempt to fill in the gap that has created over the years, by sewing all she can get her hands on. For her, “the world was full of holes that needed to be sewn. She used to sew people's hair to their foreheads, the leaves of the trees to the branches, the furniture to the carpet and even her own mouth”

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(p. 96). This obsessive-compulsive behavior is a broad picture of Adelaide's ethopoeia, displaying her madness, her obsession for sewing, for the lost unity of her family.

Dr. Fontane imposes himself as deuteragonist, Madeleine's accomplice in her wish to educate her children while still in the uterus, a kind of Faust, willing to "short-circuit the laws of nature, to force it to accelerate its rhythm" (p. 11), who sees the young woman as the perfect "lab rat". His sister Marthe is, by contrast, a static character, profoundly rooted in her own sadness and "determination" to cry whatever the reason should be—if she's worried, frustrated, unsatisfied, seldom happy, her feelings come in torrents, just like the tears that overflow her cheeks. Her portrait and also that of her brother are based on ethopoeia and parallel, but differ much from those of Louis and Celine (though one might argue that, had the twins lived and grown old they would have become a "copy" of Fontane and Marthe).

By contrast with some of the other characters, Damien, the sidekick of Louis, is a dynamic character, in pursuit of his idol, whom he defends and protects even in most absurd situations. The way he takes care of Louis, ensuring his security and supervising his daily routine (as to how he occupies his time, what are his main activities) makes Damien a sort of mentor for the fetus, indicating the way he evolved from the status of a porter to that of personal counselor.

Lucia, the last of the characters taken into account in this chapter, is the baby's love interest, the total opposite of both the fetus and his mother, Madeleine. A comparison of these two women illustrates the differences not only in their appearance but also in their conduct—while Madeleine is currently a "pile of meat as big as the Himalayas" (p. 87), Lucia's body shape is quite alluring, though at first hidden under a mass of dull clothing, later to be exposed in a "sweetly adorable indecency" (p. 143) to Louis's eyes only to complete her revenge on the fetus for wasting her time with useless knowledge when she actually wanted to live her life at its fullest, with emphasis on personal experience or tangible small joys instead of unbearable discipline and data.

Going back to Fontanier's classification of various descriptions, topography also has a major role in depicting characters and symbolism of the novel. Thus, as if being a literary hero of its own, the uterus—the life-giving parlor—turns successively from prison to Garden of Eden and from Paradise back to a cell, eventually becoming a rightful grave.

This transformation—"from womb to tomb" is an accurate illustration of Foucault's heterotopia, at first that of location (which means it is placed in a fixed position, in this case, inside the womb) and then that of extension, when the crisis emerging in a closed space bursts out, affecting the surrounding realm, be it a social environment, a geographical territory or even the whole cosmos. Moreover, the change of the ambient is connected to the hierarchical shift of literary heroes and the best example in this respect is that of the liaison between Louis and the uterus—while the fetus is accumulating knowledge, the uterus is but a shell, a haven whose purpose is to protect and facilitate growth, both biologically and intellectually; then, after the baby takes control over his enclave and proclaims Himself the New Messiah (always capitalizing the words that He uses in reference to His Person), the uterus is acknowledged as The Garden of Delight or a Barbarian Paradise (as the titles of the novel's chapters prove). Louis's power lasts for a while (from all five years he spends inside, at least four are the time of his reign), especially because God decides to retire, leaving humanity to solve all moral problems by itself. Thus, the initial uterine crisis alters the whole world and the people craving to fill the emptiness left by God's absence are willing to trust Louis with all their might, a fact that feeds his ego, generating his proclamation as the Divine Child, a noble rank Louis gladly accepts and promises the people to exonerate them not only from any guilt, but also from further responsibility, for the end of the world shall come along with the one Final Word spoken by Louis in due time.

Conflict and Resolution

However majestic such a plan may seem, there is always a chance for it to fail and this is precisely what happens, once Lucia enters the stage. With the excuse of “a good deed” (p. 115), Louis feeds his desire to see, talk to, touch and then even to own the ballerina, which eventually causes his decline. Under the spell of her beauty and due to the ability to disclose every inch of her body in an alluring endeavour in the depths of both Louis’s lodge and mind, the fetus grows tired of learning and greedily pursues some frivolous games, like scrabble, ludo or dancing, getting more and more involved in a low-key lifestyle. He gradually grows interested in the carnal side of life, despite his initial principle that “there is no other beauty, but that of a concept, all the rest is only a mere illusion of the senses” (p. 127) and it is then when he feels the full weight of the “maternal tomb” (p. 132) crushing him, when he becomes aware of the burden of “the whole world he takes the responsibility for, because to destroy is just as hard as to create” (p. 133).

Unimpressed by his scholastic performance, Lucia refuses to further visit Louis, which reduces him from his status of dialogist (or active speaker) to that of a witness. Moreover, she sends him an erotic video, with the intention to tease and get revenge. Her move doesn’t go unnoticed and Louis’s restlessness intensifies to such an extent, that he radically changes his mind and wants to be born immediately, but soon he realizes that this is impossible, not only because he is too old for that, but also because his disciples would never forgive him for giving up the essence of his existence and their belief. Trapped in the “waiting room of life”, this “fetal mummy” (p. 147) barely recovers from this loss and agrees to proceed to the renewal of the whole world. The return of Fontane (who is acquitted of all charges) is only an apparent example of forgiveness, and it means in fact that the end of Louis is near, because the doctor constantly gives Madeleine drugs whose purpose is that of gradually disintegrating the fetus. Louis’s last public speech turns into a total fiasco, for his promise to make the world burst with only one Final Word ends in a pitiful cry – “Help, help!...” (p. 161). This being said, the life returns to “normal”, with everything covered in the usual chaos of broken oaths. The metaphysical decay of Louis is soon followed by his organic implosion, freeing Madeleine, who is shown more than willing to recover and change her life. If the focus is set on the mother-fetus duo, then the plot, according to Friedman’s classification (Friedman, 1955) may be: pathetic (with both Louis and Celine losing their abilities), punitive (since Lucia gets her revenge and Madeleine and Fontane succeed in killing the “little tyrant”); it also is an action plot (as the story develops in sequences), a character plot (many of the novel’s characters change their behaviour, adapt or degenerate along the way), a testing plot (since the limits of will, knowledge and patience are all tested, with passion and hate driven to the extreme) and a disillusionment plot (since there is an inevitable loss of hope, expectations and the consequences of people’s actions are quite clear).

The novel ends with a cliffhanger – Laura, freed of her past, tries to enjoy some voluptuous pleasures of life, while inside her a small blood clot makes its way through her veins to her heart, determined to destroy everything in his implacable hatred.

Chinghiz Aitmatov’s *Cassandra’s Brand*

Basic Information on the Framework, Story Line and Viewpoints in the Novel

Published in 1994, the novel opens with the words “This time too – in the beginning was the Word. Just like then. Just like that timeless Subject. And all that happened was the aftermath of what had been

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Said.” (Aitmatov, 2008, p. 7), which clearly indicates that the focalization is zero and the vision is from behind, for there seems to be an omniscient narrator, who knows the depths of both characters’ souls and occurring events. The narrative format is somehow different from the one that is used in *The Divine Child*, since now the main events are reported by means of an article, published in the famous paper ‘The Tribune’, containing a message from a monk, exiled in outer space.

Then the story line slightly changes, focusing on Robert Bork, a futurologist, and on his thoughts while turning back home, but the discourse is still set as a third person narrative: “The futurologist was watching from up above at the boiling magma, through the porthole of the plane that was flying over the Atlantic” (p. 9), a perspective that soon shifts to a series of rhetorical questions, following Bork’s train of thought, in the shape of a monologue: “What is the point of longing forever to foresee the destiny of others, to toil in search of the meaning of life, to explore something that will never be fully revealed to anyone?” (p. 10). As soon as Bork phones his wife, Jessy, the speech turns from monologue to dialogue, but the focus point remains unchanged – the message that they had received from the cosmic monk.

The novel is structured into eleven chapters and an epilogue, but all story lines lead to one central concept, that of children unwilling to be born, the so-called *cassandro-embryos* or *x-fetuses*. The dialogues, monologues, political speeches, the whole narrative, all gravitate around this idea, augmenting it to such an extent, than it is no longer a personal dilemma like it was in Bruckner’s novel, but it becomes a social one—what should mothers do once they find out that a whole generation of babies is too scared of their potentially cataclysmic future to be born? This is, in fact, the question that governs the discourse overall, from common people to famous politicians, scholars and clergy. Up to this point, the theme is similar to the one analyzed before, with the significant difference in both narrative techniques and proportions—in *Cassandra’s Brand* the topics covered occupy relatively equal shares in its narrative architecture.

Moreover, this time the issue related to the fate of the fetuses is no longer brought about directly, by one of their representatives, but it is presented more like reported speech, from the point of view of various other characters. Even the letter monk Filotei writes to the Pope Himself, proves to be his own interpretation of what cassandro-embryos allegedly want to say. The monk tells the Pope that he managed to detect an interesting and unusual fact, that in the first weeks of pregnancy, while still in the uterus, “the human embryo is able to foresee what awaits it in the future and to manifest its attitude towards its potential fate” (p. 19). In order to help fetuses communicate with their parents and make known their wish not to be given life, Filotei employs radioactivity: the rays sent from the orbital module intensify the impulses of the fetuses and a bright pulsing spot appears on their mothers’ foreheads, letting them know that these babies are reluctant to start their life on earth.

Asserting that “The message of a cassandro-embryo can be rendered essentially the following way” (p. 20), Filotei fulfills his mission as a messenger, a spokesman of unborn children, at the same time implicitly filtering their statements through his own stream of consciousness and available lexicon¹. But, apart from this contrast in narrative techniques, the nucleus of the epistle is the same compared to Louis’s tirade about not wanting to be born. Shortly put, the cassandro-embryos state the following (the speech is rendered in the first person, regardless of Filotei being a mediator between the inside realm—the womb and the world outside):

If I were to choose, I’d rather not be born. In response to your question, I send you signals that you can decipher as a premonition of the fatality, of the misfortune that awaits me in the future. And if you manage to decipher these signals, then know that I, the cassandro-embryo, prefer to disappear before I am born, without causing unnecessary trouble to anyone. To your question I answer straightforwardly: I

do not want to live. But if, in spite of my will, I am forced to be born, I will accept the fate that is given to me, as all men of all times have done and still do. You have to decide for yourselves what is to be done, and especially the mother who conceived me. But first of all, try to hear me and understand me. I'm a cassandro-embryo! Say farewell to me before it's too late, I'm ready for that. I, the cassandro-embryo, let you know that there is still enough time, I, the cassandro-embryo, send you my signals. I, the cassandro-embryo, don't want to be born, I don't want, I don't want, I don't want... I'm a cassandro-embryo! (Aitmatov, 1994, p. 20)

As a result, many values, virtues and misdeeds are called into question and even contested to some extent, their righteousness and relative character being fervently disputed. These general social guidelines unfold as impersonal “universal truths”, such as: “The mother is a copy of the world, the involuntary bearer of harmful influences from the surrounding reality, further transmitted to the fetus.” (p. 21) or “The birth of the fetus is a central event in Space and Time, it is the germ of history among the archetypes of nature.” (p. 32), “Everlastingness is eternity and the man has been destined to endure and preserve eternity by perpetuating his nation through moral perfection. Progress is just the technological addition to this idea.” (p. 36).

Once the legitimacy of abortion is put under discussion, a new series of rhetorical questions emerges, in the form of first person plural queries, thus leading to a sort of unanimous voice of all those who must face this problem: “Doesn't this radical action, which has become as common as opening a can, turn for us into a painfully concrete problem of fate? The rest is up to us, the people, we have the right to keep or, on the contrary, to destroy this germinating lives.” (p. 22), “Aren't there voices everywhere urging us not to interfere in the pregnant woman's decision, but also voices that generate controversies in recommending abortion because there is no room for hesitation?” (p. 23), “How could we, the creation made according to the image and likeness of God, end up like this?” (p. 26), “What can we do now, when we know what Cassandra's brand stands for?” (p. 27), “Who will tell us what to do now, when we finally see the cassandro-embryos signal?” (p. 31).

So, concerning cassandro-embryos the speech is rendered from the point of view of a witness narrator, related to the concept of a story within a story or the so-called frame story, frame narrative or frame tale. On the other hand, the actual social problems, stirred up by the monk's disclosure of this “fetal secret” are rendered by means of vision with and internal focalization, concentrating on inner thoughts of some citizens. Filotei himself takes full responsibility for his discovery, becoming a kind of “delegate” for this mass of unborn children. From his position of an observer (but not a purely distant one, since he himself formerly was a researcher named Andrey Kryltsov, who used to perform experiments on genetic engineering and creating a new human breed—the *x-fetuses*), the monk admits the following:

I, Filotei, the cosmic monk, feel responsible for my actions, that is, for the irradiation sessions I conduct systematically and continuously to detect the cassandro-embryos. I hereby take upon myself the method of irradiation that causes the emergence of Cassandra's brand. (...) In my moments of weakness I pray to God, I cry and lament that it had to be me who first understood the secret of these embryos, who deciphered Cassandra's brand, this cursed sign of disaster that hides in the dark corners of genetics. (Aitmatov, 1994, p. 25).

The scope of this crisis, threatening to engulf the whole world, can be studied only if more than one voice is taken into consideration, meaning that more than one character should be analyzed.

Character Typology and Symbolism

The major characters in Aitmatov's novel include: Monk Filotei, the futurologist Robert Bork and his wife, Jessy, Oliver Ordok—a politician and presumably Robert's friend, Runa Lopatina—a surrogate mother and Andrey Kryltsov (the researcher, currently self-proclaimed cosmic monk), Anthony Junger (Bork's sidekick, much like Damien from *The Divine Child*) and the cassandro-embryos/x-fetuses.

In this novel there are two emblematic couples—on the one hand, Robert Bork and Jessy and on the other, Andrey Kryltsov and Runa Lopatina. These duos resemble much in that both Bork and Kryltsov are scientists (the former is a futurologist and university professor and the latter—a researcher at a lab of genetic engineering, under the command of the Communist Party) and differ due to their feminine counterpart—while Jessy is a caring, loving character, Runa stands out more like a cautious, lonely figure, whose actions seem to be constantly interpreted as rebellious. However, it is clear from the beginning that these two women play the role of love interest character for Bork and Kryltsov.

Considering his performance in the novel, Robert Bork may be perceived as the protagonist, which does, in turn, transform the politician Oliver Ordok into his antagonist, in spite of their friendship and based on their distinct approach towards the given matter, that of cassandro-embryos. If Bork is genuinely concerned with the fate of humanity and nature (as also are Filotei and Anthony Junger), Oliver Ordok tries, in accordance with his political skills, to gain the sympathy of the crowd, even if this means to abruptly change sides, to become the foe of his former friend Robert Bork.

As for the Monk Filotei, who might be seen as the confidant, the voice that speaks the unconcealed truth, he can be examined only if his other half is taken into account—his former identity of researcher Kryltsov, which makes him one of the most complex characters from *Cassandra's Brand*. Encompassing both a good side and an evil one, under two different names of the same flesh and bone human being, he is the actual image that compresses the two sides of the same coin, much like the Chinese Yin / Yang symbol does. The rest of the characters, however, do not show such strong signs of change in their behaviour, continuing to act in the same manner they did at the very start, a principle applicable even to Oliver Ordok, who is shown from the beginning as a slippery personality. An equally important element in stating that Ordok is, in fact, the antagonist throughout the novel, resides in his own name, since in Hungarian *ördög* means *devil*. Bork's thoughts concerning Ordok, expressed in Chapter 8 are eloquent in reference to this particular matter:

But what about Ordok, who had, in fact, changed one problem for another, he had deceived people, toyed with them, diverted their attention from important things to gain the aura of a hero, he challenged him [Bork, his old friend] to a political duel. And he [Bork] must be prepared to accept this challenge, to speak up about Cassandra's brand, to defend Filotei. (Aitmatov, 1994, p. 140).

Unlike Damien, Anthony Junger, Filotei and Bork's sidekick, places himself on the good side, but both of them are actively involved in the unfolding events, displaying a strong belief in the doctrine and personalities that they fully support.

The cassandro-embryos, those children who are afraid of the life that awaits them, who represent "a new stage on the scale of evolution", who try to "warn the humanity that a genetic catastrophe is coming" (p. 90), as well as the x-fetuses, the children created artificially, by means of lab procedures, who were procreated as a result of a programme called "Embryonic Sex Adjustment, whose main goal was to develop a controlled method of procreation and birth of individuals, something that had never

happened before. Obtaining such x-fetuses, that is, individuals without identity, born to an anonymous woman, fertilized by anonymous parents – has become the main mission of the secret laboratory. The term ‘x-fetus’ was coined by the communist curators who took care of science, great masters in all kinds of abbreviations – it soon became an original, almost revolutionary password, because the purpose of producing x-fetuses in the laboratory was to eventually train a new human race” (p. 217). They are both prototypes of the Utopian concept of a New Man, the essential difference between them being their consciousness—while cassandro-embryos are aware, even if only temporarily, of their status, potential future and they can express what they want or do not want, the x-fetuses are the exact opposite—synthetically generated embryos, “the future knights of ideology, who were to become the fearless and blameless revolutionaries of the 21st century” (p. 218).

In Filotei’s words, who recalls his experience as a scientist:

It’s quite hard to imagine all that – just an embryo, designed in the laboratory, the fetus that appears inside a vase, in a test tube. But the problem is that the man who is born as a result of this is an anonymous person, he belongs to nobody, he’s but an artificially obtained individual, a new type of human. And, according to our predictions, he has the task to overthrow the old world order, only to get the working class out of it! It is he, the x-fetus, who can become in time the sole active character, the most important element in the whole history! The phenomenon of x-fetuses is very promising from a political point of view, for it will be that penetrating force which, unlike us, will fight without fear, without doubt and without looking back for the victory of communism in the whole world. The family and other kinship relations, since they are mere archaic institutions of the old oppressive world, will be thrown away precisely by these x-fetuses. Possessing an unprecedented freedom of personality and spirit, the x-fetuses will pave the way for a new era of humanity, long predicated by our revolutionary teaching. The x-fetus is not only the eliminator of the old ideology, of obsolete things, but also the creator of the new world. I have no doubt that among the x-fetuses, the great men, the geniuses will appear much more often than before, for this means a complete release from family ties and routine, from other worries. Children are artificially produced, without any identity, and educated accordingly. (Aitmatov, 1994, p. 224).

The cassandro-embryos, on the contrary, risk to become criminals, murderers, tyrants, dictators and all sorts of negative social elements, further to be imprisoned or to destroy at their own will the surrounding environment. Judging by the widespread echo and effects of both discovering the existence of cassandro-embryos and the attempt to create a new kind of human beings, the former heterotopia of location – placed strictly inside a mother’s womb – develops into one of extension, expanding at universal level and trying to “locate the site occupied by absence and to redeem, at least partially, the lost identity of the exiled” (Boboc & Ivan, 2014, p. 103).

In this case there is no longer a vertical axis of space as opposed to a horizontal one, neither is there a clearly linear or cyclic timeline, as the cosmos itself turns into an extension of reality. Now the uterus is remodeled as a parallel universe and it is seen as a different world, where fetuses are allowed to send signals to their mothers, with this privilege taken away as soon as they’re born, due to memory loss.

Andrey Kryltsov’s urge to exile himself into the fluid skies in order to preserve unblemished his own anamnestic capacity becomes clear when he decides to leave Earth in order to isolate himself on a spatial orbit. As if to emphasise the fact that neither margins nor centre still exist and that there occurs a sudden shift of the conflict from material to spiritual level, Chinghiz Aitmatov plainly depicts chaos falling on Earth and undermining the core social networks, that up until then have been so strongly sustained by

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means of various deeply rooted traditions. While people on Earth willingly submit themselves to a cruel massacre, undertaken in the name of science, the only accurately lucid person remains Filotei. However, given the pressure brought about by the fact that people are no longer keen to cooperate by any means, he eventually casts himself into outer space, committing suicide, a dramatic gesture meant to “highlight the internal fight within the monk’s conscience, that reflects and duplicates the conflict happening on the streets. With no further sense of belonging and no more tolerance for traditional values, humanity as a whole seems to only find a refuge in literally slaughtering itself” (p. 104). This particular approach ultimately underlines the importance of people’s subconscious in both past and present, regarding not only their memory, but also their personal identity as significant components of the sense of belonging.

Conflict and Resolution

Resorting once more to Friedman’s classification of conflicts in a literary work (Friedman, 1955), it seems legit to mention that in the current novel, *Cassandra’s Brand*, there are comprised at least the following types of plot: the *tragic* plot, culminating with the death of both Robert Bork and Filotei, the two main good characters, who basically sacrifice their lives in their fight for what they believe in. However, the notable difference in their deaths—one of them (Bork) is lynched by the crowd, while the other (Filotei) willingly throws himself in cosmic space, committing suicide—fully reflects two distinct ways of resolution: on the one hand, there is a martyring death and on the other hand, a redeeming one, in a quite unusual manner, through suicide as the highest cost for past misdeeds; the *reform* plot – applicable especially in the case of Filotei, who eventually restores his position by isolating himself in cosmos, after stopping the project of artificial embryogenesis; the *testing* plot – which affects not only some of the individuals, such as Bork, Filotei or Ordok, forcing them to manifest themselves and to take a stand and defend certain principles, but also the society as a whole, divulging its vulnerability and serious internal flaws; the *revelation* plot – as Filotei publicly reveals the mystery of cassandro-embryos and x-fetuses; the *affective* plot, in the shape of palpable tension due to inner struggling between reason and emotions, belief and doubt, right and wrong and so on and, lastly, the *disillusionment* plot, leading to an inevitable loss of ideals and to its intrinsic consequences, since many people tend to become accomplices to humanity’s disastrous approach, by indulging in their own indifference rather than fight for a substantial change.

Just like in *The Divine Child*, in *Cassandra’s Brand* too the conflict is triggered by a wide “list of misfortunes: hunger, slums, various diseases – including AIDS, wars, economic crisis, social unrest, crimes, prostitution, drugs and mafia, interethnic conflicts, racism, natural disasters, nuclear experiments, black holes and so on and so forth” (p. 38), scaring (and psychologically scarring) the current fetal generation. In what concerns their fear, Louis and Celine from Pascal Bruckner’s novel may be perceived as two “enlightened” cassandro-embryos, though their apprenticeship is performed artificially, through advanced technology, as it happens with the x-fetuses.

As for the mother’s status, it is completely distinct from that of Madeleine, who is very determined in the beginning and then, once she feels defeated, she becomes quite passive. The young women and mothers from *Cassandra’s Brand* are scared of the whole situation, just like their unborn babies are, and ask both themselves and the superior social structures what should they do now, after finding out how their children feel about their upcoming lives. Although besides Runa Lopatina other names of these mothers remain unknown, the speech of one of them, despite that she’s anonymous, becomes the voice of the many, crying out all suffering and despair:

Look at me, I have no reason to hide, look here, what can I do?! cried the woman, breathing nervously, touching her forehead with her finger. This nuisance has come out on my forehead, this spot, Cassandra's Brand, as this devil in the cosmos called it! Her face appeared on the TV screen and a sinister purple spot was seen pulsing rhythmically on the woman's forehead. 'I tried to conceal it with cream or with powder', she said, covering her trembling lips with her hand. 'It's of no use, it doesn't disappear. It means that this bastard of a cosmic monk is torturing me with this cursed spot again and again: look, he says, your fetus stands against you, against his mother, against life itself, he's sending you this signal to kill him! What does this mean, that my child doesn't want to see the daylight, that he's afraid to live? What should we do, since there are many others like me out there and maybe they don't know yet that they too have Cassandra's Brand! What can I do? Tell me what to do? Should I kill the fetus because he's afraid of his own life? Does this mean that I don't want him? That neither my fate nor my life are suited for him? How am I supposed to fix all this? Or should I simply hang myself?!' (Aitmatov, 1994, p. 101).

Also, the story Filotei tells about surrogate mothers that were used as a part of the program developed for the creation of x-fetuses plays an important role in shaping the image of a mother, as promoted by the creators of the New Man. Such mothers were a mere "living test tube" for the future babies, they

were recruited from long-term prisoners, whose sentences were of 10 to 25 years. After being medically examined according to the instructions, the convict was offered the role of a surrogate mother under the following conditions: a) the birth of an x-fetus reduced her detention by half, the birth of a second x-fetus gave her the right to be released; b) the surrogate mother obliged herself to breastfeed the fetus up to the age of three months, then she had to hand him over to the state, which was to take care of his further education; c) at the end of the postnatal period, the convict was transferred to a camp or to a settlement very far away; d) the convict gave a statement in which she agreed to remain silent regarding her role, the place where she was and the staff who provided her assistance. In case of breach of the signed commitment, the woman was to suffer a new conviction." (Aitmatov, 1994, p. 231)

The end of this experiment, according to the cosmic monk, had occurred later, under Gorbaciov's government, but nobody really knows what happened to those children who managed to grow up in such circumstances. Whether they'd become respectable citizens, remarkable geniuses or if they kept in their genetic structure some of their presumably rebellious mothers' behavior is not revealed to the reader, leaving the epilogue open, with only a glimpse of the future and a rhetorical question reverberating in mind: "What have we done? What's to be done next?"²

Ian McEwan's *Nutshell*

Basic Information on the Framework, Story Line and Viewpoints in the Novel

This third and last novel, published in 2016, is organized into no less than twenty chapters, shattering the previous structure, that conformed to the exact trimesters of a pregnancy. However, here the narrator is also a fetus, soon to be born, who is "equipped with an extraordinary gift of speech out of the very essence of his³ location within the body of his mother" (Muller, 2018, p. 375). Like in Bruckner's *The Divine Child* in McEwan's novel an imaginary world is created, in order to depict the uterine life of a

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fetus, who is in permanent interaction with his mother's body, an otherwise inaccessible world, unless through a vivid imagination.

The archetypal embodiment of the mother is rendered in its closest biological form, displaying numerous anatomic processes that occur between a female parent and her child. At some point, the fetus, whose name is not mentioned (thus positioning himself somewhere in the middle on the axis of Louis / Celine and cassandro-embryos / x-fetuses), feeling Trudy's bitterness, openly states that: "My heart is struggling with my mother's angry blood." (McEwan, 2016, p. 77). Moreover, he is terrified of the fact that his mother's sexual transgressions might "break through and shaft my soft-boned skull and seed my thoughts" (p. 21), as if echoing Louis's angst when Madeleine does her duty towards her husband Oswald. The significant distinction here is that while Louis witnesses the "intrusion" of his own father, Trudy's baby is an internal observer of her cheating on her spouse with none other than her brother-in-law.

Still, unlike Louis, who manages to see by means of technology a great deal of the surrounding world and unlike cassandro-embryos, who are endowed only with an intuitive level of feelings, reminding the reader of the so-called sixth sense, Trudy's unborn infant resorts not to sight, but to other senses, that is hearing, touch, taste and smell (all of which are listed according to their frequency and prevalence in the novel).

The fetus-narrator's grasp and apprehension of the external environment fundamentally derive from hearing as a means of collecting information, helping him to get spatial-temporal orientation to some extent. Hearing is also the *modus operandi* in detecting the infamous plan of Trudy and Claude to kill his father, the poet John Cairncross (and the surname seems very important at this moment, since it is the only allusion to a "civic identity" of the unborn child, who most likely will automatically inherit his father's last name once he is born).

Secondly, the touch offers the fetus a glimpse of his mother's movements, as it happens when she dines with Claude in a fancy restaurant, allowing the baby to feel "the bottom edge of the menu across the small of my back", further to guide him regarding "a slight tilt in my vertical orientation, that tells me that my mother is leaning forward to place a restraining finger on Claude's wrist" (p. 6).

As for the sense of taste, a relevant item in this respect are eating and drinking. The meals consist of an apparently varied range of food, although its nutritiousness is fairly doubtful – tuna sandwich (as the best of the listed options), salted peanuts (which the baby states that "My mother is constantly eating for me"), "diluted" with copious amounts of wine, doubled by strong coffee in a nearly failed attempt to wake from the previous night's heavy drinking. The fact that the baby partakes this unhealthy feast is rendered by the first-person plural pronoun: "We're getting drunk" (p. 35), as the fetus states. Another interesting thing is that the smoothie, presumably a much more balanced choice when dealing with food or drink, becomes in fact the "murder weapon" as soon as it is purposefully "polluted" by poison, more precisely antifreeze, according to the plan conceived by Trudy and Claude about killing John Cairncross.

However, from a narrative point of view, the idea of a

first-person narration written in the present tense with a fetus as a narrator, who by definition is incapable of speaking, let alone telling a story, represents a problem, because if the author lends a voice to this unusual protagonist, one might argue that the narrating voice is sustained by the author. But [at the same time] an author has the power and legitimacy to create a novel as fiction and then the narrator chosen by him is part of the fiction and therefore cannot be equated with the author. (Muller, 2018, p. 381).

Consequently, Richard Walsh's opinion on the potential eradication of extra-heterodiegetic narrators in narrative fiction should also be taken into account: "Extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators (that is, 'impersonal' and 'authorial' narrators), who cannot be represented without thereby being rendered homodiegetic or intradiegetic, are in no way distinguishable from authors. Hence, the narrator is always either a character who narrates, or the author." (Walsh, 2007, p. 78-84).

Now and then the discourse is sprinkled with some essayistic remarks, for which the author rather seems to be responsible and not the fetus. Moreover, when various political issues are debated and statements are made concerning the fate of Europe, the first person singular re-emerges, as the fetus is expected to speak, with a high probability for the author to promote his own opinion, in the words of the baby.

Further, in taking stock of his upcoming life, the unborn child thinks to himself:

I don't remember such carefree delight. I'm ready, I'm coming, the world will catch me, tend to me because it can't resist me. Wine by the glass rather than the placenta, reading books in the lamplight, music by Bach, walks along the shore, kissing by moon light. Everything I've learned so far says all these delights are inexpensive, achievable, ahead of me. (McEwan, 2016, p. 162).

Such vision differs thoroughly from that of Louis, who isn't impressed at all by these "petty pleasures" and prefers to keep safe (though isolated) in his mother's womb. And while Louis's assumptions indeed belong to a fictional infant narrator, the lifestyle Trudy's child praises so much is obviously a reflection of what McEwan himself, as the author, would indulge in. Thus it seems reasonable to agree that "McEwan manages to produce an entirely convincing I-narrator and simultaneously to make the reader aware of his writing capacity, since his novel *Nutshell* is a first-person narrative which does not entirely exclude the author, as it marks a new departure in first-person narration. In this work the novelist paradoxically manages to bestow a sense of authorial presence in the text, without ever breaking the illusion that the readers are confronted from first to last page with the distinctive voice of an unusual narrative figure." (Muller, 2018, p. 386).

Character Typology and Symbolism

The main characters in this work, though less numerous than those in *The Divine Child* or *Cassandra's Brand*, seem to be much more complex, if their personality and manner of thinking are taken into account. They also structure themselves on an antagonistic scale, as the broken parental couple is temporarily restored by means of its counterparts, when John and Trudy no longer get along, he finds peace and understanding with Elodie, while Trudy gives way to her lustful passion for Claude. And the only one that governs this situation as an observer, who is in his turn, involved in this conflict in a certain degree (as his fate depends on that of his mother) is The Baby, the unborn child of Trudy.

John Cairncross, the baby's father and Trudy's ex-husband (as he himself asserts at some point that he wishes to divorce her) is an obscure, but devoted poet that, though has not achieved fame so far, goes on in professing his art, making use of poetry in every meaningful moment of his life, like when he conquered young Trudy's soul, when trying to gain her heart back and even as a means to earn his existence. From the point of view of his habits and behavior, he is a rather static character, he does not change his status along the way (except for the fact that he dies, which also makes him an episodic character, since he gets killed at the half of the novel), but this static composure is rather a sign of stability and steadfastness, than of ethical rigidity and incapacity to adapt. He is, in fact, quite tolerant with his wife Trudy living

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in his house and cheating on him with his own brother, Claude, without actually seeming naive. He tells Trudy he wants her to leave the house and go live with Claude at his estate, but does not rush her extremely, giving her time to pack and leave. It looks more like he's often simply teasing her, without the intention of really doing any harm. Moreover, his penchant for poetry and art makes him a man of culture, preoccupied with the metaphysical side of life, as opposed to his brother Claude, apparently a very practical nature. John meets his end at the hands of his own close ones, misinterpreting their wish to offer him a smoothie as a sign of peace, instead of ever thinking that he could get (and really is) poisoned.

Claude, his brother, is everything John lacks – pragmatic, mischievous, somewhat sensual (compared to John's skin disease that affects especially his hands, though quite vulgar and careless, if *The Baby's* statement is to be considered: after spending time with Trudy in a twisted mix of lust and passion, he washes his private parts at the same sink she usually drinks water from). But Claude himself rather lacks John's intellectual brilliance and appetite for culture, proving to be far more interested in expensive brand new cars, gold watches and other material goods, that may provide him a feeling of fulfillment. His sentences that more often than not illogically end in "but", after which no other argument or further reasoning follows, exasperate the unborn child, who starts to doubt Claude's intellectual capacity, that is up to the point the fetus understands the conspiracy regarding his father and notices Claude's cold blood when planning the murder of his own brother. This is the moment when the infant (and, together with him, the reader) is no longer sure whether Claude is just dull and dumb or all that works like the perfect mask for his actual wickedness.

As for the two feminine characters, Trudy and Elodie, they too are antithetical. On the one hand, Trudy seems carefree and sometimes reckless concerning her baby's development, while she internally boils with anger at the slightest signs that her influence upon her husband is diminished. However, she only longs for him briefly, from a practical point of view, as of bringing her food or taking out the garbage, with as little emotional commitment as possible. When John wants to touch her or he is willing to recite a new poetry, she is very reluctant to either one of these small proofs of love. On the other hand, Elodie, seems quite a balanced nature and she handles extremely well the dialogue with Trudy. Under the appearance of simple chit-chat, the two women exchange well camouflaged threats:

Elodie: The brooding owl is poisonous.

Trudy: Yes, a brooding one might actually kill you.

Elodie: No, I don't think so. It can only make you sick.

Trudy: I mean, if it digs her claws into you.

Elodie: But that never happens, it's too shy an animal.

Trudy: Unless provoked. (McEwan, 2016, p. 79).

The Baby is, unlike cassydro-embryos and the twins from *The Divine Child*, quite eager to be born, quite willing to start his life as a human being, even earlier if that would be possible, evoking fear in a constructive way, as opposed to anxiety, which resides in the depths of other children's souls. He too

feels fear, but it's not the fear to live and to fight for survival, on the contrary, it is the fear of "missing out" (much like in Aerosmith's well known song – 'I don't want to miss a thing'):

What I fear is missing out. Healthy desire or greed, I want my life first, my due, my infinitesimal slice of endless time and one reliable chance of consciousness. I'm owed a handful of decades to try my luck on a freewheeling planet. That's the ride for me. I want to go. I want to become. Put another way, there's a book I want to read, not yet written, not yet published, though a start's been made. I want to read the end of 'My History of The Twenty-First Century'. I want to be there, on the last page, in the early eighties, frail, but sprightly, dancing a gig on the evening of December 31st, 2009. (McEwan, 2016, p. 129).

So, as it can be easily noticed from the quote above, Trudy's yet unborn infant longs to have his share on earth, picturing himself the old age as a not so frightening or ridiculous episode in one's life, as Louis Kremer stated before: "Poor babies, victims of the functioning of their own bodies, reduced to the thrilling adventures of regurgitation and hiccups, forced to move from their infant dependence to the old man's senility, going through the adolescence's arrogance and adult vanity." (Bruckner, 1992, p. 35).

A second reason that is very strong in nurturing Trudy's baby will to live is the hope that, if he gets born, he will be able to prevent his father's death, that is John Cairncross' poisoning.

Moreover, in his representation of the World order there is a ludic tone, which is meant to diminish the anguish and keep the embryo focused on his mission to be born. Unlike *Cassandra's Brand* with its apocalyptic tone, deeply rooted in the doctrine of eschatology and *The Divine Child*, that depicts human life in a caustic deprecating manner, *Nutshell* brings about a rather playful connotation:

Will its [Earth's] nine billion heroes scrape through without a nuclear exchange? Think of it as a contact sport. Line up the teams. India versus Pakistan, Iran versus Saudi Arabia, Israel versus Iran, USA versus China, Russia versus USA and NATO, North Korea versus the rest. To raise the chances of a score, add more teams: the non-state players will arrive. (McEwan, 2016, p. 130).

Thus, turning the whole world into some sort of playground, The Baby (or, better said, the narrator) expands the internal, personal crisis to the level of a critical situation of a universal span, which leads the current research once more to the concept of heterotopia. But here heterotopia is no longer displayed as a merely binary construct—almost every space from the novel is heterotopic in its core—the womb, where the fetus grows, the old house, where Trudy lives and the car, driven by John Cairncross right before his death in an open field, surely also a heterotopic space. In all aforementioned cases there is a crisis going on, which develops in different places (the so-called heterotopia of location) and eventually seizes the whole surrounding environment (that is heterotopia of extension).

The most interesting example from all of the above is the structure *womb as a house and house as a womb*—for Trudy's baby the womb is a house, a cozy home to live and grow in, though less opulent in its attire and facilities, since the available supplies are not so abundant as in Louis's Garden of Eden and the old house, packed with garbage, expired food, intoxicating amounts of wine and various petty stocks – as those of band aids – the house which works as a kind of womb for Trudy, who can isolate herself in there from everything else around. This combination of "the metaphor of a nutshell, that is singularly well suited to be related to the notion of an embryo enclosed in its amniotic sac" (Muller, 2018, p. 377) and a deteriorated house, with smelly pipes, corroded walls and broken floor might remind the reader of the concept of matryoshka doll, that Russian toy and national symbol, encompassing a given number

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of smaller and smaller items, up to the smallest of them, that no longer opens up. Such toy depicts very well the idea of heterotopia and raises the question as to which one of its components is the world people currently live in? Is the Earth its biggest item? Is it the whole Universe? Does this reduce humanity to actually the smallest piece in the whole complex? These are questions that only philosophy and literature aim to answer to, sometimes backed by scientific proof.

Conflict and Resolution

The conflict of the novel has as a premise the idea that Trudy actually intends to kill her husband (who also is the baby's father), with the support of none other than his own brother. The apparent motive is to inherit her husband's property from London, but this pragmatic drive is doubled by an emotional one, namely the jealousy and anger she feels when John Cairncross bluntly tells her that he wants to return to his house and that she should leave the estate in two weeks at most. As for the typology of the plot, it is undoubtedly an action plot (since the action is sequential and the novel resembles much to a detective one), it also is tragic (the plan to kill John Cairncross succeeds and the poet dies alone and in pain, though he was the "stone" of the story, the only character that truly had a consistent behaviour and was genuinely good at heart) and, consequently, punitive (the two conspirators get what they deserve, with the police ringing again at their door in the end of the novel), it has a strong testing nuance (in what concerns Trudy and Claude's moral conduct), leading to inevitable degeneration of the two (who fall from grace not only by committing sexual transgression, but also by "brewing" a murderous scheme). There is a noticeable affective connotation, especially in the case of Trudy's baby, who is torn between the natural love for his mother and the imminent hate when he finds out about her treason) and the truth is eventually revealed, with both Trudy and Claude being unmasked.

The ethics in the novel is repeatedly challenged, as the adulterous couple proves unable of making the right choices, or to stick to the morals when taking a decision. Trudy too, just like her baby, is torn between the sadness of having wronged before (when she had killed a cat at the age of fifteen) and deciding to end her husband's life, as her anger and jealousy urge her to do. And this is precisely what distinguishes her from Claude – while he is the actual initiator of the crime, the "brain" of the whole "operation", Trudy is at first reluctant and then, only after her husband tells her he wants her out of the house, she agrees with Claude, that John Cairncross has to die. Thus, Wolfgang Muller skillfully incorporates in a concise way the core construction of the ethos and its changes along the novel, opining that

The experimental laying bare of the novel's plot structure has led to two results. The first is that its underlying story is a not very complex crime action, acted out by characters of no depth. The second result is that the novel as an artistic creation is nothing without its narrator and that its ethical substance is completely generated in the process of narration. The ethical dimension is in McEwan's novel an inalienable constituent of the work as a consequence of its perspective, the viewpoint of the narrator, the presentation of the story in his own voice. (Muller, 2018, p. 388)

The internal conflict of Trudy's baby is also significant, as it depicts a deep contradiction in his feelings, a relevant example in this respect being the fact that he accuses Trudy of "being selfish, devious, cruel", only to retract these words a few moments later: "But wait, I love her, she's my divinity and I need her. I take it back! I spoke in anguish." (McEwan, 2016, p. 15) and then to change his mind once again, as he states: "My father by nature is defenseless, and so am I by circumstance. My affair with

Trudy isn't going well. I thought I could take her love for granted." (p. 33). But however strong the opposition with his mother may be, the uterine bond lasts despite everything else, at least on an anatomical level, if not moral: "My health derives from Trudy, but she must preserve herself against me. So why would she worry about my feelings?", which generates an acute awareness of the fact that he himself is guilty to a certain extent: "It's not her love that's failing. It's mine." (p. 34). Moreover, in the attempt to redeem himself as well as his mother, The Baby prefers to blame Claude for everything, since he was the intruder in their mother – son relationship from the very start. He even looks for and lists some "attenuating circumstances", trying to gain Trudy's acquittal: "She was merely wrong, not bad, and she's no criminal", for there is only "Claude's essential guilt" (McEwan, 2016, p. 121).

Another important aspect from the point of view of The Baby's part in the novel is that he does not think of himself as an accomplice per se, even though he unwillingly becomes a witness to the murdering of his father, but he rather feels as an agent, whose duty is either to prevent or to avenge the infamous crime: "My mother is involved in a plot, and therefore I am too, even if my role might be to foil it. Or if I, a reluctant fool, come to life too late, then to avenge it." (p. 3). But the idea of vengeance brings little comfort to his mind, however legitimate it would be, since only the thought is forgiven, but never the act itself. To get one's revenge means to actually commit a crime of no less acerbity than the "original one":

Revenge may be thought over a hundred times in one sleepless night. The impulse, the dreaming intention, is human, normal, and we should forgive ourselves. But the raised hand, the actual violent enactment, is cursed. The maths say so. There'll be no reversion to the status quo ante, no balm, no sweet relief, or none that lasts. Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves, Confucius said. Revenge unstitches a civilization. It's a reversion to constant, visceral fear. (McEwan, 2016, p. 135).

In the end of the novel *The Baby* is the one who initiates revenge, by getting born and preventing Trudy and Claude to leave before the police arrive. He is not necessarily the one who eventually makes justice, he is only responsible for half of what happens – his time to be born has come and he follows the natural course of events, but the moment he gets out of the womb is kind of karmic, right when the taxi was waiting outside and the police were near enough as to catch the fugitives before they left.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues mentioned in the current chapter have to do with more than literature, as they depict a specific cultural approach and deal with real social and environmental problems.

From a literary point of view, the idea of a fetal narrator may seem quite controversial, leading the research almost automatically towards the fiction field, but at the same time being backed by real scientific data from biology and technology or ecology. As odd (and also interesting) as it is, the concept of an external psychological influence on the embryo in the womb is not at all improbable, there actually is documented medical proof as to what extent the anxiety of the mother (and anything else she might feel) gets to affect the little human being inside her⁴ in his or her further development. In this respect, in order to prevent potential negative effects on baby's development and personality, the novels presented in the given article may be perceived as a key moral code, offering some possible answers to various social matters, regarding a range of very serious concerns, such as abortion, climate change, technological progress, core ethical values etc. Though they cannot propose concrete valid solutions and rather endow

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the reader with freedom of choice, these literary works are a kind of warning, that raises important questions related to the future of humanity.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The novels analysed in this chapter may be considered a distinct literary direction in itself, partially dystopic, partially biographical, that has its own carefully established structure, narrative features and set of common ideas. Though it may seem a little too much to call it an autonomous “embryonic narrative style” by definition, it is clearly already widespread around the world, with various writers resorting to this particular type of narration in rendering their opinion on the occurring events. The three authors mentioned in this chapter—Chinghiz Aitmatov, Pascal Bruckner and Ian McEwan—are some of the best-known writers who approach this particular issue of a fetal narrator and its point of view from inside the womb, but this topic has also been employed by other authors as well, not only from Soviet space, Anglosphere or France, but also from Argentina (Ariel Dorfman), Mexico (Carlos Fuentes), Japan (Kenzaburo Oe) or India (Salman Rushdie), thus initiating a kind of new literary trend. From this perspective, there could be organized conferences and symposiums concerning this particular literary niche and then even be published larger volumes with studies about this topic in universal literature (taking into account that not all similar writings have been translated into English and there surely are some other researchers who could complete the abovementioned list). Moreover, this would ensure an interdisciplinary approach, since in such novels science often blends with literature.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the novels analyzed in the current chapter reflect real social and ethical dilemmas, further projected into a rather fictional setting. Though the framework is quite unusual – the maternal womb – the issues approached are some of the most relevant and pressing problems of XXI century world. These novels depict different reactions to the same menace, that of being born and later living in a world torn apart by conflicts, personal interests of various leaders, a world that rushes to an unknown destination, driven by the growth in technological progress. Once the natural balance is destroyed, chaos takes over the world, soon leading to its own disintegration. Besides the unique manner of performing the storytelling, the three literary works provide some potential ways of action, the final choice belonging, however, to the reader himself. Forced to face such a tense and intense era, humanity may either refuse its fundamental rights (as the Cassandro-embryos do), remain motionless and end up a victim of its own inertia (as happens to Louis Kremer) or fight to the last drop of energy with both itself and the occurring problems (as Trudy’s baby does). After reading the novels and learning what different characters do and what the potential final point is, the reader must judge by means of his own reason and proceed to solve his own troubles by acting in a way that he himself considers as appropriate.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

(Pseudo)-Bildungsroman: A type of fictional novel that focuses on psychological characteristics and moral beliefs of a fetus, as well as on its development *in utero*.

Cassandro-Embryo: A term that denominates a fetus who is afraid to be born, mainly due to its intuitive skills and because it is able to perceive the social turmoil. First introduced in literature by Russian writer of Kyrgyz origin Aitmatov.

Deuteragonist: The second important character in a literary work, that stands next to the Protagonist (or the main character), either as his friend and sidekick or, at times, as an opposing figure.

Fetal Personhood: The status of a fetus as a person, that encompasses its behavioral characteristics, its development, and social rights.

Heterotopia: A term Foucault borrowed from medicine and used in literature in order to define a space where a certain moral or social crisis takes place.

Narrative Mode: A method or technique that an author resorts to in writing a literary work. It usually refers to two different approaches—presentation (that focuses on telling and on a panoramic view) and representation (that focuses on showing and a rather scenic view).

Narrative Vision: A notion that deals with the relation between narrator and characters. For instance, vision from behind, if the narrator knows and says more than any of the characters know.

Setting: A term with a broad meaning, used to describe the whole frame in which the action of the literary work takes place. It does not refer simply to the tangible background of the writing, as it also encompasses cultural and historical context.

X-Fetus: Introduced in literature by Aitmatov, this describes a new kind of fetus, that was supposed to be free of all family or social bonds, to be raised and educated in special institutes, in order to make it a skilled, well trained and obedient citizen.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ If the presumption is that the embryos can only express themselves on an affective level, through various emotions such as fear, anxiety, sadness, anguish, then it is easy to assume that any existing lexicon, however advanced and refined it may be, does not cover entirely the whole range of feelings.
- ² Here is mentioned directly at least one of the three main cultural questions of the Russian people – Кто мы? Кто виноват? Что делать? = Who are we? Who is responsible for all this? What should be done next?
- ³ Concerning the gender of Trudy's baby there is a clue that the fetus is, in fact, a boy – in Chapter 9 (as in the nine months of a pregnancy), when the baby virtually writes a letter to his father, John Cairncross, and signs it with the words – “your son”.
- ⁴ See, for example, the works of R. Graignic-Philippea, J. Dayana, S. Chokronb, A-Y. Jacquet, S.Tordjman – *Effects of prenatal stress on fetal and child development: A critical literature review*, published in 2014, in *Neuroscience & Bio-behavioral Reviews*, Volume 43, pages 137-162 and Zohreh Shahhosseini, Mehdi Pourasghar, Alireza Khalilian and Fariba Salehi – *A Review of the Effects of Anxiety During Pregnancy on Children's Health*, published in *Mater Sociomed*, in 2015, number 27(3), pages 200-202.

Section 5

Education: Storytelling–Based Applications

Chapter 18

Medical Sociology and Storytelling in a Decolonial Context: Exploring Photovoice as a Critical Pedagogical Tool

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ABSTRACT

The use of photovoice for storytelling and as a critical pedagogical tool is still exploratory. Despite calls to rethink, re-imagine, and rework curriculums, many challenges remain in designing assessments that utilize creative storytelling formats that demonstrate an awareness of the social context, history, and lived realities of students. This chapter addresses the outcomes of a classroom-based study that explored whether a photovoice essay, used in a medical sociology undergraduate assessment, facilitated a critical analysis of the social determinants of health by students, and oriented them towards taking action. Existing research on critical pedagogy tends to focus on investigating the feasibility or extent of dialogical exploration of societal hegemonies, and prospects of future transformations between teachers and students in the classroom. This chapter provides an overview of how photovoice and reflective writing are used to create new stories by students in a South African university and how it can be supported.

INTRODUCTION

Decolonization in higher education remains a controversial topic because of power struggles related to conceptualizations such as “Who is knowledgeable?” and “What kind of knowledge matters and what counts as knowledge?” In Africa, as in many postcolonial contexts, there is a call for academics, researchers, educators, institutions, and leaders to produce content that reflects Africa’s new reality as a free continent. Scholars and analysts have suggested that to ensure inclusivity, knowledge production

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in higher learning should resonate from indigenous contexts as this will nurture unique identities, social consciousness, and freedom (Memmi, 2013). Others have argued that while decolonization efforts should be collaborative and inclusive, considering earlier injustices by imperialists, they should allow indigenous groups to spearhead the process related to pedagogy (Lalu & Murray, 2012).

Central to decolonization are efforts to recognize the inputs of colonized people across the world in attempts to remedy past wrongs. In South Africa, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) is one institution that has been at the forefront of this process of decolonization. Current efforts by the institution have influenced curriculum development and pedagogical practices across departments. The University has highlighted staff engagement, ongoing debates, challenges, and efforts to decolonize and Africanize the curriculum across disciplines.

Despite variations in its conceptualization across disciplines, decolonization is compatible with Freirean principles of critical pedagogy (Zembylas, 2018). At the core of decolonization are resistance to Eurocentric views, acknowledgment of the contributions of colonized populations, righting the wrongs of imperialism, fighting injustices, disrupting hegemony, empowering enslaved people, and retributive justice. Likewise, Freirean critical pedagogy foregrounds education for empowerment, critical consciousness, reflections, emancipation, social inequalities, and collective action as a path to social transformation (MacKinlay & Barney, 2014).

Critical pedagogy espouses political and moral practices as core educational tools that could bring about democracy (Giroux & Giroux, 2006). It emphasizes teacher-learner engagement that aims to emancipate by disrupting hegemony or forces of oppression that create segregation among people. Critical perspectives and means enable oppressed populations to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their realities. As forces of globalization shape and reproduce societies, critical pedagogical tools are required to investigate advancements, progress, gains, and losses. Given the historical legacy of apartheid in South Africa and the need for civic courage, critical viewpoints and tools become imperative.

This chapter presents a case study of the author's utilization of a significant pedagogical tool, photovoice, which is a mix of photography and reflective essays, to integrate students' perspectives in a health/medical sociology undergraduate class. The first part provides an overview and the general aim of the chapter. The second section provides definitions, a literature review on contexts of photovoice use in teaching, and the theoretical underpinnings of the project. This analysis provides the background for understanding its utility as a significant pedagogical tool that changes the dynamic of storytelling across disciplines in the humanities. The third section describes the photovoice process as pedagogy and a research method. Discussions of the practical implications of using photovoice follow this. Thereafter, recommendations and conclusions are presented.

BACKGROUND

At the beginning of the fourth term of 2019, the UWC urged faculties to rethink their curricula in line with national goals of decolonization and empowerment. The author, a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, was part of the academic regeneration team at the institution. Part of the guiding question was to rethink and re-imagine what a relevant, responsive, and innovative curriculum for the department would look like. In response, the author introduced photovoice, an innovative pedagogical tool to foster experiential learning among students by connecting them to their own lived realities while grounding them in sociological theories and concepts.

The broader goal of the course was to ground and engage students in concepts such as social epidemiology, social determinants, social construction of health, access to healthcare services, health systems, and inequalities. The curriculum was designed around these themes but with emphasis on factors that influence health outcomes, such as health practices, beliefs, and healthcare service utilization patterns. Furthermore, the curriculum was reworked in alignment with the National Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, in fulfillment of the global health agenda of ensuring health for all.

In response to widening inequities in access to healthcare services and poor health outcomes among vulnerable groups, South Africa adopted the SDGs as the successors of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In a 2019 country report, the South African Minister for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Jackson Mthembu, noted that the SDGs develop, transform, and restore the dignity of people around the world; more so in South Africa, with its history of deprivation and exclusion (National Department of Health, Statistics South Africa, South African Medical Research Council, & Inner City Fund, 2019).

A reflection on access to healthcare in South Africa indicates that current inequities can be traced to the country's history of apartheid (Obuaku-Igwe, 2015, p. 7). These inequities in access to healthcare are further influenced by gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, neighborhoods, and educational status in shaping health outcomes. Health inequalities in South Africa declined after the transition from apartheid to democracy, when the living and working conditions of marginalized groups were improved through welfare policies and the provision of public amenities. However, emerging evidence suggests that trust in the health system has waned over the years as mortality and morbidity rates increase among vulnerable groups who depend mostly on the public healthcare sector (Obuaku-Igwe, 2015, p. 14).

It is against this backdrop that the sociology of health course was redesigned to introduce students to the social processes that shape and influence health outcomes across various social groups. To achieve this goal, it was necessary for students to understand the difference between structural and individual factors, otherwise known as social determinants of health, which influence health outcomes. Sociology of health makes use of sociological theories to explain how social processes affect health, illness, and diseases, with the goal of raising awareness to the intersection of multiple factors in producing and sustaining health status or outcomes (Cockerham, 2012).

To bridge the gap between theory and practice in achieving the broader goals of decolonization, a critical approach to medical sociology was enacted. A critical pedagogical approach to medical sociology enacts perspectives and tools that recognize not only the impact of social conditions on health, but broader health contexts and the political economy of the health system (Cockerham & Scambler, 2010). The premise of the enactment of a critical pedagogy is Freire's education for critical consciousness, and empowerment and knowledge acquisition through collective teaching and reflections (Freire, 2015). Freire's principles of empowerment education propose classroom engagements that enable students to participate in authentic learning that resonates with their own lived realities. This participatory classroom engagement fosters critical consciousness when teachers facilitate and students document and tell their own stories in their own voices. It also bridges gaps in knowledge theorizing in support of social sciences learning by increasing student awareness of social theories and societal processes through their own lived realities.

Critical pedagogy democratizes classrooms and learning processes through its ability to legitimize students' contributions in an era where the legitimacy and validity of knowledge and the contexts of its production are contested (Giroux, 1983). Given the underlying significance of Freire's critical pedagogical perspective of a dialogical education that allows for experiential learning and critical reflections, the next section elaborates on the concepts of decolonization and critical pedagogy.

DECOLONIZATION AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

The call to decolonize the curriculum in higher education in Africa has opened a public discourse on its implementation agenda in African universities. However, much as practitioners, governments, and scholars have presented a case on curricula development and continued with narratives on democratic and emancipatory approaches to teaching and learning, not much has been done in terms of setting an agenda for health research in the social sciences. Health research in social science contributes to well-being and the strengthening of health systems, particularly when aligned with national priorities and community health needs (Obuaku-Igwe, 2017, p. 1).

Furthermore, health research in social science has contributed to altering health practices and policy by changing people's attitude, knowledge, and understanding of diseases and other social problems (Landry, Amara, & Lamari, 2001). The call to decolonize curricula in higher education as a pathway to democratizing knowledge production in Africa, particularly in the social sciences, paves the way for students to contribute to knowledge generation that resonates with their social context and lived realities.

Decolonial efforts in neo-liberal educational contexts necessitate the use of approaches that nurture students' ability to critically analyze society. Critical pedagogy extols such democratic values in teaching and research processes. It is a shift from a teacher-centered to a teacher-led but student-centered decentralized form of participatory teaching, where student engagement and other class activities focus on issues of mutual concern that stir critical thinking, and a belief in the possibility of transforming the world (Freire, 1996).

Critical pedagogy involves not only a reflective approach to teaching, but analysis, inquiry, and critique of the transformative possibilities implicit in the social context of classrooms and education itself. The ultimate goal of a critical pedagogy is to liberate the mind through a multi-level approach to the analysis of existing social relationships – that of history, current practice (including its hierarchical bases), and of the potential to transform and disrupt hegemony in the future (Giroux, 1983, p. 109). These abilities transform classrooms into effective spaces where emancipatory social actions are articulated and actualized through mutual efforts.

Giroux (1985) suggests that the classroom is a space for resistance, where teachers and students jointly mediate the contradictory lived experiences of education in order to address inherent problems in the curriculum. Thus, in essence, there is a need for students to be involved in the struggle to overcome injustices and to humanize themselves in the process. This process requires giving students an opportunity to engage in critique to see the relationship between problems of everyday life and the pedagogical practices enacted in classrooms (Giroux, 1985, p. 376). Photovoice as a pedagogical tool aligns with Freire and Giroux's notions of the importance of indigenous perspectives in knowledge generation in the social sciences.

This research is embedded in Freire's theory of critical consciousness, but draws heavily from Giroux's (1983, p. 87) three-level analysis of existing social relationships and Simon's (1984) notion of critical action, which posits that the ability to act critically involves reflecting on and realizing how things work in society, what shaped or contributed to the current status quo, and what is required to maintain, sustain, or disrupt the status quo (p. 380), in exploring how photovoice as a pedagogical tool enables the construction, reconstruction, and deconstruction of knowledge, research, and practices within the broader context of health in social sciences.

PHOTOVOICE AS A RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGICAL TOOL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Photovoice as a Research Tool

Photovoice is a participatory action research and educational tool that was developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1994). It has been used across disciplines to engage participants in democratizing research and learning processes (Leavy, 2015). Through the process of using photography to document lived realities and engage with policymakers, photovoice has the potential to amplify the voices of marginalized communities who are often left behind in policy imperatives. The use of photography and other forms of visual engagement in higher education has been exploratory but started gaining popularity in the 1990s through Wang and Burris's work.

Wang and Burris's (1994) conceptualization and utilization of photography are in the form of photovoice, an educational tool that is deeply rooted in Paulo Freire's principles of critical consciousness, feminism, and visual sociology. Historically, photography has been a useful tool for documenting and chronicling historical data, as well as for social understanding among school children (Linter, 2005). Since the inception of photovoice in 1992, it has been used across sectors and in fields such as education, community development, social work, public health education, healthcare, and non-profits, but most predominantly in research methodology as a form of arts-based participatory action or mixed-methods research tool, to stir critical consciousness and social action (Morgan et al., 2010).

Research shows that using photovoice as a research approach to understanding broader public health issues of access to resources fosters debate and empowers participants as active members of society (Downey, Anyaegbunam, & Scutchfield, 2009). As a research approach, it enhances the capacity to think, reflect, act upon, and make sense of environments and experiences among research subjects/participants (Cook & Buck, 2010). By enabling research participants to gain new insights and develop new ways of conceptualizing their lived realities, photovoice strengthens their capacity to take action and set the agenda for the future. Photovoice is viewed as a tool that helps research participants gain insight into the nuances and complexities of social life (Latz, Phelps-Ward, Royer, & Peters, 2015, p. 124).

Photovoice can be thought of as a visual research method used to supplement other qualitative tools such as structured interviews and focus group discussions (Budig et al., 2018; Bai, Lai, & Lui, 2019). Budig et al. (2018) note that by using photovoice to explore change in empowerment in vulnerable communities through the eyes and experiences of female participants who took part in a previous photovoice research project, they discovered that the experiences of photovoice participants are often less scrutinized. Bai et al. (2019) equally found that in using it to capture the views of an elderly population on care preferences and expectations, participants developed critical awareness of their expectations of individuals and society, acquired knowledge of barriers to care, developed new awareness and perceptions of the self, and expanded their social capital through new relationships that were formed during the project.

Photovoice Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool: Nature, Structure and Mechanics

Researchers have studied the use of photovoice storytelling as a pedagogical tool across different disciplines. As a storytelling tool, photovoice has the potential to build social, psychological and academic skills in learners (Greene, Burke, & McKenna, 2018). An analysis of its utilization over a 20-year period

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indicates correlation with learners' civic engagement and identity due to its growing influence as a tool for reimagining various social, economic and political spaces (Greene, Burke, & McKenna, 2018, p.870). Its utility as a storytelling tool within social science spaces promotes non-traditional ways of knowledge production as students learn new skills, such as the technicality of choosing, analyzing photographs, highlighting social issues, as well as engaging in critical reflection and action (Rodriguez, 2017).

Greene, Burke, & McKenna found that the use of visual storytelling as a pedagogical tool helps in integrating curriculum, establishing conceptual connections, exploring cultural diversity and stirring critical consciousness. Essentially, photovoice is a different way of telling a story which helps students in raising awareness of issues that matter most to them, such as their challenges, the impacts of policy imperatives and opportunities. They added that using photovoice as a storytelling tool enables students to provide an insider perspective on their socio-emotional needs and ways of 'viewing the world', which tends to be overlooked or ignored by adults. In addition, storytelling, in the form of photovoice, reverses power dynamics between teachers and students as it repositions teachers as learners and learners as teachers. This reversal of the status quo, moves students away from consuming knowledge to producers of knowledge and legitimizes their contribution (Wood, 2016).

Research shows that as a storytelling tool, photovoice enables students to make tangible connections and contributions to their communities. It also enables them to use the stories they tell in defining themselves, which promotes their ability to challenge stereotypes (Greene, Burke, & McKenna, 2018, p. 874). The traditional form of storytelling in social sciences is textual, which forms part of the methodological and pedagogical tools in sociology. Traditionally, sociology majors are often presented with readings, literature within the discipline and expected to read, analyze and draw connections between theory and practice. However, photovoice is a deviation from that norm, to a visual, more practical, organic, engaging and active form of storytelling which gives more context and meaning to students' lives. This is premised on the fact that textual or written forms of stories tend to lose their appeal over time but the use of photographs draws attention to forgotten stories and enables individuals to think about it differently, in a manner that encourages them to reclaim forgotten memories or create new ones (Wood, 2016, p.7).

Consequently, photovoice can be likened to oral storytelling, where participants are at liberty to tell any part of the story they deem fit, but about their own lives or that of their community. The difference between photovoice and oral storytelling is that the stories told in the former format tend to have profound effects on the way the tellers perceive themselves, their life experiences, fulfillment in life and overall development. Nevertheless, irrespective of the format (visual, oral or textual), the essence of storytelling is to establish a connection between the storyteller and their audience. Apart from creating a link with their audience, every storyteller desires to draw the audience into their world and the reality they are depicting so that they can become a part of the story and that is where photographs stand out. While photovoice has proven an effective pedagogical tool for learning in multicultural contexts (Chio & Fandt, 2007, p. 484), its effectiveness as a visual storytelling tool for integrating curriculum and helping students make conceptual connections in medical sociology is an under-researched area.

Some studies have shown that as a form of visual storytelling tool across various disciplinary fields, photovoice is commonly used by youth aged between 13 to 17 years. In addition, more than 55% of the studies often involve students as co-researchers in collecting and analyzing stories across a wide range of themes, such as their experiences of community, academic, health, social, economic and political spaces. Given that the epistemological underpinning of photovoice is grounded in the need to amplify 'specifics' of participants' voices and their lived realities through a combination of photos and narratives, facilitators of photovoice projects, students and researchers tend to use them in addition to textual

or other forms of storytelling. These include field notes, group discussions, reflective writing, maps, interviews, journaling and media artifacts (Charmaraman, 2013).

The researchers often provide a descriptive analysis afterwards, to link the use of photovoice to empowerment, learning, civic engagement, perceptions of capabilities and identity. Studies have noted however, that the use of pre-project interviews, surveys or focus groups in the evaluation of the outcome of photovoice on the participants was not common (Charmaraman, 2013, p.13). To close that gap, photovoice was used strategically in this study with pre-survey, group discussion, and reflective writing. The use of photovoice as a storytelling tool in this context is described as the students' explanations of their lived realities – with the aim of creating or recreating their narratives in the form of photos that reveal aspects of their lives which could be linked to major themes drawn from the course reader as well as data points from the questionnaire.

A visual representation of their lives in this context is intended to reflect the progression of the political economy of health and its context in South Africa from the apartheid years to date – a reflection of the impacts of policy imperatives on ordinary people, such as the pains and gains. Thus, getting students to use the camera on their smartphones as a way of documenting the complexities of the social contexts of health from their perspective changes the dynamic of storytelling through its ability to blend their verbal and visual minds to work together, which results in greater understanding, awareness, and consciousness of society's needs (Walter & Gioglio, 2014). In addition, as a form of visual storytelling, photovoice has the potential to “show a lot without telling much but with the added advantage of stirring critical engagement, conversation and action” (Walter & Gioglio, 2014, p. 23). By offering a fair evaluation of society's needs through the eyes of students, as a necessary first step towards positive social change, photovoice thus positions teachers as facilitators of conversations and reflections in the process of decolonization (Memmi, 2013, p. 31).

In this case study, students used their cameras to take photos and used them to describe their understanding of daily interactions with the healthcare system and aspects of those interactions that meet their initial expectations of the quality of care, the willingness to reuse that particular service (provider), or recommend them to their relatives and friends. In this medical sociology class, a pre-project survey and needs assessment were conducted at the beginning of the semester to collect data on students' social demographics. Participants were required to create and recreate versions of their stories just like in oral tradition where storytellers are allowed to alter and tell their own versions of popular stories but without altering it so much that it becomes a new story. The photovoice was used together with reflective writing but preceded reflective essays because it fostered critical and structured thinking as well as the articulation of the central message of their photovoice, which was a major goal of the course.

Research Methods

Teaching and Research Context

At a time when the legitimacy of knowledge theorizing is highly contested, with many scholars rethinking their pedagogical practices, modifying contents, and mode of delivery, linking them to technological change while dialogically connecting course materials to the lived realities of students, photovoice was used in this undergraduate sociology of health class both as a research and as a pedagogical tool. This study took place in a university setting in a sociology class that focused on health outcomes/status,

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their distribution among and across various social groups, and social determinants (both structural and individual) that shape those outcomes across a life course.

The broader research aim was to investigate how sociology majors combined photovoice with other sociological tools to create or recreate stories. A total of 334 undergraduate students who enrolled in the UWC's medical sociology class voluntarily participated in the study, which lasted six weeks and took place during the first term of the first semester. The UWC was established for coloreds in 1960, during the apartheid rule, and has had a long history of resistance to social injustice. The university has gained recognition for its efforts in championing decolonization in South Africa.

Sociology of health is a core module in the Department of Sociology and a prerequisite for sociology majors. The pre-project questionnaire indicates that the class comprised 50% black Africans, 45% coloreds, 3.3% whites, and 2.2% Indians/Asians, of which only 63.4% made out of pocket payments for healthcare at the time of the study.

Figure 1. A representation of students' self-identified socio-economic status from the preceding survey

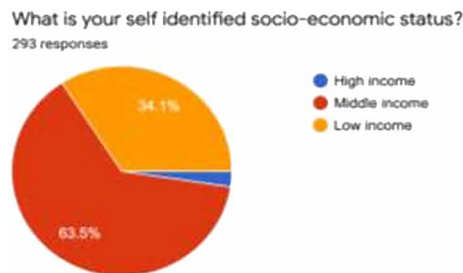
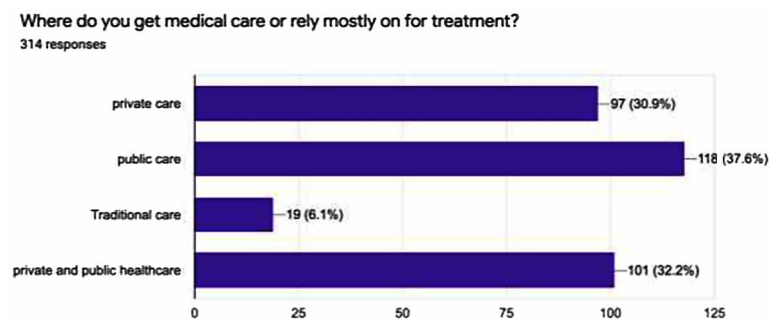


Figure 2. Descriptive statistics of students' preferred healthcare service provider from preceding survey



The overarching goal of the course was to engage students in experiential learning activities that would ground them in sociological themes while providing a basis for their photovoice inquiry. In order to achieve this goal, minor weekly course activities known as intervention tasks, which were centered on social inquiry, determinants of health, health outcomes, healthcare systems, healthcare utilization patterns, health beliefs, and health promotion, were introduced. The weekly activities required the use

of annotations for each reflective piece of writing and connected students to their family members and peers on campus on issues of health and the political economy of the South African healthcare system.

Photovoice Procedure

For this study, students were required to take photos of their social and physical environment (Wang, 2005) in response to the overarching research question: What factors influence the utilization of health-care services in your community? To guide their thoughts and enable them to articulate and construct responses in line with course requirements and research goals, the students were provided with four themes that guided their inquiry and reflection. These themes were derived from the questionnaire. In addition, they were required to make daily journal entries for six weeks in order to learn about social determinants of health within the context of their healthcare utilization patterns and the impact on health-seeking behavior. Students had the option of participating in the photovoice project or an alternative task.

Given the exploratory nature of this project, there was a need to integrate qualitative and quantitative datasets. Out of 350 students, 334 participated in the photovoice project. Prior to the photovoice project, students completed a survey questionnaire with open- and closed-ended questions that fit into the broad themes and lines of inquiry. Wang and Burris (1994, p. 123) define “lines of inquiry” as the broader goals and objectives of a project. The photovoice research question was used to describe and contextualize students’ response to the survey that preceded this project in order to provide fuller understanding of the issues (Leavy, 2017).

All students signed consent forms that indicated that their participation in the study was confidential and voluntary and that they were allowed to discontinue at any time or choose an alternative assessment task. They were also informed that their reflective writing and photos would be used for research purposes; however, they would retain copyright to all personal photos. The use of unstructured and broad themes was necessitated by the need to gain a fuller understanding of how students applied their sociological imagination in ascribing meanings to their photos, the link between students’ interpretation of their photos, the social setting in which the photo was taken.

Stage 1: After initial discussions with students about the bigger challenges of inequality in South Africa and their impact on health, ethical considerations, photo dimensions, photo analysis, the use of annotations in preliminary weekly reflective writing, and other mechanics of using smartphones for photographs, students were assigned tutorial groups to work with teaching assistants and discuss how to select photos they liked, those that were most significant, and in line with the lines of inquiry. Students were advised that the photos had to reflect the defects and assets in their communities and, as such, they had to bear the emotional burden of engaging in discussions within their tutorial groups.

Stage 2 and 3: After initial discussions with teaching assistants, students had weekly tutorials where they engaged with peers, shared photos, and described the meaning of their images in small groups within their tutorial group. Each tutorial group comprised 30 students, which were further divided into smaller groups of five each. After receiving feedback from tutors and their peers on their photos and interpretations of the photos, students were then required to write an essay to outline various patterns, theories, or themes that emerged from the photo analysis and dialogue with their teaching assistant and peers.

Working from Freire’s framework of education for critical consciousness, the author was keen to use photography and accompanying essays to reflect the community back upon itself, and to reveal the everyday social and political realities that influence students’ health-seeking behavior. Letting students as people at the grassroots level take photographs that portray their lived realities was thus in line with

principles of critical consciousness. The students' photos were often images of their experiences, a reflection of society itself (Wang, 1999); facilitating group discussions therefore provides a platform where students can collectively engage in a critical analysis of the social conditions that shape, detract, maintain, or sustain their personal wellbeing, as well as that of their community. Emerging themes from the students' analysis of their photos are discussed below.

Data Analysis and Findings

This study applied photovoice storytelling as a pedagogical and research tool to investigate students' perceptions of determinants of healthcare service utilization in their community. After the group discussions, participants coded and interpreted the photos by themes and social issues. The emerging theories and themes were generated by the author through content analysis. The questionnaire was used as the first step in the process to have a broad overview of the factors that shape student healthcare utilization pattern. The themes from the photovoice project were major statistics that emerged from the survey and the photovoice project and group discussions took the form of a brainstorming session aimed at reflecting on the individual projects and at unwrapping the meanings behind the data points.

The photos were analyzed by the students individually at first and then in groups, based on their "why", which was carved out of the four themes they were presented with at the beginning of the semester. In choosing and creating stories around their photos, students were required to focus on their ideas, their audience, on why they were telling the story and then choose the best photo and reflective writing format that would best create the story. They were also enjoined to pay attention to open and closed stories by being deliberate about how much of their story they wanted to reveal. After taking the photos, students were required to observe a few rules in choosing the best photos. One of the rules was to be minimalistic in their choice of photos and pay attention to various elements in the photos, such as lighting and weather effect. They were required to avoid photos with too many details and, in the event that they had one where such details were not part of the story, they were expected to blur the background. This was meant to make the photos impactful, get the message across very easily and ensure that their peers got the literal meaning of the photo easily without having to misinterpret them.

While letting students tell their own stories through the use of photos and reflective writing fostered inclusivity and participation, there are well known pitfalls such as subjectivity, which has limited its utilization in the field of sociology. The subjective nature of photovoice has to do with participants misrepresenting social issues and viewers misinterpreting the photos. For instance, photographs are known to stir emotions and in the process of analyzing their photographs during the exhibition, most of the participants became emotive. This was rectified by ensuring that the photographs were analyzed individually and thereafter, exhibited and discussed in groups before the submission of the reflective writing, to ensure post-discussion reflections and coherent articulation of writing.

Research indicates that photovoice could create hegemony when one considers whose objectives are being represented in the photographs. This implies that photovoice draws participants and youths in particular into spaces that are dominated by gatekeepers such as adults, teachers, researchers and those in authority, which could lead to contentions over their eligibility as active citizens. This crisis of legitimation could further result in the youth being silenced and excluded by those in positions of power who tend to resist any form of challenge to their authority (Wood, 2016). In order to even out power imbalances and politics of representation, students were divided into tutorial groups where they selected

leaders to facilitate discussions, exhibitions and analysis of photographs with minimal supervision by teaching assistants and the lecturer.

Making a shift from structured essays to photovoice and reflective writing raised a lot of discomfort among students because of the associated vulnerability that comes with exposing their work, lives and experiences to criticism and misinterpretations from their peers. The group discussions and exhibitions were cataclysmic moments where most of the students came to articulate their thoughts and weave stories around the photos, mentally arranging the sequence of events, analyzing and accepting their lived realities. As students shared, discussed and analyzed their photos, they got more comfortable with their own realities, accepted them and became less defensive when critiqued but laughed, listened and empathized more. As one of the students said during the course evaluation: “I found myself and what I would like to do with my life as I described, discussed my photos with members of the tutorial group and listened to theirs”. Another student added that: “The photos and the stories we shared got inside me and changed everything I believed about the working class, why they have a lot of children and why they receive grants.... It made me more appreciative of my parents and my privilege. I will never judge them the same way again”.

Students exhibited vulnerability by telling their personal stories without knowing how their stories will be received or interpreted. However, by telling their stories, they sold hope to their peers. By sharing photos, viewpoints and collectively analyzing their photos during the tutorial exhibition with peers, students realized that not only were they not alone in their ordeal, but given the history of the country, their current circumstances might not be perfect, but they had fared better than their ancestors and even though they have a long way to go, their future held much hope. Most students agreed that their current situation was a blessing and a curse. A blessing because they had government policies that are meant to improve their health and livelihoods, and a curse because there are expectations and burdens that come with being given opportunities their parents never had. The majority admitted that even though their stories were similar to popular narratives, the depiction from mainstream media and publications was poor as they experienced significantly more structural barriers compared to the average South African citizen, which led to dissatisfaction with healthcare service providers.

Students whose photographs depicted high out of pocket payments and low-income status differed greatly from those with health insurance; it is also noteworthy that cultural narratives and family traditions that hindered access to healthcare utilization were further influenced by low educational status and poverty. It emerged that most cultural identities, religious practices, norms, and traditions were being challenged as more minority groups were educated or financially empowered through post-apartheid government policies. These were thought to increase perceptions of need for healthcare and, correspondingly, motivate individuals to use healthcare services. Nonetheless, the notion that racial/socio-economic minorities were less likely to use healthcare services due to affordability, transportation costs, health systems responsiveness, and acceptability-related factors such as cultural or religious reasons was notable in all photos and stories.

PEDAGOGICAL INSIGHTS

Photovoice Enables Students to Deconstruct Their Social Contexts and History: Deconstructing Health Systems Responsiveness

- **How do I Teach You About Yourself?:** The kind of photovoice and stories that were shared, how they were shared and why they were shared were some of the highlights of the course. The themes and pictures meant different things to students and these perceptions varied by gender, ethnicity and social class. A combination of these factors raised a puzzle around engaging students in critical consciousness of their lived realities. For the male students, issues around health beliefs, health practices, sexuality, identity and masculinity were prominent. The female students grappled with issues of acceptability of available healthcare services, poor sanitation, and inadequate access to reproductive and preventive healthcare. While students from low income neighborhoods struggled with unsanitary and poor living conditions, everyone seemed to be bothered about medical pluralism, lack of commitment to mental health, high out of pocket payments and shortage of personnel in the public sector, which further raised issues around day clinics and their role in stigmatizing patients with chronic medical conditions. One of the biggest challenges was our unpreparedness to address some of the issues. More research is needed to understand the issues in depth.
- **Multiplicity of Knowing and Social Awareness:** A couple of issues also emerged as students pieced together their own visual stories, compared their experiences to that of their peers and listened to others during discussions and photo analysis. For the students, as they discussed the photos, certain aspects stood out more than others such as the background, physical surroundings, the emotions, vulnerability, passions and originality of the photos. While some students were engaged, others found the process entertaining. These aspects that stood out contributed to unraveling the story behind the photo stories as they observed and debated the fact that female participants had more provocative and compelling photovoice. During the discussions, students formed relationships with particular photovoice (provocative ones) and got involved in recreating the stories by predicting the untold stories behind the photo, filling in the gaps and theorizing. For instance, one of the participants reported that her family paid out of pocket and could not afford private healthcare services and therefore relied mostly on public healthcare. The participant listed a few reasons for not using specific healthcare services: dissatisfaction with the quality of care, quality of amenities, government policies such as low funding, and shortage of medicine.

Figure 3. Photographs of two students' neighborhoods in Enkanini, Khayelitsha (right) and an extended community of Smartie Town, on the eastern border of Paarl (left). Both communities are home to low-income colored and black South Africans, which are at times referred to as "blikkies" due to the dirty streets



The ability to explore and communicate the stories behind their lived realities through photography was considered a more effective form of storytelling and learning than writing structured essays since it gave them room to contribute to the inquiry, be creative, own their voice, see themselves in the stories, learn about themselves and also change the way their peers perceived social issues. There was a collective consciousness of their identity as knowledgeable people and how they differed in their construction of knowledge and reality. At first glance, students struggled to connect their visual stories to what they have learned in class and the themes particularly, as their peers interpreted the photos differently. This unearthed a multiplicity and an impostor syndrome which have a negative impact on how they learn, how they know and how they came to the knowledge of what they know about their lived realities. Their differing views in the interpretations of same photos was an indication of the multiplicity of knowledge production, an observation that fostered interaction between the students and reinforced the effectiveness of photovoice as a visual storytelling tool because students who rarely spoke in class interacted with others as the photos appealed to them and opened them up to learning.

- **Multicultural Education:** Using photovoice to create and recreate stories about their health, transformed the way students understood themselves and their peers and fostered a multicultural education because they resonate with most stories. As one student noted, “time and space make us miss out on the daily realities of each other’s lives. But photovoice became a tool that mirrored these realities to us... I could not have told a good story if I were writing a structured essay where we are not allowed to be in the story or use first person pronouns”. The photos portrayed who the students were, their personality and identity through their environment and activities. While some photos were taken for granted and did not get much attention, other visual stories got more attention. Students were more interested in unusual photos or those they resonated with and spent more time analyzing or discussing them.

Students’ photos are a reflection of their communities, which is an indication of the political economy of health in South Africa. Students’ photo stories are a direct estimate of their experiences with a particular healthcare system that reflects the quality of care. Their photovoice about health systems responsiveness as motivation for using healthcare services portrayed high negligence which leads to more deaths within clinics. This aligns with research on the percentage of deaths that occurred in South African hospitals

as compared to home-related incidents of death. In-hospital deaths were at 47.5%, which is far higher than those that occurred elsewhere (Maluleke, 2016).

Photovoice Connects Students to Themselves and to the Social Processes That Shape Their Health: Constructing Determinants of Healthcare Utilization

Students revealed greater overall dissatisfaction with the lack of interpreters in various primary healthcare facilities. Similar to others in the group, a Group 4 participant discussed her feelings about hospitals making language services optional. All participants noted the influence of language barriers on healthcare utilization patterns and the need to train biomedical personnel in working with interpreters. The reported influence of language as a barrier to healthcare service utilization is of note because literature on access to healthcare has highlighted the significance of language as a key determinant of health status, access to healthcare services, and quality of healthcare.

In creating and recreating their photovoice, students observed that in South Africa, black Africans comprise 80.6% of the population and the majority of the working class. Due to historical injustices that excluded them from socio-political, economic, and educational opportunities, social mobility has become challenging, making them susceptible to illness and diseases. Participants agreed that even though there has been some progress, existing structural hegemony continues to sustain inequities in access to healthcare services among marginalized groups, several years after apartheid, making it difficult to use healthcare services even when they are available or free.

Photovoice Unwraps Intersectionality

The question of who uses existing healthcare services in South Africa, how and under what conditions is a very complicated one due to the intersection of race/ethnicity, social class, place, gender and health system responsiveness. By recreating these stories and presenting them visually, students experienced a shift between being the statistic and being a part of the process of understanding or recreating the data. This form of storytelling unearthed a new framework and represents a victory for ignored communities. Most of the students came from communities with history of marginalization and the reality of poor access to healthcare is not lost on this demography who are so eager to end the cycle of inequality and systemic discrimination.

The influence of the students' backgrounds, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity were visible in their stories. For the majority of the students who lived in high-income communities and did not have to pay out of pocket for healthcare, their stories did not create much connection with others but raised questions about what kind of photos get attention and where do they fit into the story of discrimination other photos revealed? The dismissive comments from their peers revealed the complexity of intersectionality in understanding access to healthcare. Most of these students said they learned more from the photovoice stories than they ever did from a classroom.

Students who were from low- or middle-income communities but had intersecting identities such as ancestral worship, being Christians, or having parents with medical cover who did not have to pay out of pocket, also had differing stories. For these students, knowing that there were others who were living in poor conditions and experienced worse health issues and discrimination but had no option other than to "*dress up and show up*" as one mentioned, revealed a lot about the human condition and the power

of resilience and agency. Through these stories, intersectionality emerged and students grappled with the question of how to navigate their intersecting identities in their quest for social justice.

Figure 4. A photograph of two students' homes without running water (right) and a make-shift sink for washing dishes (left)



- **Responsiveness, Emotional, Inclusive, Creative and Active Learning:** The use of photovoice as a storytelling tool fostered inclusivity and made students responsive by stirring emotions in an otherwise logic and jargon-prone academic space where there is no room for feelings that are considered inherently weak and non-analytic. The process of taking, choosing, creating stories with photos and listening to peers interpret their work differed greatly from writing. In addition, analyzing and discussing the meaning of their photos was an active part of storytelling and knowledge production. This process fostered active learning in students because they were not being told the story, rather, they became part of the process of creating knowledge as they recreated photo ‘stories’, listened to their peers review their work and interacted with tutors for feedback.

Photovoice Empowers Students to Enter Dialogue, Reconstruct, and Take Action

The students indicated that the photos grounded them into their own lives and drew them into those of their peers by pointing out that, rather than assuming they were alone in their ordeal and thinking of their challenges as problems to be solved, they should see opportunities for improvement in their personal health practices. Most of the students resolved to volunteer more often in educating members of their community. They committed to improving their health habits and doing things differently. Students who had hitherto been defensive about their socioeconomic status, changed their perceptions and came to the realization that being defensive will only give more power to their challenges.

The photovoice project also made students better readers and writers as they became interested in understanding the issues they struggle with by delving into the course readers for explanations and theories that could help in making sense of their realities. By reading more they exercised their sociological imagination as an alternative way of viewing the world as well as the relativity of health. Through reading, they gleaned insights that would make them better visual storytellers as they get to understand the broader societal underpinnings of their lived realities and gain inspiration on how to create and recreate their stories by improving their visual vocabulary, comparing their experiences to those of their peers in other places, as well as those of their ancestors, to see what has changed, how and when.

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Figure 5. Students dramatizing patient-provider interaction during a group presentation



Students reiterated their commitment to challenge stereotypes and harmful health practices or beliefs that prevented people from utilizing healthcare services. This commitment to preventive healthcare preceded discussions on health education where students emphasized the importance of leveraging social networks and existing social capital to promote positive health practices. A Group 6 student showed insight into the assets-based approach to health promotion: “I believe that if you get someone from the community to talk to their people, they will shape up. I mean, we are poor and without health insurance, we don’t have any choice but to use what is available.”

Students’ efforts and discussions revealed that they were aware of the health needs of their communities and embarrassed by the way the media and government portray them as needy people who are dependent on welfare and professional healthcare services. Students concluded that an assets-based approach to healthcare services would help in changing the way marginalized communities are perceived. They proposed that instead of viewing vulnerable communities as needy, policy imperatives should prioritize building and strengthening existing capacities within them by identifying human, environmental, and/or social networks that can be leveraged from within.

While these themes are similar and resonate with findings from previous studies, the rich contexts of the experiences reflect the effectiveness of visual storytelling in highlighting that knowledge is relative and socially constructed. In essence, photovoice as a storytelling tool facilitates multiple perceptions of events and things by enabling students to view and interpret them from various perspectives, which is part of sociological awareness. In addition, as students shared and discussed their photos with peers, that process of engaging with various viewpoints and interpretations of their photovoice resulted in awareness that brought about change. Specifically, the themes are reflective of patterns that explain the frequency of emergency care utilization by this population as noted by other studies, and can be viewed through the HBM prism.

The HBM proposes that an individual’s assumptions about their level of risk for an illness or disease and their understanding of the benefits of taking action to avoid it determine whether they will readily take action (Glanz & Bishop, 2010). The HBM proposes four indicators that could predict why individuals would act on their health behavior: (a) perceived susceptibility to and severity of disease, (b) perceived benefits, (c) perceived barriers, and (d) perceived self-efficacy. For most of the students, this model can be utilized to explore perceived benefits and barriers that prevent them from using available healthcare

services. For others, the primary reason for not utilizing healthcare services was the absence of infirmity or disease. These students would only use healthcare services based on the severity of an illness or its symptoms. Other students who did not have to make health decisions based on the perceived severity of their illness or health status were constrained by finances and in the event that finances were not a challenge, most cited health systems responsiveness, which covers language, doctor-patient interaction, culture, religion, and other acceptability-related factors.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The existence of biomedical and traditional healthcare systems, otherwise known as the duality of health systems, and divergent views on their efficacy and modus operandi, led to the emergence of interrelated points from the data. Firstly, most students relied on traditional or alternative medicines and only used biomedical care occasionally. As such, they did not quite understand the daily experiences of those who relied solely on biomedical healthcare service providers for every health need or who utilized medical care more frequently; however, their utilization of alternative/traditional medicine was largely determined by family members, religious doctrine, or culture, and also stirred feelings of exclusion that were similarly expressed by students who were unable to utilize biomedical healthcare services due to their socio-economic status.

Secondly, due to embeddedness in both healthcare systems, most of the student participants developed various indicators that they used to measure the efficiency of two different health “fields”, with contradictory approaches and competing practices (see Ritzer, 2003, for an explanation of “fields”). Thirdly, students who had no medical support felt compelled to use public primary healthcare services such as day clinics and seemed dissatisfied with provider interaction, whereas students with medical cover who used the public sector by choice reported a different experience.

The high number of female (80%), black African, and colored students (95%) on a bursary (65.9%) within the sample has implications for future research. Data from the pre-project questionnaire suggest that social processes and transformation are paramount to the utilization of healthcare services. The students noted that inequities in the distribution, quality, and access to specialized healthcare services were patterned along existing income and racial lines but utilization patterns increased as they moved to campus or their parents got full-time jobs with medical support.

Future research with majority whites and males is needed to further explore questions that include: Why low-income earners and uninsured users feel dissatisfied with non-medical aspects of public healthcare systems? Are there specific (specialized) healthcare services that are less utilized by a particular social group? Are day clinics less utilized by a particular social group? Addressing these questions may shed light on the contingent nature of healthcare utilization patterns as they intersect with social contexts and processes.

Lastly, the empowerment educational approach to the project, the weekly readings and tasks, the provision of inquiry lines, grading students’ photovoice essays, and the fact that the survey was not anonymous may have affected or shaped the responses. It may have led to bias or exaggeration of facts based on students’ assumptions about what the lecturer wanted to hear. Despite these limitations, the study contributed to the formation of a student-led community health promotion organization known as *Indima-Yethu*, translated from IsiXhosa as “our contribution”.

CONCLUSION

As visual webs rise with the growth and expansion of technology, teachers in various contexts need to incorporate storytelling tools in pedagogy to aid student participation in the democratic process. This study has demonstrated the power of visual stories in drawing attention to and facilitating engagement with all critical elements of empowerment education (Cook & Buck, 2010). At a time when knowledge theorizing is geopolitical and highly contested with perspectives from indigenous systems constantly undervalued, the incorporation of visual storytelling tools in classrooms has the ability to increase student participation, improve learning, and facilitate inclusion while bridging the gap between the academic community and society. Students' essays, narratives, photo analysis, and group discussions provide a platform to engage in a dialogue with others in questioning each stakeholder's thinking (policymakers, sectoral planners, authors, healthcare providers, researchers, and personnel in health services and health systems research and practice) beyond relying on cited papers or knowledge generated from other contexts.

The use of photovoice as a storytelling tool was instrumental in empowering students by enabling them to leverage their voices in the classroom. Through insights gleaned from photos, students observed that social conditions, processes, and relationships contribute to overall health-seeking behaviors (Krieger, 2009). The use of photovoice as pedagogy in this project nurtured shared responsibility and inclusivity among students in a diverse and multicultural classroom, where each person got to unlearn various stereotypes about others as they unpacked their stories. Through discussions and the collaborative process of creating or analyzing their photos, students were able to set aside unconscious racial biases, recognize underlying discrimination as well as religious and cultural differences, in uniting against social injustices. While the process did not yield much in terms of tangible activism, it opened up spaces for students to engage actively and talk about the factors that shape their health.

It also provided a platform for analyzing and drawing connections between the history of South Africa, current reforms in the health sector, and the potential for transformation (Simon, 1984). While the application of photovoice storytelling as pedagogical tool in medical sociology empowers students and facilitates experiential learning by connecting them to their social contexts and enabling a deconstruction of the processes that shape or sustain them, its application is context and curricula specific. There is a need for caution in utilizing it in contexts without follow-up resources.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Acceptability: The willingness to accept a particular healthcare service based on anticipated or experienced quality and emotional response to it.

Affordability: The ability to pay for healthcare services without foregoing food and other essentials.

Apartheid: A system of racial discrimination that existed in South Africa and ended in 1994.

Decolonization: The process of undoing or reversing the harmful effects of colonialism.

Medical Sociology and Storytelling in a Decolonial Context

Health Inequalities: The differences in health across populations, measured by access to healthcare services and resources.

Health Systems Responsiveness: A multifaceted process that measures how well a particular health system meets the expectations of its citizens.

Healthcare Utilization Pattern: The process of seeking and using biomedical services for the purposes of promoting health, determining health status, or curing existing illness and diseases.

Social Determinants of Health: The social factors that shape and influence health. These factors include the places individuals are born, grow, work, play, and age.

Chapter 19

Chemistry Edutainment: A Storytelling Activity for Middle-School Children

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ABSTRACT

Creating a fun, interactive, and useful science activity for teaching purposes can be a real challenge, especially if it is addressed to middle-school children. More and more science communicators are employing novel communication techniques to better reach out to their audience. In science communication, storytelling is valuable to sparking interest in science. Given that there are many episodes in the history of science that can serve as inspiration, the authors of this chapter share how they used storytelling, based on a real-life event, to create a science communication activity for middle-school children. Focused on chemistry and ethics, these topics were introduced through hands-on laboratory activities with ethical questions embedded in the story line. This task challenges the students to come up with answers by themselves, through a problem-based learning model. By adding game logic elements to this activity, the authors created a unique form of communicating science, both educational and entertaining, which children appreciated.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the authors will discuss in detail how they transformed an event from the history of science in the 19th-century, known as the “Crime on Flores Street”, into a storytelling-based activity focused on chemistry and ethics, thus calling it “Ethics against Chemistry”. This chapter emphasizes the potential

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use of storytelling in science education, presenting a framework of a new science communication activity, which was well-received by the students.

“Ethics against Chemistry” was designed for middle-school students, to be used in a non-formal classroom environment. Moving through the sections of this chapter, we will explore all stages of storytelling development, including the adaptation of the real story into a student-friendly activity, as well as the association of storytelling with gamification. Following the introduction of the concepts of storytelling and edutainment, section two of this chapter presents the activity outline, addressing the general aspects of its framework. The primary focus will be on structuring the activity whilst addressing our proposed goals for student interaction. In the following section we present in detail our activity framework. Firstly, a review of “Crime on Flores Street” is presented, to explain key aspects retained in the activity design. Then, the focus will turn to the storytelling adaptation of this case, detailing key aspects such as its history, characters, and student engagement. The section ends with a clear-cut explanation of how the gamification elements were added to the activity, highlighting the connections made with the edutainment and storytelling framework. The addition of game logic elements has turned this activity into a form of entertainment without neglecting the educational side, thus creating a unique form of chemistry and ethics “edutainment”. The next section of this chapter contains the assessment of the activity. We will focus on the feedback given on the activity, specifically in its storytelling and edutainment components. This part of our research aims to analyze the suitability of this approach from the students’ perspective. In the final section we discuss the challenges and possible research opportunities created by this work.

Previous results of this activity were presented in the following conferences: XVII ENEC / III International Seminar of Science Education in Porto (Portugal) and *Encontro de Ensino e Divulgação da Química* in Coimbra (Portugal), both in 2019.

BACKGROUND

Edutainment

Edutainment is a challenging learning methodology that tackles many problems of traditional forms of education. The student is the focal point of the learning activity, making edutainment a dynamic part of the educational process. Students can express their preferences based on their experience and learning interactions. Teachers, on the other hand, can use this information to improve their outputs (Johnson, 2010, p. 55; Zhigeng, 2019). Learning new skills while gathering experience and feeling emotions while being entertained is pivotal for this educational method (Donovan, 2010, p. 138). Edutainment positions itself as an entertaining mechanism that can provide knowledge to many people, while being aesthetically appealing (Buckingham, 2005, p. 41). But the key factor of this methodology is the informal approach of the lessons. As such, extensive or highly dense subjects are treated in a way that is more appealing to the audience (De Vary, 2008, p. 35; Sorathia, 2010, p. 265). Broadly speaking, edutainment comes as an amalgamation of the concepts of ‘education’ and ‘entertainment’. “Learning from entertainment” requires an establishment of gamification practices to renew traditional forms of education. In other words, it tackles the students’ lack of focus and interest (often cited as one of the major issues in traditional learning methodology) by providing them with opportunities to create a positive learning experience (Zin, 2010).

Current research on edutainment methodologies usually presents two routes of educational strategies: the use of entertaining elements or the integration of educational content into an entertainment sphere.

Many authors take a step further and associate edutainment with game-based learning, as it better embodies this concept (Johnson, 2010, p. 55). The pedagogical elements in edutainment are frequently associated with the learning pace of students (Okan, 2003, p. 255). They can be considered as (Networking, 2009):

- **Relevance Learning:** when the students are engaged by the significance of the topics.
- **Incremental Learning:** when students learn at their own pace.
- **Distributed Learning:** learn at different periods.

Edutainment is rising in the educational community, as it helps to combine effective hands-on experiences with specific skills they aim to convey (Zhigeng, 2019). In another stance, it can be a useful tool to combine real-life experiences with several educational formats.

Several articles refer to various forms of entertainment, primarily mentioning transmedia outlets such as television, digital/social media, and video games (Jarvin, 2015, p. 33; Sorathia, 2010, p. 265; Zhigeng, 2019). Moreover, edutainment can also be considered as a hybrid genre that relies heavily on narrative and gamified formats to address educational topics in an informal way (Okan, 2003, p. 255). Gaming approaches can be powerful when embedded within educational strategies. Applying gamification-based activities can promote student learning: individually or in a group, students can explore, perform trial-and-error actions and repetitions in a fun way, without realizing that they are learning at the same time (De Vary, 2008, p. 35).

Types of Edutainment

On addressing the issue of creating and implementing a storytelling-based edutainment activity, it must be clear which categories one must fit to their design. One can design an activity to be interactive, passive, or a hybrid (with mixed tasks requiring involvement). According to White (2003), at an organizational level, one can define the types of edutainment based on their:

- **Location:** An interactive and participatory activity where the user becomes an active participant and a non-interactive activity where the user (or spectator) is just seated and exploring.
- **Purpose and Content:** Informal education to improve the participants learning skills by providing new experiences.
- **Target Group:** Motivation and age-oriented (participants who share some interests).
- **Type of Media:** Either audiovisual (TV, film), computer/digital or internet based.

Storytelling as an Educational Tool

Telling stories is an intrinsic multi-sensorial human connection tool. The intrinsic value of orally expressing a story can be one of the most powerful driving forces of human imagination. As such, it is legitimate to think of storytelling as an educational tool. And even more so if the story portrays a fantastic tale of human endeavor.

A compelling story has powerful effects since it can unite an idea with an emotion. Stories seem to be a product of evolution, as they have allowed us to simulate reality and to predict the outcome of relationships. As such, narratives are easier to comprehend and are associated with a high recall rate (Dahlstrom, 2014, p. 13614). Stories have been recognized as a communication vehicle in many edu-

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cational applications (Schank, 2002, p. 287-314). They can engage the people's imagination regarding a specific topic, empathetically. This is especially noticeable with young children, as their perception of the real world comes from the guided experience of other people. Despite not being a "hands-on" activity, storytelling can span a more transcendent range of emotions in young students.

Physical experiences can certainly make an instant impact on children, but they are volatile (Schwchow, 2016, p. 980). They are more prone to understand and recall specific pieces of information if they are transmitted within the plot of a story, rather than by a conceptual arrangement (Schank, 2002, p. 287-314). It is important, particularly for young students, that abstract concepts be presented in a way that they can easily comprehend (Avraamidou, 2009, p. 1683).

The pedagogical reputation of storytelling is demonstrated in many excellent studies (Haven, 2000; Truby, 2007). In a more practical approach, one can understand storytelling as an educational tool whose effect is threefold: it generates awareness of a new topic; introduces the student into a new reality; and encourages reflection and integration of (new) concepts (Caine, 2005). But most importantly, it can be engaging and entertaining. The ability to involve students at an emotional level can be the driving force towards a more "active engagement" on their behalf. This paves the way for new forms of teaching school subjects, ranging from mathematics, science, history, and even linguistics (Rose, 1997).

If one's objective is to introduce students to science and how science is a part of their world, one must introduce it in a fashionable way. First impressions are everything when talking to middle-school students, as one can imagine. Even more so when discussing topics hard to introduce, such as chemistry or physics. One way to face the issue is to flip the perspective of students. Letting them see with their own eyes how a scientist solved a problem can surely help. Or better yet, let them try to solve the problem, helping them perceive scientific problem-solving. And a good starting point would be to approach science as a story. A "historical narrative" can easily become an icebreaker to teach the way nature is understood by scientists (Schiffer, 2014, p. 409). However, the plot of the story cannot be just a bland copy of historical reports. For students to understand the fundamentals of science in action, several concepts must be highlighted. As previously reported (Heering, 2010, p. 323), there are four major plot points that a scientific-based storytelling activity must include:

1. Scientific knowledge, while durable, has a tentative character.
2. People from all cultures contribute to science.
3. Scientists are creative.
4. Science is part of social and cultural traditions.

Chemistry subjects can be easily implanted in this environment. A good form of teaching science subjects through narratives is to demonstrate that science is no more than a human endeavor (and a search for answers). It consists of the accumulated stories of regular men and women trying to find answers to their questions. The hardest part, in this conception, is to find a story that can fit these criteria. When addressing a school science question, the story cannot be just about finding an answer to a certain quiz. It must evolve into a problem to be solved (problem-based learning), surrounded by a certain shroud of mystery and engaging elements. From this perspective, studies point out the positive outcomes of such an approach, especially when it comes to enhancing student learning outcomes and motivation with scientific topics (Corni, 2010, p. 1; Morais, 2015, p. 58).

Storytelling can provide new ways of addressing science communications to a broader audience, namely to middle-school children. By capturing their attention and promoting overall enjoyment, the

latter can be engaged with the scientific activity, and control their learning process, building up their motivation, interest, and curiosity regarding a specific topic. In this sense, gamification can also be a useful way to improve the students' engagement, by adding game elements to a non-gaming context, such as challenges/tasks or win/lose logic. One can make science learning more dynamic, interactive, and ultimately fun.

Storytelling Adaptation

What must be the primary directive when casting a storytelling plot to address scientific topics? The focus should be on creating (or adapting) a story that aims not to provide an answer to a question, but rather an answer to a problem. And the story should not be too technical or methodical, as it can easily distract the students. The content must be wrapped and delivered in some form of a ludic template, to engage the students' imagination and abstract perception. Therefore, the story (either real or fictional) must provide:

1. A clear problem that needs to be answered.
2. The existence of several theories for its explanation.
3. The successful (and especially the unsuccessful) experiments towards the answer.
4. A proper closure, with the dissemination of the theory.

A story can be defined as a sequence of related events, although a few additional issues must be considered:

1. They unfold at the right pace, matching the audience's ability to follow the story.
2. They hook the attention of the audience with interesting plots, settings, and characters.
3. They leave a lasting impression, spiking the audience's curiosity, which makes them want to know more.

The pace of the story is quite subjective, as it could seem to move too fast or too slow to distinct individuals, depending on their different tastes and attention spans (Ma, 2012, p. 12). There are various ways to trigger one's attention to our story. Mystery and building up suspense are key factors to properly engage with the audience. When something out of the ordinary occurs, with no apparent explanation, it can arouse the natural sense of curiosity in human beings. Not knowing what happened makes the audience want to know more. Several episodes with this prerogative can also be good candidates for storytelling. But one type is becoming prevalent in TV shows, series, or books: an unexpected murder and the story of the team that tries to solve it.

Our minds were set to address the emergence of analytical chemistry in Portugal, whose development accompanied some dramatic criminal affairs. From the early works in antiquity to the thriving of modern chemistry in the late 19th-century, several stories can easily spark the interest of an audience, even children.

ETHICS AGAINST CHEMISTRY: AN EDUTAINMENT ACTIVITY

Activity Overview

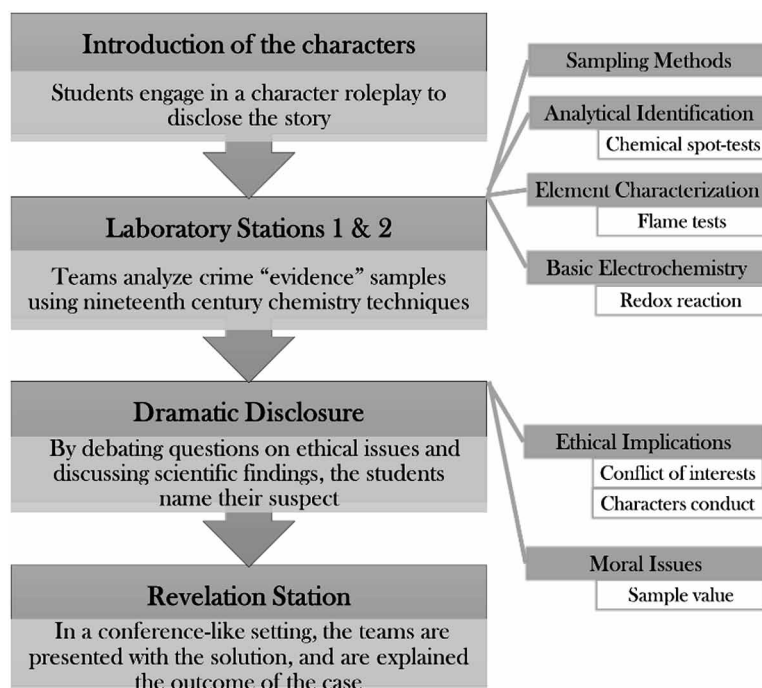
The purpose of combining these different forms of communication and learning techniques was to create a scientific activity that was easily understandable, but most importantly, interactive. Thereby, it could serve as a tool that could both provide entertainment and knowledge in various areas. “Ethics against Chemistry” is an educational science dissemination activity of chemistry and ethics, integrated into the program of the 2019 Junior University, a Summer curriculum that introduces children to the University environment; in this case, the University of Porto (Portugal), in the Faculty of Sciences. From all over the country, about 280 Portuguese speaking students were divided into classes by the organization of the Junior University. Each day, a different class of about 14 students participated in this activity. The middle-school students, under fourteen years old, were invited to perform a series of hands-on activities within an educational scientific game. As stated before, this is a novel approach focused on storytelling, based on real figures in the Portuguese history of science and technology in the 19th-century. These real-life characters partake in a forensic murder-case, one that is seldom explored.

It all comes together in a board game (Figure 8), composed of “stations”, challenging the students to fulfill a game report on their smartphones to complete the game, guided by two teachers, that also evaluate the reports and chose the winning team. The hands-on activities were planned to mimic the chemistry laboratory techniques available in the 19th-century. The participants play the role of 19th-century scientists/investigators who will have to follow the scientific method and perform actions like correct analysis of crime-scene samples, handling/treatment of samples and data, and execute the most effective scientific procedure. They will do so based on their methodical decisions, as they obtain clues to unravel the enigma.

Students will have to team up to resolve this murder-case, facing scientific and ethical challenges, inspired by the real-life story, in the same way as the characters were. As a request to finish the game, the students articulate their findings in a “conference-like” presentation and are encouraged to argue the scientific and ethical implications of the procedures they used earlier.

In Figure 1 we can see that Stations 2 and 3 represent the laboratory stations, in which the students analyze the samples of the crime scene, in a pre-prepared laboratory. The laboratory procedures are written down so the students can follow the protocol of experiments. Their aim is to determine the composition of the samples, through chemistry techniques. It is up to the students to handle the material correctly and to draw their conclusions. Teams must take turns to use the laboratory stations. The samples provided for analysis are Oxygen Peroxide, Hair Sample, Copper Sulphate, Ascorbic Acid, an Alkaloid, and Borax solution.

Figure 1. Schematic summary of the structure and goals of the activity “Ethics against Chemistry”



The participants were introduced to the samples not knowing what they represent, although the teacher states that at least one was used as the murder weapon. The teacher helps them through the laboratory experiments, to identify all the samples presented. Then, the students write down their findings and interlink the results with the story elements provided by storytelling media. The most attentive students will be able to link these elements with the practical information obtained from the scientific experiments.

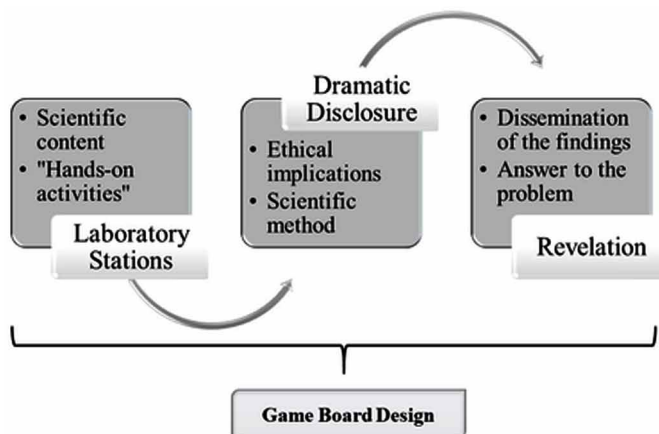
Building an Activity Framework

Design Layout

In this section, the design layout of the activity is designed as a general blueprint of the way the activity was drawn up. The initial idea was to determine what elements must be intrinsically reproduced in the gamification setup. The first step is to identify a vehicle and/or anchor for the student engagement in the story. For practical reasons, and favouring a “hands-on” approach, the vehicle chosen was a gameboard.

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Figure 2. Scheme of the selections of topics and activities that resulted in the gameboard of “Ethics against Chemistry”.



The following stage is to set up what needs to be disclosed in the gameboard. It was clear, right from the start, that the scientific element needed to be omnipresent in the game. However, by itself, it is not enough to engage with the students. There must be a methodical path that interlinks the science activity/explanation with a dramatic and emotive disclosure of the storytelling element. And so, as revealed in Figure 2, the laboratory stations are the catalyst for students' interaction and participation in the game. It is from them that they will be able to draw vital information needed for game development. Therefore, we have designed one practical stage (Laboratory Stations) and two storytelling stages (Dramatic disclosure and Revelation).

The storytelling stations are essential to involving students in the development of the story. Through them, with added knowledge from the laboratory stations and the revelations of the characters, they will only move forward if they are able to identify specific key aspects. In the Dramatic disclosure, the students will need to face the ethical implications of their decision regarding their answer to the question in the game, along with the evidence provided by the scientific stations. Even more, they can only obtain the final answer if they can successfully argue why they chose that answer, based on their findings. This is crucial to make students feel a part of the story and for being able to provide a continuous focus of attention after the scientific activity (so as not to lose engagement in the storytelling sections).

Introduction to the Real-Life Story

Choosing an episode from the history of science was challenging, as popular stories or well-known stories within a culture might not be a good option. The audience might lose interest in the plot, after all, they may already know how it ends. Since our activity was designed for Portuguese middle-school children, we intentionally limited our options to events that took place in Portugal as our audience was composed of Portuguese speakers. This way, we could establish a deeper connection with them. Therefore, we chose an unknown story for the age group, although quite popular at the time, the “Crime on Flores Street”, a mystery tale that leaves the audience questioning why a rich doctor wanted to kill his family for more

money. In this crime-solving drama, populated by characters with unanswered questions and the feeling of injustice upon a child's death, all these factors contribute to engaging the audience with the story.

To fully understand this activity, we will explain below how this story was transformed into an educational activity, but first, we must tell the real story, at least what is known.

Our story takes place in the 19th-century Oporto, Portugal, where a brilliant doctor called Vicente Urbino de Freitas was convicted of murdering his nephew, Mário Sampaio. Urbino de Freitas was married to Maria das Dores Basto Sampaio, daughter of Maria Carolina and António Sampaio, a rich merchant. Maria das Dores was the youngest of three brothers, Guilherme Sampaio (who died but fathered two kids: Mário and Maria Augusta), and José Sampaio Júnior. Júnior fell in love with Miss Karter Lothie after his wife's death, though he died in mysterious circumstances (involving Urbino de Freitas).

Four months after his death, tragedy strikes the Sampaio family again. The grandparents António Sampaio and Maria Carolina receive a strange package with Easter sweets that were distributed to their grandchildren. The girls complained about their bitter taste, while Mário ate his entire portion.

Suddenly, the children started to feel sick. Maria Carolina gives them fruit salts and they sleep through the night. The next day, Maria Carolina calls for help, explaining to Urbino de Freitas what happened, and he prescribes warm water and coffee (R. J. Dinis-Oliveira, 2018, p. 69). Later, Urbino de Freitas prepares enemas that are given to the children by their maid, Maria Luísa. The girls expelled the enema as soon as their uncle leaves the house. Mário, on the other hand, followed his uncle's instructions and kept the enema for as long as he could, and was rapidly getting worse. About to leave the house, Urbino de Freitas explained to Maria Carolina that the children were poisoned, and they should call Adelino Leão da Costa, another doctor, for help. Freitas told him that the children were poisoned from the Easter sweets without revealing his enemas' prescription. Hours later, Mário died.

Suspicious started to build up around Urbino de Freitas, due to the testimony of Miss Karter. She promptly collaborated with the police, revealing that the murderer must be someone in the family, as José Sampaio Júnior had died a few months before, with the same symptoms as Mário Sampaio. Therefore, forensic experts from Porto were called to analyze samples from Mário Sampaio's body (already buried) to determine the poison used. This story caught the attention of the national press (Marques, 2019, p. 48), and between toxicological tests and trials, more than 3 years passed.

Freitas was convicted of murdering his nephew in order to obtain the family fortune, though he fought all his life to prove his innocence. In court, toxicological reports from analysis of the victim's body, provided by a team of chemists led by António Ferreira da Silva, were critical to solve the case. Due to his contributions in this case, Ferreira da Silva is considered by some authors as one of the most prominent Portuguese forensic chemists.

This was a controversial and dramatic case for the Portuguese justice system, not short of scandals: criticism fell on the toxicological analysis, and on the previous love affair of the public prosecutor with Maria das Dores. As of today, this case still has a lot of details being studied (R.J. Dinis-Oliveira, 2019, p. 17-19).

Storytelling Adaptation

As previously stated, a storytelling adaptation must follow four basic steps to ensure its viability. In this section, we describe how we adapted our story to this framework. The fundamental steps in the conception of "Ethics against Chemistry" are:

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1. **Address a Clear Problem that Needs to be Answered:** Our story highlights several problems that can be addressed. It should be noted that we must not dismiss any aspects of the story, as they can be used in later sections. The problem is simple: who committed the murder? It is a simple question that needs closure, and it is easily understood by the students.
2. **The Existence of Several Theories for Problem Explanation:** Using the elements provided by the real story, one can build upon several theories for how the crime occurred. The plot should emphasize the relations of the main characters and how they can lead to possible lines of thought in the story. In this case, right from the start, the poisoning of the victims was thought possible. Despite this being the primary theory, other ramifications emanate from this iteration: who poisoned whom? For what purpose? All these questions lead to other theories that can explain the main sequence of events and help develop character storylines.
3. **The Successful (and Especially the Unsuccessful) Experiments Towards the Answer:** This is, perhaps, the most important issue in this framework. The plot must provide sufficient elements so that the problem could be solved with a scientific query. In this case, since it all points towards a poisoning felony, it is easy for students to comprehend that the poison (the “murder weapon”) should be identified, therefore requiring scientific methods to solve this problem. Presenting scientific experiments as a tool for solving crimes can induce the idea of “science in the service of everyone”, with actual applications that influence our daily life. We also stress the importance that these experiments can be flawed, in the sense that it is not always clear, right from the start, what to test and how to test it. This is the opportunity to present science as a “human endeavor” made of rules and terms of engagement. Concepts like “experimental planning”, “sampling”, and “data collection” can be introduced to familiarize students with the specific line of thought in executing a scientific experiment. We chose to introduce several tests congruent to the story, but only one of them expressed the right answer. That way, it is easy to portray science work as something made of trial and error, and not just accessible at a click of a button.
4. **Proper Closure, with the Dissemination of the Theory:** After the students had the experience of how scientific knowledge is built, they also must know the proper way to disclose their findings. With respect to the real case, since it involved a trial, it is easy to portray it as an ideal scenario to reveal the conclusion of the experiments. However, a case can be made for a revelation step in a more appropriate scientific environment. For example, the staging of an academic conference or a science class can be an ideal place where students themselves can present the results they have recorded. That way, the intrinsic procedures of public speaking, presentation, and argumentation are being subsequently learned by them. It is a simple and effective way of allocating some of the credit for the development of the story to the students who partook in it.

The narrative construction and gamification adaptation of this activity were constructed by extracting the elements cited above from these four basic steps. All the features of the story were inspired by the outtakes produced from the previous analysis.

Characters' Selection

We have described, with some detail, the real-life story of the “Crime on Flores Street” in a previous section. The first step was to choose which details of the real story would be used in our activity (such as characters and locations). It is important to choose a starting event within this story that could trigger

the interest and curiosity of the audience. And, as we stated previously, adding a mysterious death can serve as a decoy to catch your audience's attention. Therefore, our starting point was the murderer of Mário Sampaio. We could have chosen the death of José Sampaio Júnior (although it is mentioned by the teachers) but did not for two reasons: 1. Vicente Urbino de Freitas was not convicted for his death in real life (R. J. Dinis-Oliveira, 2018, p. 69); and 2. Mário's death was the starting point of the plot.

We decided to reduce the number of characters to those essential for storytelling adaptation. Nonetheless, the characters that were cut off did not interfere with the overall premise. Then again, we added some details and relationships between characters to avoid directing all suspicions towards Vicente Urbino de Freitas.

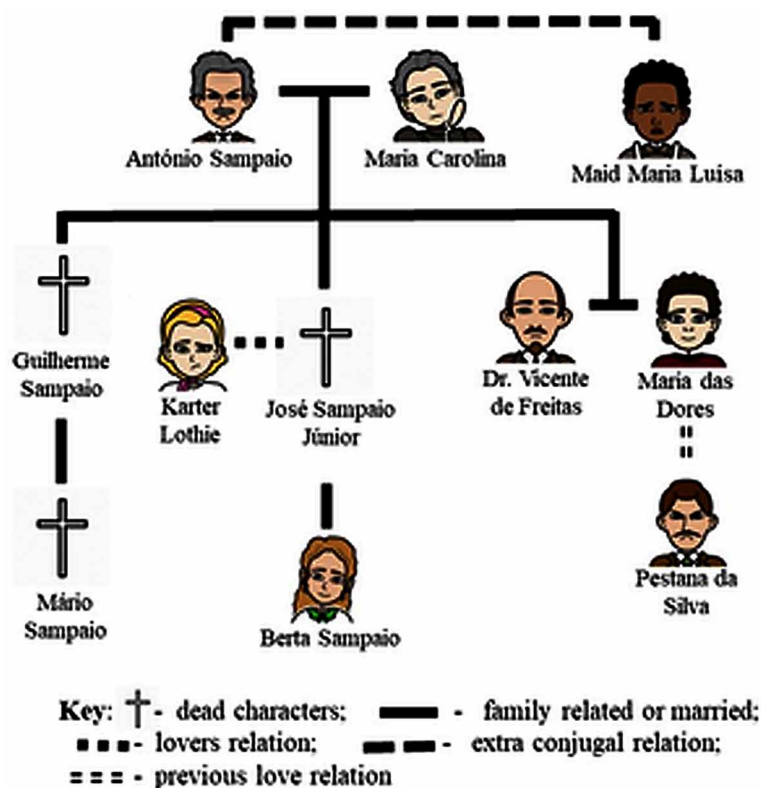
Some story elements and the relationships between the characters were intentionally changed, although they in no way taint the scientific findings from the hands-on experiences, nor change the culprit. And, by doing so, we were able to test if the students are more drawn to cast conclusions mounted on scientific arguments.

All the characters included in the story, together with the backgrounds, were created in Storyboard-That,(2020) a platform for digital storytelling that enables the creation of graphic novels and comics with a lot of options of personalization.

The main characters of the Sampaio family, and those closest to them, are represented in Figure 3. Since our story begins with Mário Sampaio's death, he is represented with a cross. At this point, his father, Guilherme Sampaio, and his uncle, José Sampaio Júnior were also dead, so they are also represented by crosses. The wives of both men do not exist in the story. However, in José Sampaio Júnior's case, the teachers mentioned that he had a wife who had died before the event and that he was in a relationship, at the time of his death, with Karter Lothie, who was not the mother of Berta Sampaio. Berta Sampaio was the only granddaughter who was kept in the story, since she was old enough to "be questioned" by the police. We only needed one of the girls to contrast her actions with Mário's: in the real story, he ate the whole portion, the girls did not; he followed Dr. Vicente de Freitas's instructions regarding the enemas, while the girls did not.

Only one help is represented here, as the wealthy family is described to also have a cook (Dinis-Oliveira, 2019, p. 10). Maria Luísa was the maid, and we wanted to make her a 'scapegoat', making things a little more complicated, mysterious, and interesting. And for some reason, in this type of activity, a lot of people suspect the help first. Thus, we have faked a relationship between her and António Sampaio, which resulted in her getting pregnant. In fact, the script of this first part is written so that the characters "accused" each other. We will detail that in the next section.

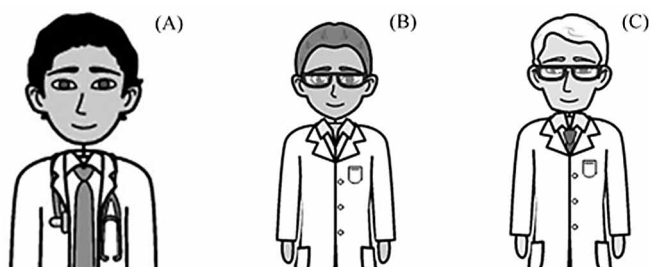
Figure 3. Recreation of the Sampaio family tree for “Ethics against Chemistry” activity.



Lastly, we slightly changed the name of Vicente Urbino de Freitas to Vicente Freitas, to avoid the chance of the students finding out about the real story, by a simple Internet search.

These are all the characters that appear at the beginning of the story. Each one of them tells what happened, or what they thought happened to cause Mário’s death. As the characters share their thoughts and feelings, this brings the audience closer since it seems as if they were speaking directly to them.

Figure 4. Characters outside the Sampaio’s family: (A) Adelino Leão da Costa, (B) António da Silva, (C) Augusto António Rocha.



The last character on the tree is Pestana da Silva, the public prosecutor, who later accused Vicente Urbino de Freitas of murdering his nephew. However, his actions were questioned because of a previous relationship with Maria das Dores, and he was accused of acting out of jealousy (R.J. Dinis-Oliveira, 2018, p. 10). He only appears towards the end of our story.

Figure 5. Representation of António Ferreira da Silva.



Besides Vicente Urbino de Freitas, other doctors attended the house of the Sampaio family to treat the ill children. Again, here we reduced the number of characters for simplification purposes and incorporated the medical doctor Adelino Leão da Costa (Figure 4A), who performed the autopsy of Mário Sampaio in real life (R. J. Dinis-Oliveira, 2018, p. 69). He could also give the audience a second opinion upon the treatment given to the children.

As we stated before, toxicological tests were performed in real life and there were two Portuguese laboratories involved, one in Porto and the other in Coimbra. Therefore, we added characters that could speak on behalf of these laboratories: António da Silva from Porto (Figure 4B) and Augusto António Rocha from Coimbra (Figure 4C). In real life, Augusto António Rocha was a medical doctor and professor at Universidade de Coimbra who was asked by the defence of Vicente Urbino Freitas to help in the case. This was a controversial choice, as Augusto António Rocha had studied medicine with Vicente Urbino de Freitas (Leonardo, 2009).

Our final character had relevant participation in this case in real life: António Ferreira da Silva (Figure 5). At the time of the murderer, António Ferreira da Silva was a chemistry teacher at Academia Politécnica do Porto (1877-1910) (Ferraz-Caetano, 2019, p. 213). His discovery of new reactions for alkaloid analysis was published in the Academy of Sciences of Paris. And since Vicente Urbino de Freitas was accused of using alkaloids to poison family members, Ferreira da Silva was asked to help (Martins, 2018, p. 244).

Script Composition

After selecting our characters, the next step was to give voice to them and it was particularly important that the characters spoke directly to the audience, recreating almost an open dialogue and creating a deeper connection with the audience. Otherwise, the characters would only confront each other, putting

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distance between the story and the audience, leaving the audience as a third party, and feeling left out. This could increase the levels of the distraction of the audience.

To solve this issue, and to involve our audience in the story, we gave students a role. This way, they felt like they were participating in the story. And since there was a murder to be solved, the students assumed the role of the police investigators who were trying to solve the case. By doing so, the audience role-play could interact with the characters, hear and see what happened.

The first animation from *StoryboardThat* sets the tone of the activity and the teachers set some of the rules, guiding the students through the game. As the audience assume the role of police investigators, they receive the instructions from their chief, who assigns them the mission to crack this case and to write everything down, as there could be some useful information. The chief then orders the police investigators to head down to the scene of the crime: the Sampaio family house and interview whoever is inside.

Although our characters and environment match the 19th-century, the language used and the dialogues of the characters were kept in the 21st-century, to avoid linguistic entropy and to make it legible for our audience. The language used in the 19th-century is context-bound and it has its particularities, which could be hard for a fourteen-year-old to understand. The characters' message could be lost in translation, preventing the story from coming through.

Since there are a lot of characters and our audience was made up of middle-school children, the script was written to interchain characters of the Sampaio household. In other words, when the police investigators interview a character in a room, that same character reveals the name of someone else in the household, who is usually interviewed subsequently. The characters always direct their speech to the police investigators, except for António Ferreira da Silva, who appears last and speaks to a chemistry class, while Pestana da Silva speaks to the judge.

Nonetheless, they all tell a small part of the story, which obliges the audience to pay attention to the narrative and reconstruct the whole story themselves. This is not a fluid narrative, where there is a succession of events that occur and culminate in the climax of the story. The characters are almost secondary and are driven by the power of the narrative itself. The purpose of our narrative, in doing the interviews, was to keep it simple in order to help the information sink in, but also to turn on the focus to the characters, as they accused each other of being the murderer. All characters created were static and since they needed to talk, we had to come up with a way to "give voice" to the characters. Therefore, we imported the idea of speech balloons from comic books. This way our characters could "talk", and we could add as many speech balloons as we wanted, to accommodate all the lines of their speech. Figure 6 and Figure 7 exemplify different characters within the household of the Sampaio family, demonstrating different facial expressions while being interviewed by the police investigators, as they tell their side of the story.

The static images were also limiting in one other aspect: the audience could not ask questions to the characters; their questions were also previously established. Figure 6B shows two speech balloons, one from Maria Carolina the other, in the bottom left corner, belongs to the police investigator.

Figure 6. Examples of the characters and scenery from the Sampaio household, with António Sampaio (A) and Maria Carolina (B) being interview by the police investigators



The audience cannot control the story, they do not have that freedom. Much to the contrary, this type of storytelling can be defined as *passive storytelling* (Ma, 2012, p. 18). However, for this activity, our story had to be set up with a screenplay, as we wanted to guide our audience on the right path to solving the mysterious murder of Mário Sampaio. By not having the freedom to interact with the characters, all members of the audience have the same information, therefore in theory they are all at the same starting point to solve Mário Sampaio's case. We did realize that this passive storytelling may not be enough to engage with our middle-school student audience and thus in the next section, we will describe how we turned this story into an interactive activity, which can entertain the audience.

Figure 7. Examples of the characters and scenery from the Sampaio household, with Vicente Urbino de Freitas (A) and Miss Karter Lothie (B) being interview by the police investigators



The first character to be interviewed, as per 19th-century cultural rules, is António Sampaio, the man and owner of the house. He describes to the police investigators that both grandchildren felt ill but only Mário died, with the same symptoms as his son, José Sampaio Júnior. Then again, when he was told that everyone in the house was going to be interviewed, he responded that the maid, Maria Luísa, only speaks nonsense, so she is not worth interviewing, with an expression of worry, despair and concern about what she could say about the pregnancy (Figure 6A). António mentions that his daughter, Maria das Dores, is in the dining room, so the police investigators interview her next.

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Maria das Dores quickly pushes the blame towards Miss Karter, confessing to never liking her, since she drank funky teas all the time (detail visible in Figure 7B). When asked about the motive Miss Karter could have to kill Mário Sampaio, Maria das Dores said it was all about money, as she always asked José Sampaio Júnior for money. She also mentions quarrels between Miss Karter and her mother, Maria Carolina, concerning the family's money and José Sampaio Júnior.

Maria Carolina, next in line for the interviews, is very upset about the death of her grandson, and by the other family members that she already lost. She reveals that her son, Guilherme, died in an accident and José Sampaio Júnior died in agony, vomiting, treated by Vicente Urbino de Freitas. Nonetheless, like her daughter, she also accuses Miss Karter of murdering Mário Sampaio and José Sampaio Júnior, for the family fortune. In Figure 6B, a vase with roses is visible. This detail is important to recall since roses are cultivated in the house and very appreciated. In fact, Berta Sampaio (a scenario not illustrated here) is interviewed in the garden of the house, surrounded by roses.

Miss Karter Lothie is both stunned and preoccupied that Mário Sampaio was poisoned, as she is aware that she is going to take the blame for it since there are people in that house who do not care about her, nor like her. Moreover, she questions why the children could eat sweets from an unidentified box that the maid brought into the house. She also states that the children were the only ones to eat sweets from that box and were treated by Vicente Urbino de Freitas when they started to fall ill, despite the fact that the remedy he gave them did not seem to work.

Vicente Urbino de Freitas sits at his desk, with a wrapped box and some candy (Figure 7A). As he is being interviewed, he comes across as arrogant, stating that he is never wrong. He tries to diverge attention, launching suspicions upon the fruit salts given by Maria Carolina, as they could have had something added, a blue powder that the maid Maria Luísa saw in Maria Carolina's room. He states that the latter lost her mind over the scandal with the maid Maria Luísa. When asked about José Sampaio Júnior's death, he redirects the claim towards Miss Karter.

The maid Maria Luísa's turn has come, and she claims that the package of sweets was left at the door, with no identification. She brought it to the house as it could be something important, and then confesses that she is pregnant by Antônio Sampaio, who had visited her room at night. She asked Maria Carolina not to fire her and she was kind explaining that she had already lost children, she did not want to lose anyone else that could carry the family's name. When asked about the blue powder that Maria Carolina keeps in the room, Maria Luísa confirms that she saw it and that the mistress said that the blue powder was used on the roses, and was kept there so that the children could not reach it.

The last character that is interviewed is Berta Sampaio, and she tells the police investigators that she was very sick on Easter, as was her cousin Mário. She confesses that Vicente Urbino de Freitas gave them remedies, the enemas, but that she did not take hers. She also states that both of them ate some sweets, and she tried the coconut cake but did not like the taste of it, so she gave it to Mário, who ate the whole cake.

After interviewing the household of Sampaio's family, the police inspectors turn towards the other medical doctor who was also called at the house to treat the children, Adelino Leão da Costa. He states that when he arrived at the house, there was nothing he could have done to save Mário Sampaio, who probably died from something he ate. He also says that Vicente Urbino de Freitas only attended to the children as a request from their grandmother, who insisted tenaciously. When asked about the enemas that were prescribed by Vicente Urbino de Freitas, Adelino states that he does not agree with that prescription, since they are not effective.

This set of interviews concludes the storytelling part, which is important to set the mood of the story, and to introduce some facts to the audience: how the characters are related to each other (Figure 3), what events led to Mário's death, the stories behind the characters and what actions Berta did differently from Mário (whose actions ultimately led to his death). The story pauses for a bit, to give the audience a chance to investigate the crime and try to figure out, in an interactive way, who committed the murder.

The laboratory character António da Silva (Figure 4B) states that they work with new reactions that can identify toxic compounds, a useful technique to help the case. Augusto António Rocha (Figure 4C), on the other hand, states that he knows very well the Sampaio family since he studied medicine with Vicente Urbino de Freitas. He also disdains the work from the laboratory in Porto and calls António da Silva a liar.

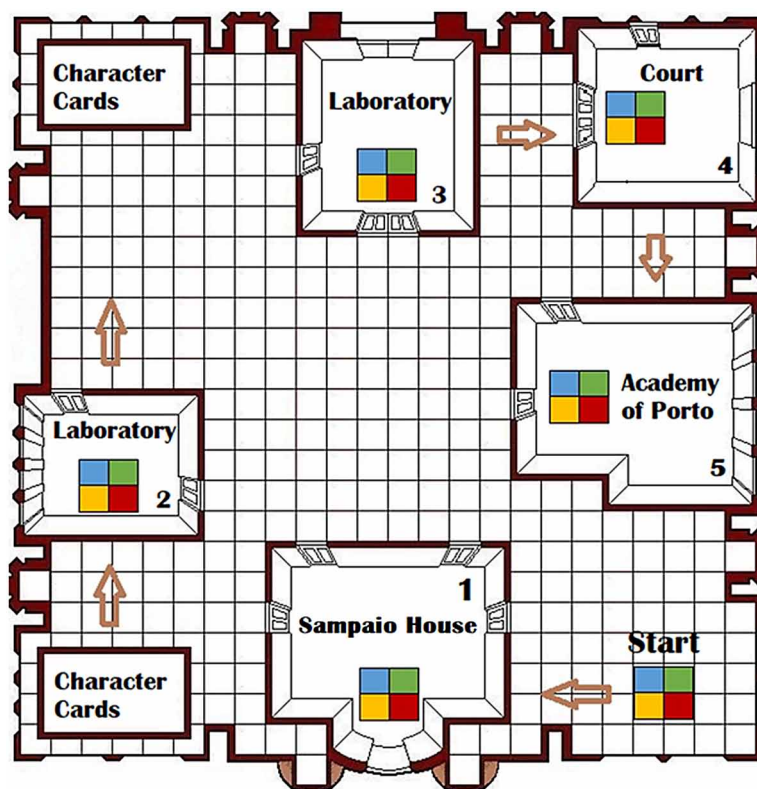
After the laboratory results are back, the storytelling continues its pace, reaching its final stage. The case is brought to justice, and the prosecutor is Pestana da Silva. He states to the court that the laboratory in Porto found the presence of alkaloids within samples of Mário Sampaio's urine, although the laboratory from Coimbra did not find such substance. Even so, he accuses Vicente Urbino de Freitas of murdering his nephew and he also states that he does not like him as a person.

After the trial, the story skips two years and heads to the classroom of António Ferreira da Silva, where he tells the class how he helped solve a case, by creating new techniques to detect the presence of alkaloid substances, which were used to poison Mário Sampaio. And the culprit was Vicente Urbino de Freitas.

Addition of Gaming Elements

The question that remains is: how to transform this story into an interactive activity suited for middle-school students? The answer resides in adding gaming elements, thus turning this activity into a game. As we stated previously, games can be an effective tool to engage children in difficult subjects, and this also includes board games. Therefore, we were inspired by the popular board game Clue®, which included the premise that we were looking for in a game: that the participants play the role of investigators to find out who committed the murder. As we followed this premise, we constructed a board game (Figure 8) according to the same logic design as Clue®. The board game is divided into five major "stations", which are numbered: Sampaio house; Laboratory; Laboratory; Court; and Academy of Porto. The starting point of the game is marked by the position "Start" and above it there is a section composed of four colorful squares: yellow, blue, red, and green. These squares match the colors of the four teams playing the game, named after these colors, and are replicated in each station, to serve as an anchor, to convey a more dynamic sense of space and change of setting as the game evolves.

Figure 8. Structure of the gameboard of “Ethics against Chemistry”



Between the major stations, there are *in medias res* stations that represent a place where the “Character Cards” are laid. Teams will pick up a card whenever there are instructed to do so by the timeline animation controlled by the teacher, which sets the pace of the game. Each card contains an image and a small description of the person. Then, the students will assist at a small interrogation that was already described, conducted by the investigator with a particular character. The cards are made available for consultation throughout the game.

The timeline animation includes the rules and the timing of the next steps of the game. It also incorporates digital storytelling (characters animations) and pauses for group discussions. To change “stations” and follow the game, students must conclude tasks like hands-on laboratory experiments (Laboratory station 2 and station 3) or answer questions, engage in some ethical challenges (stations 1; 4; and 5), available in a pre-determined digital report. This digital report is accessed via the internet at the beginning of the game through a smartphone (one per team).

The gameboard sets the timeline of the game and the storytelling (Figure 8) as the starting point of the game is Station One, the crime-scene house, where the police investigators go first. There, they learn what happened and interview the Sampaio household. Afterward, and as they collect samples from the house, the police investigators go to the laboratories available at the time (Stations 2 and 3) to have the samples analyzed. At least one of the samples was used to murder the victim. With that in mind, each team will proceed to analyze all samples. Next, in Station 4, there is a “Dramatic Disclosure” moment, brought about by the character Pestana da Silva in the trial of this case. The teams are encouraged to

debate orderly, as to make their arguments on who is the culprit. Finally, Station 5 is the “Revelation Station”. The students are presented with António Ferreira da Silva’s story to his class how he helped solve this case. He reveals who committed the murder and what poison was used.

Figure 9. Word cloud containing the answers given to describe “Ethics against Chemistry” (free translation by the authors).

Source: WordArt.com, 2020



As part of the gaming strategy for this activity, we have added compulsory laboratory experiments that students need to participate in. They serve as plot points in which they analyze all the samples presented along the storyline, bearing in mind that at least one of them was used to accomplish this crime. Consequently, they will use the experiments to determine the murder weapon. In this part, the role of the teacher/supervisor is pivotal. Each experiment is presented with a series of protocols and safety warnings that ensure the completion of each task. In order to help students complete all laboratory queries, teachers will provide aid, on a step-by-step basis, during all stages of the experiment, making sure students are aware of the scientific concepts behind each action. We highlight that all experiments were designed to tackle specific chemistry issues that students were familiarized with from their middle-school syllabus. Bellow we present a quick remark on the experimental contents.

Experiment 1: the purpose is to compare current analytical methods with the techniques used in the 19th-century. For that, students will analyze hair samples and compare their magnified samples with model strains of types of hair. They should conclude that it was not possible to assign blame based on this evidence, as it was not possible back then.

Experiment 2: the students perform a flame test, applying simple concepts of oxidation-reduction processes. By comparing the samples with a library of compounds, students identify certain samples through the color of the flame emitted by each of them (this test reveals that one of the samples is copper sulfate).

Experiment 3: in this experiment, students use a special identifying dye (Dragendorff’s reagent) which is added in small quantities to the solid samples. If the reagent changes its color, it will form a small precipitate, whose color may identify a specific compound. This experiment reveals that one of the samples was an alkaloid (which turned out to be the poison used in our story).

Experiment 4: students perform a very familiar experiment known as “warm foam” or “elephant toothpaste”. If the addition of one of the liquid samples generates the outcome expected within this experiment, it will prove that one of the samples is oxygen peroxide. This activity introduces students to the concept of catalysis.

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Experiment 5: in the experiment “revealing sheet”, when iodine tainted paper sheets are in contact with ascorbic acid (vitamin C), the paper goes back to its original color, demonstrating a redox reaction. This experiment identifies one of the samples as ascorbic acid.

Experiment 6: in the “identifying glue” experiment, if mixing normal white glue with a specific liquid sample results in a new malleable solid, it shows the presence of a Borax solution in one of the samples. This experiment introduces the concept of non-Newtonian mixtures.

Figure 10. Categories of learning takeaways stated by the students to describe “Ethics against Chemistry”

investigation 24.5%	social skills 6.3%	history 18.9%	positive attitude 8.4%	chemistry 44.8%
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These samples were not chosen by chance. Hydrogen peroxide was a common household disinfectant, so it is not a strange element to hold in a house. The presence of ascorbic acid could be explained by the usage of fruit salts that were given to the grandchildren by Maria Carolina. The copper sulfate sample finds its explanation in the storytelling and scenery, as it was used for the roses’ plantation, as a few characters mentioned it. The borax solution also has common household applications.

These experiments were designed to complement the storytelling activity and provide the answer (in part) to the game’s initial question. Students must follow the laboratory protocol to correctly identify all the samples. Several samples can be tested in the process, though the experiment only reveals the composition of one sample. For example, in Experiment 4, two liquid samples are put to the test but only one of them reacts, enabling its identification. In Experiment 6, the liquid sample that reacted in Experiment 4 will react this time with the white glue. This process allows students to proceed through a ‘trial and error’ method, ultimately discarding the samples that show no toxic effect for humans. If they perform this chain of experiments correctly, they should conclude that Experiment 3 revealed the murder weapon. The next step was to suggest who could have better access to such a substance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we focus on student feedback on the activity regarding both its storytelling and edutainment components. It intends to analyze the feedback on the suitability of this approach from the student’s perspective. As such, it can be made a case for the positive impact of this framework, proving primary evidence on improving this storytelling adaptation.

The feedback of the students was evaluated with an empirical assessment of the individual reports, voluntarily made by each participant.

Student Evaluation

At the end of the activity, a student evaluation form was embedded in digital inquiries, which prompted them to answer some questions. First, the students were asked to rate the overall experience, on a scale

from 1 to 5 (Likert, 1932), 1 being rated as awful, and 5 as excellent. The participants gave the activity a 4.77 grade (n=160). This represents positive feedback suggesting overall enjoyment in the students.

The following question was intended for 'brain dumping': "Use three words to describe the activity". The results obtained by word analysis from their report answers are depicted in Figure 9. The word cloud portrays common answers from a universe of 406-word entries, amongst a sample of 146 students. The size of the words represents their frequency, therefore words in larger fonts appeared more frequently on the students' answers. Details of this analysis are provided in Table 1 of Appendix 1.

The words in Figure 9 correspond to 62% of the answers given by the students. All of them represent positive feedback from the participants, choosing words that convey educational and emotional answers. The word "mysterious", in our view, cannot be dissociated from the story plot of this activity. The word "different" can be interpreted as describing the novelty factor of this activity since the word "innovative" also appeared (1.5%).

Though the students also used other words in their answers, they were less frequent, and would not be perceptible in a word cloud. Other answers include the words: joy, formidable, original, entertaining, unpredictable, amazing, good, brilliant, and exciting. At the opposite end, the activity was also described as: tiresome, complicated, complex, deceptive, dramatic, stressful, challenging, hard, annoying, and boring. The frequency of these words is also discriminated in Table 1 of Appendix 1.

Finally, one of the questions allowed students to write down their main takeaways from the experience. Only answers that matched these criteria were considered, vague answers like "I learn a lot", "I don't know", "Stuff" or "Everything" were not included, which led to a total of 143 valid answers. The students also gave random answers (14.7%) such as: "one shouldn't kill children", "killing your family is wrong", "be careful who you marry", or even "don't trust medical doctors called Vicente". Answers that truly replied to our question ("What did you learn?") were grouped in the categories in Figure 10.

In the investigation category (24.5%) were included answers regarding the process of investigation included in the game or the skills need to do so, such as: "We should analyze every hypothesis before coming up with an answer"; "Observe every clue", "To be a detective", "To pay attention to details" or "We should think simply and logically instead of creating theories that we cannot prove".

The category of social skills (6.3%) included answers like: "Teamwork", "To judge people better" or "Respect my teammates and everyone's opinion".

The history category included answers that mentioned the history of science and the story of the "Crime on Flores Street", students answered like: "This real case", "Ancient science", "I learned more about forensic chemistry and about history" or "I learned about an historic episode that happened in Portugal".

The positive attitude category (8.4%) includes demonstrations of positive attitudes towards science and chemistry. For example: "I learned that science is very important to help solve cases", "Chemistry is not boring", "I learned that criminology is more important than I thought" or "I learned that I can find the answer to many problems with chemistry".

Lastly, the category chemistry (44.8%), which included experiments, compound identification, and chemical reactions, students gave answers such as: "The reaction of substances with other substances", "Interesting experiences", "More chemical reactions", "I learned that some components are toxic and how to execute some experiments".

Some students gave a more structured answer, which mentioned different aspects; therefore, their answer was included in several categories. For example, the answer "I learned how to act like a 'real' detective and learned a lot about the history of science" was included in the category investigation and in the category history.

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The “Crime on Flores Street” storytelling part made an impact on the students, providing the backbone of this activity. And the activity fulfilled its objective, in that it established a fresh form of edutainment that could help approach difficult subjects, such as chemistry, in a fun and interactive way.

Difficulties in Implementation

One of the major difficulties we encountered was the heterogeneity of each class, composed of children coming from different parts of the country, having different levels of education, behaviors, and knowledge. Although in the 7th and 8th grades Portuguese students have some contact with science, laboratory experiments are often left out, which was proven by the students themselves. Some revealed no previous laboratory training, often failing to identify reagents or laboratory material. Therefore, as the scientific component is a key aspect of this activity, one of the hardships of the activity design was to accommodate adequate experiments to incorporate concepts easily understood by the participants. As we said, since every group of students was heterogeneous, it was challenging to adapt the explanation of concepts during the activity. As to avoid any tedious parts of the activity, teachers frequently needed to adapt their discourse to ensure that the students understood how this content was interlinked with the storytelling elements.

Even though laboratory safety rules are stated by the teacher and also written in their protocols, before any laboratory experiments students often forgot to follow the laboratory rules.

“Ethics against Chemistry” was introduced in the Summer program that lasted a whole day, in a context where learning is supposed to be fun and ‘hardcore evaluation’ is put aside. As such, students might feel more relaxed since they do not have the pressure to succeed, besides that of winning the game. This factor might have reflections on their answers and on their commitment to the task.

On the other hand, one can easily lose the interest of a student or the entire class, unless their sense of curiosity is appealed to and that was not a problem that this activity faced. Much to the contrary, after the initial set of interviews with the Sampaio household, many students started to hypothesize ridiculous explanations for Mário’s death, including an ‘evil twin’, an ‘evil clone’, a ‘suicide’, or even that ‘Berta did it’. We had to repeat for different classes and several times that the students should stick to the information given by the characters and not use external explanations. One frequent question was if the murder would only appear near the end of the story (for suspense building). We had more difficulties in guiding the students through the story, sticking to the important facts, than encouraging them to participate in the activity at all.

Students showed real interest in participating and debating with the teachers and with each other in this case, eagerly explaining who they thought was the murderer. And sometimes the time stipulated for discussion was not enough for all opinions to be heard. Time management for discussion and student participation must be rethought to better compensate time spent on the laboratory stations.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

“Ethics against Chemistry” was tested for the first time in the Summer of 2019. In this pilot study, the main point was to measure the student’s receptivity, obtain their feedback, and improve this activity for future editions. Evaluation methods still require some improvement, to convey more outtakes from the gathered data.

Further investigation is required, most importantly, to determine if this activity enables long-term knowledge retention. It is important to assess if the children retain the knowledge that they have accumulated, to implement changes that could improve the effectiveness of “Ethics against Chemistry”. It would be relevant to assess if this activity transmits new information or not. The data we provided cannot show if this activity is going to have an impact on students in the long-term. To do so, questionnaires before and after the activity that gauge the student’s chemistry knowledge must be administered. However, the questionnaires must be carefully designed, as too many forms for this age group can be quite plaguy.

Other parameters should also be included in future studies, such as analyzing students’ motivation in relation to the game, as well as science awareness.

Once standardized, “Ethics against Chemistry” could be tested on larger samples and, with the right adaptations, this activity could even be used as a classroom resource for chemistry and history teachings in the 7th and 8th grades in Portugal. If one intends to use this activity in the classroom, major changes should be done, so this activity could be implemented in a 90-minute class.

On the other hand, the model of this activity could be used to inspire similar activities, to tell other stories of forensic chemistry or even stories from other subjects. The combinations of storytelling and gamification are endless, and the results can be very rewarding.

CONCLUSION

Based on the performed evaluation, “Ethics against Chemistry” successfully introduced middle-school children to the history of science topics, in an interesting, interactive, and fun way. Through gamification, storytelling, and role-playing techniques, students adopt the scientific method to solve this game, while learning chemistry concepts with hands-on experiments and solving ethical questions.

This chapter brings new insights regarding the implementation and interpretation of a real-life historical event, in a storytelling-based science communication activity. By combining storytelling methodologies with concepts in chemistry, we have shown that it is possible to connect storytelling with classical disciplines, using new technological channels. The history of science is brought together with the seldom explored storytelling practice, to reveal historical events and convey simple scientific concepts, aimed at middle-school students.

When addressing the edutainment component of the activity presented above, we highlighted its value (and necessity) in the learning process. The feedback gathered from the students showed that their predisposition to learn the outcome of the story (including the scientific themes) was higher when they were engaged with the storytelling feature of the activity. It was perhaps the “entertainment” component that sparked their interest in learning what was happening in the story. Clearly, the connection of edutainment with the learning process cannot be overlooked, as it can be a key factor in increasing student motivation.

This game establishes a great framework for exploring other topics regarding the history of science and STEM, while discussing some ethical issues effectively. By replicating the design and structuring steps made available throughout this chapter, scientists, teachers, and science communications have a valuable tool to create or adapt stories for science education purposes.

The use of a real-life event from the history of science and the location of this event (Porto, Portugal), contributed to an easier connection with the audience (Portuguese students). Also, it allowed them to assimilate the importance of the history of science, its overall development, and how it can explain so

much of the science applications of our daily life. Therefore, it was a major contributor to the increase of students' awareness of science during this event.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Edutainment: Conjugation of an entertainment activity with educational content, so as to improve learning and make it more interactive.

Gamification: Adding game elements to a non-gaming context, such as team-players competitiveness, win/lose logic, or gaining points through the activity.

Hands-on Activity: A type of experimental activity that invites the touch sensitivity of the participant, who can manipulate objects.

Non-Formal Education: Learning activities provided outside the school system (formal education).

Problem-Based Learning: Learning technique that appeals to the students' curiosity by establishing a problem to be resolved, and by doing so, the students learn from this task.

Storytelling: The art of telling a story in such a way that it compels the audience, engaging with them through appeal to the emotional side. A good resource to use in science communication.

APPENDIX 1

All answers to the question “Use three words to describe the activity” were carefully analyzed and the ones that did not meet these criteria were eliminated (like “I should have won”), resulting in a sample of 146 valid answers. Similar words were uniformized, for example, “mysterious” and “mystery”, those answers were counted as “mysterious”, the same goes for “cultural” and “culture” that were counted as “cultural”, “challenge” and “challenging”, counted as “challenging”. Words with related meanings were not merged in purpose, so as to stay true to the students’ answers.

For the word assessment frequency, answers that were a repetition of one word (“cool, cool, cool”), were counted one time, rather than three times. Answers that present two different words (“fun and creative”) or just one (“good”) were also included in the analysis.

Finally, the words were translated into English, always trying to be true to the Portuguese meaning.

Table 1. Groups of words that the students used to describe “Ethics against Chemistry”, divided by percentage (free translation by the authors)

Percentage	Words
0.25	Suitable, Joy, Animated, Anxiety, Brilliant, Tiresome, Captivating, Climatic, Neat, Uninteresting, Determined, Dramatic, Entrepreneur, Deceptive, Enriching, Tedious, Entertaining, Involving, Amazing, Stimulating, Excellent, Experimental, Explosive, Easy, Cute, Formidable, Delightful, Informative, Intelligent, Exchange, Nice, Logical, Crazy, Liar, Observative, Obvious, Original, Great, Patient, Controversial, Laughter, Simple, Stressful, Sad, Annoying, Exciting.
0.49	Scientific, Complex, Complicated, Confusing, Dynamic, Weird, Happy, Objective, Thoughtful, Chemical, Repeatable, Thriller, Top.
0.74	Cultural, Spectacular, Unpredictable, Boring.
0.99	Good, Challenging, Thrilling, Amusing, Enthusiasm.
1.23	Incredible, Interactive, Surprise.
1.48	Hard, Innovative.
1.72	Fantastic.
1.97	Creative, Curious.
2.46	Different, Intriguing.
4.19	Mysterious.
4.43	Educational.
7.39	Cool.
18.97	Interesting.
22.17	Fun.

Chapter 20

Transmedia Storytelling Edutainment and the New Testament Lesson

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling is the most ancient form of teaching that can enhance the learning experience, and transmedia is a technique where elements of a story get dispersed across multiple media with each story creating a cohesive entertainment experience. The storytelling framework is a viable solution to engage a universal audience, and the socio-cultural theory of learning presented underpins how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact instruction and learning. The study explores how the pre-historic practice of transmedia storytelling can be used and practiced by educators. Narratives transverse across media and can be traced back to the presentation of Biblical stories. The Bible story has been told across many different forms of media, from print to icons to stained glass windows. Jesus, the master teacher, used storytelling methods of instruction to convey his message to his learners across different platforms. The chapter explores the parallels between Biblical transmedia and contemporary transmedia and considers transmedia edutainment as a pedagogical practice in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

There is evidence of storytelling in every culture and in every land. The earliest forms of storytelling were primarily oral combined with expressions and gestures. The Bible is a pre-historical form of storytelling, and Jesus, one of the most depicted figures in history, used storytelling to connect with his audience and helped them to understand complex concepts. His stories were about what the people of that time could identify with and central to whom his listeners were.

Jesus was an extraordinary teacher who was proficient in narrative instruction. His teaching style drew massive crowds and held the attention of those who heard him. Jesus was a teacher who taught

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with compassion, and, for that reason, it is essential to study and acknowledge his methods. The paper addresses Jesus' teaching style and story structure methods, as well as the use of parables to teach lessons to people. Often, modern-day teachers overload students with a plethora of learning content, which is the opposite of the teaching methods of Jesus. The primary aim of this study is to ground the pedagogical practice in the social theoretical foundation and to show the benefits of the approach.

Transmedia storytelling, which is now supported by the Internet, provides a communal environment in the form of interactivity and participation. Stories contain universal themes that resonate on an emotional level with all human beings. Educators who use narratives in education can better communicate a lesson and engage a learner in retention and recall. Narrative instruction is a powerful learning tool, and learners who are emotionally and cognitively involved in the learning process can benefit. The persuasive power of stories and the emotional engagement with stories is something Jesus profoundly understood. The telling of a well-told tale encourages people to use their imagination so that they can interpret and amplify meaning. The Greek word *anamnesis* means to remember or recover the truth already within. Learning may be the rediscovery of truth that lies hidden deep in the soul, and which also connects all to one. It is imperative to connect to Jesus and to learn from his teaching practice, and this, in turn, will inform the learning experience.

The paper shows how the pre-historic practice of transmedia storytelling can be linked to current pedagogical practice, which can be used to educate learners in profound ways. Moreover, the work highlights the transmedia franchise, the characters in stories, and audience engagement. Transmedia storytelling edutainment involves the use of narratives as a holistic and critical-creative approach to learning, and it involves the use of stories to develop learning content around a particular discipline.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is interdisciplinary and considers current and pre-historic transmedia storytelling practice, student engagement, the master teacher, Jesus, and the New Testament lesson. First, a search of the existing literature was conducted to select the keywords of the primary search. Second, the references of the selected papers and the citations were reviewed. Third, the selected papers were classified according to their content. A thorough search of the existing literature was done on the Internet, Google Scholar and in Scopus using a combination of keywords: transmedia, storytelling, narrative pedagogy, New Testament, holistic learning, social theoretical pedagogy, master teacher. The articles gathered were 289 and then reduced to 156 based on limitations such as source, language, duplication, or accessibility. After scanning titles and abstracts, 36 works were accepted that narrowed in on the topic to support the storytelling practice by way of social learning and collaboration.

Transmedia Storytelling

In the era of media convergence, transmedia storytelling provides users with the ability to interact with their favorite entertainment content across multiple media platforms and formats. Transmedia is a process where elements of story get dispersed across multiple media and each stand alone account creates an individualized and cohesive entertainment experience. Through transmedia, audiences can experience the story across multiple platforms such as TV, film, radio, magazine, books, games, online, CDs,

exhibits, events, and toys, each piece making a specific contribution to the audience's understanding of the story and universe.

Marsha Kinder (1991) coined the term transmedia in the '90s, when she noticed a change taking place in media marketing related to franchise entertainment, which considered the consumer as an active participator in meaning-making. Transmedia storytelling is not to be confused with traditional cross-platform media franchises, sequels or adaptations. The creation of rich environments that support a variety of different characters is an aspect that distinguishes the transmedia story from single storylines. Transmedia storytelling represents earlier forms of media and it is vital that earlier forms of media and character representation should be examined for understanding.

Social Collaboration, Narratives, Emotional Engagement and Retention

Learning is considered a social act, and through social interaction and conversation among participants, better learning can be achieved. Collaboration in learning environments has been strongly associated with comprehension and retention. Johnson and Johnson (1986) point out that "there is persuasive evidence that cooperative teams achieve at higher levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work quietly as individuals" (p. 31) and there is persuasive evidence regarding the use of narratives in education, which has proven to increase retention and recall. Moreover, it is important to consider studies which have shown that students' attention span during lectures is around fifteen minutes (Wankat, 2002). Thereafter, attentiveness drops considerably, and the result is less retention of the material (Prince, 2004), and this is where storytelling can play a significant role.

The human brain is wired for story, that is, humans think sequentially much in the same way that story is executed in sequence. Ricoeur (1984) contends that human beings instinctually understand narrative expression, and most learners would agree that engaging with stories makes lessons more interesting. Narratives have universal appeal because they touch on human emotion, which is a characteristic of all learners. Furthermore, narratives are strongly linked to retention. Margolis (2009) confirms that all scientists are in agreement that "human memory is a narrative-driven process" (p. 10) and, since we remember in narrative, "we should teach in narrative form because it seems to be a more intrinsic process" (Kalogeras, 2014, p. 207). Since ancient times, stories have been used for teaching purposes. The persuasive power of stories and the emotional engagement with stories can lead to innovative pedagogies in media-rich environments. Stories engage audiences and they are perfect to engage learners. The present chapter considers important theorists in the field of education, as well as entertainment. Marshall McLuhan wrote, "Anyone who tries to make a distinction between education and entertainment does not know the first thing about either," and his insight is expanded on in this current work with transmedia storytelling edutainment.

What transmedia storytelling does is to take a narrative and place it on as many platforms as possible, while keeping the central theme or story at its core. The purpose of this practice is to reach as many people as possible and to initiate a collaborative and participatory culture across media space. Educators who use narratives in education can better communicate a lesson and engage a learner. Jesus as a teacher had perfected communication across space and time. His central message never changed, and he knew exactly how to deliver his message to whatever audience was in front of him. Whether it was discussing the word of God to soldiers, preachers, criminals, or children, his message never changed, but the way in which he delivered his message did. Today, we use the affordances of each medium differently to communicate messages, while Jesus did this in a natural manner.

Socio-Theoretical Foundations of Pedagogy

Humans and communities identify with stories, and together they bring understanding to people. In social constructivist classrooms, collaborative learning is a process of peer interaction that is mediated by the teacher much like the participatory culture found in a transmedia project. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in the construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). That is to say, adults in the learner's environment are conduits for the tools of the culture, which include language, cultural history, social context, and more recently, electronic forms of information access (UCD Open Educational Resources, n.d.).

Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism argues that knowledge and culture develop "first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people, and then inside the child" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 23). The theory applied to transmedia storytelling provides learners with interaction of the core story, and additional stories provide the learner with more understanding through the scaffolding of knowledge as demonstrated by the practice of Jesus.

Likewise, the socio-cultural theory of situated learning, which was popularized by Lave & Wenger (1991), argues that knowledge is built in context and through dialogue. The theory applied to transmedia storytelling allows students to work with instructors and peers collaboratively to solve both fictional and real world problems in much the same way as they would in their everyday lives. Moreover, socially distributed cognition, first imagined by Roberts in 1964, argues that knowledge and cognitive processes can be distributed through a community. The theory applied to transmedia could be useful when the cultural setting of the learner supports the community formed around the story world as demonstrated by Jesus. Furthermore, problems could be posed by the storytellers (pedagogues) and worked out in the minds of students while supported by the community.

To appreciate some of the debates around social pedagogy it is worth going back to the distinction made between teachers and pedagogues in ancient Greece. Pedagogues (*paidagogos*) were family attendants (slaves) whose duties were to supervise the young sons of the house. The pedagogues would sit with the boys in the classroom and also take them to the gym. As E. B. Castle (1961) contends, the classroom attendance of the pedagogue was to supervise the young man's manners and he was the parental authority throughout the school day. It is important to stress the moral supervision by the *paidagogos*. He taught boys how to behave, which was extremely important to the parents, more than the schoolmaster who taught him letters. He was, even if a slave, a member of the household, who aligned with the father's authority and views. The schoolmaster did not have contact with his pupils like the *paidagogos* did (Castle, 1961). Therefore, the role of the *paidagogos* in the learning environment should not be overlooked, especially in today's society, where moral character, values, and ethics are challenged.

The paper considers transmedia storytelling edutainment, narrative instruction, and learning communities led by master teachers as the new model of knowledge interaction. Similarly, there needs to be a bridge between science and art, fact and fiction, and the diverse worldwide community to address the needs of a rapidly changing world through a global platform that brings together scientists, educators, and leaders to inspire learning that fosters community, connectedness, and solutions to contribute to the higher good of all. The importance of logical reasoning, coherent research, as well as moral humans and compassionate educators cannot be overemphasized. Jesus told stories to inform, to emphasize his points, and to provide life-changing experiences, and so it is that this method should be followed by educators. Educators should engage their classrooms with storytelling lessons because they are the best

way to spark interest, appeal, and provide retention. Transmedia storytelling edutainment appears to be a viable solution to engage learners of all levels and of generations across cultures.

TRANSMEDIA AND THE BIBLE STORY

Narratives transverse platforms and bear a striking resemblance to the presentation of Biblical stories. Biblical stories have inspired contemporary transmedia stories and this makes transmedia a historical phenomenon. The Bible stories have been passed down through centuries and have been told across many different forms of media, from print to icons, to stained glass windows and to major motion pictures.

Religious art found in churches echo how the Christian story was told across media. However, it is not being suggested that spiritual stories are the same with entertainment stories found in contemporary media culture or that their content is related. Conversely, what is being conveyed is the story structure and characters found in stories are known to work across all cultures, and can engage audiences and learners alike.

The storylines and characters found in the Bible were conveyed on multiple platforms. Jesus is depicted in sermons, psalms, stained glass windows and sculptures and “there are more portraits of Jesus than there are scholar painters” (Witherington, 1995). Jenkins (2003) contends that “for most of human history, it would be taken for granted that a great story would take many different forms, enshrined in stain glass windows or tapestries, told through printed words or sung by bards and poets, or enacted by traveling performers”. In a transmedia context, the parishioner, for example, can experience Exodus in the course of a sermon and Deuteronomy via paintings (Long, 2007). According to Stetzer and Wax (2017):

Some people see the Bible as a collection of stories with morals for life application. But it's so much more. Sure, the Bible has some stories in it, but it's also full of poetry, history, codes of law and civilization, songs, prophecy, letters—even a love letter. When you tie it all together, something remarkable happens. A story is revealed. One story. The story of redemption through Jesus (p. 4).

What Stetzer and Wax (2017) describe is exactly what is found in the current transmedia franchise practice, which is all the varied components support the core story. The Biblical story was the beginning of what is now known today as transmedia storytelling and which is used by producers of entertainment content to engage audiences, and which can also be used in education to engage learners.

Transmedia Franchise

There are some parallels between contemporary transmedia and Biblical transmedia that should be examined. As an analogy, transmedia producers use an in-depth document called *The Transmedia Bible* to document their transmedia production. The assumption is that the depth and complexity of the production is synonymous with the depth of the Bible. *The Transmedia Bible* intimately defines the transmedia storytelling universe; the core story, and all aspects of the story world, such as character descriptions, environments, extensions and multimedia franchise information. The Hollywood movie franchise much like the Biblical narrative is dispersed onto different media platforms. However, in both cases, it is important to engage with the core text to achieve a good understanding of storyline and characters. With that in mind, the story, along with the characters, are the most important factors to the experience and

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not what media platform the story resides. Moreover, the movie characters, as well as Jesus Christ, the character, can be seen on multiple platforms with audiences engaging with him through various forms (Evans, 2011) and his appearance and representation across media assumed that the audience already knew the character (Jenkins, 2006), much like the hero in the entertainment media franchise.

The Bible resembles a franchise because Biblical stories create communities worldwide like franchised entertainment. Participatory cultures and communities of support are highly regarded when considering edutainment. Furthermore, transmedia franchises are created to motivate the consumer to engage with as many different media as possible in the same way the Church was interested in expanding their religious stories over centuries through paintings, icons, and text. Consistency in story extensions is important for both entertainment and religious entities. The forming of communities around stories is an aspect of both fandom and religiosity. It is evident the audience plays an important part in the authority and meaning of stories, which arise from the interaction and negotiation of ideas between the producers and users of the texts (Lewis, 2005). Transmedia practice utilizes techniques to integrate audience with story and individuals with character, bringing the story into daily life, and the active involvement in story is visible in both current and Biblical stories.

Everyone enjoys a good story and Jesus knew the power of story. Jesus is the symbol of sacrifice as he died on the cross, and in media, redemptive sacrifice is a common theme with brave male characters sacrificing their lives so that others could live (Morgan, 2008). In the Matrix trilogy, Neo sacrifices his life for what is left of the human race. Moreover, authors are inspired by characters who sacrifice their lives for others. Conflict drives story and the fight between good and evil is a popular one. Author J. K. Rowling has made it known that Christianity was one of her inspirations when writing *Harry Potter*. The battle between good and evil and the parallels between the character Jesus Christ and Harry Potter are purposely intertwined into the tale (Rosenthal, 2005). Stories involve conflict and the conflict is what makes the stories interesting, and the lessons learned are from the resolution of that conflict.

Transmedia Characters

There is a similitude between the representation of contemporary transmedia characters and Jesus. Good characters are the center of contemporary stories and Jesus is the center of the Biblical story. Jesus is a multi-faceted and a multi-dimensional character, like many of the present day transmedia characters. Pennington (2014) explains:

Jesus is beautiful because he is multi-faceted; he is not a flat character or a one-dot-on-a-white-canvas piece of minimalist art. He is multi-dimensional. We begin to glimpse this glory through the diverse titles the God-man bears and holds—Christ, Messiah, Anointed One, Savior, Friend, King, High Priest, Creator, Pantocrator (Almighty), Lord, Crucified One, Risen One, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, New Adam/Second Adam/Last Adam, King of the Jews, Man of Sorrows, Light of the World, Hope of All Nations, Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Prophet, Apostle, Bread of Life, Rabbi, Paraclete, Lion, and Lamb. In this many-layered variety we get a hint of what Jonathan Edwards called the glorious juxtaposition of divine excellencies.

The Bible story is one of the oldest and successful transmedia narratives in history. Scolari, Bertetti & Freeman (2014) believe that “older forms of transmedia franchise were constructed on character sharing rather than on the logic of a particular world” (p. 17). Characters in a transmedia story world

are much closer to the audience because the audience has more opportunity to engage and relate with them on different media platforms. Transmedia theorists agree that a good character can sustain multiple narratives, something which Jesus was able to successfully do time after time.

Jenkins (2006) takes his reader back to the Middle Ages and explains how the Christian story was told to a largely illiterate public: “Unless you were literate, Jesus was not rooted in a book but was something you encountered on multiple levels in your culture” (p. 119). Today, if you ask people how they would describe Jesus, you will get varied descriptive words, concepts, and ideas; and people can easily handle more than a single idea regarding Jesus. The various communicative channels, such as the Bible, movies, sermons, and historic documents feed different storylines and, therefore, people can create their own story based on their beliefs and values. The same practice and interaction resembles the transmedia audience of today, where the audience engages and interacts with content, as well as generates their own content in the way that suits them best. Learners can follow in this manner to make meaning from transmedia storytelling edutainment (TmSE) content.

From Jesus’ practice, educators can learn how to engage learners. Jesus related to his listeners using everyday examples, referencing, for example, mustard seeds, fig trees, fish, weddings, and the workforce just to name a few. Jesus loved to use sayings which have been handed down to the present day. A well-known saying of his was “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9), and “That’s the blind leading the blind” which is a variation of a saying of Jesus from Luke. Jesus used sayings for three reasons: “to capture His hearer’s attention, to encourage them to reflect on what He said, and to help them remember His words” (Zuck, 1995, p.184). Moreover, Jesus used humor and “there are many examples of Jesus’ use of humor and wit to get his point across. Jesus said what father would give his son a stone to eat, or a snake instead of fish, or when he asks for scrambled eggs, his father gives him a scorpion. I can almost hear Him saying, “C’mon man”” (McCoy, 2016, p.10). The Lord used humor indeed, but “He never told jokes merely to evoke hilarity. His humor was always purposeful” (Zuck, 1995, p. 204). The right humor at the right time can illuminate a lesson and engage the learners.

Moreover, Jesus was a master storyteller who engaged learners in a holistic manner that aligns with the natural working of the brain. It seems that, long ago, Jesus understood that engagement through storytelling is the best way to create understanding, retention, and recall. According to the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2010), stories are “a fundamental way in which the brain organizes information in a practical and memorable manner.” Likewise, in the manuscript, “Transmedia Storytelling and the New Era of Media Convergence in Higher Education” the author argues:

Transmedia Storytelling Edutainment (TmSE) is a pedagogical approach that uses storytelling to engage learners. It is a critical, creative and transformative pedagogy that aligns with natural workings of the brain because the brain thinks in story mode. Narratives provide emotional engagement for a universal audience and they are easier to remember and retain, which makes them ideal for educational practice (p.174)

Today, teachers can engage learners by using sayings, current events, personal stories of all types, and even humor is necessary.

Jesus' Teaching Methods

Jesus, one of the earliest transmedia storytellers, used different platforms to convey his message out to his followers. The stories found in the Bible are vivid accounts told by Jesus that allowed him to be able to communicate his messages in memorable and creative ways. Jesus' teaching methods were engaging and varied. He spoke plainly at times, spoke in parables, and used actions to inform and teach his audience. Parables are short fictional narratives or slogans told in the third person that are open to interpretation and make lessons intriguing. A parable can be defined as a brief story that can stand alone to support a lesson or a self-contained module that appeals to the thinking and attitudes of its hearers (Carlson, 2008). The parables Jesus told are unique in structure and design. His stories or parables are well-known, as, for example, the story of the great flood and Noah's Ark or the story of the Garden of Eden. Jesus was a master storyteller and he used stories to inform and convey important points at the beginning, middle, or end of a lesson.

Jesus' storytelling style of teaching was most likely learned on his own, perhaps through his prayer practice. He undoubtedly worked from a consciousness different from other religious leaders. Storytelling was a way for him to convey a lesson, avoid dualistic thinking, argumentation, and remain in oneness. When Jesus taught, he considered the whole person and he valued their tradition and culture. He adapted his teaching methods to the situation and the environment. His teaching was often opportunistic, as he drew from circumstances at hand to make his points, and his aphoristic style was what made his teaching enduring. Perhaps he realized that human attention span was limited and current events could be useful to instruction.

Jesus used the transmedia of his time, and his teaching methods were both engaging and varied. He was an interdisciplinary teacher and included a full scope of instruction that involved theory, practice, individual, group, personal, public activity and private life, and at the heart of his teaching method was story. It is important to mention Jesus adapted his methods to the situation. He did not write anything down. "One might even go beyond this to suggest that his refusal to write anything was itself a pointed comment on the uselessness of formal moral doctrines or codes; for him, moral agency operates within broader standards of conduct and character" (Burbules, n.d.). Today, moral character is an area that needs improvement and this was discussed in relation to the role of the teacher in the above section entitled the *Social Theoretical Foundation of Pedagogy*.

Up to this point, the chapter briefly contextualized the religious and historical origins of transmedia storytelling to understand Jesus' teaching methods. However, the focus is on Jesus, the educator, and not Jesus' religious preaching or teaching, so even those who do not believe in Christianity can benefit from his teaching style and transmedia storytelling practice. There is strong evidence of Biblical transmedia storytelling that evolved into contemporary transmedia storytelling practice, which can inform current pedagogical practice. Storytelling is a great way to convey a lesson with any subject matter:

Transmedia storytelling edutainment involves the use of stories to create learning content around a discipline. These may or may not be popular stories; however, it appears that the more popular stories – distributed across multiple platforms – may provide a better hook to capture the attention of learners. That is, recognizable stories from popular entertainment, and their extensions, may create greater anticipation and have broader appeal and an established atmosphere for engagement (Kalogeras, 2004, p. 16).

Furthermore, TmSE extends existing learning theories and transformative ideas and removes the barriers between people and social systems and can liberate both. TmSE is a holistic teaching method that is student-centered and not technologically oriented just like transmedia narrative, which is story-focused and not media-specific. Moreover, Jesus' methods provide insight to current TmSE practice and are considered in his story framework.

Jesus understood his audience and how to create story structure, and his "stories exhibit artistry with respect to unity, coherence, balance, contrast, recurrence, and symmetry" (Kistemaker, 2005, p. 50). According to Johnson (n.d.), Jesus applied the five fundamentals of story structure listed below:

1. **Hook.** He gets into the stories quickly, wasting no time. He absolutely understood that He had to command attention quickly. In *The Prodigal Son*, he begins simply with, "There was a man who had two sons..."
2. **Set up.** He gives enough details to paint the picture, and each description was rich adding to the mental picture being painted. He describes the rich man in Hell asking Lazarus "to place a drop of water on the tip of his finger to ease his agony."
3. **Dress Up.** He stayed focused on the direction of the story, but allowed enough depth to make it *real and meaningful* to the hearer without confusing the audience.
4. **Payoff.** He hit the high point, delivered the message, and taught a lesson. He was clearly prepared and knew exactly where the story was going. He got there quickly and efficiently. There was a destination, an *emotional* conclusion.
5. **Blackout.** He knew when it was over, and left them wanting more. Sometimes they *begged* Him to continue, but he challenged them by leaving some of the stories unfinished. Not untold, but unfinished. This forced each to think, and develop their own meaning from the story.

There are many ways to tell stories but there is much to learn from Jesus' storytelling practice that can inform storytelling practice in the classroom. Student engagement is key to learning and can be stimulated by a good story through emotional engagement, which is universal across culture.

Imagination

According to Carlson (2008), Jesus used his imagination to tell his stories. William Bausch (2015), the author of *Storytelling, Imagination and Faith*, writes: "Is there something in a story that in its very nature expresses the way and mind of God more than any other expression? Is it because a story is an intractable "knowledge energy" which links one person to another, one generation to another and ultimately, links all to God?" (p. 7).

Bausch quotes Amos Wilder (2015), author of *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination*, who calls for a greater use of the imagination, for it is "a necessary component of all profound knowing and celebration... it is at the level of imagination that any full engagement with life takes place" (p. 9). And, J.R.R. Tolkien distinguishes between two worlds, the primary world of the universe created by God, and the secondary world created by the imagination of human beings. These worlds, he says, are no less real. "What really happens is that the storymaker proves a successful 'sub-creator'" (J.R.R. Tolkien cited in Bausch, pp. 17-18).

Stories reflect our common humanity, and people can experience the events in stories, which they may never have had the opportunity to experience and learn from without any of the drawbacks. Kalogeras

(2017) states that stories “guide us back into ourselves, and they help us understand ourselves in events that have not taken place” (p. 62).

Imagination, without a doubt, can inform and add to understanding, and it can reveal truths. Bausch (2015) maintains that storytellers are our guides in the pursuit of truth much like philosophers and theologians. He further contends, “there is power in the imagination which cannot be overlooked. It is where we experience profound knowledge through experience exemplified in a story. Stories are intended to help learners consider possibilities. Similarly, ‘stories reflect our common humanity and bind us to one another in a common destiny, apparently even beyond time and space’ (Bauch, 2015, p. 41).

The Structure of Jesus’ Parables

Stories follow a common structure which includes three parts: act one, act two, and act three; however, Jesus presented a quicker more journalistic format that could be ideal for today’s learner with limited attention spans.

Interestingly enough, Jesus in his parables and stories made heroes of the outsiders and underdogs. He “rarely used personal examples, and while He regularly used material from Scripture, he only occasionally used historical examples” (Carlson, April 2, 2008). Jesus understood plot and could engage his listeners instantly. Carlson further contends:

Jesus knew how to establish the setting in the first ten seconds of His story. He knew how to use the Four W’s’ of Journalism (and an H) - Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? If we look at the parable the Sower and the Seed we learn in ten seconds: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture” (Luke 8:5–6).

Out of the six questions, four are answered:

1. *Who?* The sower.
2. *What?* Went out to sow.
3. *When?* Not answered, but probably at sowing time.
4. *Where?* His field.
5. *Why?* Not answered. Jesus will use this to illustrate spiritual receptivity.
6. *How?* Jesus develops the details to fit his teaching purposes.

The opening of Jesus’ stories also directed the listener’s interest. By establishing the basic plot in the first few seconds, Jesus could then tell a longer story. However, none of Jesus’ recorded stories would take more than three minutes to tell, while the shortest would take just 20 seconds. The last sentences of Jesus’ parables prompted a response from his listeners. Note some of His methodology:

- He usually didn’t have to state the main point, because it was obvious from the story.
- He usually established the analogy in the first sentence. For example, “The Kingdom of heaven is like ...” (Matthew 13:31).
- He often ended His stories with a convincing question. For example, “How is he then his son?” (Luke 20:44, KJV) (Carlson, April 2, 2008).

Jesus is one of the best storytellers and teachers of all time. He was called a master by his disciples and he taught about true motives and the honesty of the heart. Teaching is a talent that comes from God. In Ephesians the profession of teaching is being singled out as one of the gifts from God. “The gifts He gave were varied. Some were called to be apostles, others to function as prophets, still others to be evangelists, and others to be pastors or teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). Teaching is a gift and good teaching is heart-centered. Heart-centered education considers a holistic approach that builds character and not only academic achievement (Kalogeras, 2017). Under the heart-centered approach, the conscious teacher who understands themselves and others helps increase student knowledge and awareness of self.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Further research is needed on the intersection of science, storytelling, spirituality, as well as self-development through the framework of pedagogy, which may inspire a holistic model of education. Humankind is living in the aftermath of the digital revolution and transmedia storytelling could be the link to a convergence of media, platforms, and stories working together to create holistic learning experiences accessible to multiple generations and cultures. In the light of this information, more insight is needed on Jesus’ approach to teaching and the role the *pedagogos* in relation to moral and ethical development in education. An insightful discussion can be found in the publication *Illuminating the Heart: Finding meaning and purpose in life through higher education, transmedia storytelling and moral character* (Kalogeras, 2017). This manuscript provides a way to find meaning and purpose through education, Biblical reference, and storytelling. It is an insightful read for all educators interested in connecting to their higher good.

CONCLUSION

Jesus gave selected people an important gift; the gift of teaching and with that gift he revealed effective practice that can be gained through observing his teaching practice. “It has been given to you” is a major concept (Matthew 13:11) and gift from God, and therefore, educators should consider how to use Jesus’ storytelling methods in their own teaching practice. Matthew 13 contains his explanation of his use of parables as a way of teaching:

To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. That is why I use these parables,

For they look, but they don’t really see.

They hear, but they don’t really listen or understand. (Matthew 13:11-13)

Jesus gave educators the ability to comprehend the mystery of their practice if they genuinely seek to understand it, and the truth of the matter is Jesus inspired audiences through storytelling. His exemplary method can inform any educator willing to embrace it.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Aphoristic Style: A compact and epigrammatic style of writing. An aphorism is a short sentence expressing a truth in the fewest possible words.

Holistic Education: A holistic perspective concerned with the development of a person’s intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative, and spiritual potentials. It engages students in the teaching/learning process and encourages personal and collective responsibility.

Moral Character: The existence or lack of virtues such as integrity, courage, fortitude, honesty, and loyalty. Basically, it means that you are a good person and citizen with a sound moral compass.

Narrative: A narrative or story is an account of a series of related events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious.

Pedagogy: The word is derived from the Greek *paidagogos* meaning literally, ‘to lead the child.’ In common usage, it is often used to describe the principles and practice of teaching children.

Social Pedagogy: It describes a holistic and relationship-centered way of working in care and educational settings with people across the course of their lives. The term ‘pedagogy’ originates in the Greek *pais* (child) and *agein* (to bring up, or lead), with the prefix ‘social’, emphasizing that upbringing is not only the responsibility of parents, but a shared responsibility of society.

Storytelling: The process of using fact and narrative to communicate something to your audience. Some stories are factual, and some are embellished or improvised in order to better explain the core message.

Transmedia Storytelling: Transmedia storytelling is the technique of telling a single story or story experience across multiple platforms and formats using current digital technologies.

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