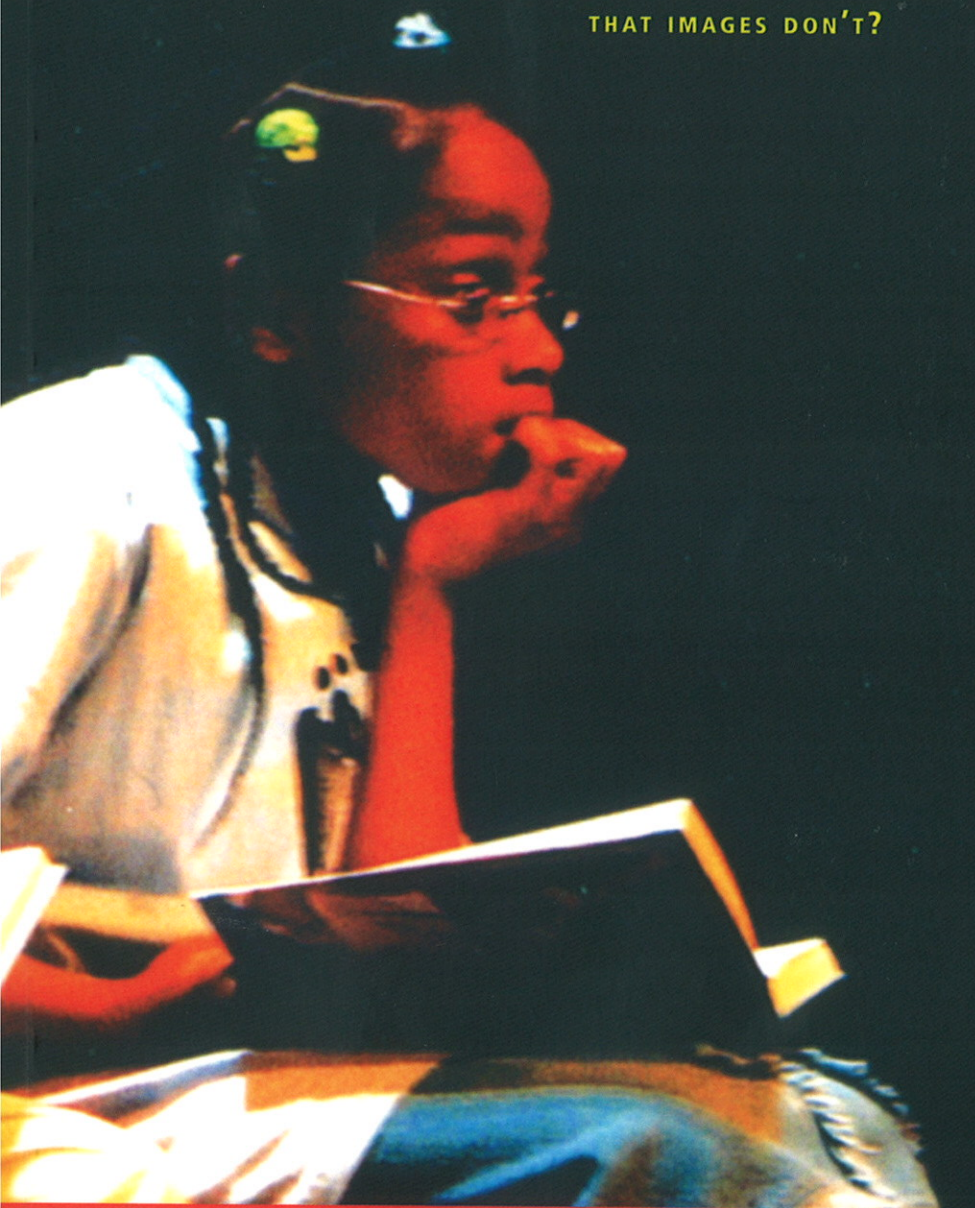
EDITED BY DICK SCHRAM

READING AND WATCHING

WHAT DOES THE WRITTEN WORD HAVE THAT IMAGES DON'T?



STICHTING LEZEN REEKS 15

READING AND WATCHING

Stichting Lezen Reeks

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ISBN 978- 90-5972-321-4

Cover and basic design: Lijn 1, Haarlem
Lay-out: Textcetera, Den Haag

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STICHTING LEZEN REEKS
PART 15

Eburon
Delft 2009

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FOREWORD

A while ago, I was reading a Dutch weekly, *Vrij Nederland*, which featured a long interview with Paul Verhoeven, the man who recently wrote a biography of Jesus. As you might know, Verhoeven has made a name for himself as the director of films like *Flesh & Blood*, *RoboCop* and *Basic Instinct*. When he was asked why he had chosen to write a biography rather than making a film about the man from Nazareth, Verhoeven answered that his choice for the written word rather than images had been prompted by the word 'perhaps'. According to Verhoeven, it is impossible to film the word 'perhaps' and when Jesus is your subject, you soon and very often find yourself in the realm of 'perhaps'. With our conference at the back of my mind, I immediately thought: could a unique function of the *word* lie in 'perhaps', as opposed to other media that rely primarily on *images*? Could the written word leave every scope for subtlety, shades of meaning and layers, whereas an image remains crude and one-dimensional?

Perhaps you will find the answer to this question once you have read this book, in which we publish all the lectures held during our international conference, Reading and Watching, which took place in Amsterdam on Friday, 21 November 2008. However, I fear the worst. The irony is that one question always leads to another, which in turn leads to another, *et cetera*.

Be this as it may, our conference focused on the following central question: what does the written word have that images do not. At least you will become a little wiser on this subject. Given the calibre of our speakers, this is something of which I am very confident.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people responsible for organising the conference behind the screens. Firstly, Prof. Dick Schram, Mirjam van Vliet,

Desirée van der Zander and last, but not least, Nanneke Joustra from JCC Congress Consultancy & Events. I also thank Maartje van Berge, who assisted Prof. Dick Schram and Mirjam van Vliet in editing this book.

Aad Meinderts
Director Dutch Reading Foundation

RACHEL VAN RIEL

INTRODUCTION

All over the western world, there is concern that younger people don't read as much as they used to. Is this just the older generation bemoaning the ways of youth – something that has gone on in every age since the Greeks – or is something of value being lost?

We have new technologies, new literacy's, and even new art forms. How do these relate to the old ones of reading, writing and publishing in print? Will the new forms replace the old ones or will they co-exist in a hybrid culture? Are the new forms, in fact, a natural development from the old ones? Or are they parasitic, feeding on the substance of the past while failing to acknowledge it?

What is the best way to introduce reading, to promote the delights of reading, to young people in this context? I don't mean just the ability to read, I mean much more than that. In the UK, we introduced a national curriculum in the 1990s with a literacy hour in primary schools which concentrated on formal approaches to teaching reading. Twenty years later, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority says that reading skills have improved but the amount of reading children do in their own time for pleasure has dropped significantly. Encouraging a love of reading is as important as teaching how to read. The PISA study published in 2002 by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, *Reading for Change*, showed how reading for pleasure is a more important indicator of student opportunities in later life than family background. For those of us looking for social change, that's a fantastically positive message.

If we want to encourage a love of reading how then should we best engage with new technologies? Should we fight or connect, opt for separate development or retreat? One thing we can do is to articulate better what happens when we read, what reading is and does, this simple yet complex activity that takes place every time we open a book.

My favourite writer on reading is Alberto Manguel but I want here to quote an English novelist, A.S. Byatt. I had a long conversation with A.S. Byatt about research in England that showed that young people preferred to find out about sex by reading about it in books and magazines. In the age of the visual image, where representations of sex are everywhere, this seems at first surprising. But it wasn't the mechanics of what goes where, children know that at an early age, it was the feelings involved that young people used reading to experience. When reading, the boundary between what you feel as the character and what you feel in your own body is up to you. A.S. Byatt went on to argue from this:

> Reading is a private activity and entails a private relationship between two people, reader and writer. It takes place over time unless the reader rejects the book. Spoken language can take short cuts, take cues from the respondent's face or situation. Written language is addressed to someone unknown – it makes an imagined world, a sustained argument, a passionate plea, out of one person's inner life and offers it to another separate person to experience and think about. The relations between feeling, thinking and imagining are not the same as in any other art form.
>
> I think most of us go about thinking and talking to ourselves in a quite different way from that in which we talk to friends or family, and I think reading lets us into someone else's privacy while we retain our own. It is in this sense that I can say I know George Eliot better than my husband. I have shared her inner life. It has changed mine.

So what claims can we make for reading? The Reading and Watching Congress brought together readers, writers and academics, a panel of experts in child development, psychological research, literary criticism, literary theory, film studies and gaming to discuss and debate what it is that's special about reading. Whether you are a student, a professional engaged in the book world or simply an enthusiastic reader, you will find plenty here to stimulate your thinking. So what are you waiting for? Turn the page and get reading.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY:

Rachel van Riel is director of Opening the Book, the library design and training company. Rachel is a passionate advocate for public libraries in the cultural and educational sector. She introduces the concept of reader development which has changed the way public libraries in the UK engage with their customers. Rachel has taken reader-centred ideas to European countries from Norway to Hungary and also to Australia and New Zealand.

GYÖRGY KONRÁD

READING AND WRITING: A RANDOM WALK[1]

Writing is, in point of fact, nothing more than reading. We have a recollection of sentences that pass before our eyes, or we pull them out from where they have long been lying low. Reading is another vagrancy, being somewhere else, an approximation to the rapture of being here. There are times when being somewhere else and being here coincide; there is such a thing as a happiness prompted by sheer being. That is what we are born into, it is our calling; there is no need to get so heated up.

Literature is inspirational, intuitive thinking, and it follows the logic of the personal thought process with its own meanderings. A reader need not feel obliged to believe what the writer asserts; it is conceivable that they are self-evident assertions. We believe these assertions because they have been dormant inside us and have only been aroused upon contact with the book.

What else is literature than a dream about ourselves that inculcates generations and operates like a secret compact? Like ladies choosing a hat in a milliner's, taking a fancy to one of the models that they suspect goes with their face, so we treat the walks of life that are open to us, crop up, or present themselves, looking them over, trying them out.

We are all of us experiments, inventing a self-portrait; we have received ourselves as a chance in order to make something whole of it. Everyone with his own game to botch together with an incorruptible angel keeping an eye on it.

A writer entices the reader among imaginative realities of varying force and, like a pharmacologist, he investigates the mechanism of the effect of his preparations. His objective is a text that causes an organised mental state in musical sequence:

1 Translated by T. Wilkinson.

the tranquillity of a lake surface at dawn, an avalanche of terror, a mighty organ of light.

Everyone is a novelist, at least in their dreams, but also on the high days of their wakefulness they envy the variedness of creativity and would like to be other people. The limited mortal's pipe dream is who he should move into, whose memory he should siphon off, whom he should rob of insecurity. There are times when they think that what surrounds them here is all there is, each and every one a novel. He too has been written, and he behaves as if he were just in the middle of reading himself. What penetrates him through the filter of writing is no longer him; that already reposes in the book, and he goes stealthily onward, restlessly and unfinished.

For a good while I lived in a country where I had to be an adventurer if I was to write sentences that were to my liking. But why would writing novels be any less risky than rock-climbing or flying kites? I try to listen to the speech of many other children and adults who are no longer living, either because they were killed or they died en route.

A novel's viewpoint is that of the author, even if it contains many characters, and even if it is written in the first person singular. The characters are speech positions: the author paints his face so as not to be scared of speaking.

He writes for others as if he were writing for himself. By imagined adventures, the writer pretends that he is describing real events, and readers pretend that they believe in them. They are well aware that the author is not a whale hunter or bank robber but only saying what it would be like if he were, as readers have already seen whale hunters and bank robbers for real on the tv.

A reader sits down in a corner or his (or her) room, places beside himself (herself) a few volumes that have been taken off the bookshelf, and the orgy starts, without any affront to tastes or noisome bluster. For agreeable writing or reading of novels you need the complicity made present by credibility and probability. If the writer cannot sense the eroticism of the genre as a seduced reader himself, then how is he going to make that perceptible to his own readers? I can make a decent stab at a naïve epic, say, but I slip out of character every now and then.

An American crime novel writer in his latest thriller reaches the bank robbery, the groundwork for which has been flawlessly laid down from the viewpoint of fiction. His protagonist's final sentence is: "I'm going to rob three banks tonight. Tomorrow I'll either be rolling in cash, or a stiff". The writer put down his pen and went off with the carefully detailed equipment to rob a bank. Out of sheer nerves, he parks his car illegally, two cops approach and he reaches for his pistol—something he would not normally do. They were faster on the draw and shot him. Does

that make him a saint of the modern novel? Or authenticate his story? He was not a particularly good writer, and a mere beginner as far as robbing banks goes.

A writing itself, as a subject, looks on anything other than itself with ridicule. The reason I write is to put that chunk of text into decent shape. What kinds of sequences seek one another from notions that dance around one another? A genuine text stands out from the paper. A piece of reading is different if one reads it in a different order. A book of poetry may be opened more or less anywhere. The actual story of a novel is how a writer takes his subject into his possession: it is not the subject that is of interest so much as the gaze that is focused on it, and the tone in which it is told. If these are good, the book takes up residence inside us, stays with us, and we become dependent on it; we feel homesick when it is not there. It is not worth writing something that is only worth reading once.

The imagination takes a bird's eye view over memories, and for some of these it makes a nose-dive. So long as the novelistic intention in a text is convincing, it does not matter what is about; it may even have the author as its unworthy subject. A novel does not take place in reality but on paper. An autobiography is also fiction. A writer composes it out of agglomeration that he arbitrarily recalls. He has more material at his disposal than he can handle. He sets the pictures into an order, and on one side there's the mind working, on the other, the book's finitude. The writer's activity is the writing itself, the completing of the work, which may take long years of work but means less to a reader, being equal to the temporal trip taken to read the book. What the writer may have devoted years may take just days, perhaps just hours to the readers.

A literary text needs no approval from movements or states, churches or academies. Writing is a civilian occupation, and a writer is civil even among civilians. A writer who is worth anything is not servile or useful; literature's spirit is unruly. Is there any other line of business more competent to fix its eye on the victims of conflicts? The instrument of the law is force, that of art is seduction. Every sentence has to cajole the reader to read the next.

It is not a criterion of the literary utility of a demonstrable fact of life whether or not it really happened but that it looks as if it really might have happened. What is true is at one and the same time also aesthetically interesting. A true story also a disclosure value; it invites readers' imaginations to take new paths. To put it more frivolously, is the truth as useful to writing as good weather, a room of your own, or a stimulant?

It does not matter whether or not a thing was exactly as I wrote it, my fantasies are just as much part of me as my personal particulars; one can also look on the truth as being an instrument of aesthetic influence. One does not have to prove

anything one asserts; if readers do not wish to believe it, they won't. A literary sentence only asserts that it is possible to regard things in that way; if it works, then the text will be such that even its author will not entirely understand it. A complete understanding requires a total identification of reader and author such that the two brains become essentially communicating vessels; it would be better for the reader to leave the book having to admit a pretty sense of defeat. If he swallows it whole today, what will that leave for tomorrow?

Classical works that stand the test of time can only become richer as time passes, becoming ever more mysterious with each reading, maturing over time. If a novel lives, then it ripens like a wine in the cask. With luck it will outlast other works, its siblings, having stored up a measure of vitality that means it is the only one still left here out of its own time.

An author writes for himself, not giving any thought to whether it will be what anyone else is looking for; if it is good enough for him, maybe it will also be of interest to a reader. For the author, writing is self defence, feeling one's way, an incantation and hallucination. It draws the reader or listener into a mindset, a mood, plucks common taste-strings, stirs up resonances, gives a face to themes.

What does a novel do to readers? It summons them out of their own and into another world where they can enter into another's affairs. If that is successful, then they will fear less from others. Part of a text is the effect that it evokes. One can also look on it as a sort of gymnastic exercise: a nearing and moving away, the current carries one from cold to warm, from desire to disgust. The story has a point of departure and an ending, like a journey. But what makes a story a story? A significant roundedness? Literature is an adventure: lord knows what will flash through my mind a minute from now, and which of the events that have been evoked I shall choose to relate. I was in the mood for digging into my own memory, what with the cerebral sclerosis going its own sweet way in any case, and I was in the mood for relating what I had found as the images of the past move slowly around each other.

The number of things that can be related is infinitely greater than the number that can be written down. It is a chance matter what I pick up and select from them. An author cannot know what he is going to write, since he has no way of knowing who he himself will be tomorrow, into which realm of his consciousness he will stray. Fishing from the emotional memory, tasters of troubles and extremes, the speaker crosses over into people in whom he has not been before; work against death. The day a child is born who does not want fairytales is the day we can complain.

A writer discusses death in order to slip away from it, a live person untangling secrets in the vicinity of death. Great works are a result of lengthy preparation and

craftsmanly concentration. Slivers have to be hewn from a huge uncarved block in order for a work should be placed before the reader as a well-composed unity. The writer sets it aside, allows it to settle, then a while later takes another look and only sees what he has accomplished in retrospect.

Literature is a sectarian pursuit, with writers and readers together still making up such a tiny minority that world literature as a whole, along with its readership, might be treated as a small global conspiracy. Our ferocious amusement, the literary work, helps you to be who you are. It instructs one in a somewhat more independent outlook on things. It is not that the writer's role is on the wane; even when he is dead and buried we may still ask how he would have decided in our place. World literature is the best between the reader as person and humanity, one in which in principle one does not need to count on the rapid death of a piece of news or the event that is portrayed.

Literature conjures these up, gives them nowness. The scenes of latent time crowd onto the stage. Just as every single cell in the body contains information on all the other cells, so a single human being is a blueprint for the whole of humanity, all-inclusively. His hapless head is deadly earnest in passing on the message that has been entrusted to him, subordinating himself and serving it, keeping himself constantly before its eye. Living for the sake of the eye? Whose eye might that be, then?

Gentle reader, make sure you stay on your toes. The wily author will entice you into fictional realities of various force, inviting you to make a several-hundred-page excursion around his brain. He will take your fantasy in hand, make it work, overwhelm with appealing and with ghastly scenes, which can be ascribed to the politics of configurations of the author's own desires and fears. It will also cross his mind to assemble the book before your eyes in much the way that in some restaurants the chef will grill the steaks in front of the guests.

No matter if readers do not understand everything; if they did, they would be bored. A writer composes pictures that unsettle certainties. It works to its advantage if readers lose their way among the pictures. Let them resurface from reading in much the way they do when they dive too deep and are nearly at the last gasp for air.

The gentle reader will not be given hypnotic warnings to relax the limbs; better to keep all one's senses alert. It takes me years to write a book; you read it in just days, which is why it is you, not me, is the true hero.

A tale is the desire that what happens to me should be of interest. Why should I not smooth down what has happened to me no into a tale? I can lie low among the riddles; after all, literature is a chimera, a distortion, a violation of reality, stylisation. Literature plays the same part in the life of society as a nightmare or

daydream, sick fancies and the like, including idées fixes and delusions, in the life of individuals.

It is thinking replete with desire, a decoction of vengeances, a fantasy about love wars, a more impressive alter ego of our own character's clumsy nature and later a fond fatherly glance at our childishness. My entire consciousness finds a place in literature, my reveries just as much as my nightmares, my blindness just as much as my clear-sightedness, and even my mind as it tries to master the colourful host of my desires and my dreads. I should let loose the tales of the imagination strolling inside me, may the night-time and the daytime mind cohere in them, let me write a running commentary about my passage through mundane heavens and hells. A person is allowed the two-way freedom of craving and repulsion, but only in the realm of literature—naturally, the other arts too! Men of science or praxis should not even dream of such freedom.

If I write seriously about a serious subject, that does not exempt me from risk of error; people may argue over my essays, but not over my novels.

It is possible to get bored with novels or to forget them, but equally it is possible to enter into their spirit and even recall them. In this way stories take over a reader from within, and readers are just unable to free themselves of what they have read as they are from what happens to them. A metaphor cannot be put in the dock, nor can it be proven unscientific. If I write down a conceptual judgement and someone comes along to disprove it, I can write down another one to substantiate the first, then someone may take exception to that too, and so out of vanity, in self-defence, I become mixed up in something that has long ago lost any interest to me. The theoretical cast of mind has no wish to participate in my brain with the literary thought-process. Or vice versa.

The moment the intellect makes an appearance it immediately casts doubt on and even pokes fun at itself, or in other words becomes literature. Consciousness of consciousness in pictures. This enterprise also has its own centripetal force. A novel is an intellectual construction which is an end in itself, and complete in and of itself; it stands in no need of external justification or test of truth. Novel writing sifts through and clears away the rules of theoretical and practical thinking; the genre has its own philosophy, which is ever more implacable the more I surrender to it.

In my novels I can be a murderer, a robber, lewd, licentious, cowardly, drunken, and mendacious.

There is no amount of baseness within me that I could not find room for it within them. I can rise above myself, be self-sacrificing, heroic, even enlightened—so long as I win! I have not yet been tortured and have never killed anybody, yet

I have lost count of how many times those sorts of things have happened in my novels.

Every person is a fortress, me too, but I only reside in a few of the rooms, and I flit like a ghost through its cobwebbed, crazy chambers. One who goes more deeply into anguish has to go higher in illumination—that's my craft. I would define humans as beings who crave diversion. The more technical a procedure, the more clear-cut it is: a matter of being either this or that. The majority of working people can only indulge themselves in the uncertain poetry of contradictions as a luxury, just before turning in for the night. It is my official duty to wander through the alternatives, to resuscitate an amputated limb in a phantom projection, and to realise something that came to nothing. I am a professional extender of consciousness; I strain extremes, stand in mirror lighting. I would like to catch sight of, in the mirror, the paradoxes of the sages of old as they laughed formidably and solemnly at the viewer.

I have no wish to be good and have no wish to be bad, if only I am able to carry thoughts to the point that as few as possible are in agreement. It is a slow liberation if I am in such a small minority that I am virtually on my own. It may be that the minority is the determining factor, not what is plentiful, the lawbreaker who amends the rule, but never mind if that is not the case. If being moral amounts to no more than gaining the approval of my contemporaries, because I think the same as them, then there is nothing that compels me to be moral. I do not write on behalf of any community; I am nobody else's spokesperson. I am closest to others if I can speak in my own name without any detours. It is a paradigm of authors: on the one side is the priest (that is God's word), and on the other the writer (my words). There is no respect here, just fallible curiosity talking. A history of gods, demigods, deified humans, gods becomes men, saints and heroes—the work of fairytale, literature, mythology, inspired people. Readers require stories; they need to understand the world and themselves so as to know how they should live. Texts give them advice, call upon one or forbid one; one can be faithful or unfaithful to them.

We roam around a map of the geography of our lovers, call in on a cemetery and theatre, a swimming baths or flea market, loaf around in subways and shopping malls, in scrapyards for train engines and cars, hug cherry trees resplendent in their bridal finery, lean back on a centuries-old dry-stone wall, and this is where a novel that started a long time ago might take its start. It was one of the rules of the game, fixed early on, that there is no way of knowing what will come next, so one cannot know where the next paragraph will end up. A book is a leaven; the reader's head rises on top like a kugelhopf or a milk bread. All it needs is for the reader to

lay hands on it, the postman to deliver a letter or the phone line to be working and not be cut off. You force yourself through the sieve. Total silence may also be an acceptable deal. Not give in even in the event of absolute failure: what can be said has to be said.

A book can also be read as a proposed strategic plan, being credible if it proposes a thing that the author does in practice. I am a scout for my readers in twilight zones; I may squeeze myself out of the throng, but I long to be back in it.

I would be a lonely creature in the universe, well aware of the categorical imperative, the Kantian comme-il-faut, in order to speak and act in lieu of all humanity, in its name so to say—a state of mind that is familiar to all adolescents.

Ever since I have been able to read and roam around, I have sensed the relationship between novels and cities. I have built for myself my own city for literary use, out of which came Kandor, of which I am the plenipotentiary city planner. My heroes and the city survive the novel's ending.

Every heartening piece of news has its disappointing twin. Thus, if somebody should wish to predict the death of the book, the end of the Gutenberg tradition, and moreover incidentally the decline of literature or even of oral culture itself, then that would be provide marvellous services for others to start a game of ping pong, and purely in order to stimulate conversation another will forecast the triumph of the book and a promising future for all bound up with that, writers, publishers, and intermediaries.

The world's book trade and the number of readers, to the best of my knowledge, are both growing. Across the globe new book markets are coming into being, and these have dealings with each other via ever more links. As in other branches of production and consumption the role of the world market and international trade is expanding, and this can also be said of books. The book industry received relatively little external support in market economies and, for the most part, has to stand on its own feet. That gives it a certain soundness: it does not depend root and branch on the mercies of the state or other benefactors; conversely, it can on durable consumer tastes, on the multifarious needs of private purchasing power.

World literature, a term that Goethe may have mentioned merely as a jeu d'esprit, does exist, and it has acquired a robust reality over the last two hundred years, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, because the world market for books offers the concept of world literature its raison d'être. Changes of government and budgetary policies can make life more difficult, but they cannot completely wreck it. I am not suggesting that I am speaking about a major branch of the economy as the total turnover of all the USA publishing firms put together would not put it among the top forty biggest firms, but then a ranking of forty-

second is not to be sniffed at even if the true significance of books and literature cannot be measured by its cash value.

The changes of regime in Eastern Europe have resulted in a realignment of the stocks held by bookshops, but it would be foolish to suppose that commercially successful thrillers have swept all before it. The pulp fiction that corresponds to mass movies, with the USA as the premier exporter in the world market may attract a large portion of the time and money that are devoted to reading, but that still leaves room for so-called high culture, for demanding works of enduring value, for the classic and semi-classic repertory of the moment which will find buyers just as with any high-quality product, from wine to raincoats. The cost of making motion pictures requires large numbers of viewers, whereas a book can make do with quite small print runs. It may have just a few thousand readers, but that is enough for a book to be born and to live its own adventurous life.

It is predictable that a finely printed book, like the products of the luxury goods market in general, is the sort of consumer article that is also an investment; it furnishes the home, is a signal of the family's cultivation, and quite likely might even be readable. A durable text cries out for a durable setting. It is certain, therefore, that bibliophilism, the notion that a book may be viewed as a work of art, is a permanent source of work and livelihoods. It is likely that both traditional and electronic modes of cheaper accessibility are coming into fashion. The traditional might be a more diverse extension of the lending library network and a spreading of the custom of private book exchanges. It might become a supplement to the occasions that we drop in on friends to arrive with books in hand, to bring and take books away in order to boost the average number of readers that a book gets, which would be no bad thing for an author's vanity, nor in fact be exactly unpleasant as far as his pocket goes, because it is fair to say that anything that expands the reading of one's books can ultimately only be good for one.

In all likelihood there is going to be a spread of electronic reading. If I am able to download any book at all into my computer, it may be that I shall read it on the screen for a while, or maybe jump in and quickly scan it, skim through or have it skimmed through, and if the text brings me up short, arrests my attention and detains me and then I shall print it out, but it is even more likely that my readiness to purchase a hard copy of the book itself will grow in direct proportion to the desire, because anyone who spends a lot of time looking at computer screens knows that in one's free time it is much more agreeable to sit in an armchair leafing through the pages of a book that is pleasing to the touch than it is to have one's eyes glued on tiny luminous letters not only during work hours but also during spare-time when reading is not obligatory.

Literature will therefore in part remain in public and private libraries, but in part split off from material reality, from the five-hundred-year-old book form and transform into a digital flitting. It may even be that impudent readers will do whatever they like with our text, lifting out passages that appeal to them but dropping others, the interactive owners of what they read, and more and more often following the dubious practice that students cultivate of reading only chapters, or pages, or slivers of passages as encouraged by their teachers out of works that were intended as organic wholes by the author, who is bound to take a dim view of any intervention aimed at extracting from, abridging or chopping up the text.

Our message sets off on its travels. It may be that it will be held up in the short term; it may be that it will prove to be tenacious and proliferate, in much the same way as we have no way of knowing what fate our children will encounter. We give them mothers and fathers and then it is up to fate. Literature will continue not making authors rich, or even if some are able to make a living from it, the majority are obliged to make their living by other means, but even so I think it is just as unlikely that real talents will abandon writing as that humankind will be struck dumb because the written word is the first cousin of the spoken word, and just as people can make a distinction between chatter and substantial communication, between the informative and the redundant, so there will always be some who demand cogent texts through whatever channel, in whatever medium, and there will be intermediaries who link writers and readers; furthermore, it will continue to be likely that although writers will get a cut, the intermediaries will always have the better side of the bargain.

Translators are worthy of special appreciation. They are an author's most intimate acquaintances. It may be that they have never met in person, but in many cases they are closer to each other than friends or lovers. A translator works his way into the author's brain, takes the author into himself, absorbs him, in a laborious advance from sentence to sentence, and he sends the text further on its way by signing his own name to it, espousing it, so that now the two together answer for it. With the job calling for considerable devotion and offering but a modest income, in this too translators are close to authors. Yet it is only through them that world literature can exist at all. A writer cannot choose not to exist, because he is crazy, he writes even if he is starving, although it is not a wise tactic to divulge that. Nowadays the only thing we can be sure of is that translators are just as crazy.

States no longer feel it is a vital matter that as many of their citizens as possible read books by that country's authors. But if politicians in positions of responsibility, those who disburse money from the state coffers, would be inclined to give a moment to thinking over the merits of the case, then they would grasp that the dis-

tribution throughout the big wide world of works that have been written by citizens of that country in the country's language are the most cunning of all promotional campaigns for the country even if the book is full of grim horror tales, because if a book is any good, then this will still show that the country in question has a literature, and one that quite possibly is no worse or more meagre than that of larger and richer countries, even though the same cannot be said of other sectors of production. Anywhere where is literature there are human treasures. It may even happen that the names of a country's heads of government, party leaders and ministers ring no bells for a foreign reader, but those of its writers do mean something.

It may even happen that in the wake of reading a book whole families will get up and go to find out for sure whether the landscape, behaviour, mood which has aroused their interest in the book does indeed exist in the author's homeland. Subsidy of writing, translation and publication via the channels of state and private redistribution is a cheap investment for élites, yielding good returns. Anyone who has anything to do with literature can only be happy if it is possible in our home town for fair numbers of bookish people to get together for a short while, for us to greet them all and seek to reassure them, in lieu of tame tree-frogs, that their labours are not in vain, because the book will be a person's indispensable companion as long as people have eyes and hands. The company to which we belong is very widespread and has networked the globe for several thousand years.

You can no longer be either a high priest or a heretic, not even an expert. In our place it is again the priests who utter exalted things; it is no longer our business to speak loftily. Readers continue to need good books, but they have no need of intellectual leaders. The number of writers is rising faster than the number of readers.

One seeks to put on the shelves of the world's libraries viable books that will outlast one's own death. It is a self-sacrificing simulation of personality for a person to turn into another here on Earth. We erect a castle of books, hide in it, and hope that there are readers depraved enough to wish to come across us in our hiding-place, and even after that will still be curious about us. Creating a literary work is a strange coat hanger for human frailty: a painstaking scheming for form that, for a while, is stronger than death.

Any person of sound mind and body needs to think of himself to some extent, but as a rule even those who parrot the saying that their life is a pure novel do not reach for a pen. In my little story the subject was set from the outset as well as the author himself, whose very destiny was to be governed by his decision to make writing his full-time occupation. The story reports how the author tries to stay alive, and how he accounts for that life. This readers' spy passes on messages that he is progressing along life's path and recounts his experiences in the domain of

human existence. He strives to salvage something from the days he has spent coming and going; tries not to die entirely, let him stay just a little bit longer, like a monogram carved into a tree trunk or scratched on the wall of a prison cell.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY:
György Konrád was born into a Jewish family. He studied literature, sociology and psychology in Budapest. Among others he wrote *The Case Worker*, *The City Builder*, *Feast in the Garden* and *The Stone Dial*. Until 1988 his books were forbidden in Hungary. Konrád was elected president of International P.E.N., and in 1997 he was the first non-German to become president of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

ADRIANA G. BUS

STORYBOOK EXPOSURE: HEAVENLY BLISS AND VIRTUAL TUTORS

Many people are shocked by the suggestion that watching screen media is replacing the shared experience of reading by adults and children. Are they right and will the outcome of this be negative? To answer this question, I will discuss why children's exposure to storybooks up to the age of five is important, whether or not adult support is indispensable and the age range in which watching screen media can be effective in stimulating reading.

More than ten years ago I began to wonder whether reading books to preschool children is important in preparing them to become readers. At that time, opinions were divided. Some took the position that book reading promoted skills that were indispensable for becoming a reader. For instance, the Commission on Reading in the US (Commission on Reading, National Academy of Education, 1985) described book sharing "as the single most important activity for developing knowledge required for eventual success in reading." The empirical evidence, however, is less conclusive. Scarborough & Dobrich (1994) for instance, conducted a review of all 31 studies done between 1950 and 1994. They counted the number of significances and concluded that few studies revealed significant effects of book reading. Having found this, they wondered whether we should advise parents to read to their young children as the Commission on Reading had done. Is it true that even if it is not effective, it may not hurt to try? Scarborough & Dobrich wondered whether book reading makes sense when mothers report that preschool children enjoy being read to "not at all" or "not much." They argued that serving broccoli to a child who dislikes it will not make the child love broccoli. On the contrary, we run the risk that reading sessions will solidify the child's aversion to books.

ANOTHER VIEW OF BOOK READING

Since Scarborough's findings were inconsistent with the common view that book reading is an incentive for language and literacy, my colleagues and I (Bus, Van IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995) decided to have another look at the 31 studies in Scarborough's review. We concluded that their approach may not do justice to the actual results of research into reading books. Most of the studies used small samples. This implies that effects have to be substantial to reveal a significant result. A meta-analytic approach is then preferable because it takes into account small, but positive, trends in small-scale studies (Rosenthal, 1991). Indeed, looking at studies of book reading from this perspective, we reached a different conclusion than that drawn by Scarborough. We found unequivocal support for parent-preschooler book reading as a tool to promote literate language. There were hardly any studies with negative results, which means that book reading has a positive effect on literacy measures. Synthesizing all the positive outcomes, I found that parent-child book reading explains about 8% of individual differences in language and literacy. According to statisticians, this amounts to a moderate to strong effect.

In this way, we gradually came to understand why exposure to books from an early age is so important to becoming a reader. Through books, children come into contact with a specific kind of language, also known as the written language register, or academic language. The order and combination of words in texts are governed by rather complex syntactic rules and written language includes more formal vocabulary than oral language. This is not only true for adult texts but also for picture storybooks for the very young. For instance, in a story for children between the ages of 3 and 6 about a bear who falls in love with a butterfly [Beer is op Vlinder by Annemarie van Haeringen], we find words like "desperate," "jealous," "in love," "dart," "blush," "chuckle," "broken-hearted" and many other words that children do not hear every day. Familiarity with such words is one of the best predictors of reading.

A SOUTH-AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

There is increasing empirical evidence that it is difficult to step into reading without some familiarity with academic language. As an explanation of why reading education in developing countries is unsuccessful, my best guess is that young children are not exposed to academic language in books. To test this hypothesis, I joined a South-African project aimed at promoting early literacy. Academic results in South Africa are poor. Official tests show that less than 40% of learners pass the literacy test at grade 3 level (Klop & Tuomi, 2007). Education through the medium of a second language, which is mostly English in South-Africa, is one problem, but cer-

tainly not the only one. Children fail even when they are instructed in their most familiar language which can be Afrikaans, Xhosa, or another indigenous language. When they start school they lack the complex language skills that are needed for academic success, and their language skills do not "catch up" despite formal education (Klop & Tuomi, 2007).

A few weeks ago, I visited Grade R classes in Manenberg, a poor neighbourhood of Cape Town, inhabited only by coloured people (the South-African term for people of mixed racial origin). Grade R classes are senior kindergarten classes comparable to the second year of kindergarten in the Netherlands. Grade R is meant to prepare 5-years-olds for learning to read in Grade 1. I was impressed by the efforts of the teachers. They do all the "right" things: teach letters, promote name writing, share books with children and enable children to read independently by providing books and magazines.

Despite all this, the children fail. I suspect that these reading problems are so persistent due to language deprivation: exposure to books starts too late and it is limited to school, and is therefore incidental. Many young children are therefore not exposed to books at all because fewer than half of all children aged 5 attend Grade R classes. In addition, higher grades fail to promote language development as part of reading education.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AS A MAIN INGREDIENT OF EARLY BOOK SHARING

Even when numerous books with attractive pictures are available at home and parents are willing to read to their child, not all children automatically turn into avid readers. Most young children do not show any interest in books until their parents have made attempts to elicit their interest (Bus & Van IJzendoorn, 1997). In preverbal infants there is a gradual shift from hitting pages and grabbing the book towards referencing. Children's increasing understanding of books emerges as a social act: they are learning through touching, laughing and looking at pictures *with* the parent. This explains why emotional support by parents is a main ingredient of early book sharing in children aged 3 and below. We discovered in a series of studies that we could predict the frequency and quality of book sharing at home by testing the emotional bond between parent and child (Bus, 2001).

We used a test that includes a brief separation of parent and child in a strange environment. The quality of the emotional bond is scored when parent and child are reunited. Most infants cry because they are separated from the parent, but secure children are easily comforted by the parent. Insecure infants respond differently. They do not allow the parent to comfort them and crawl away when the parent returns in the room or may even respond aggressively by hitting or pushing

the parent when he or she approaches the child. Reactions to the reunion with the parent, as indicators of the flexibility of the parent-child relationship, predict the frequency of book sharing at home (Bus & Van IJzendoorn, 1995). We tracked down mothers who admitted that they rarely read to their three-year-old and we compared these pairs with mother-child pairs who share books once or twice a day. The results were clear. Children with an insecure relationship with their parent were strongly overrepresented in the group which read infrequently, but they were a minority in a group which read frequently.

We also observed how parents read books to children between the ages of 0 and 3. In secure pairs, reading books lives up to the ideal Portrayed in the familiar Kodak pictures of a parent reading to his or her child. They are reminiscent of well-known depictions in religious art, showing a loving mother, Saint Anna, who leads her daughter, the Virgin Mary, in the first steps to reading (Figure 1). Book-reading sessions of insecure parent-child pairs are different and seem incapable of sparkling real interest in books in children (Bus, Belsky, Van IJzendoorn & Crnik, 1997). The children are much less attentive than the secure children and hardly refer to the book's contents by laughing, making sounds or pointing. Parental energy is mainly devoted to getting and keeping the infants' attention.

FIGURE 1 STATUE IN A NICHE OF A CHURCH IN VALLAURIS (GOLDEN VALLEY) IN SOUTH-FRANCE (COPYRIGHT PIETER KRONNENBERG).

YOUNG CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES ARE SHIFTING FROM BOOKS TO SCREENS

As we entered a new technological era, young children's activities shifted from books to screens. More stories than ever are available through new media and this has led to new realities: children spend an increasing amount of time watching on-screen stories on their own and spend less time sharing books with their carer (Rideout, Vandewater & Wartella, 2003). Nowadays even the youngest are exposed to screen media. The 1999 American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advised against screen time for children aged 2 and younger, and I tend to agree with them. As my research shows, exploration of books at that age is *a fundamentally social act*. Success depends on emotional support by the parent.

However, should we also advise against screen time in the case of children aged 3 and above? I do not think so. A high-input style during book reading is not very common in older age groups. Most children above the age of 3 do not like parents to interrupt the story. My son used to say: "read, don't talk." Children of that age work out the meaning of unknown words on their own, without any help. This impression was confirmed by a recent synthesis of the literature made by Mol and colleagues (Mol, Bus, De Jong & Smeets, 2008). She collected all the experiments that test effects of parent-child interaction during reading and found that parents who were trained to be very responsive had a positive effect on outcome measures in the younger ages, but no longer in from the age of 4 onwards. On the basis of this line of reasoning, we may argue that children no longer depend on adult support to benefit from book reading and that independent encounters with on screen stories can add to literacy from age 4 onwards.

Many on-screen stories are animated cartoons. Unlike picture storybooks, they do not have narrative language, but social language, motion pictures, sound and music as their main sources of information. As these onscreen stories do not expose children to complex syntactic rules and lexical diversity, they have little potential as a means of preparing children for making the transition to reading. So let us ignore these cartoon-like stories, (over)abundantly available on television, and focus on the growing number of what Lou Reed once named talking books ("I wish I had a talking book…"). Though they are available through screen media, they all have the qualities of literate print stories. I would now like to turn briefly to the typical features of digitized picture storybooks.

In onscreen picture storybooks, text and illustrations of the original book are preserved, but they also have additional features. There is, for instance, oral text that replaces print. This feature enables children to read stories without an adult being present. However, there is more. There is more to see in animated versions of picture storybooks than in print versions. Static illustrations have become motion

pictures and there is music and sound that matches the scenes. In one scene in the story about the bear and the butterfly, the bear wishes to tell the butterfly that he is in love with her, but he is too shy to do so, does not know how to tell her and stumbles over his words. The static picture of a bear with his head bowed depicts the situation rather well, but the scene in the animated version is even more powerful. We see how the bear hangs his head and it slowly turns red. Simultaneously there is audible, but incomprehensible, mumbling in the background and the way the bear moves his leg adds to the general impression of shyness. By now there are many wonderful living books on television (KRO and NOT/Teleac) and, more importantly, there are internet sites with picture storybooks for the very young. The number of books available in these digital libraries is small, but growing.

A main criticism is that attention-catching motion pictures distract attention from narrative language. On the one hand, non-verbal information may fill working memory and "use up" all the available space, not leaving room for words. On the other hand, rich visualizations may support language development. On a recent visit to the Comenius Museum in Prague, I learned that the educational pioneer Comenius (Jan Amos Komenský) was the first to use pictures to develop language skills. His book *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (The world explained in pictures) is the mother of all children's picture books. The Orbis was intended as a visual textbook for learning Latin and other languages. It summarizes the world in 150 pictures. The objects in the pictures are numbered and accompanied by columns of labels and short sentences describing the numbered objects (see Figure 2). The book thus introduces about 2,000 words from astronomy, animals, plants, occupations and other domains concretized by the picture. Comenius argued that the verbal system thus draws on the rich knowledge base of the nonverbal system. Or in his own words: "Things are the body, words but the garment."

FIGURE 2 *ORBIS SENSUALIUM PICTUS* (THE WORLD EXPLAINED IN PICTURES) BY THE EDUCATIONAL PIONEER COMENIUS.

EMBEDDING LANGUAGE IN A REAL-LIFE CONTEXT

More than three centuries after the first publication of the Orbis in 1658, the Canadian psychologist Allan Paivio (1986) published empirical evidence of the basic idea of the Orbis, namely that language learning builds on the foundation of nonverbal representation. For instance, his experiments showed that recall of abstract words like *justice* can be improved by encouraging subjects to visualize words (e.g. imagine justice as a frocked judge). As a matter of fact, this step is reinforced by presenting an oral rendition of the narrative text simultaneously with motion images (and sounds) as happens in living books. By thus embedding words in a real-life context, new vocabulary and unknown language structures are concretized. We have done a series of experiments with living books in classrooms and, in line with Paivo's dual-coding model, all revealed impressive progress in language skills. Van der Kooy & Bus (2008), for instance, conducted an experiment with five-year-olds with poor emergent reading skills. For three months, once a week, the experimenter logged these children into one of the digital libraries on the Internet. The sessions lasted at most 15 minutes and during the sessions children "read" real literature without any help from the teacher or researcher. The children in the digital book reading group made more progress on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) than the control children who were equally poor in emergent reading skills. They spent the same amount of time in front of the computer screen, but playing games instead of watching storybooks. Despite this very moderate investment of time in onscreen books – not more than an additional two hours spread over three months – children benefited substantially from their visits to the internet site with picture storybooks.

Do motion pictures have an advantage above static pictures? Motion pictures in living books may enhance a detailed representation of events and thus create a better context for learning new vocabulary and language structures. The motion pictures may work like a spotlight on a stage that tells the audience where to look to understand what is happening and how characters respond to the events. Children derive nonverbal representations from what they see and hear, and the language they hear simultaneously may build on this foundation. To test this hypothesis, Verhallen & Bus (in press) compared the effects of static and living books on vocabulary gains. Two computer versions of the same book were presented to immigrant children from low-educated families – a group that mostly lags far behind in language skills. The spoken text and artwork were identical, but in one version the illustrations were static and in the other they were motion pictures. For instance, at one point in the story the witch turns her black cat green. The picture shows a witch waving her wand and we see how the cat turns from black to green. The experiment supports the prevalence of living books in immigrant pupils. With motion

pictures, book-bound vocabulary improves, but exposure to the static version does not promote statistically significant gains in the book vocabulary. The average gain in difficult words with motion pictures amounts to 13%, which is impressive, even compared to the outcomes of other studies in which a person mediates between book content and child (e.g. Biemiller & Boote, 2006).

HOW CHILDREN EXPLORE PICTURES

Do children learn new vocabulary by matching words with pictures? For instance, when the story text tells that the witch rushed outside, tripped over the cat and fell into the rose bush, all the elements mentioned in the text are depicted in the accompanying illustration: the witch, the cat and a rose bush. The living book may facilitate a match between a word (e.g. a rosebush) and its depiction by zooming in on the rose bush, while the text tells about the witch falling into the rose bush, and may thus support learning the word "rosebush". This theory of how children benefit from pictures would fit with a finding in psycholinguistic research that eye movements are closely related to language processing (Pashler, 1998). When children listen to an instruction with the elements that are mentioned in the instruction in front of them, they quickly move their eyes to those elements that are successively mentioned and that are most closely related to the meaning of the words (Trueswell, Sekerina, Hill & Logrip, 1999). For instance, if a "(toy) frog," "a napkin," "box" and "frog on a napkin" are placed on a table", when the instruction is given "Put the frog that's on the napkin in the box", the child's eyes jump from the "frog" to the "frog on a napkin" to "the box". In other words, they follow the order of words mentioned in the instruction exactly. If the language is ambiguous and children misinterpret the meaning of a sentence, eye movements make misunderstandings visible. Take, for instance, the sentence: "Put the frog on the napkin in the box." "On the napkin" is usually first understood as a destination and children's eyes jump from the "frog" to the "napkin" instead of to the "frog on the napkin."

To test whether children follow a similar strategy when they listen to an oral rendition of the story text, we recorded eye movements while children listened to the oral text, and recorded which objects in the picture they fixate on successively (Verhallen & Bus, 2008). There is no support for the hypothesis that children actually fixate on elements in the order in which they are mentioned by the accompanying text. We discovered that children fixate on human figures more than 80% of the time. In particular they fixate on their faces, and only briefly, 20% of the time, on non-human figures. In other words, children do not scan the complete picture searching for elements mentioned in the text, but rather seem programmed to trace the human figures, probably because they assume that those parts of a pic-

ture are most informative about events in the story. They use the visual behaviour of human figures (and their facial expressions) as the main way of understanding what the story is about. The impressions derived from a selective scan of the picture are matched with the accompanying narrative language. We expect that eye fixations are similar when children watch motion pictures. However, children may learn more from exposure to living books because those books offer more guidance in deriving what is vital in a picture. There is evidence that people easily misunderstand the fragmentary information in static illustrations by focusing on eye-catching details that are irrelevant in the accompanying text (Nodelman, 1988). The result of this is that visual information does not offer relevant context clues to understanding the story language. Motion pictures, by contrast, may guide children as a spotlight on the stage, thus children from going astray due to eye-catching details in pictures. Living books may thus be more supportive than static illustrations in concretizing unfamiliar words and sentences in the accompanying text. However, new studies are needed to test this hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

To round off, what are our main findings? Websites with high quality storybooks support literacy development in children aged 4 and above. They enable kindergarten children to roam virtually around these digital libraries, select books, and read and reread their favorites, without adult support. Computer routines may thus help young children to become readers in the long term. We estimate that children's vocabulary, one of the best predictors of reading, expands by about 500 words per year if children visit a digital library less than an hour per week and the digital library includes a sufficient number of books to guarantee exposure to books for some time. For younger age groups, computer stories are less suitable. Young children need a sensitive parent to stimulate their interest and keep them focused on the contents of the story.

We also found that animated picture storybooks on internet sites might be an excellent way of promoting literacy of children at risk. Motion pictures, more so than static illustrations, enable these young learners to grapple with unknown vocabulary in picture storybooks and to "catch up" their language skills. There are numerous studies which report vocabulary gains as a result of book reading by teachers in classrooms. However, the gains they report are relatively small by comparison with the gains in our studies of living books. This is all the more surprising when we take into account that in the experiments with digitized storybooks children were sitting all alone at the computer screen, without a teacher to correct distractive behaviour and focus attention. Now that there is one computer for 6

pupils in each classroom and most Dutch schools have access to the internet (Kennisnet ict op school, 2007), schools should take advantage of new ways to promote literacy and make electronic books part of the curriculum.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY:

Adriana Bus is Professor of Education and Child Studies at Leiden University. She is a leading scholar on the impact of attachment theory on children's emergent literacy development, and on developmental changes in storybook reading among parents and children. Currently she is working on building an internet environment to promote rich literacy experiences for young children.

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KLAUS MAIWALD

LOST AT SEA? READING AND READING PROMOTION IN A PICTORIAL CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

What chances do reading and reading promotion stand in a culture dominated by (audio)visual media? I will try to show that an effective reading promotion can no longer work outside or against but must operate *within* the dominant paradigms of our media culture. In other words, reading promotion should acknowledge other media while emphasizing the *exclusive* potentials of literature and gratifications of reading.

Let me start out by looking at the question of reading versus watching from the vantage point of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766). In this study, Lessing (1729 – 1881), most prominent advocate of the literary Enlightenment in Germany, delineates the boundaries of painting and poesy in an interpretation of the Laocoon-Group. Laocoon meant to warn the Trojans of what was to go down in history as the Trojan horse; yet his intentions were thwarted as he and his twin sons were killed by seasnakes sent out by the irate goddess Athena. Fatally deluded, the Trojans pulled the wooden horse inside their walls. The Greek sculpture, roughly dating between 50 B.C.E. and A.D. 50, embodies the most intense moment in Laocoon's deadly struggle (fig. 1):

FIGURE 1 LAOCOON-GROUP (SOURCE: ETSCHMANN, WALTER, HAHNE, ROBERT & TLUSTY, VOLKER (2004): KAMMERLOHR. KUNST IM ÜBERBLICK. STILE – KÜNSTLER – WERKE. MÜNCHEN: OLDENBOURG, 65)

Lessing's main point concerns the difference between the visual arts and poesy.[1] In modern terms we might say that Lessing explored the range of two symbolic codes. It is characteristic of the visual arts to place colors and forms side by side (*nebeneinander*) in space. Due to that semiotic make-up, sculpture and painting are structurally limited to representing objects (or parts of objects) existing side by side. Poesy (literature) arranges sounds or words sequentially (*aufeinander folgend*) in time. That is why literature focusses on 'objects' whose components follow one after another. In short, the realm of painting is to render *things*; the prerogative of literature is to represent *actions*.

1 Lessing's *Laocoon* was a response to Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauer-Kunst* (1755). Winckelmann had strongly advocated the emulation of ancient by contemporary art. His treatise, also dealing in depth with the Laocoon-Group, was to become seminal for German classicism around 1800.

From there it is but a small step towards a plea for the promotion of reading. Since actions can only be represented in language and best in writing, every benefit that derives from experiencing (fictional) actions can best be obtained from reading. This idea is confirmed by the benefits typically ascribed to reading (for the following cf. Spinner, 2001): Reading helps us acquire knowledge about the world and makes us think about fundamental human questions; reading allows us to transgress the boundaries of our empirical experience and to develop a sense for the fantastic and the possible (what Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities* called *Möglichkeitssinn*). Reading fosters our imagination, our capacity for empathy, and our awareness of cultural and historical relativity; reading helps us deal with the challenges of growing up and of shaping our identity. Obviously, these effects involve processes much more than events: we build knowledge and think about problems; we transgress boundaries and develop mental capacities; we grow up and find out who we are. If, however, these processes are to be steady and their effects lasting, they cannot be sustained by momentary acts of visual perception of static objects; rather they require reading as a prolonged mental involvement in fictional actions.

We must pause here to note a remarkable irony. In Lessing's time, reading was by no means held unanimously as a cultural good. Towards the end of the 18th century educators denounced the hazards of excessive reading, especially for young women. Viewed from today, the zealous discourse about reading fury and reading addiction (Lesewut and Lesesucht) (cf. Glück, 1987, 178ff.; Kittler, 1995, 180; Beisbart & Maiwald, 2001) looks preposterous, if not absurd. In any case it should make us more than cautious in passing judgments on today's media culture and today's "Adolescents and Literacies in a Digital World" (cf. Alvermann, 2002).

Apart from that irony it seems doubtful that reading promotion can actually be based on Lessing's distinction between painting and poesy. For one thing, reading is no longer a culturally exclusive symbolic practice and the Laocoon-Group hardly a typical case of visual perception. In 1992, W.J.T. Mitchell coined the expression *pictorial turn* to describe a contemporary culture largely dominated by pictures; at about the same time Norbert Bolz (cf. 1995, 228) proclaimed the "end of the Gutenberg-galaxy" in a giant shift from verbal to visual communication. A more recent publication, edited by Christa Maar & Hubert Burda in 2004, testifies to the continuing relevance of the phenomenon: *Iconic turn. Die Neue Macht der Bilder* (the new power of images). Looking at Greek sculptures in art museums is not typical of what people do in their daily lives. As pictures have become ubiquitous, decoding pictures has become a constant task. Now, from a merely quantitative point of view, our case for reading vs. watching still holds. Although appearing in large quantities,

pictures might not do what literary texts do. (Regardless how many engines pull it, no train will ever fly.)

But quantity is not the only issue here. So far reading has been held against watching static artefacts. As soon as *motion* pictures come into play, there is a new ballgame, of course. It has been said, so by David Bordwell (1985), that film lacks a narrator and that there is a basic semiotic difference between showing and describing an action. Still, there are categories that literary and cinematographic narratives share. On the level of *histoire* (or story) there are characters, setting, time and action; on the level of *discourse* (or plot) there are time structure and point of view (cf. Leubner & Saupe, 2006, 218-220). Beyond all theoretical considerations: What is a movie, if not – in Lessing's terms – a sequential arrangement of objects to represent an action drawn out in time? And what is the cinema, if not the mighty 20th century successor of 19th century literature in telling stories to mass audiences?

But as films tell stories, do not all the claims associated with reading apply to watching as well? In watching films, can't we learn about the world? Can't we develop empathy with characters and reflect on their actions? Can't we encounter the fantastic and the unthinkable? Can't we grow and mature in doing all that? Think about the infamous perfume maker Jean Baptist Grenouille. His story is a gripping and touching one in Patrick Süskind's novel (1985), but also in Tom Tykwer's movie (2006). Why should we want or have to read a novel, if there is the option to watch a film?

THE READING PROCESS

In search for an answer to that question we can turn to media theory and media history. In the 18th century consciousness becomes the main subject matter of literature, and novels come as all kinds of "confessions," "effusions," "diaries" and "letters." Prime examples are Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1739) and *Clarissa* (1748), Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774) or, already into the 19th century, Jane Austen's novels. As literature discovers *Sense and Sensibility* (Austen, 1811), extensive reading becomes a mass medium for the emergence of subjectivity. This is not only due to the "psychological" subject matter of the literary texts but also to the very nature of the act of reading. In following a linear succession of letters, words and sentences, a reader permanently recodes digital symbols into mental images and concepts. This brings about an ambiguous effect: A readers conjures up a fictional world which by definition is separate from the empirical world; yet in doing so, the reader constantly experiences his or her own subjectivity. In short, reading is the privileged medium for blending social perception and self-

reference and thus for the formation of consciousness (cf. Jahraus, 2003 and 2008, 172-175; Kittler, 1995).

Much the same idea can be developed from the perspective of cognitive science and reading research, which have provided us with basic insights as to what happens when we read. First, there seems good reason to assume that people transform everything they experience into *mental models*. According to Johnson-Laird (1983, 165), mental models are "structural analogues of the world," that is, symbolic representations of experience and knowledge. If we have been to a number of restaurants, we develop a mental model of what happens there. We take a seat; we study the menu; we order drinks and food; we eat, request the check, pay and leave. Storing knowledge and experience, mental models also provide us with conceptual frames and scripts for dealing with new situations. (A mental model of driving a car or eating at a restaurant allows us to drive many different cars and eating at many different restaurants.) Mental models are interconnected, with smaller models being embedded into larger ones. And they are constantly being re-modelled as a new experience is being integrated into our mental make-up (cf. Maiwald, 2005, 81-90). Comprehending a text then means that we transform what we read into a mental model.

Secondly, in reading two processes intertwine: bottom-up and top-down. Reading sets in with decoding letters and words, that is, with mentally reconstructing incoming data "bottom up" from the text. Almost simultaneously the reader starts to activate knowledge he or she already has about the world, including knowledge about texts, and feeds it "top down" into the reading process (fig. 2):

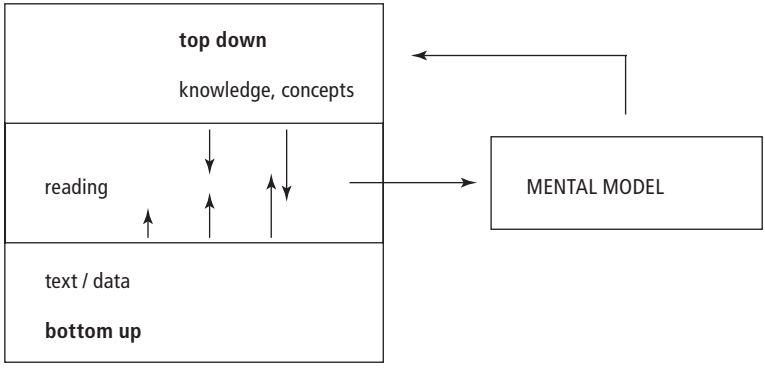

FIGURE 2 READING AS A BOTTOM UP AND TOP DOWN PROCESS

As we read into a text, a mental model begins to emerge and becomes one of the concepts that instruct the further reading process. In the course of reading we establish semantic relations, formulate hypotheses and develop expectations. Let us read, for example, into the following text:

> Once upon a time in the middle of winter, when the flakes of snow were falling like feathers from the sky, a queen sat at a window sewing, and the frame of the window was made of black ebony. (http://www.fln.vcu.edu/grimm/schneeeng.html, 30 November 2008)

The phrase *Once upon a time* indicates a narrative of past events, more specifically, a fairy tale. *[F]lakes of snow […] falling like feathers from the sky* hint at supernatural things to come; the adjective *black* is a foreboding of sorrow. In any case we do not expect the queen to be sitting at the window forever if the story is to become a story.

As the example shows, reading entails typical cognitive and textual operations. Among these are the identification and discrimination of central and peripheral elements; the selection of important and the inference of missing data; the synthesis of wholes and the analysis of parts; the interpretation as the act of assigning meaning (cf. Aust, 1996). In performing those operations, the reader moves from decoding letters and words via establishing local and global coherence to realising superstructures (i.e. the formal organisation of the text) and contexts (e.g. the newspaper in which an article appears or the larger discourse of which it is a part) (cf. Kintsch, 1998).

To sum it up, reading can be described as an elaborate cognitive process in which text data and previous concepts are transformed into mental models.

THE COMPLEXITY OF VIEWING

If we regard elaborate cognitive abilities and a rich store of mental models good things, then reading is a good thing. But what about the complexities of viewing? Cannot watching a film be mentally very demanding, too? Steven Johnson (2006) has claimed that modern TV series like *Seinfeld*, *The Sopranos* or *24* make us more intelligent because their intricate plots, multithreaded narratives, and rich intertextuality severely challenge the intellectual process of the viewer.

Another of Johnson's examples is the cartoon series *The Simpsons* – and rightly so. The opening sequence of *the Simpsons movie* (2007), for example, is a brilliant collage of witty intertextuality and ironic self-referentiality: It starts out with a gruesome story of heinous murder and intrigue acted out by Itchy and Scratchy, the heroes of the cartoon series within the series. After a hard cut, there is Homer

Simpson standing up in the middle of a cinema denouncing the boring film and the stupid people who pay to see something they could get for free on tv. Yet another reality shift occurs when Homer first speaks to his fellow spectators but then directly addresses the viewers of *The Simpsons*. From there we move swiftly into the well-known *Simpsons* intro with Bart writing the penalty sentence "I will not illegally download this movie" on the blackboard (Bart having to stay after class is a *leitmotif* of the series). The action proper starts out with the rock band Green Day performing from a barge on Springfield Lake. Since the lake is heavily polluted, the band wants to say "a word about the environment," whereupon the audience hoots and pelt them with rocks, tomatoes, and bottles. The water starts eating into the barge, which is sinking, Titanic style. The singer assures his comrades, "Gentlemen, it's been an honor playing with you tonight," whereupon they take out violins and play "Nearer My God to Thee" (fig. 3).

FIGURE 3 *TITANIC* REFERENCES IN *THE SIMPSONS MOVIE* (2007) (SOURCE: SCREENSHOT FROM DVD VIDEO NO. 3462508)

Finally we see a church service with the organ playing the Green Day hit "American Idiot – Funeral Version." The media images cited in this opening include the first moon landing (to the soundtrack of *Zarathustra* from Stanley Kubrick's 2001: *A Space Odyssey*), a careworn John F. Kennedy bent over his desk during the Cuban Missile Crisis, *Tom and Jerry* and – of course – *Titanic*.

To appreciate this kind of audiovisual text requires vast cultural and intertextual knowledge and elaborate cognitive activity. Watching is by no means simple, let alone simplistic. What is more, complexity as encountered in *The Simpsons*

is no exception. Over the past 10 to 15 years audiovisual texts have entered the cultural mainstream which 30 years ago would have been rejected by larger audiences as too complicated. Films like *Twin Peaks*, *Twelve Monkeys*, *Matrix* (I), *Run Lola Run*, *Vanilla Sky*, and *Mulholland Drive* play on the precarious ontological status of reality (what we experience as reality) and demand an aesthetically and intellectually astute viewer.

It is a popular prejudice that written texts are intrinsically superior to visual texts. Let me give you an example of the ambivalent relations between literature and film to prove that this is not necessarily true. *The Graduate* is a story about a young man who has just finished college and is bound for a business career. Benjamin Braddock's life, however, falls apart as he embarks on an affair with Mrs. Robinson, who is not only considerably older than Ben but also the wife of his father's business partner.

The 1967 film by Mike Nichols starring Anne Bancroft and Dustin Hoffmann has become a classic while the novel by Charles Webb (1963) has rightly faded into oblivion. Webb's novel is a very dry piece of prose which reads like a film script; the movie, on the other hand, draws fully on the means of the medium (for example by including the Simon and Garfunkel hits "Mrs. Robinson" or "Scarborough Fair"). The contrast shows very markedly in the endings. After Ben has disrupted the wedding of Mrs. Robinson's daughter, he and Elaine run from the church and escape on a bus. Here is the ending of the novel:

> Elaine was still trying to catch her breath. She turned her face to look at him. For several moments she sat looking at him, then she reached over and took his hand.
> "Benjamin?" she said.
> "What."
> The bus began to move. (Webb, 1987, 165)

This is not a bad ending. It is poetically just and aesthetically satisfying. It leaves to the reader's imagination to picture how Elaine looks at Ben, and it leaves open what Elaine is going to ask or tell Ben. Although it is a happy ending, it remains an open one, too.

Where the book comes to a satisfactory ending, the final scene of the movie is truly brilliant. A few stills may help to illustrate the point (figs. 4-7):

FIGURES 4-7 FINAL SCENE OF *THE GRADUATE* (SOURCE: SCREENSHOTS FROM DVD VIDEO NO. 500177)

The shot-countershot perspective (5/6) creates a much more comic effect than could be achieved in a written narrative. In addition, the film masterfully renders the transition from adrenalin-fuelled euphoria (5) to quiet happiness to subdued pensiveness (7). Last but not least, the film's parting shot (8) is rich in symbolic meaning: Ben and Elaine are moving ahead, away from the viewers, but mainly away from their parents' rigid and shallow lives; surrounded by ordinary people, they ride on a bus passing modest homes and trees, leaving behind artificial status symbols (swimming pools, sports cars) but also the privileges of their upbringing. And, in a highly symbolic act, they are crossing a bridge.

In short, there is good reason to see *The Graduate* as a movie, but very little reason to read the book (cf. Frederking, Krommer & Maiwald, 2008, 146-150). Films like *The Graduate* or *The Simpsons* raise the question of whether the benefits ascribed to reading cannot equally (and more easily) be obtained from watching.

One might be tempted to say "yes". For one thing, the mental operations we perform when reading are not categorically different from the ones executed when watching a film. We start out with limited audiovisual data, activate our ideas about the world and films and gradually try to make sense out of what we see (i.e. to construct a mental model). As far as content is concerned, films and books share the potential to tell stories that may stir our imagination, foster our empathy, expand our knowledge or tickle our nerves. Needless to say there are many films that will not do anything like that; but let us not forget that there are plenty of pointless and boring books.

THE SPECIFICITY OF READING

Nonetheless, I still want to make a case for reading and reading promotion. My first argument pertains to the cognitive aspects of reading. In basic categories of mere perception there is no fundamental difference between reading a book, watching a film or, for that matter, eating at a restaurant. All our sensory experiences are first transformed into semantically neutral neuronal data before our brain computes cognitive realities out of those data. The range and the complexity of our cognitive world, however, depend very much on terms and concepts we acquire. Yet the acquisition of terms and concepts and the formation of mental models are deeply grounded in language. Language is the arbitrary, symbolic, discursive and potentially recursive code we rely on to think and to communicate. (There is no way to express *if*, *perhaps*, or *I was mistaken* in a picture.) A mental model after having seen Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* on stage might look like this:

Romeo ♥ Juliet
Romeo † ➔ Juliet †
☹

But surely we cannot rest satisfied with that. When dealing with the most famous love tragedy in world literature, we should want an extended and more sophisticated mental model, which might include knowledge about other works of Shakespeare, the Elizabethan era and Renaissance theater, adaptations of the subject (e.g. by Gottfried Keller, Leonard Bernstein & Baz Luhrmann) and also the awareness that *Romeo and Juliet* is a timeless fictional model of the conflict between family loyalties and love in particular, society and the individual in general.

It is obvious that developing elaborate mental models requires terms, concepts, and cognitive operations that cannot possibly be gained from viewing pictures. A child growing up in a rich verbal and communicative environment is more likely to develop rich cognitive faculties than will children left to themselves in front of a tv set. Literacy events such as book sharing, talking about books, visiting a library or bookstore do not guarantee such an environment, but of course they are integral to it. It is no real surprise that competent readers generally also make competent users of other media. To put it bluntly: If you are smart, watching can make you smarter; but in order to get smart, you will have to read.

Having to read to get smart seems a good point in favor of reading, but it sounds somewhat utilitarian and slightly joyless. Therefore my second claim concerns the intrinsic value of literature. Films may be able to tell great stories in great ways. Yet there are things literary texts do which films cannot (and vice versa) and experiences available from reading which cannot be obtained from watching (and vice versa). Erich Kästner's children's novel *Emil and the Detectives* (1929), for example, has been adapted in three films (1931, 1954, 2001), which tell the story in a rather straightforward, conventional way. The novel, in contrast, intriguingly displays and plays on its status as an aesthetic artefact. The text starts with a poetological reflection on writing and literature as the presumed author tells the young readers why and how he came to write a book about Emil, and not a South Sea novel. Subsequently the text introduces ten main characters and locations before the actual narrative sets in: "So, nun wollen wir aber endlich anfangen!" (Kästner, 1999, 27). The story proper is told by an extradiegetic narrator who largely abstains from commenting the action but divides it into 18 chapters with catchy titles such as "A spy sneaks into the hotel" or "Do we learn anything from that?" Most importantly, the empirical author suddenly appears as a character in the novel when a journalist named Erich Kästner invites Emil to his newsroom for an interview.

Ironically and playfully drawing attention to itself as a fictional construct, Kästner's novel provides a reading experience that is categorically different from watching a movie.

When the novel *Emil and the Detectives* was released, Kästner had but little to fear from audiovisual competitors. But even today a literary text may very well hold its ground, as is demonstrated by the remarkable debut of *Life is Funny*, published by E. R. Frank in 2000. What makes *Life is Funny* special would largely be lost in a film. The novel is a sequence of 13 narratives by New York teenagers about their precarious and often barely tolerable lives. Their talk ranges from rough to gentle, from funny to fearful, from silly to wise, yet it always sounds true. The reader listens to voices from contemporary Brooklyn which despite their authentic ring can be quite complex. "Sonia" for example unfolds a multi-layered narrative to recount her troubled friendship with a young man (which as an Indian girl she is not permitted to pursue) and to convey her attempts to cope with his suicide (cf. Frank, 2000, 29-44.). In addition, the reader, as the novel progresses through seven chapters and seven years, gradually realizes how the teenagers' stories weave together and build up to startling climaxes. Reading, and reading only, can convey that kind of experience.

My plea in favor of reading, then, is twofold: Reading is crucial for cognitive development, and reading grants us particular aesthetic experiences. That being so, reading promotion requires no further justification. But in a media culture like ours reading promotion should follow certain routes while steering clear of others. Let me make three suggestions:

THE PROMOTION OF READING

First, we should not condemn or ignore other media but consider audio books, films and interactive CD's as stepping stones to reading and books (cf. Bertschi-Kaufmann, 2000). This applies especially to children growing up in social environments remote from print media and the reading culture.

Secondly, an important part of reading promotion should be the unbiased reflection of inherent potentials and gratifications of different media. My remarks on *The Graduate*, *The Simpsons*, and *Emil and the Detectives* were to outline the general idea, which another example may illustrate:

In his 1971 novel *Krabat*, Otfried Preußler describes a 14-year-old orphan who is hired as an apprentice in a flour mill. It soon turns out that the miller is a practitioner of black magic who in return for his evil powers sacrifices one of his apprentices to the devil every New Year's Eve. Krabat undergoes a dangerous emancipation from his master and finally succeeds with the help from a young woman.

Krabat is a suspenseful fantasy thriller and at the same time a thoughtful novel of adolescence (which has also been read as a parable of the rise of Nazism in Germany). Blending fantasy action and a serious subject matter, Preußler's book has sold 1.8 million copies and been widely read in German schools.[2] In October 2008 a film adaptation came out, accompanied by a rather flashy website. *Krabat* has thus turned from a mere book into a full-blown media combination.[3]

Reading is often credited for giving free play to the imagination whereas pictures limit our perception. Many readers emphatically confirm that idea, so let us put it to the test by comparing the description of the mill in the novel to a picture of the mill on the website:

> Krabat was groping through the forest like a blind man in the fog, then came across a clearing. When he prepared to step out from under the trees, the clouds opened and the moon appeared, shedding a cold light on everything.
>
> Now Krabat saw the mill.
>
> There it was in front of him, cowering in the snow, dark, ominous, a powerful, evil animal lurking for prey (my translation)[4].

What certainly strikes us in this passage is the metaphor in the third paragraph, which conveys Krabat's subjective view of the mill as a menacing, sinister animal. In the picture of the mill on the website there is an open landscape, not a clearing; we see a decrepit building bearing little resemblance to a dangerous animal, however with a murder of crows soaring behind it (fig. 8).

2 Kirsten Boie's 1999 mobbing thriller *Nicht Chicago. Nicht hier.* testifies to that when one character observes that *all* seventh graders are going to read *Krabat* (cf. Boie, 2004, 12).

3 It is media combinations such as *Krabat* or, archetypically, *Harry Potter* which painfully call into question the meaning of reading and reading promotion. Media combinations present a wide variety of written, auditive, audiovisual and interactive versions of a story, and they provide attractive interactive options (guest books, votings, contests, shopping etc.). In contrast to what cinema, MP3-player and internet have to offer, reading a book at first glance seems a rather tedious activity.

4 The original text:
Krabat tappte ein Stück durch den Wald wie ein Blinder im Nebel, dann stieß er auf eine Lichtung. Als er sich anschickte, unter den Bäumen hervorzutreten, riß das Gewölk auf, der Mond kam zum Vorschein, alles war plötzlich in kaltes Licht getaucht.
Jetzt sah Krabat die Mühle.
Da lag sie vor ihm, in den Schnee geduckt, dunkel, bedrohlich, ein mächtiges, böses Tier, das auf Beute lauert.
(Preußler, 1981, 14)

FIGURE 8 PICTURE OF THE MILL IN *KRABAT* (SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.KRABAT-DERFILM.DE/INDEX_LIVE.PHP, 15 JANUARY 2009)

In my view it would be pointless to prove the text superior to the image or vice versa. The picture shows a ramshackle mill-wheel, a flimsy water conduit, a warped roof and in doing so perhaps curbs our imagination. On the one hand the black birds and the eerie grey filter create a startling aesthetic effect. By contrast, the text allows us to picture the mill in our minds and thereby stimulates our imagination. On the other hand the metaphor of the lurking aninmal, even though aesthetically powerful, forces an interpretation on the reader, which the image does not. In a media culture like ours, comparisons of the means and potentials of different media should play an important role in reading.

Lastly, when books are concerned, reading promotion should not stay indiscriminate and indifferent but put special emphasis and a special premium on books that yield special gratifications. *Emil and the Detectives* and *Life is Funny* are such books. They should be highlighted since they prove that neither reading nor reading promotion need to be lost at sea in a pictorial culture.

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RAYMOND A. MAR

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON READING AND WATCHING NARRATIVE FICTION

Organizations interested in the promotion of reading, such as the Dutch Reading Foundation, are likely to benefit from a comprehensive understanding of the empirical research currently available with regards to the outcomes of reading. The public's current fascination with science shows no sign of waning, and any appeal for an alteration in behavior must be accompanied by evidence of a scientific nature if it is to be maximally influential. Unfortunately, a truly exhaustive review of such research is beyond the scope of this chapter. In lieu of comprehensiveness, this review will focus on relatively unique and less commonly discussed outcomes of reading, and in this way expand current conceptions of the correlates of reading. In light of the theme of this conference, this chapter will close with some discussion of research examining the differential outcomes of reading versus watching. We begin with evidence for the possible social outcomes of reading.

SOCIAL OUTCOMES

My colleagues and I have been working from a theoretical perspective that views stories as a cognitive and emotional simulation of social experience (Mar & Oatley, 2008; Oatley, 1999). For the most part, stories are about people, their psychology, their aims and goals, the pursuit of these goals, and the conflicts with others that often result. It is difficult to think of a story that doesn't have interpersonal relations or human psychology at its centre. Even stories that take inanimate objects as characters, such as Tom Robbins (1990) *Skinny Legs and All*, anthropomorphize these objects by imbuing them with recognizably human traits and mental states. In stories with only a single character, a single person stranded on a mountain for

example, the environment often takes the role a secondary character. "This mountain is trying to kill me," a character might think. At the very least, if a character is truly alone in a story, the narrative takes the shape of an exploration of an individual's psychology, which can inform human psychology more generally.

When engaging with narrative fiction, we undergo a profound, embodied simulation of the social experience depicted. We imagine what it is like to be in the situations described, surrounded by the characters of the story, and working through the conflicts of those involved. That nature of this simulation should not be trivialized. Quite profound emotions can be experienced during our participation with narrative fiction. It is not uncommon to feel our eyes well up with tears at the end of a sad film when a character dies. But, upon closer reflection, this seems like quite an extraordinary response. How could we become sad—truly sad, to the point of tears—at the death of a fictional character who we just encountered for the first time an hour and a half earlier? It's not that we don't know that the death is false, that the actor playing this character is likely living quite happily somewhere in Los Angeles; what's unique is that this knowledge does not take away what we have experienced by simulation of the narrative's events. Because of how we encounter the social experiences found in a narrative, and the concomitant social and psychological knowledge embedded in these stories, there is a large potential for stories to influence our social lives. Expository nonfiction communicates information by telling. Narrative fiction communicates information through experience.

Empirical investigations into this hypothesis have only just begun. To begin, an early review paper I wrote identified that the areas of the brain most commonly associated with narrative processing closely parallel those areas of the brain used to comprehend our social peers (Mar, 2004). Recently, I replicated this finding in an analysis that employed more sophisticated statistical techniques (Mar, in prep.). This demonstrates that there is a common neural substrate for both story-processing and social-processing which is consistent with the idea that social cognitive processes are employed while we engage with stories. With evidence for this initial premise in hand, it was then possible to formulate some unique hypotheses regarding the social outcomes of reading fiction. It became plausible, for example, that frequent readers of narrative fiction might have better social abilities as a function of constantly simulating the social experiences depicted in narratives. In a way, frequent readers might be exercising their social cognitive faculties every time they pick up a novel.

In order to test this hypothesis, we conducted a study that examined whether lifetime exposure to narrative fiction was positively correlated with social abilities (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz & Peterson, 2006). As a control for narrative fiction I chose exposure to expository nonfiction, which entails many of the same processes (e.g., reading discourse-level text) but is unlikely to provide the same simulation of social experience. Exposure to print was measured using a modified version of the Author Recognition Test, first developed by Stanovich & West (1989). This measure asks people to check from a list of names those that they recognize as belonging to published authors. Importantly, guessing is discouraged because respondents are informed that the list contains false names (i.e., foils), so attempts to cheat or guess can easily be detected. In this way, the Author Recognition Test effectively discourages socially-desirable responding, which normally plagues self-report approaches to assessing reading habits. In order to measure social abilities, we relied upon two task-based measures. The first, known as the Mind-in-the-Eyes task (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste & Plumb, 2001), present a photograph of a person's eye-region and asks individuals to choose from among four options the mental state that person is currently experiencing. The second is known as the Interpersonal Perception Task-15 (Costanzo & Archer, 1989). This video consists of short clips of unscripted interactions between non-actors, followed by a multiple-choice question that has an objectively true answer. For example, after showing a brief interaction between two adults and two children on a couch, respondents might be asked who is the child of the two adults. The answer to this question is never provided explicitly within the clip, so viewers need to decode nonverbal cues such as body position and prosody in order to come up with the correct answer. We found that exposure to narrative fiction was positively correlated with scores on both measures (although in the case of the Interpersonal Perception Task-15, this relation just failed to attain threshold for statistical significance), when controlling for expository nonfiction exposure, age, years of English fluency, and general intelligence. So, people who had more exposure to stories tended to score higher on the two measures of social abilities. In contrast, exposure to expository nonfiction exhibited the opposite relation; the extent of one's exposure to nonfiction texts predicted poorer scores on these tasks. A follow-up study demonstrated that this finding cannot be attributed to trait personality, although individual differences in fantasy ability seem to be an important mediator (Mar, Oatley & Peterson, in prep.).

Thus, although the research into this topic has only just begun, there is some evidence that positive social outcomes are associated with exposure to narrative fiction. Of course, the studies just described are correlational in nature and thus causal

direction cannot be inferred. That is, we don't know if it is the case that reading narrative fiction improves social abilities, or that people with good social abilities are more likely to read fiction. Even if the latter is the case, however, this research still tells us something about the social nature of stories and about the social lives of readers. A third possible explanation for the correlations observed is that some other variable predicts both a tendency to read narrative fiction and to perform well on measures of social ability. The only way to infer causality through research is to conduct an experiment in which people are randomly assigned to a condition. Such an experiment has been conducted, and people assigned to read a piece of fiction outperform individuals assigned to read a nonfiction essay on a measure of social reasoning (Mar, 2007). This finding increases our confidence in the idea that reading narrative fiction may directly improve social abilities, but a great deal more research is needed in this area. For one, it should be demonstrated that the types of social benefits that we observe in the laboratory can be generalized to real-world circumstances. As a first step towards answering this question, it appears that readers of narrative fiction do not have smaller social networks, experience less social support, or report more loneliness compared to those who read less (Mar, Oatley & Peterson, in prep.). Another important future direction is to examine the outcomes of long-term reading in a way that can allow for the drawing of causal inferences. An intervention-based study, in which people are randomly assigned to a diet of narrative fiction or expository nonfiction over a period of months would be ideal. Studies of this kind, however, are very difficult to complete and require a great deal of resources and planning.

COGNITIVE OUTCOMES

It is possible that the reading of narrative fiction may have cognitive outcomes as well as social outcomes. When engaging with narrative fiction we imagine the narrative world that is presented, projecting ourselves into this fictional space. Gerrig (1993) referred to this as "transportation," as readers are transporting themselves from their current circumstances into a fictional world. Because narrative requires us to think about non-present circumstances, it necessarily involves a form of abstract thinking. This may explain a quite striking finding reported by Daniela O'Neill and colleagues (O'Neill, Pearce & Pick, 2004). These researchers found that the narrative abilities of 3 to 4 year-olds predicted their later math abilities, which is a little unexpected unless one takes into account that both involve thinking in the abstract. Some research currently being conducted in my lab examines whether adult readers of narrative fiction tend to have greater abstract reasoning ability compared to those that read less often.

Another cognitive outcome commonly associated with reading is vocabulary acquisition. To date, however, no research has examined whether what we read is important for learning new words. In a pilot study examining this question, we found that narrative fiction predicted vocabulary ability but not expository nonfiction (Mar, Babyuk, Valenzano & Peterson, 2008). This was true both when reading was measured using the Author Recognition Test, and when self-reports of reading habits and preferences were employed. Interestingly enough, a follow-up study indicated that fiction texts are not likely to have more unique words than nonfiction texts, so this cannot explain the finding. Vocabulary is an important cognitive outcome because it is a major component of many standardized tests, especially those used to determine admission to postgraduate degree programs such as graduate school, medical school, and law school.

Novel outcomes of reading narrative fiction are being uncovered more and more. But does it matter whether a piece of narrative fiction is read versus watched? How does watching television or a movie compare to reading a book?

READING VERSUS WATCHING

Research that directly compares the effects of watching versus reading something is still in its infancy. That said, there are a number of interesting findings along this vein that are likely to surprise those interested in this topic. One obvious question is whether reading results in a deeper engagement with a piece of fiction, compared to watching. Are we more transported into a story world if we read about it, compared to if we watch it play out in front of us on a television screen? The idea that reading involves a deeper simulation, or more transportation, seems very attractive. After all, in these debates reading has typically been viewed as active whereas watching is passive. While reading a story, our mind needs to conjure up the scene; we need to imagine what characters look like, what their voices sound like. When watching something on television or in a film, all this information is provided to us. All we need to do is absorb it. Melanie Green and colleagues (in press) presented the same narrative in either text or film form, for two stories: (1) *The Hunt for Red October*, and (2) *Goodbye Columbus*. Surprisingly, they found no effect of media on self-reported transportation; it did not seem to make difference whether people were watching or reading the story. They also examined whether imagery ability might play some role in how transported people feel while reading. It could be that only people who are really good at conjuring up images of events while reading are more transported while reading compared to watching a story. This was the case for one of the stories, but not the other, so no consistent effect was observed.

These same researchers (Green et al., in press) wondered whether reading a story first might lead to more transportation on a subsequent occasion when one watches the same story as a film. So many books are being made into films nowadays, it would be interesting to know what effect reading the book beforehand will have on one's experience watching the film. What they found was that the greatest amount of transportation was experienced by individuals who first read a story and then watched a film version of the same narrative some time later. This demonstrates to some degree the complicated relationship between media; exposure to a story in one form can influence the experience of this same story in another.

These researchers also found an interesting interaction with respect to an individual difference variable. 'Need for Cognition' is a construct that describes an individual's preference for complexity, thought, and problem solving. A person who rates themselves as high in agreement with the statement "I would prefer complex to simple problems" would be seen as high in 'Need for Cognition.' Green and her colleagues (in press) found that these same individuals are also likely to prefer books over movies, and report more transportation into books than into film. So, interestingly enough, it is not imagery ability that consistently determines a preference for reading over watching, but a preference for complex thought.

Another question that comes to mind is whether information is more likely to be learned through reading versus watching. One might think, again following the lay argument outlined earlier, that since reading is more active it should lead to deeper encoding of material and thus greater recall. This, however, is not what the empirical research shows. In fact, a number of studies have found that watching something leads to better retention of information than reading or listening to it (Walma van der Molen & Van der Voort, 1997; Ricci & Beal, 2002). Clearly, we need new conceptualizations of how these different media are processed in order to better account for current research findings.

What about the social outcomes mentioned earlier? Is there any difference in how exposure to different media predicts social abilities? In an article currently in preparation by our group (Mar, Tackett & Moore, in prep.), we describe a study in which exposure to storybooks and movies in preschoolers predicts social cognitive development, but exposure to television does not. Clearly, the effects of media are complex and can not be reduced to simple differences in visual versus textual presentations.

The extant empirical research comparing reading versus watching narratives thus appears to be quite mixed. In some cases where we might expect differences (e.g., transportation or narrative engagement), no differences appear to exist, and in cases where we might not expect differences (e.g., correlates with social ability) there might be a difference. The key to making sense of these results is likely to lie at least partly in an examination of individual differences. Recall that measurement of an individual's "need for cognition" helped to explain more absorption or transportation into books over visual presentations. Incorporating measurement of relevant personality constructs such as trait transportability, fantasy tendencies, imagery abilities, and tendency to anthropomorphize seems an important next step. What is also needed is a in-depth exploration of what these different media entail. Although television and film are both audio-visual presentations, in what ways might they differ particularly with regard to the potential for cognitive and emotional simulation?

It would also be useful to look at related research that might inform our understanding of the effects of reading versus watching. There has been some very interesting work recently on the anthropomorphization of television characters, for example. Wendi Gardner & Megan Knowles (2008) have shown that the presence of a photograph of a favorite television character can result in similar effects as the presence of a real social other. Along similar lines, Epley and his colleagues (Epley, Waytz & Cacioppo, 2007) have begun to show that anthropomorphization of various targets might help to reduce feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and ostracism.

CONCLUSIONS

The research reviewed here has demonstrated that there are some surprising social and cognitive correlates of reading. This review has also revealed, however, that a great deal of work remains to be done. Although there has been a few compelling studies that contrast reading versus watching a narrative, the results of these studies have illustrated that things are more complicated than we might have anticipated. What is clear, however, is that engagement with narrative fiction, perhaps particularly when presented as text such as in novels or literature, has an important impact on us and is a topic that deserves to be studied closely. It is my hope that organizations such as the Dutch Reading Foundation will continue to support this interesting and important work.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY:

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JAKOB LOTHE

VERBAL NARRATIVE AND VISUAL IMAGE: READING AND VIEWING CONRAD, COPPOLA AND SEBALD

For reasons which I hope will become apparent in the course of this chapter, I consider the topic of this conference as very important indeed. My contribution is an exercise in practical criticism. I will discuss reading and viewing by referring to, and briefly analyzing, illustrative examples of verbal and filmic texts created by the Polish-British author Joseph Conrad, the American film director Francis Ford Coppola, and the German-British writer W.G. Sebald. Relating the concepts of reading and writing to narrative, I will specify my critical concerns by linking narrative representations of both verbal and visual images to the concept of perspective. I will also, of course, relate the concepts I use to the activities, positions and qualities which they purport to illuminate.

I begin by inviting you to consider the relationship between visual image and perspective in this painting completed in 1656, Diego Velázquez's.

FIGURE 1 *LAS MENINAS*, DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ, 1656.

Las Meninas is at once a product of, and a significant contribution to, the Renaissance and the Age of the Baroque. And yet this remarkable painting is also something more than, and different from, the period of which it is a constituent element. For the French philosopher Michel Foucault, *Las Meninas* problematizes representation in a radically new way, not least by simultaneously distorting and extending our habitual perspective. Who or what is the orienting perspective in *Las Meninas*? By "perspective" I mean the artist's, the author's, the narrator's, or the character's point of orientation. Perspective determines what we see and what we do not see. Perspective is thus linked to sight, and also to insight. However, perspective can indicate perception as well: what it means and feels to be looked at in a certain way and in a given situation. Focalizing and delimiting the visual field, perspective is associated with choice (what to see or notice and what to omit or exclude); concomitantly, perspective is also something that can be chosen for us, something that can be determined by those in a position of power and influence.

This twofold characteristic of perspective is brilliantly presented by Velázquez. We see a group of nine people who appear to be silent, and several of whom are looking in the same direction. At first we think they are looking at us, but then we realize that their eyes are directed not at us as spectators but at the Spanish royal couple – King Philip IV and Queen Mariana – who we must imagine sitting or standing exactly where we are. They are being painted by Velázquez, who has made himself a character in his own painting. We would not have known this without the mirror, which is positioned in the middle of the painting and in which we can see a blurred image of the king and queen. Relegating them to a mirror image, Velázquez highlights the minor characters, while at the same time problematizing and challenging the relationship between painter, picture, and spectator. The effect is tentacular, in that we are being drawn into the picture. Similarly, in the different medium of verbal prose, we are drawn into the discourse of texts such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Sebald's *Austerlitz*. In both cases, and in both media, the effect is in large part due to modulations of perspective.

Although a visual perspective is not essentially narrative, it can have a distinctly narrative component. A narrative presents a chain of events which is situated in time and place. Defined thus, a narrative can be verbal as well as visual or filmic. As narrative is a feature of verbal fiction as well as of film, it arguably establishes the most apparent, and most important, link between two media that, as Boris Eikhenbaum noted as early as 1926, are very different in several ways.

Before turning to Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*, I want, for the sake of illustration, to briefly relate an instance of verbal narrative to an example of a filmic one. Consider this text:

> "Ach," sagte die Maus, "die Welt wird enger mit jedem Tag. Zuerst war sie so breit, dass ich Angst hatte, ich lief weiter und war glücklich, dass ich endlich rechts und links in der Ferne Mauern sah, aber diese langen Mauern eilen so schnell aufeinander zu, dass ich schon im letzten Zimmer bin, und dort im Winkel steht die Falle, in die ich laufe." "Du musst nur die Laufrichtung ändern," sagte die Katze und frass sie. (Franz Kafka, *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, 368)

> "Alas," said the mouse, "the world is growing smaller every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when at last I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls are narrowing so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap I am running into." "You only need to change your direction," said the cat and ate it up. (My translation)

This short narrative, an untitled story by Franz Kafka often referred to as "Kleine Fabel" ("Short fable"), enables the reader to quickly form his or her images of the running cat and the waiting mouse. Very effectively, the story starts with the narrative trick of making a mouse talk – and immediately it discusses problems of great psychological complexity. Thus the mouse expresses ambivalence between agoraphobia and claustrophobia. In extremely condensed form, it presents the course of a life which can be associated with the reader's life experiences (how much larger the world seemed when we were small!).

The visualizing potential and power of literary characterization become particularly striking if we briefly compare Kafka's narrative with a narrative fiction film such as Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now Redux* (2001). I shall be returning to this film shortly, but refer to it here in order to remind you of the way in which, on film, the characters are presented to us. In one strong sense a film – as the sum of a large number of constituent elements – visualizes the character for the viewer. There is, then, a very significant difference between the ways in which images operate in verbal and visual narratives. Still, even though images on film are inseparable from what they show (including the characters and the action), in *Apocalypse Now* they sometimes take on a significance of their own. Moreover, filmic images need to be processed, or interpreted, by the viewer – and I would argue that this kind of interpretative process involves the formation of the viewer's own images. For the viewer of *Apocalypse Now* who has read *Heart of Darkness*, for example, the response to and understanding of the film's images is simultaneously strengthened and complicated by the images which he or she has already formed when reading the verbal text.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's most famous story, Marlow describes his journey to Africa – and up the Congo River – and his meeting with Kurtz: the highly successful agent who is collecting and delivering more ivory than any other. Marlow is shocked to discover that Kurtz, the personification of Europe and European civilization, has been involved in, and possibly responsible for, barbarian killings and rites. Kurtz dies uttering the words: "The horror! The horror!" (69).

In the first paragraph of the novella, Marlow has not yet started to tell his story. The narrator here is a frame narrator, who after having presented the narrative situation introduces Marlow and then becomes a listener to Marlow's story. We are introduced to a group of five people on a sailing-boat that is anchored waiting for the tide to turn:

> The *Nellie*, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

> The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth. (3)

Remarkably static, this narrative situation is possessed of various constituent elements of literary impressionism ("haze," "grey…air," "dusk"). The narrative beginning presents suggestive visualization by means of verbal prose. Readers of Conrad's tale will of course get different associations when reading this opening. Personally, I am forcibly reminded of this painting by Claude Monet entitled "The Thames at Westminster". Completed only thirty years before Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*, Monet's painting not only presents an element of space (a location of imperial power) which calls the opening of the novella strikingly to mind. Additionally, key adjectives in the beginning paragraph of the literary text – especially "haze" and "grey…air" – can also be used when describing this painting. What is essential here is not what is seen, but rather the painter's and viewer's impression of what he or she sees. This kind of visualization, I hasten to add, is very different from the mechanical operation of visualization performed by film on an empty silver screen.

The pronoun 'us' refers to the five characters aboard the Nellie. One of them is Marlow, who is to perform crucial functions both as narrator and as character in the tale. As indicated already, however, it is significant that not Marlow but an anonymous first-person narrator is narrating here. At first sight, the novella's narrative situation seems to resemble the epic 'proto-situation' in which, as Walter Benjamin observes in his classic essay "The Storyteller," a teller tells his or her audience something that happened. The resemblance is nonetheless superficial – not only because the concept of the epic proto-situation excludes the device of the frame narrator but, more importantly, because in Heart of Darkness the narrative act, its motivations, and its thematic implications are much more problematic.

While the frame narrator is often the most authoritative and knowledgeable of the narrators in a story, this is not so in *Heart of Darkness*. For although the frame narrator passes on Marlow's story and appears to be reliable, his insights are distinctly inferior to Marlow's. The frame narrator's conventionality, including his reference to London as the "greatest … town on earth," increases the impact and suggestiveness of Marlow's first words: "And this also … has been one of the dark places of the earth" (5). This narrative variation is one of the most effective in all of

Conrad's fiction. Marlow's remark exposes the relative naïvety and limited insight of the frame narrator and prefigures the sombre implications of the tale he is about to tell. The comment anticipates his later reflections on the arrival of the Romans in Britain, "nineteen hundred years ago – the other day. . . ." (5). For the Romans, Marlow plausibly goes on to suggest, Britain must have seemed an inhospitable wilderness "at the very end of the world." Moreover, Marlow's opening words also foreshadow "darkness," the text's central metaphor which (like ivory) becomes a powerful symbol. Although the Romans "were men enough to face the darkness … They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others" (6–7). This generalizing statement obviously refers to the Romans, but also includes a reference to the narrative Marlow is just starting. Suggesting that Marlow's level of insight is superior to that of the frame narrator, these brief observations also indicate some key characteristics of Marlow's first-person narrative: a reflective rhetoric designed to impress and persuade, a peculiar blend of personal and intellectual curiosity, and a tendency to generalize on the basis of individual experience. Conrad thus uses two narrators in *Heart of Darkness*, and the effect of Marlow's narrative is inseparable from the function of the frame narrator. Conrad's combined use of both narrators manipulates the reader into a position resembling that of the frame narrator's narrates, that is a position characterized by a willingness to listen patiently and by the possibility of acquiring new insight (including improved knowledge of how little we know) as a result of that listening. The similarity between the tale's effect on the listeners and that on the reader is striking.

Returning to *Apocalypse Now*, we may first remind ourselves that this film, unquestionably one of the most widely discussed and most influential productions of American post-war cinema, uses visual images to tell the story of the American officer Willard's "mission" to find and "terminate" (that is, kill) the American Colonel Walter E. Kurtz, who, operating on his own with a group of followers in the border area between Vietnam and Cambodia, is no longer obeying orders. *Apocalypse Now* has no frame narrative corresponding to that in *Heart of Darkness*: Willard is no Marlow addressing a group of listeners. Moreover, whereas Marlow is a reflective and eloquent officer who is genuinely shocked by his experiences in the Congo, Willard is a professional killer who, in striking contrast to Marlow, is almost completely inarticulate. Thus, the viewer is often unsure how to interpret the visual image of Willard.

In spite of such significant differences, however, there are also surprisingly direct points of contact between Coppola's film and Conrad's novella. Although the most obvious of these are related to the issues of colonialism and imperialism,

there are also other forms of contact between the verbal and filmic texts. One way of identifying a cluster of such contact points is to suggest that a number of the images presented in Coppola's film seem to be inspired by Conrad's impressionist narrative, for instance images of the jungle presented from the vantage point of the boat moving up-river and linked, as well as limited, to the perspective of the boat's crew. There is an interesting affinity here between the ways in which Conrad's narrative inspired Coppola as film director and its impact on the noted British photographer Marcus Bleasdale, whose original book *One Hundred Years of Darkness* juxtaposes black-and-white photographs with quotations from Conrad's novella.

FIGURE 2 *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF DARKNESS*, MARCUS BLEASDALE, 2003.

In my brief discussion of Coppola's film I will focus on the scene entitled "Intelligence Compound," which constitutes a kind of filmic frame narrative in *Apocalypse Now*. I will identify and briefly discuss three points of contact. First, we immediately notice that the colonel is named Kurtz, as is the agent in *Heart of Darkness*. Significantly, in the "Intelligence Compound" scene Kurtz is present only in the form of a voice and a photograph. Indeed, both in Conrad's verbal narrative and in Coppola's filmic one, the "passive" character, that is the one who is not travelling

but is gradually being approached by the other, appears as the driving force of the plot; attitudes to him are mixed, including admiration as well as fear, and as indicated already he is named Kurtz.

In the verbal discourse of *Heart of Darkness*, the characterization of Kurtz is predominantly indirect, often assuming the form of rumour or reputation. In "Intelligence Compound" Kurtz is characterized directly by the general. Just as importantly, however, he is characterized visually through the constellation of, and opposition between, visual image and voice. Looking at a photograph of Kurtz while listening to Kurtz's "verified" voice being played on a tape recorder, Willard is apparently unable to relate the voice to the photo. This form of filmic characterization is extraordinarily suggestive, especially by presenting Kurtz as an enigmatic and fascinating figure – the hollow man serving as the epigraph of T.S. Eliot's modernist poem.

As regards the second word, "method" / "unsound method," we may remember that this phrase is used about Kurtz by one of the minor characters Marlow encounters on his up-river journey towards Kurtz's station. Retrospectively, Marlow, his listeners and we as readers link "unsound method" to the "barbaric" actions in which Kurtz has been involved. In the relevant scene in *Apocalypse Now* the general uses and even repeats the word "unsound," thus not only underlining that Kurtz's method is "unsound" but apparently also attempting to convince himself that it actually is. Repetition, which often indicates affirmation, here suggests an element of doubt. For the viewer, this sense of doubt is reaffirmed, and strengthened, when we are confronted with the extreme brutality of senseless killings in the following scene: the helicopter attack on the coastal village which enables Kilgore (a character seemingly not disobeying orders) to go surfing on the waves outside it.

For the general, Kurtz's "unsound method" involves a lack of "restraint" – which is another key word in *Heart of Darkness*. As viewers we are now in a position to appreciate a further irony, for especially on a second or third viewing of *Apocalypse Now* it becomes impossible to claim that Kurtz is the only character showing lack of restraint. In actual fact, American warfare in Vietnam showed little restraint, as indeed the general's facial expression signals that, one level at least, he comes close to admitting. There is a prevailing sense of tension and unease in this scene. Using and appropriating key words of *Heart of Darkness* while at the same time never referring to Conrad's novella directly, and complicating the relationship between image (photo) and voice, "Intelligence Compound" suggestively indicates that film is something more, and more complicated, than just a succession of filmic images.

Turning now to W.G. Sebald, I want to consider the effects of one predominant characteristic of this author's works: the use of visual images as integral parts of verbal narrative. Born in Bavaria in 1944, Sebald was both literally and metaphorically a child of the Second World War. A soldier in the German army, Sebald's father was detained in a prison camp in France after the German capitulation in May 1945. When he finally returned to his family in 1947, his three-year old son did not recognize him. Perhaps because he did not feel at home in Germany, Sebald emigrated to Britain in 1966. He stayed there until, tragically, he died in a traffic accident in 2001.

In this year, 2001, Sebald published his main work, the novel *Austerlitz*:

FIGURE 3 *AUSTERLITZ*, W.G. SEBALD, 2001.

Before discussing some of the images of this strange, and strangely compelling, novel, let us consider how it begins:

> In the second half of the 1960s I travelled repeatedly from England to Belgium, partly for study purposes, partly for other reasons which were never entirely clear to me, staying sometimes for just one or two days, sometimes for several weeks. On one of these Belgian excursions which, as it seemed to me, always took me further and further abroad, I came on a glorious summer's day to the city of Antwerp, known to me previously only by name. Even on my arrival, as the train rolled slowly over the viaduct with its curious pointed turrets on both sides and into the dark station concourse, I had begun to feel unwell, and this sense of indisposition persisted for the whole of my visit to Belgium on that occasion. I still remember the uncertainty of my footsteps as I walked all round the inner city … (1)

In the Antwerp train station the frame narrator meets with Austerlitz, who, in a manner partly comparable to Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, becomes the protagonist and main narrator. Moreover, as in *Heart of Darkness*, the frame narrator becomes a patient and keenly interested listener to Austerlitz's story. Austerlitz's spends his life searching for his parents, even though he suspects that they were both murdered in Auschwitz. The three images to be considered are all related to both to the search and to the lurking suspicion that it may be in vain which accompanies it.

Austerlitz escaped from the Nazis on a Kindertransport to Britain in the summer of 1939. Austerlitz's father, Maximilian, fled to France, while his mother, Agáta, remained in the Czech Republic together with Věra, a non-Jewish friend of the family. As Austerlitz much later resumes contact with Věra, he comes to believe that his mother deported to Theresienstadt in the autumn of 1944. It is typical of Austerlitz that, acting on this idea, he scrutinizes an eight-hundred page study by H.G. Adler "on the subject of the setting up, development and internal organisation of the Theresienstadt ghetto …" (327). In the original German edition of Austerlitz, this sentence is divided into two by this textual image:

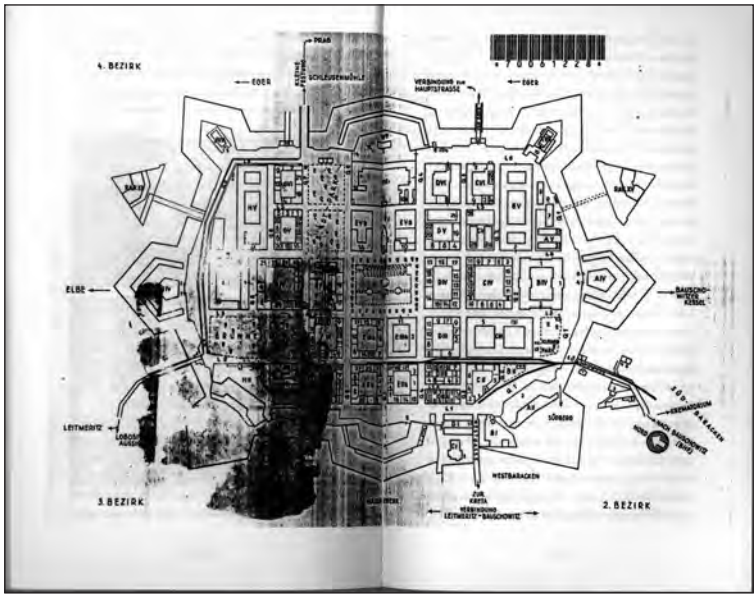

FIGURE 4 *AUSTERLITZ,* W.G. SEBALD, 2001.

The map makes Austerlitz, the frame narrator and the reader visualize an element of space, a place complete with streets, houses, and a surrounding border. We also note the names on the map. As names have to be read, an element of verbal prose is inserted into the image. Two of these in particular become semantically loaded in the context of the verbal narrative which frames the visual image: "bhf." [Bahnhof] and Krematorium." "Bahnhof" is linked to Austerlitz's journeys across Europe and to those of millions of Jews deported to the extermination camps. The word "Krematorium" is repeated in the main text when the frame narrator, who still keeps relaying Austerlitz's story to the reader, reports that the "incinerators of the crematorium, kept going day and night in cycles of forty minutes at a time, were stretched to the utmost of their capacity, said Austerlitz" (337).

The protagonist and main narrator Austerlitz makes this comment in the middle of the novel's longest sentence, which stretches from page 331 to page 342. In this convoluted sentence, Austerlitz – accompanied, we might say, both by the frame narrator and the reader – makes a sustained attempt to move beyond the sterile surface of the map. He is searching for a sign which might affirm the presence of his mother in the Lager. At the very end of the ten-page sentence, Austerlitz suddenly mentions that, according to Adler, the Nazis made a film in Theresienstadt – a film which Adler never saw "and thought it was now lost without

a trace" (342). However, Austerlitz manages to obtain "a cassette copy of the film of Theresienstadt for which I had been searching" (343). Watching the film, he cannot see his mother, Agáta, anywhere. But then he gets the idea of having a slow-motion copy made. Seeing this artificially extended version – a film approximating photography in an unconventional manner – he notices the face of a young woman:

> Around her neck, said Austerlitz, she is wearing a three-stringed and delicately draped necklace which scarcely stands out from her dark, high-necked dress, and there is, I think, a white flower in her hair. She looks, so I tell myself as I watch, just as I imagined the singer Agáta from my faint memories and the few other clues to her appearance that I now have, and I gaze again and again at that face, which seems to me both strange and familiar, said Austerlitz. I run the tape back repeatedly, looking at the time indicator in the top left-hand corner of the screen, where the figures covering part of her forehead show the minutes and seconds, from 10:53 to 10:57, while the hundredths of a second flash by so fast that you cannot read and capture them. (230–51)

As it turns out, this woman is probably not Agáta. What is interesting in our context, however, is that the textual image inserted into this passage of verbal narrative is filmic:


alten Herrn, dessen kurz geschorenes graues Haupt die rechte Hälfte des Bildes ausfüllt, während in der linken Hälfte, etwas zurückgesetzt und mehr gegen den oberen Rand, das Gesicht einer jüngeren Frau

erscheint, fast ununterschieden von dem schwarzen Schatten, der es umgibt, weshalb ich es auch zunächst gar nicht bemerkte. Sie trägt, sagte Austerlitz, eine in drei feinen Bogenlinien von ihrem dunklen, hochgeschlossenen Kleid kaum sich abhebende Kette um den Hals und eine weiße Blumenblüte seitlich in ihrem Haar. Gerade so wie ich nach meinen schwachen Erinnerungen und den wenigen

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FIGURE 5 *AUSTERLITZ*, W.G. SEBALD, 2001, 358.

This means that, in consort with film's conditions of production (that is, making a film) and reproduction (that is, viewing it), what we are looking at here is just one frame out of the 24 frames per second which we, that is our eyes, need to be exposed to in order to experience an optical illusion of movement (or slow, apparently painful movement in the version made specially for Austerlitz). We are looking at a frozen image, an image which insists on moving and yet stands still, suspended in time and space. The two faces in the image seem to be approaching the viewer from an unknown place somewhere in the past. Rather than going against the grain of the verbal text, this image strengthens the characters' ghost-like appearance.

Just after the presentation of this image Austerlitz tells his listener (and frame narrator) "that he was now about to go to Paris to search for traces of his father's last movements" (354). If the textual image of the woman from Theresienstadt is as close as Austerlitz thinks he is able to get to his mother, the last one to be discussed is a forceful visual representation of his search for his father.


vor von einem Mitarbeiter des Dokumentationszentrums in der rue Geoffroy-l'Asnier eine Nachricht erhalten habe, derzufolge Maximilian Aychenwald Ende 1942 in dem Lager Gurs interniert gewesen sei, und daß er, Austerlitz, diesen weit drunten im Süden, in den Vorbergen der Pyrenäen gelegenen Ort nun aufsuchen müsse. Sonderbarerweise, so sagte Austerlitz, habe er wenige Stunden nach unserer letzten Begegnung, als er, von der Bibliothèque Nationale herkommend, in der Gare d'Austerlitz umgestiegen

sei, die Vorahnung gehabt, daß er dem Vater sich annähere. Wie ich vielleicht wisse, sei am vergangenen Mittwoch ein Teil des Eisenbahnverkehrs wegen eines Streiks lahmgelegt worden, und in der aufgrund dessen in der Gare d'Austerlitz herrschenden ungewöhnlichen Stille sei ihm der Gedanke gekommen, der Vater habe von hier aus, von diesem seiner Wohnung in der rue Barrault zunächst gelegenen Bahnhof, Paris verlassen bald nach dem Einmarsch der Deutschen. Ich bildete mir ein, sagte Austerlitz, ihn

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FIGURE 6 *AUSTERLITZ,* W.G. SEBALD, 2001, 410.

"Curiously enough, said Austerlitz, a few hours after our last meeting, when he had come back from the Bibliothèque Nationale and changed trains at the Gare d'Austerlitz, he had felt a premonition that he was coming closer to his father. …

an idea came to him of his father's leaving Paris from this station, close as it was to his flat in the rue Barrault, soon after the Germans entered the city. I imagined, said Austerlitz, that I saw him leaning out of the window of his compartment as the train left, and I saw the white clouds of smoke rising from the locomotive as it began to move ponderously away". (404–06)

These lines accompany, and frame, the image presented above. At this point we have a sense of the narrative coming full circle, for one of the first images of Austerlitz is also of a railway station. Moreover, the title of the railway station in Antwerp, Salle des pas perdus or "Hall of lost steps" can equally be linked to the Gare d'Austerlitz, whose name, as I have noted in an essay on the novel's title, is blended with one significant aspect of the protagonist's name. As the frame narrator tells us that Austerlitz takes several photographs in the Salle des pas perdus in Antwerp, he may have taken this one of Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris too.

Like the other images in *Austerlitz*, this one does not have a caption. Such a lack of information and specification furthers the reader's, and viewer's, interpretative activity. We are invited, and inclined, to think of Austerlitz imagining his father escaping from the Germans in 1940, and yet perhaps ending up in a concentration camp a few years later. Thus the image induces us to think of this railway station as one out of many sites of deportation.

Concluding, we have noted that even though the viewer of a film is presented with a series of mechanically reproduced images, the interpretative activity which these necessitate is complex and multi-faceted, involving a restructuring of images and even the addition of new ones. If the viewer of *Apocalypse Now* has read *Heart of Darkness*, his or her images are likely to blend with those already formed when reading Conrad's verbal narrative. While in the case of Sebald the reader also becomes a viewer, our "literary" reading of this author is not impaired, albeit influenced and manipulated, by the incorporation of black-and-white images which are, significantly, uncaptioned and blurred, thus curiously furthering the interpretative and image-constructing process of reading.

The sub-title of this conference asks, "What does the written word have that images don't?" In the preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* Conrad notes: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see! (147). Referring to the verbal narratives he himself wrote, Conrad is playing on two senses of the word "see" – seeing with your eyes, and seeing in the sense of learning and acquiring new insight. While this is no doubt the experience of the reader of *Heart of Darkness*, I hope to have shown that we can also learn something significant by looking at a visual image – be it at painting such as *Las Meninas*, filmic images from *Apocalypse*

Now, or images of different kinds from *Austerlitz*. In the two last examples, moreover, our appreciation of the visual image is considerably enriched by the verbal narratives to which they are related and in which they are embedded.

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JOYCE GOGGIN

READING AND WATCHING: LITERATURE AND GAMES

On a vacation in Germany last summer, I thought I would brush up on my German by reading Hermann Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel*, a novel I had intended to read while writing my PhD thesis on literature and play, many years ago. While I had expected a sort of psychedelic hippy narrative about spirituality, my guilty procrastination was rewarded with a text that has more to do with my current research into digital culture and how it is affecting a shift in the contemporary novel. On sifting through the secondary literature, moreover, I learned that the few critics, who have written about this text, tend to align it with science fiction, and that Thomas Mann once described *The Glass Bead Game* as being "prophetic and sensitive to the future" (Norton, 1973, 10).

What struck me immediately was Hesse's description of the Glass Bead Game played in his futuristic land of Castalia. This multiplayer game produces an abstract synthesis of science and art, while itself constituting, to some extent, the narrative structure and content of the novel. In one odd passage, Hesse suggestively describes it as a sort of cosmic, metaphysical game played by intellectuals and artists at the beginning of the 24th century. The participants, who hale from a vast community of thinkers, play the game by sending strategies and solutions to a game master who positions their contributions within a complex system, as one might string glass beads along the cords of a universal Aeolian harp. As Hesse writes:

> This is a mode of playing with the total contents and values of our culture […]. All the insights, noble thoughts, and works of art […] produced in creative eras, all that subse-

> quent periods of scholarly study have reduced to concepts. […It is on] this immense body of intellectual values [that] the Glass Bead Game player plays [...]. Theoretically this instrument is capable of reproducing […] the entire intellectual content of the universe. On the other hand, within this fixed structure […] a whole *universe of possibilities* and combinations is available to the individual player. (Hesse, 15)

Hesse is notoriously vague as to how the game is physically executed, and contemporary readers can only be amused by the notion that people in the 24th century would play the game by surface mail, however Hesse's game image cannot help but conjure a number of associations, such as the World Wide Web or Wikipedia, in the minds of contemporary readers. As Roger C. Norton has noted, Hesse's "intention in his ironically voluminous, yet very inexplicit, descriptions of the Game was obviously not to picture his ideal of a super data-computing centre […]. Yet there are enough concrete details and specific mention of science and technology […] to warrant closer examination" (83). So while Hesse, writing novels in the 1940s, could not have foreseen what the personal computer and the internet would make possible, the Glass Bead Game, to my mind, bears an uncanny resemblance to the MMORPG, or massively multiplayer on-line role-playing game.

A MMORPG, simply put, is a digital, on-line, 24/7, real-time possible world, where players meet and strategize with or against each other, from locations around the globe. This, for me, is reminiscent of the way in which the players of the Glass Bead Game strategize with their peers from a great distance to create a sort of musical possible world, containing a universe of possibilities and random combinations. And while MMORPG players generally have less lofty intellectually goals in mind than Herman Hesse's Castalians, they virtually coordinate their movements to defeat monsters, accumulate wealth and tell each other stories. At fan sites, players of WoW, for example, create virtual libraries of esoteric, game-related knowledge, such as technical script on how to cheat and where to find objects, as well as films, pop songs and videos.

More importantly, players of MMORPGs frequently relate their experiences in game worlds in the form of lengthy personal narratives and dialogues of discovery, quest and friendship. The narrative potential of digital environments accounts for why one gamer told game scholar R.V. Kelly that the MMORPG experience was like living "inside a novel as it is being written". And although Hesse's Glass Bead Game most closely resembles on-line games, single-player games present equally compelling cases for the narrative potential of some computer games and their relation to more "papery" narrative forms like the novel. And at the level of structure, players

progress through games by completing various tasks that unfold like narrative episodes, as the player "levels-up" through game configurations that "remediate", in Bolter and Grusin's terms, structural novelistic conventions such as chapters.

One of the first major scholarly works to appear in 1997 on the storytelling potential of videogames was Janet Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, in which she hailed videogames as "a new medium for story telling". As she argued, "[t]he combination of text, video, and navigable space suggest that a computer-based microworld need not be mathematical but could be shaped as a dynamic fictional universe with characters and events" (6). The obvious objection here is that an adventure game, FPS, or MMORPG does not a *War and Peace* make. Hence, people who object to Murray's early and somewhat ambitious claims argue that hanging out in *Grand Theft Auto* and stealing stuff, let alone staking and fragging opponents in *Quake*, hardly amounts to the same kind of complex narrative activity that either writing or reading a great psychological novel involves.[1] To such objections Murray has countered that "[a] game is a kind of *abstract storytelling* that resembles the world of common experience but *compresses* it in order to heighten interest […] each move in a game is like a plot event in a *simple* but compelling story" (1997, 142-3). In other words, the stories that videogames generate are as simple as medieval tales and fables, a literary period and genre that many videogames seek to remediate. Or, to put it in Marie-Laure Ryan's terms, narrative in videogames amounts to *internal-exploratory interactivity*, which is "not about interpersonal relations, but [rather] the sequence of transformations that affect a micro-environment" (2006, 11). So instead of looking for a grand narrative in video games, we must content ourselves with little stories and the pleasures of discovering the nooks and crannies of a digital possible world (10).

Published in the same year as Murray's work, Espen Aarseth's *Cybertext* took a somewhat more reserved view of the storytelling capabilities of video games. Here Aarseth outlined his method for analysing hypertext and videogames as opposed to "codex texts", or printed, bound works that rely on simple, non-navigable print as their medium of communication. In so doing, he proposes a means of analysing "ergodic literature" or narrative forms that require "nontrivial effort […] to allow the reader to traverse the text", which allows readers to follow their own forking path as they execute the narrative. This is to say that hypertexts, and particularly

1 Cf Aarseth, "Gaming isn't storytelling. Don't be so sentimental. Gaming is about killing your prey" (347).

videogames considered as a form of text,[2] require that readers *actively* configurative the text, rather than subjecting it to the standard hermeneutic procedures, in order to get story out of the digital world or document. To use a slightly different vocabulary, hypertexts like Michael Joyce's *Afternoon*, or videogames played for their narrative potential, require lean-forward or active participation as opposed to lean-back or passive participation on the part of the reader. This is why, Aarseth prefers the terms "user" or "player" to "reader" because players, as opposed to readers, must effectuate a "semiotic sequence, and this selective movement is a work of physical construction that the various concepts of 'reading' do not account for" (Aarseth, 1997, 1).

There are, of course, notable exceptions to be found among codex narratives such as Saporta's *Composition No. 1*, which requires physical effort to decode because the text's packaging forces readers to order its pages before attempting any deeper hermeneutic or interpretive activity. Drawing on Barthes' concept of tmesis, or skimming or skipping passages, Aarseth argues that any novel has multiple random points of entry. Although this is not the principle operation involved in reading most books, it highlights ways in which readers of lean-back, or "readerly" texts in Roland Barthes' sense, may also be physically active in the process of producing meaning from codex texts. While there are plenty of exceptions to Aarseth's arguments, *Cybertext* is a productive and pioneering attempt to produce a typology that enables us to think about text carriers such as paper and screen; text producers and their relationship to writerly readers; as well as the varying degrees to which communities of readers and gamers re-write texts and deconstruct the line between themselves and authors or programmers.

The arguments I have just presented were advanced from the side of narrative against commonly-held the notion that new digital media should not to be equated with books, and that these media are possibly antithetical to reading and the role of literature in society. There is a camp in game studies, however, that also takes exception to the notion that digital media and literature are somehow similar in terms of narrative potential. Gonzalo Frasca, for example, has eschewed the use of any literary theory, and particularly narratology, in the study of computer games, proposing ludology "against the common assumption that videogames should be viewed as extensions of narrative", or some new kind of book. But of all the scholars who promoted ludology as the method for studying games, probably the most

2 On Aarseth's definition of text, see *Cybertext*, 19-21.

hysterical was Markku Eskelinen. In one of his more frenzied attacks on narrative, Eskelinen set out "*annihilate* for good the discussion of games as stories, narratives or cinema" because "stories are just uninteresting ornaments or gift-wrappings to games, and laying any emphasis on studying these kinds of marketing tools is just a *waste of time and energy*".[3]

More recently, however, most games scholars have calmed down and accepted the insights that narratology makes possible, and Gonzalo Frasca himself now refers to the narratology / ludology wars as "the debate that never happened". Yet every year articles claiming that games are in no way narrative continue to be published, based on a number of recurrent and uninformed claims on the nature of both narrative and literature. Many such claims were brought together at a recent conference by pioneer game-designer Chris Crawford in a passionate lecture wherein he discussed his "dramatic universe engine" for interactive storytelling, which he calls the "Erasmatron". Throughout his lecture Crawford opposed his notion of ludic storytelling to narrative literary fiction, thereby reinforcing the narratology / ludology debate that had supposedly been resolved, and unwittingly supporting those who see games as a form of cultural impoverishment.

FIGURE 1 CHRIS CRAWFORD EXPLAINING HIS DRAMATIC UNIVERSE ENGINE.

3 See http://gamestudies.org/0101/eskelinen/

One of Crawford's most contentious claims was the assumption that literature, unlike games, is not fun. In the category of "fun" Crawford included games, gum, comic books and candy, relegating literature to the category of "not fun" and serious. While on the surface the thought of Crawford deciding what is "fun" and opposing it to "not fun" makes me nervous, there is also the consideration that literature as a discipline has ceaselessly had to defend itself against the claim that it is not serious, not empirical, and not scientific enough to merit a place at the university. Unlike the utilitarian, expository discourses of the natural sciences, literature is seen by government administrators and budget makers as a sort of "baggy monster" of feelings and impressions that does not merit serious study, because it yields largely non-quantifiable, non-verifiable results. Moreover, as anyone knows who has been badgered for not doing something "serious", "real" or "useful" with their life as they pursued an academic career in literature, the common perception is rather that literature is way too much fun.

But it's not just parents and spouses that say this. Scholars have long argued that literary narrative is a sort of autotelic game that has no purpose outside itself, and the creation of ludic possible worlds, whose primary function is to entertain rather than to produce measurable goods. Indeed, many scholars claim that literary narrative is, in fact, a particular kind of game hence, Nancy Morrow's *Dreadful Games*; Mihai Spariosu's *Literature, Mimesis and Play*; and Peter Hutchinson's *Games Authors Play*.[4] And of course, there is Huizinga who claimed in *Homo Ludens* that literary narrative constitutes a type of game playing, because it is supposedly voluntary and serves no end outside of itself. And all of these arguments proceed from Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which he defines "poesis" or literary production as a form of *mimesis* or imitation. This is to say that because poesis in its mimetic function imitates various aspects of reality, it acts as a game of pretend, or one that is regulated by "as if" conditions, and ultimately constructs possible worlds with their own characters and conditions of reality.

Moreover, while philosophers and literary theoreticians have conceptualised literature as a kind of game, authors of fictional narrative from Chaucer to Dickens have narrated card and board games as a sort of nod to the notion that narrative fiction is a kind of game. Early examples include Pietro Aretino's 16th-century *Le Carte Parlanti: Dialogo di Partenio Etiro* [*The Speaking Card*], an allegorical poem

4 Note, however, that not all literary genres, or even narrative genres, are concerned with the projection of possible worlds. Very roughly, this category of narrative is limited to epic poetry, novels and short stories.

in which the characters are playing card figures. At roughly the same time in Spain, narrative poems known as *feulletos* were published daily and re-enacted court politics substituting playing card figures for sovereigns, which readers in turn played at deciphering.[5] In the 20th century, the self-conscious foregrounding of games was a popular postmodern device employed in texts like Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, and Cortazar's *Hopscotch*. The salient feature of these texts is their self-proclaimed game structure that requires the expenditure of a considerable ergodic effort in flipping backwards and forwards as one attempts to decipher their message.

In Chris Crawford's talk, to which I would now like to return, he asserted that literary narrative is highly formulaic and structured, while storytelling is spontaneous and therefore fun. As Crawford explained, storytellers like himself have no particular formula or blueprint in mind and are at liberty to shift directions at any moment. So while games produce spontaneous stories, narrative, and particularly literary narrative is rigid and structured. As he spoke, the first counter-example that sprang to my mind was the claim made by Émile Zola, that most rigid of 19th-century realists, that his fiction was a random experiment.[6] According to Zola, his technique consisted of providing a grid and some characters and then turning them loose to do as they pleased while he, the author, recorded their unpredictable actions. While Zola's theory is largely metaphorical, Crawford supported his argument with the example of a Grandfather telling a child a bedtime story wherein the hero takes a boat trip. His interlocutor, a little girl, protests, "I don't want a boat, I want a pony" and immediately, the spinner of this epic yarn turns the boat into a pony and continues. But what this logic ignores is the reason why Grandpa is able to do this, this being that he, like everyone else, was acculturated with countless story blueprints involving narrative conventions and specialized rules. From birth we become familiar with these structures however implicitly, and as Crawford himself explained in the question period, we all need stories about "cowboys, brave soldiers, fearless explorers whose masculine curiosity takes them to distant planets, and about whores with a hearts of gold". While his examples could profit from gender critique, all of them are highly formulaic even if the teller is free to change narrative elements at will.

5 Pietro Aretino *Le carte parlanti* (1545), Palermo: Sellerio, 1992. *Les Cartes Parlantes*, the translation of Aretino's dialogue was also popular in France, where it enjoyed two editions in 1589 and 1651. On the 16th-century political Spanish genre *los folletos* see Jean-Pierre Etienvre's article "Du jeu comme métaphore politique" in *Poétique* 56, 1983, p. 397-415.

6 Although Zola properly belongs to a movement known as naturalism, this category or genre is generally seen as a subgenre of realism.

FIGURE 2 CHRIS CRAWFORD ENACTS STORYTELLING BLUEPRINTS

But before leaving the topic of arguments that oppose games and digital worlds to narratives, let me introduce two final objections. It has often been said that games cannot be narrative or literary because the characters in games are flat, or two-dimensional and that their primary function is simply to interact in conflict as agents of good or evil, rather than to involve the reader in lengthy meditations on the meaning of life and the human condition. However, the first psychological novel to offer this kind of narrative was *La Princesse de Clèves* in 1678 and it was preceded by episodic narrative literature populated by characters like Chanticleer the proud cock or the sly Fox of *The Canterbury Tales*, all of whom are all flat characters devoid of psychological depth. What I surmise from the negative comparisons made by most ludologists, therefore, is that they are looking for what E.M. Forster in 1927 referred to "characters with a but", or psychological doubt which creates the illusion that fictional characters are actually complex, meditative beings rather than flat constructs of ink and paper.[7]

Others contend that computer games can never provide the narrative richness of literature because they consist of episodes, which are held together merely by the premise of the game. At the same time it is assumed that literary narrative is more or less chronological, and consists of events that all add up to one big story. But to return to *The Canterbury Tales*, this narrative consists of a prologue in which characters are introduced with the premise that unites them. They are travelers on a pilgrimage from Southwark to Canterbury who make a game of telling each other stories, which are collected in no particular order, to form a non-chronological narrative. Hence, although the episodes are set in a framing tale, they bear no other relationship to one another than their setting and do not add up to a greater, homogonous narrative. In this regard as well, it would seem that experts on litera-

7 It is worth noting that Forster was describing characters from 19th-century novels with the benefit of hindsight, which is to say that the psychological characters arrived very late on the scene, and by no means dominate contemporary fiction.

ture and ludologists alike argue against the literature and games analogy, based on assumptions that are most true of the 19th-century novel, which is of course just one kind of narrative.

As I listened to Crawford speak however, I was also struck by the resemblance of his project to that of the Russian Formalists who, in the 1920's, attempted to explain the specific mechanisms of literary production. The Formalists reacted to literature by systematizing it in terms of three central metaphors, namely the machine, the organism, and the system. Once the literary enterprise was boiled down to what their contemporary William Carlos Williams called a "small or large machine made of words", and its inner workings revealed, texts could be dissembled and described in terms of syntax and function. Hence, the poetic process could be understood as the intersection of the axis of selection containing linguistic elements such as verbs, nouns, adjectives and so on, and the axis of combination along which the artist conjoins the linguistic elements chosen to form a poem or a fictional narrative, governed by rules of genre.

The structure of the computer program that Crawford is developing for his story-telling game is unconsciously, yet closely, related to much of what the Formalist school did, and essentially mimics their program in reverse. This analytic procedure basically amounted to taking apart literary texts and explaining how they work, whereas Crawford's program will allow the user to choose elements from a reduced set of syntactical blocks to be conjoined along a combinational axis (263-6). The player/author does so by selecting elements such as actors, verbs, stages or locations and events through standard menu-driven input, while being subject to "laws of drama", which determine tone and govern which claims are true and false given set parameters chosen by the player-author (267). These laws are subtended by universal or extradiegetic laws, and local or intradiegetic laws, which also determine what is possible in this new interactive, narrative fictional world. The end result is a system that allows for, "the progressive upward integration of its functional units", which is how Barthes spoke of literary and cinematic stories in his essay, "The Structural Analysis of Narratives" (Barthes, 1982, 291). Ironically enough then, while espousing a method for engaging in non-literary and non-narrative storytelling, Crawford energetically argued for a method which has much in common with most structuralist accounts of how narrative works.

However, while there has been much debate on computer games and how they do or do not tell stories, little thought has been devoted to the relation of novels

to games from the reverse perspective. In other words, the notion that computer games are somehow like a form of narrative fiction has been explored at length, yet no attention has been paid to the impact of videogames on standard, codex fiction. For example, there has as yet been no study of the rapidly expanding market in novelisations of videogames or choose-your-own-adventure books, or the impact that videogames are having on the shape of what might be considered more 'literary' contemporary novels. In conclusion then, I would like to focus on the last category through a few texts that straddle the border between novel and videogame, and put aside the question of game novelisations for the time being.

We are currently experiencing a shift in contemporary novelistic discourse that manifests itself in how writers like Jeanette Winterson, Douglas Coupland, Chloé Delaume and others align their work with games. This turn in the art of the novel hinges on developments in novelistic structure and representation, similar to the exchange that occurred between print and film beginning in the 19th century. In *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, Kamilla Elliott explained how illustrations by authors like Thackeray were later absorbed into the idiom of cinema, serving as models for cut-away and establishing shots, dissolves and shot-reverse-shot sequences, as well as casting, costuming, framing and set design. Keith Cohen, has explained the shift from novel to film as being primarily located in the capabilities of presenting time and space specific to both media. For Cohen, "the cinema projects a series of permanently present moments against the screen", which means that it communicates chronology and character development spatially, as opposed to the novel which relies on the "predominantly linear manner of traditional narrative" and incorporates the temporality of reading into the representation of time.

The current exchange between novel and videogame involves the problematics of *real* time and *navigable* space, entailing a heightened version of Cohen's time/space argument. Moreover, this shift operates what Barthes called the "transpos[ition] of narrative from the purely constative plane, which it has occupied until now, to the performative plane, whereby the meaning of an utterance is the very act by which it is uttered" (Barthes, 1982, 285). This shift is particularly evident in Chloé Delaume's *Corpus Simsi*, a novel whose title refers to the author's avatar body in *The Sims*, an online role-playing game. From the outset the reader is asked to perform what Delaume calls her "generator of fiction" in a number of ways, like deciding when to turn the book over and start again; dealing with bizarre language that reads like a high-snob discourse in Simlish translated directly into French theory; and enjoying the rich tactile environment that is the book itself. The text is also composed of jar-

ring images, a practice that makes inroads into subverting the word/image divide, while creating readerly difficulty that requires Aarsethinian, nontrivial effort to traverse.

FIGURE 3 IMAGES FROM *CORPUS SIMSI.*

Throughout the novel Delaume insists that authorship is an equally performative act, hence "the meaning of any utterance is the very act by which it is uttered". As she explains, "appart from being totally immersed in the generative ludic illusion of [the videogame world] only the authentic project of writing can produce the same effect of the recreation-event of virtuality".[8] In other words, the emphasis is on the performative or eventful nature of the text, which can also be said of the Sim/author. Delaume graphically illustrates this by transcribing Rimbaud's "je est un autre" [I is another] as "*jeu est un autre*" [Game is another], thereby conflating her author function and the game. This accords with Barthes' notion that while the novel was formerly composed of a mixture of two systems "[personal and apersonal], successively mobilizing the signs of non-person and those of person" to produce "'psychology'", novels like Delaume's are about "pure system" and "bringing the whole narrative down to the sole instance of the discourse—or […] the locutionary act" (Barthes, 1982, 285). This threatens "the very content of the person […] [so that] the psychological person (of the referential order) bears no relation to the linguistic person, the latter never defined by states of mind, intentions or traits of character but only by its (coded) place in discourse" (Barthes, 1982, 285). Or, as Delaume puts it, she "was expulsed from the body [she] thought to be [hers] one spongy Friday in 2002" to become a "interminably a fictional character" in a

8 See Delaume's website at www.chloedelaume.net

"perpetual diaspora", so that it is now through the game-body as discursive instance that the narrative plays itself out (Delaume, 2003, 4).[9]

This tendency to evacuate subjectivity from both character and author, placing agency in the performativity of the text is a gesture common to novels that remediate videogames. For example, characterisation in Coupland's *JPod* is weak and expresses itself through elaborate game back-stories involving sexual fantasies about Ronald MacDonald, created by sketchy characters who work as game designers. Similarly the author has written himself into the novel as a dispersed character to whom others refer as "that asshole Douglas Coupland". While these questions of agency could easily be described as simply and adorably postmodern, I would argue that something different is going on, at least in the textual support. In his reading of *Afternoon*, Aarseth argued that the hypertextual environment in which Michael Joyce's disjointed prose is presented naturalises it, "and therefore [does] not cause the subversion [that it] might have in a codex format" (Aarseth, 1997, 86). Published 10 years after Aarseth, the graphic display of *JPod*, including junk mail, pages that breakdown into code, 81 pages of code and the inclusion of pop-up messages, encourage us to read the novel as hypertext, a hermeneutic operation ostensibly inaccessible to the computer illiterate.

Jeanette Winterson's *PowerBook* likewise incorporates pages with commands such as "save", "restart" and "view as icon", while the title implies that the book is to be read as though through a laptop. This novel too is full of disembodied voices and diffused characters implying, in ways similar to Delaume and Coupland's work, that agency, both authorial and readerly, has been fed into a random generator, from which neither emerges on top. To the question "[w]hat happened to the omniscient author?", a disembodied voice replies, "gone interactive", while another narrative voice explains "[t]his is where the story starts. Here, in these long lines of laptop DNA. Here we take your chromosomes, twenty-three pairs, and alter your height, eyes, teeth, sex. This is an invented world" (27, 4). And if, in Cohen's view, spatiality supplants temporality from novel to film, according to Winterson in videogames and novels that adapt them "[t]ime is downloaded into our bodies. We contain it. Not only time past and time future, but time without end" (2000, 103).

Given the importance of digital worlds and games in a growing number of everyday lives, it behooves us to take a closer look at the novels that adapt this medium.

9 All translations of Delaume's work are mine.

Worlds like *Second Life*, where it is possible to visit my bank and countless other commercial institutions as well as universities, while taking in spectacular scenery and chatting with friends around the world, doubtless provides the sort of rich environment for creating fiction that has inspired novelists for centuries. One place to begin would be a typographical and topographical classification of videogame novels on the basis of structure, character development, text base and the representation of agency. This is important work because, while some object that videogame narratives are disjointed, eposidic, shallow and support only two-dimensional characters, I would argue that, should human beings and novels revert in the direction of earlier psychological novels, a video game industry that has long surpassed Hollywood revenues and develops at a mind-boggling pace will keep up if need be. In this regard then, the correct conclusion to draw is probably that the fat Sim hasn't sung yet.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY:

Jocye Goggin completed her PhD in comparative literature at the Université de Montréal and came to the University of Amsterdam in 1997 to work on a post-doctoral project on gambling in 17th-century Dutch painting. Her major areas of research are literature, play and game theory, film and new media. Dr. Goggin teaches literature, film and new media and has recently become Head of Studies for the Humanities.

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FORUM DISCUSSION BETWEEN SPEAKERS, LED BY RACHEL VAN RIEL

Mr. Konrád

Twenty minutes earlier Rachel van Riel had given the audience the opportunity to ask the members of the panel (the speakers that day) questions and now a man rises and directs his question to the Hungarian writer and key note speaker György Konrád.

'Mr. Konrád, not so long ago a game maker said in a newspaper article – and he was criticised for it: literature is so heavily laden with rules, that nobody can move within it at all. In his view literature is a big burden of the past. What would be your answer to this? What would you say to someone who says that literature is all about rules?'

Mr. Konrád sighs, shuts his eyes and sighs again. It's only a few hours ago that he made his random walk through writing and reading, a speech in which he stated that writers are unruly, that they break the law and cannot be controlled, that writers don't do things by the law but challenge the law – and now he's confronted with the phrase: 'Literature is all about rules.' But he noted that the man who asked the question doesn't agree.

Than he opens his eyes and says, loud and clearly: 'I'm afraid the man is stupid. I won't say writers are criminals, but they are nonconformists. That is: if they're good writers.'

All the answers mr. Konrád gave were that accurate. Even when the subject was chocolate, the drug of the eighteenth century…

Joyce Goggin took the first question, earlier that afternoon.

'Will games and literature get closer in the future, because many game players want more than two dimensional characters?'

Joyce Goggin: 'Some in the literature departments argue that games have nothing to do with literature, because games have two dimensional characters. But they are the same people who get upset with comic books and graphic novels too – and I have very little time for that.'

'Others – people in the game study world – agree: games have nothing to with literature, and therefore game studies is a discrete discipline and should have it's own department and it's own professors.'

'Though I whole heartily support the idea of an own department of games studies, I totally disagree with both sides and think this is a totally unproductive debate. I mean, since Aristotle tons and tons of people who have written about literary discourse all say: literature – I hesitate to use the world, I prefer fiction – is a kind of game. Always has been.'

'At the end of my paper I mention that fiction also has flat characters. Postmodern fiction has very flat characters and premodern fiction had very flat characters too. In nineteenth century literature characters indeed were not flat, but that's a distinctive form of narrative literature that only existed in a distinctive period. It's just a period in the middle, even a very delimited period. But everyone seems to be thinking about nineteenth century literature when talking about literature. Without realizing. The whole basis of the argument in this fight doesn't exist in the first place.'

'To answer your question: I think games have a tremendous amount of potential to become progressively more narrative.'

Raymond A. Mar added: 'The game industry explicitly tries to incorporate more narratives, even in genres that traditionally had very thin narratives. Look at platformers. Newer platformers use more and more cut scenes to elevate the drama. Look at role playing games, the key phrase is always emigation: can we make the player forget that he's playing a game? That's what's happening when you read a really good novel: you forget that you're reading a book. The facts on the ground show that game designers are aiming more and more towards fictionality. There's even a market for books about certain games characters, because people get attached to these characters. A lot of gamers themselves are taking this in their own hands, where they add together elements of games to form their own ministories. They take content and create movies out of it.'

'But it's definitely an fine line. If you move too far towards the narrative, it becomes much more a film than a game. One of the most narrative games has ten hours of cut scenes in the middle! One of these cut scenes even lasts seventy minutes. The gamer is sitting there for hours, not playing a game but watching a movie!

The game for sure has it's advocates, but a lot of gamers were turned off by the amount of content they could not control.'

Joyce Goggin: 'This new development asks us what movies are? Joe Wright, the director of *Pride & Prejudice* (2005), said in an interview that he thought of his film as an adventure game, in which Elisabeth (one of the five sisters Bennet the novel by Jane Austen is about) has to level up as she comes ever closer to her husband.'

Than Van Riel moved on: 'Next question.'

'The world changes, from a world of words to a world of images. Does literature still stand a chance?'

Van Riel: 'Do you want a philosophical answer or a practical one, tips on how to promote reading?'

'Both, actually.'

Van Riel routed the question to Jakob Lothe.

'It is important to make the book visible and attractive. Libraries have op changed there as well as bookshops. There's a lot of potential. As to the philosophical side of the question, both will survive. For example: a lot of people were led back to the book version of *The Lord of the Rings* (J.R.R. Tolkin, 1954) or *Harry Potter* (J.K. Rowling, 1997-2007) after seeing the films that were made after these books. That's strong proof of the strength and attraction of literature even today. Konrád was right, when he said that we are increasingly linked to a screen through our work. But that makes reading book in our spare time – a paper book, perhaps with illustrations – an attraction and a value of it's own. This value is not to be underestimated and will be increasingly important.

Joyce Goggin added: 'In 1939 William Wyler made a movie called *Wuthering Heights*, based upon the novel by Emily Brontë. In the years to come the book sold 75 times more than in the hundred years since it was published in 1839. Movies really do a lot to promote novels and to get people reading.'

Klaus Maiwald: 'I do not know if literature has a future. I do know there's a law in media history that says: new media do no replace existing media, but they relegate old media to new spots in the system. So, reading and books will not disappear. But we are in the middle of a major shift, form a verbal culture to a pictorial culture, from words to images – and no form of reading promotion is going to counter that shift. The question is: how do we evaluate that shift? What do we do about it? The shift happening, does not relieve us from reading, does not negate the good things

about reading or negate the task of promoting reading. In Germany we have *Das gute Jugendbuch*, a form of reading promotion within the new paradise of media culture. This can be done inside schools as well as outside schools. But if that saves the reading culture, I don't know.

Than György Konrád ended this part of the discussion, again quite accurately: 'Halfway the nineteenth century a very important French literature critic said: 'The novel is dead.' Next year, Gustave Flaubert published his *Madame Bovary* (1857).'

'Next question!' One that was directed to Adriana Bus.

'You said in your speech that children's vocabulary is getting better when they're not just reading but when they're also looking at pictures, reading picture books.'

Bus: 'There is a potential for living books or digital story books to similarity influence social cognitive development. But we also need to keep in mind the danger of providing to much information. If you provide to much information, children will no longer be able to make these references and struggle to understand. You can't glue all these story books together, but if the illustrations are rather simplistic and don't provide too much information story books have the same if not a greater potential.

'Last question,' Van Riel closed the discussion.

'If you turn those living picture books into games, do you think the effect will be as positive, less or more positive on children?'

Mar: 'Oh, definitely. If you succeed in drawing their attention and get them to focus on the given task, I see certain advantages. Especially if the game is oriented around understanding other peoples mental states. It would basically involve training them in types of things they need to do in order to understand that people do have emotions and metal states that differ from their own. It would need a framework of explicit training of these skills.'

Adriane Bus: 'We already turned the books into a kind of games by interrupting the stories for questions. But it's very difficult to do it in such a way that children get involved. We started with asking questions like parents do, but that didn't work. We therefore want the child to be an antagonist, rather than just a listener who obeys. How, we don't know yet. We're working on that.'

At the end Rachel van Riel herself had a question. She asked the panel what books members of the audience should read and what games they should play.

Mar: 'The book I want you to read came to my mind when the question was asked: is literature dead? When radio came along, the book was dead. When television came along, the book was dead. When theatre came along some expected it was the death of the book. Anyway, there's a book written by Italo Calvino: *If on a winter's night a traveller* (1979) and this book addresses this question specifically. Read it!'

Joyce Goggin: 'Me too! Did you know that the political economist Max Weber recommended chocolate. It keeps people awake, so they could make money. But the book I want you to read is not a book by Weber, but by James Gee. Gee is professor of reading and he wrote a book called *Why video games are good for your soul* (2005) and you should read it. To be honest: *I* should read it. I haven't read it myself yet. But I should.'

Maiwald: 'I would recommend E.R. Frank's *Life is funny* (2002), for the reasons mentioned in my paper and for the last line of it – a great last line. The male character says to his brother: 'Don't worry about it, girls is crazy.'

Jakob Lothe: 'Conrad, of course. But I would like to recommend not a book in particular, but a genre as a whole: short stories. Pedagogically they're easier to use than novels.'

György Konrád: 'Go to a book shop, take a book from the shelve a read a few lines. If you like it, read it. Myself, I'm interested in a book which filled the whole window of a book shop I visited today. The book is called: *Chocoholic*. I'm really interested. You know, chocolate was a drug in the eighteenth century… The church didn't like, but some fathers of the church did like it very much. It became decent because they drank hot chocolate in the afternoon. I'm curious.'