XXVIII AIA Conference

Pisa, 14-16 September 2017

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

CULTURE WORKSHOP

Adaptively evolving ecosystems: Green-speaking at Tesco

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Increasingly, ecosystems, which are intrinsically non-linear adaptive systems, partly determined by environmental conditions, and partly the result of self-organization, have become a locus intersection of different and often contrasting interests in our contemporary semiosphere. In particular, a major issue is the divergence between genuine worries about the environment and climate change on the one hand, and productivity standards and the need to generate profit on the other. From a lingua-cultural perspective, we can notice how companies progressively rely on green-economy oriented campaigns to socially promote their corporate image and attract the rising number of consumers who are sensitive to environmental issues. "Ecosystem" and "sustainability" have thus become catchwords for companies that follow this recent tendency – Tesco being a relevant case in point.

Starting from a stall in the East End of London in 1919, Tesco can rely today on a team of over 470,000 people in 11 markets worldwide. A fresh food business, and a media savvy company, Tesco advertises its aims to reduce the impact on the ecosystem. Declaredly, their success depends on the health of the natural environment. Accordingly, they maintain they are addressing the environmental impacts in their operations and supply chain. They have identified five key environments. Firstly, climate, whose ongoing change presents a big challenge. Then, they focus on forests, marine, farmland, and freshwater, as domains to be variously safeguarded, also by developing the overarching policies of Reducing, Reusing and Recycling.

The aim of this study is to identify and scrutinize aspects of Tesco's videos advertising such issues. Multimodal texts, synaestetically exploiting many different codes, require a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach (Kress 2010, van Leeuwen 2013), to be integrated with ecolinguistc notions, given the issues at stake. According to Stibbe, "Ecolinguistics is about critiquing forms of language that contribute to ecological destruction, and aiding in the search for new forms of language that inspire people to protect the natural world" (2016).

Furthermore, since advertisers utilise a range of themes capable of appealing to the audience, i.e. wonderful natural settings, fashionable lifestyles, success stories, etc., the *lines of appeal* (Fowles 1996, Dyer 1988) of Tesco's videos will be a focus of our investigation, along with the modalities of the visual composition of the images (Stinson 2012, Ascher and Pincus 2013, Bateman 2014, Chandler 2016). The results and implications of such analysis will be critically discussed in the presentation.

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The child in the House of Life: The house trope at the *fin de siècle* and after

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My paper focuses on the house trope in a number of (auto)biographical texts of the English and European *fin de siècle* in which house imagery features prominently and becomes indicative of cultural cross-border mobility and (dis)continuities. In these texts the house articulates experiences of self-formation, belonging and fulfilment, as well as of dislocation and mental and physical exile. It represents the original mythopoeic space where the artist's creativity is aroused as a child and is the place in and by which adult inspiration is activated, often by conjuring up childhood memories. Walter Pater's story "The Child in the House" (1878) concentrates on a puerile and juvenile authorial *alter ego* who shapes his aesthetic imagination in relation to the childhood home he finally abandons. Though necessary to art, the house is here a space of totality lost in the physical and psychological displacement of maturity, thus condemning the artist to a perpetual condition of intermediate identity. This conception closely associates Pater with Giovanni Pascoli, who compares his childhood home to a "nest" – a protective and inspirational locus whose memory opposes the dislocations of adulthood.

Fin-de-siècle culture offers examples of another house trope type. Important novels of the time describe the houses of adult aesthetes – all authorial projections – whose poetics and taste are already established. For these characters the house becomes the site of aesthetic realisation, a personal museum and an extension of their beautiful and discriminating selves, as in Huysmans's *Against Nature* (1884), D'Annunzio's *The Child of Pleasure* (1889) and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Both these *fin-de-siècle* constructions of the house trope were assimilated by one of the most distinguished critics of the period – Mario Praz – more than fifty years later. In *The House of Life* (1958), Praz's adult house becomes a direct emanation of his aesthetics and personality: it is, in his own words, "a projection of the self" which defines him as a refined connoisseur with a fastidious penchant for the interstitial spaces in the history of taste, as happens to the arch-aesthetes in the novels of Huysmans, Wilde and D'Annunzio.

Nevertheless, the genesis of Praz's poetics is also associated with his childhood abode. *The House of Life*, a monument to the adult man's house, contains passages glorifying the home of infancy as a mythopoeic place and shelter, in a re-reading of the house trope that locates Praz close to Gaston Bachelard's positions in the almost contemporary *The Poetics of Space* (1957). For both Praz and Bachelard, the childhood house is the first subjective world that artists keep reproducing in their work and in relation to which they negotiate their identity – in an evident cultural continuity with Pater and Pascoli. As a belated aesthete, however, Praz also interprets cultural persistence by engaging in a continuous recreation of his originary house in real life.

Shakespeare *à part*: Re-visiting Shakespeare in the French *nouvelle vague*

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In an interview with *Cahiers du cinéma*, Jacques Rivette, one of the most important critics and filmmakers of the *nouvelle vague*, calls Shakespeare "a continent that is gigantic, extraordinary", but remains "*terra incognita*". The paper argues that in the early Sixties *nouvelle vague* filmmakers (including Rivette) make significant, if occasional, incursions into this *terra incognita*, re-marking its alterity, opacity, and foreigness. Jacques Rivette's *Paris nous appartient* (1961) includes repeated rehearsals of *Pericles*, and makes the disjointedness of the Shakespearean play – theatre director Gérard Lenz himself calls it "unplayable" and "unstitched" – resonate with the "out-of-joint" aesthetics of the film. Jean-Luc Godard's *Bande à part* (1964) incorporates an English class in which a passionate teacher reads excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*, and asks her superannuated students to translate them back into English. By doing so, the film raises questions not only about translatability across cultural and linguistic boundaries, but also about the relationships between image track and voice track / soundtrack, thus involving "Shakespeare" in a self-reflexive movement toward the constituent elements of the "cinematic".

Mediality is also a major concern of Claude Chabrol's *Ophélia* (1962), which the paper will analyse in more detail. In this film the spectral appearance of fragments of a mediatized version of *Hamlet* – Lawrence Olivier's 1948 quasi-noir film – infects and takes over the life of the film protagonist Yvan, who begins to see his world through the eyes of the Shakespearean character, and even shoots a film (i.e. *The Mousetrap*) in an attempt to "set … right" what he sees as the proliferation of corruption – after all, as in *Hamlet*, his father has died and his mother has quickly remarried. Through this attempt, the film offers a parody of the much-cherished *nouvelle vague* notion of *auteur* that it simultaneously upholds. The uses of the Bard in the *nouvelle vague*, the paper concludes, bear witness to the fact that "Shakespeare" is not simply "Shakespeare-the-text" but rather, the cultural site of negotiation and problematization of linguistic, national, and media boundaries – between French and English, French and American cinema, theatre and film, and so on. Moreover, these uses raise more general theoretical questions about cultural translation (in an extended sense) as a process that is central to the definition and self-definition of cultural phenomena.

Subtitling cultural references: To translate or not to translate?

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As an academically acknowledged subject area, recently welcomed in the field of Translation Studies, audiovisual translation – and, more specifically, subtitling – continues to benefit from research on its main challenging points. Although subtitling has its own specificities as a genre (from editing to technical constraints and diamesic variations), a key quality for good subtitling remains the understanding of the nuances of the source language and a thorough knowledge of the source culture. However, when it comes to the question of translating cultural references or culture-bound terms, it is vital for the subtitler not only to understand the medium, but also to identify with the audience (Luyken et al. 1991).

Nedergaard-Larsen (1993) and Pedersen (2005) offer approaches ranging from verbatim transfer to target language adaptation through the use of the most known translation strategies. Nevertheless, it has been recently observed that – thanks to digital globalisation – translating cultural references on screen is no longer a common practice. This happens because, according to McLuhan (1996), cultures have become inextricably interconnected. In other words, the choice to translate or not to translate culture-bound terms should be attuned to the degree of present-day interculturality.

This paper attempts to tackle the question of how the process of subtitling takes into account cultural references and whether it successfully conveys them to the audience. To do this, I will refer to the taxonomy designed by Pedersen (2011) in connection with the translation of culture-specific items from English into Italian. Some available translated examples from the first episode of the British television series entitled *Garrow's Law* will also be analysed in order to understand if the trend of leaving cultural references intact could represent a better solution than their adaptation in the target language. The results are varied and stimulating, but at the moment do not allow to figure out a clear methodological route. Whether or not this *modus operandi* remains fair towards the audience's full understanding of the audiovisual product has yet to be thoroughly researched upon. Instead of confining the issue to the words on screen, my paper intends to foster discussion on the need to trust the audience and the audiovisual medium.

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G.B. Shaw's "The Black Girl in Search of God": From colonial Other to (black) New Woman

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The Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) first published his prose tale "The Black Girl in Search of God" in a 1932 collection of short stories. In less than a decade, post-war Modernism would come to an end after the publication of its climactic masterpiece, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939). However, the revolutionary changes generated by Modernist experience had already permeated and would continue to permeate British literature, acting as a powerful watershed in terms of formal solutions and thematic motifs.

For its part, Shaw's production has always been seen as firmly conversant with Victorian culture, albeit in oppositional terms. In this respect, Pericles Lewis, among others, maintains that "Shaw seems more at home with the Edwardians […] than the Modernists T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf" (2005). This can be argued, in particular, on the basis of the traditional form that structures his major plays. However, it is my contention that many an influence of Modernism as an oppositional aesthetics can be found in Shaw's "Black Girl", especially if one considers the Shavian representation of the colonial Other as the dominant motif in the tale.

In the story, the leading character, a mission-educated, black young woman, sets off on a quest across the forest in search of God. The journey becomes the occasion for the girl to speculate on both religious and philosophical issues and, simultaneously, to openly attack the Edwardian colonial paradigm. In the context of an irony-pervaded reconfiguration of identity models, the "lowest" component of the White/Black binary is here de-homogenized, depathologized and given something more than a voice: a speculative faculty. Deconstructing the traditional racist association of Blackness with corporality and morally connoted deviance, Shaw activates a representational practice which, in redesigning ethnic difference as well as British identity, enables us to draw many a parallel with E.M. Forster's modernist portrayals of Doctor Aziz or Professor Godbole. However, Shaw's choice is even more provocative, as the colonial Other *par excellence* has now been re-cast into a (black) New Woman.

This story is thus to be seen as an oppositional cultural product, as its hostile reception was to confirm. In deconstructing Western hegemonic value systems, it proved to be a clear attempt to interrupt contemporary circuits of "racialized" knowledge and to create imaginative possibilities for political transformation, as announced by the girl's mixed marriage in the epilogue.

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The thinning red line between fact and fiction

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When the Oxford Dictionaries editors selected the phrase "post-truth" as Word of the Year 2016, they officially recognized a typical phenomenon of our age: the increasing difficulty in distinguishing checked facts from fake news, non-fiction from fiction, science from science-fiction. The phenomenon is not new (the history of science is replete with hoaxes; political propaganda has always been biased or willingly misleading), but the extent to which that attitude has influenced everybody's everyday life is unprecedented: Britons chose to leave the EU and Americans voted Donald Trump as President on the basis of false data, fake information and blatant lies. And, as journalist Matthew Norman reported in a recent article for *The Independent*, voters did not "give toss about objective truth", as if everyone could be free to choose their own reality.

This inability to care for the separation of real and fictional worlds has worsened in recent years. A pertinent example can be found in film history and criticism. When in 1993 Jim Sheridan's *In the Name of the Father*, based on Jerry Conlon's autobiography, was released, its historical inaccuracies and fictionalised parts (in real life, father and son never shared the same jail cell) raised at least some controversy. When in 2015 Tom Hooper's *The Danish Girl* appeared, nobody seemed to care that the names and part of the actual life of two historical characters (Danish artists Einar and Gerda Wegener) were used to tell an almost completely fictional love story. Another example is provided by Italian television: an "imaginative" science divulgation show like Roberto Giacobbo's *Voyager* is watched and received by most of the audience, especially the young, in the same way as a factual scientific program like Piero and Alberto Angela's *Super Quark*. Again, it is as if everyone could be free to choose their own *auctoritas*: academic publications and pseudo-scientific blogs are all read and interpreted using the same level of belief, or rather, suspension of disbelief.

The purpose of this paper is thus twofold. On the one hand, it aims at describing this ongoing phenomenon in some of its aspects (news, art, science), and at seeing if classical theories on possible worlds (Lewis 1973), reception theory (Jauss 1989) and fictionality (Pavel 1986) can be used to better understand it. On the other hand, however, it would hope to raise a discussion about how we, as scholars and teachers, can help readers and viewers, and especially our students, start thinking again on what distinguishes fact from fiction.

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From Oscar Wilde to Hanif Kureishi: David Bowie and English literature

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Approaching David Bowie in literary terms means translating his work into a sort of dialogue between dialogues where music interrogates other art forms and in which images, sounds, and words constantly redefine themselves. Bowie's songs and in particular his lyrics are characterized by a powerful theatrical dimension (Critchley 2016), inhabited, as they are, by many different masks – *constructed* during his career to problematize the very notion of a natural, stable and *authentic* identity which was dominant in 1960s popular music (Auslander 2006) – but also by different voices resonating, as Bakhtin would have put it, in the author's words. Bowie's work is indeed nourished by a profound dialogical relationship with writers such as Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, George Orwell, Colin MacInnes and Hanif Kureishi (just to name a few).

Shakespeare seems particularly relevant in order to investigate Bowie's inner dialogism, that is the many complexities of a man who thought himself *as* theatre; some critics have even established a link between Bowie's mid-1970s mask, namely *The Thin White Duke* and Shakespeare's Prospero (Donadio 2013). At a different level, in his practice of performing identity, Bowie became a sort of twentieth-century Oscar Wilde, who acknowledged the *truth* and relevance of masks not only in art but also (and most importantly) in everyday life (Coppa 2004).

But for Bowie literature was also a lens through which to read and respond to his own time; in this sense, in 1974 he produced a dystopian work (that is, his album *Diamond Dogs*) deeply informed by Orwell's vision in the iconic novel *1984*. The two writers who nevertheless seem to be more strictly connected with Bowie are Colin MacInnes and Hanif Kureishi, who interestingly were able, in two different decades (respectively in the 1950s and in the 1980s), to investigate the complex dialogism which linked (and still links) music, youth culture and (especially in Kureishi's work) multiculturalism. Bowie wrote two important songs in which he paid a direct tribute to MacInnes' masterpiece (*Absolute Beginners*, 1959) and to Kureishi's 1990 cult novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*: the former was published in 1986 for Julian Temple's filmic adaptation of MacInnes's novel, while the latter was released in 1993 for Roger Michell's BBC version of the novel by the Anglo-Pakistani writer. What seems particularly relevant is Bowie's ability to create, through his concept albums, an art-form which not only seems to be nourished at different levels by literature, but somehow becomes itself *literature,* recovering the power and directness of early oral poems (Van Leeuwen 1999) within extremely rich and complex narrative structures.

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Globalization into cyberspace: Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* and the Indian transnational parasite

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In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, the geographer David Harvey articulated the concept of "time-space compression" (1989) to designate commodity production and accumulation as key factors in a renewed relation between time and space. Harvey's condition of postmodernity is thus dominated by an alteration of spatio-temporal perceptions. But if globalized modernity has dissolved the borders of nation-states, allowing for a global mobility which involves both human and financial capital, it has also turned hope into disillusionment. As Sankaran Krishna argues (2009), postcolonialism raises doubts about the inequalities and injustices of our contemporary liquid global world. Krishna's contention is that the interactions between the West and non-Western societies have not been egalitarian in cultural and economic terms, a dissatisfaction that Joseph Stiglitz had already expressed in his *Globalization and its Discontent* (2002). Pro-globalization policies, Stiglitz claims, can increase vulnerability and poverty when they enhance rapid change without cultural adaptation, ethnic conflicts, and corruption.

The complex interaction between globalization, human mobility and cultural commodification informs the transnational turn of early twenty-first century Indian writing. Like a virus, Indian literature has percolated through Anglophone literary spaces. Rushdie's heirs – or "Midnight's Grandchildren", as they have been labelled – have populated Indian literature and, even more significantly, in their works "India itself has put the traditional idea of the nation as imagined community into question" (Ashcroft 2016). In the wake of global mobility and spatio-temporal disarray, Indian writing has interrogated the idea of the Nation as it had been embraced in the aftermath of Partition. This year, India is celebrating its seventieth anniversary since independence and contemporary diasporic writers – Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, and Hari Kunzru, just to name a few – still draw upon Rushdie's skepticism toward nationalism. However, they tend to turn away from his epic-scale tones and to privilege stories of displaced, ordinary people.

Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004), for one, is a tale concerning worldwide connections and disconnections, global strollers, neoliberal finance and the impact of cyberculture. A British writer of Kashmiri descent, Kunzru weaves the globalization and transnationalism net against the background of the American Dream. Fascinated by computers and Bollywood cinema, the naïf Indian protagonist of Kunzru's second novel, Arjun Mehta, first experiences enthusiasm and then disillusionment with Western culture. He eventually decides to release a virus into cyberspace in order to save his job as programmer in Silicon Valley. Kunzru's juxtaposition of satire and science fiction conveys the disruptions of our contemporary world, split as it is between the real and virtual, computer geeks and neocolonialism.

Following the convergence of globalization studies, postcolonial theory and Indian diasporic discourse, I would like to shed light on the motif of the cyberworld as a productive and transformative semantic space that contaminates ethnic "purity" and generates change. By featuring the virus as a powerful metaphor for interconnectedness, *Transmission* seems to evoke Nayar's conceptual framework relating to the transnational parasite, a performative exchange produced at the interstices of cultural negotiations. The novel, in my view, illuminates a cultural paradigm of contestation and agency in a globalized world where multiple affiliations – emotional, ethnic and economic – unsettle hegemonic concepts and practices.

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Play. Pause. Replay: Performing the classics

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"Don't read this book like a regular book! You'll get confused and angry". Even if confusion and anger are at the core of *Hamlet*, the *To Be or Not To Be* "choose-your-own-path" version of Shakespeare's famous play by the best-selling author Ryan North is not exactly what one would expect from a story about the prince of Denmark. In North's work, in fact, the reader is raised to the status of no less than a co-author, through a gamebook where a new kind of authorizing process is able to directly involve the addressee's response. It's up to the reader to choose a character and go through the adventure as Hamlet, Ophelia, or even as the Ghost; to explore alternative possibilities or stick closely to the Shakespearean plot, taking full advantage of the gamebook medium. While moving through predisposed narrative crossroads, we are asked to decide in which direction the story should proceed and thus draw a new personal trajectory in the play's plot. Moreover, in 2016, *To Be or Not to Be: A Chooseable-Path Adventure* was followed by *Romeo and/or Juliet: A Chooseable-Path Adventure*. In this latest series of proliferating Shakespeares, the adaptation of literary classics to a new medium gives further impetus to the revaluation of such evergreens as *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, as was also the case with *Pride and Prejudice* via *Lost in Austen* (2007) by Emma Campbell Webster. Here one finds an unconventional language and a performative approach to the text, which is reshaped in a new and original way.

This paper aims to look at the gamebook as a new possible intersection of narrative systems underpinned by a performative structure that both revitalizes and overcomes the idea of the book as an autonomous artefact. The huge amount of choices the reader is called to make to build his/her own story recalls what Judith Butler's performance theory states about identity as the peculiar result of performative strategies. Gamebooks represent both a new experience in popular creativity, in which iconic roles become exchangeable in performative ways, and an original postmodern product. As a matter of fact, the complex nature of gamebooks reminds us of what Richard Schechner said about postmodern experimentations in his *Performance Theory*: "Recognising, analysing, and theorising the convergence and collapse of clearly demarcated realities, hierarchies, and categories is at the heart of postmodernism. Such a convergence or collapse is a profound departure from traditional Western performance theory" (2002: 116). If books are no longer subject to their medium's hierarchies, gamebooks open up new possibilities in the ways stories are experienced thanks to a technological "re-mediation". The theatrical/narrative event takes place in a totally transformed space, miles away from its once fixed textual shape. But, as Patricia Waugh wondered in her *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, "how can we recognise or deal with the new?" (1984: 7). Could the most famous plots in the world have an impermanent structure and still be called "classics"? My proposal purports to focus on examples such as North's gamebooks in order to encourage a more general reflection on a contemporary "literature-scape" marked by a pivotal performative turn.

The DNA journey and literature

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The scientific discovery of DNA, together with processes of genetic transmission, has allowed people to demolish the ideology of a "pure race" and of the ethnic-based divisions in the world. Genetics has shown that the concept of *ethnos* is not a monolithic principle, but the outcome of a complex and infinite mixture of races and cultures. The awareness of the non-linear and multifaceted story of our genes influences not only our identity and cultural interactions, but it also shapes modern ideas of citizenship and nationality. These two concepts no longer appear as rigid categories that imply a linear correspondence between a single ethnic group (a group of people who share ethnic identity, language, culture, descent, history) and the right to belong to a nation.

In my paper I will adopt an interdisciplinary approach combining scientific, cultural and literary discourses about genetic genealogy. This enquiry starts from a scientific and cultural project called "Let's open our world" and powered by *Ancestry.com*, one of the most popular genealogy websites that launched a direct-to-consumer test, which sequenced people's genes to trace their geographic roots. The participants in this project were taken on a journey based on their DNA, through which they discovered that what they knew about their ethnic identity was absolutely partial. The results of the test disrupted the clear-cut labels the interviewees used to define themselves and other people. "What I love about DNA", explains AncestryDNA expert, Brad Argent, "is [that] it tells a biological history of who we are. It sits beside culture history and paints another picture of who we are" (Argent 2017). This genetic enquiry was recorded by a video called "The DNA journey" (https://blogs.ancestry.com/ancestry/2016/06/02/the-dnajourney-powered-by-ancestrydna/).

Literature contributes to this journey by visualising it through words and stories. This essay will particularly analyse Bernardine Evaristo's novel, *The Emperor's Babe* (2001), where the English-Nigerian author recovers the genetic roots of Britishness by writing about the African presence in Roman Britain. She stated in an interview: "I wanted to disrupt [the assumption] that Britain was only populated by white people until recently, so this challenges Britain's misguided sense of its own history and identity" (Collins 2008). Therefore, the DNA journey empowered by both science and literature affects not only people's awareness of their roots, but also their modern concept of nationality: it points out the complexity of this concept and provides a more articulated framework, which is a necessary tool to look at the contemporary world.

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Exile as a creative choice: Transnationalism and liminality in Orson Welles's *Chimes at Midnight*

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The purpose of my paper is to analyse Orson Welles's 1965 *Chimes at Midnight* with close attention to the relationship between the film's stylistic instability and Welles's own experience as a "transnational" director.

Drawing primarily on *Henry IV*, Parts I and II, with brief borrowings from *Richard II*, *Henry V*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Welles makes a "kaleidoscopic revisualization" (Seltzer 1969) of Shakespeare's texts which is deeply rooted in his own personal and historical situation. *Chimes at Midnight* was shot in various locales in Spain between 1964 and 1965, while the country was still in the throes of Francisco Franco's military dictatorship. At that time, Welles had been residing for extended periods in various European areas in a (more or less) voluntary exile from both Hollywood and the USA, where his movies had become as unwelcome as his outspokenly progressive political views, since "the proscription of intellectual filmmaking in post-1940s Hollywood went hand in hand with punitive anti-Communism" (Guneratne 2008). Finding in Franco's Spain a location for his erratic artistic activity may well have intensified Welles's sense of intellectual and political alienation, so that he probably felt even more "quixotic" this time, once again prepared to uphold his artistic fight in the face of low budgets, intellectual solitude, and political oppression. Artistically and politically detached from both his home and host countries, Welles might be considered as one of those "transnational" filmmakers who, having undergone the "crises and tensions of exilic migrancy", have transformed their "liminality and interstitiality" into "passionate sources of creativity and dynamism" (Naficy 2001).

My paper considers the director's filmmaking strategies, as well as the film's technical flaws, as a means to convey Welles's radical "in-betweenness", and his being neither "here" nor "there" as a possibility for his work to address a double audience – the one left behind and the present one – along with their double issues. In doing this, I will look at the "incredible unevenness" (Jorgens 1977) of *Chimes at Midnight* not as a flaw, but as a way to explore Welles's personal and historical sense of loss.

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Wandering in a creative space: The construction of the Indian city through the gaze of the global postcolonial *flâneurs* in Mistry and Chaudhuri's fiction

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> "If a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively"
> (Chaudhuri 2013: 95)

As Homi Bhabha has pointed out, it is "the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic come to […] it is the city which provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out" (1994). According to this definition, the city can be seen as a postcolonial space able to determine people's identities. The modern cosmopolitan metropoles are spaces of cross-pollination, and the recent "spatial turn" in literary studies has underlined how literature can shape the traditional geographical conceptualization of space and its understanding in order to reveal a complexity which was not visible in the past (Warf and Arias 2009). In this context, the city can definitely be considered a creative in-progress space whose borders lend themselves to every kind of mobility (social and transnational), a place where subaltern people can exploit its (and their own) potentialities by walking along the streets (De Certeau 1993). However, the centre of the so-called "peripheries" of the world may also represent a threat, like a promise of happiness which turns flourishing expectations into nightmares.

Starting from these assumptions, my paper intends to analyse the global postcolonial spaces depicted in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1995) and Amit Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991). The aim is to investigate how the two authors have employed the urban environment in their novels, trying to read the Indian city contrapuntally through the histories, lives, and deaths of marginalized and alienated characters, and highlighting their personal relation to the city-space. From the annihilating universe of the Indian city during "the Emergency" portrayed by Mistry, to its recent renaissance due to India's economic development, the paper examines the changes in the Indian urban environment and its potentialities as a creative and inspiring space. It also approaches Mistry's and Chaudhuri's characters as potential postcolonial *flâneurs* – in the meaning given to them by Williams (1997) and Gikandi (2010) – in the globalization era.

Indeed, their role as observers of the big events of Indian history lays the groundwork for an insider/outsider dialectic, which is at the same time part of, and apart from, the new Indian cities' cosmopolitanism. In this light, their wanderings and their subaltern stories can be read alongside the "official" accounts of Indian history, building a narrative that shifts between the dominant and non-dominant viewpoint embodied by the very figure of the postcolonial *flâneur*. In other words, the novels read the city's history back through the characters' wanderings, thus discovering and pondering the lost stories that contributed to making India what it is today.

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Pinter's use of humor: A cross-cultural perspective

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Harold Pinter's work is characterized by quite a peculiar use of humor, which springs forth when the reader (or the audience) does not expect it: relatively indiscernible at the beginning, it subtly develops and then turns up in the end with all its might. Nevertheless, Pinter's humor is not easy to gain access to, as one can gather from what the absurdist playwright once said about himself: "I had a pretty good notion in my earlier plays of what would shut an audience up; not so much what would make them laugh; that I had no ideas about" (Norrick and Baker 1995: 253). Additionally, we might suppose that Pinter's humor grew "wiser" as time went by and that, if his first works could prompt spontaneous laughter, his latest ones showed a much more controlled use of humor.

The aim of this paper is to draw on a cross-cultural perspective (especially the one illustrated by Alford & Alford 1981) in order to ascertain to what extent such works as *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) and *Mountain Language* (1988) display "universal" humorous elements. The focus on these specific plays is grounded on two factors: first of all, both of them are short *piéces*, challenging the playwright to suitably adjust humorous strategies; secondly, their chronological distance allows us to verify how these strategies have developed.

Pinter's humor mainly emerges as a linguistic one connected with the social stratifications that can be found in *The Dumb Waiter* and *Mountain Language*. The humorous effect is reached through insults, scatological references, semantic ambiguity and even allusions to death: through what, in other contexts, would be associated with social transgression, and not be seen as funny at all. But the linguistic humor in *The Dumb Waiter* and *Mountain Language* has an additional feature: it is so fragmented and codified that it only becomes accessible when a typically nihilistic despair creates a complicity between performers and audience.

Rewording/rewarding culture: The complexity of (post) cultural studies in the Italian academic context & beyond

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In his *Keywords*, Raymond Williams states that "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams 1977: 76). My issue here goes back to this statement and engages with the many complex ways in which a methodological approach born in the UK in quite recent years, defined from scratch as part of the culture of the Left and conceived as a hybrid tendency across disciplines rather than a discipline in itself, is received and reshaped – "re-worded", in fact – within the Italian research and teaching context that is quite obviously miles apart from the English one. I will see how English Cultural Studies in Italy tends to be perceived, at best, as a Janus-faced entity, gaining unlooked-for intimacies with a number of heterogeneous approaches and often opening the way to a continual slippage of critical categories. It is true that Cultural Studies inherits Hoggart's and Williams's attempt at adapting techniques of literary analysis for the study of a variety of cultural formations (from popular music, to theatre, cinema and graffiti art), but it is also receptive to Stuart Hall's repeated emphasis on language as *THE* practice grounding signification and whose working is essential in the process of producing cultural representations (Hall and Open University 1997: 4-6).

While keeping Eagleton's position that "Literature – of all things! – inherits the weighty ethical, ideological and even political tasks which were once entrusted to rather more technical or practical discourses" (Eagleton 2000: 40), I will consider how this position – so congruent with the Italian propensity to relate Cultural Studies to Literary Studies – has to include Hall's notions that "culture is about shared meanings and meanings can only be shared through our common access to language" (Hall and Open University 1997: 1-2).

In a postcolonial and globalized perspective and facing the current European emergency concerning migration, I will focus on how the Italian approach to Cultural Studies can help to face the ambiguity recently pointed out by Simon Gikandi: "English literature is simultaneously one of the most universal cultural phenomena, a pantheon that can be traced all the way from the outer Hebrides of Scotland to Suva in Fiji, but English is also one of the most parochial disciplines, constantly associated with very provincial geographies and concerns" (Gikandi 2001: 650). This of course calls into play a strong engagement of English Cultural Studies with postcolonial and migration studies, and again it raises the question of what we call Cultural Studies and how this theory is located in the Italian study and research context.

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Everything is translatable, nothing is translatable: Representing migrants' identity construction

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A translation is always a process, and never a simple or definitive one. The translator endeavours to transpose meanings so that distant words can be semantically interrelated, but this always bears with itself a dimension of failure, as nothing can be perfectly transposed from one language into another without losing or altering a part of its meaning. In the field of Cultural Studies, translation processes have been discussed starting from the assumption that, from an etymological point of view, "to translate" means "to carry across". Hence, Salman Rushdie's statement that the migrant is a "translated man".

Indeed, the migrant's translation has been compared to an act of *sur-vival*, both in the sense of his living on the margins and in light of his dream for survival (Benjamin, Bhabha, Derrida, Rushdie). As the migrant crosses physical, linguistic, and cultural borders, he needs to translate himself in relation to the new context and to translate the new context in relation to himself. At the same time, the migrant progressively establishes a new relationship with the culture of the place he comes from, while dealing with the culture of the place he has moved to. Translation is therefore a process that does reshape identity.

Novels written in English by Pakistani authors frequently show characters whose lives are determined by different forms of border crossings. I will analyse how these authors represent processes of identity construction in terms of physical, linguistic, and cultural translations. *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) by Nadeem Aslam, in particular, encourages to discuss the unfolding of such processes by looking at the forms of hospitality or hostility that its characters – or a whole community – must face.

"The shade of it all": Queering academia via Twitter

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Social media platforms are increasingly becoming prevalent communicative practices through which identity is performed and displayed (Butler 1990, 2004). Facebook pages and Twitter accounts are, thus, used in order to give a voice to specific communities of practice (Wenger 1998; Swales 2004, 2008). In these contexts, language becomes a means through which gender identities are performed, since "the performative nature of language can be understood as the way in which it allows us to be 'certain kinds of people' and engage in 'certain kinds of activities' through an ongoing series of cultural performances" (Jones 2015: 68). Creative text-internal and text-external resources take on a seminal role in constructing given gender identities, since in a dimension where heteronormative categories are the default way of structuring society, creativity becomes a way through which unrepresented identities and discourses come to be defined.

Grown out of the tradition established by social media accounts such as *Shit Academics Say* (Hall 2015), our case study examines the recently created Twitter account *Scholarly Queen*. The linguistic choices emerging from the very first description of this account show the user the general treads that the account deals with, creatively giving a voice to queer identity in Academia. More precisely, it humorously represents queen identity as juxtaposed with the daily-life experiences in the academic world.

The case study presented here is investigated in the framework of social media discourse (Herring 2004; Androutsopoulos 2008; Zappavigna 2012, 2013). In particular, the notion of engagement systems on social media platforms will be used to retrace the representation of the in-group language employed by *Scholarly Queen* in performing an academic gendered identity. This will allow us to see how "users of language perform their identity within uses of language" (Martin et al. 2013: 468). More specifically, this contribution will highlight, in the particular case of *Scholarly Queen*, the way Twitter users perform relational identities as they enact discourse fellowships (Zappavigna 2013).

At the same time, due to the crucial role played by the numerous images discursively used to perform this queer academic identity, a recently developed theory of multimodal analysis will be applied to investigate the multimodal prosody (Balirano 2017) constructed in *Scholarly Queen*.

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PANELS

CULTURE WORKSHOP

PANEL

Designing identity: Technology, media, and politics in complexity

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During historical transitions, it is a common practice to question the boundaries of identity. Indeed it becomes strategically important to analyse and decodify both the new emerging symbols and the discourses on the Self which define the dynamics of identity representation. Since in our contemporary age contradiction and conflict permeate the categories of values and the mechanisms of the representation of reality, it is interesting to investigate the following issues:

- the ways in which literature connects cultural innovation, new kinds of knowledge, cognitive practice, and the ethical and the moral dimension of civil and social coexistence. If not fully identified, the "new" takes on the character of the monstrous;
- the renewed individual and/or collective narrative logic(s) and its(their) fields of action, as for example social-media storytelling or unsettling web-culture phenomena such as digital after-death;
- the complexity of contemporary social systems, including migration and counter-terrorist policies which move the concept of inter/multiculturalism further and mark even more intensely a clear conflict with all those cultural key factors that we perceive as belonging to our cultural identity or heritage (think, for example, about the sociological concept of "super-diversity");
- the role law plays in describing these new collective dynamics in a renewed negotiation between rights and duties, and the necessity to repossess a strong ethical dimension.

The panel aims at investigating the ways in which we can shape, enact/re-enact our existence and our being in the contemporary world within the *design* of culture, intended as a sense-making intellectual framework.

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Contemporary popular trauma

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In an increasingly mediated world, tragic events are more and more witnessed and understood through the mass media. In *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images* (2010), Allen Meek underlines the fundamental role played by media in magnifying trauma: the complex relationship between a traumatic event and its technological mediation addressed to a larger community has become a focal point in the wake of 9/11, which Meek reads as an example of "virtual trauma". On this occasion, the photograph of "The Falling Man" from the World Trade Center, now a recognised world-wide symbol of the attack, was censored for many years after its first appearance, fuelling a huge debate around the limits and ethics of media in matter of historical representation.

In the last decade, the idea of trauma has undergone a process of spectacularisation generated by the massive employment of mass media, which has provided a paradigm for the popular representation of personal experiences of victimhood and suffering. To many travellers, for instance, reporting from their visits to the historical sites of tragic events through photos and social media has become a common habit. The so-called "disaster-selfie", namely a selfie taken at a site of human tragedy, is today a popular aesthetic trend, which reconfigures our relationship with death in the digital world. The aim of this paper is to analyse how the notion of popular trauma culture has evolved today, by focusing on the recent projects of Yolocaust, a website showing people taking inappropriate pictures at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, and of Austerlitz, a documentary film showing tourists on a visit to the former concentration camps. All this has raised new moral challenges in the politics of self-representation and the ethics of visuality.

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The material and conceptual reshaping of prose fiction in digital, electronic, and book form: I-dentity v. we-dentity

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The boundaries of identity have been challenged and disrupted by several factors throughout time and literature has always been a rich repository of specimens for such varied phenomena. By treading new narrative paths in the wake of scientific findings and innovation in the early twentieth century, or turning stories into *unfamiliar* or unsettling literary artefacts in the 1960s and 1970s, novels have undergone conceptual and material transformation. Once again, in the 1990s, literature has been asked to re-shape its identity, rethink its conventions and open up to other narrative options: digital, electronic, intermedial, multimodal and an increasing number of typographically unconventional prose fictions (from Douglas Coupland's to M.Z. Danielewski's). The highly connected world has gone hand in hand with the fascination with high-tech tools, offering a fertile territory to a series of individual literary attempts (as exemplified by the Electronic Literature Collection) as well as collaborative projects (e.g. *The Silent History*, 2014, by Eli Horowitz, Matthew Derby, and Kevin Moffett), in which

disclosing and exposing the creative process and narrative devices has become essential to the codifying and layering of meaning.

Within such contexts, among British and American authors a diversified use of "we-narratives" (Margolin 1996, 2000; Marcus 2008) has grown, pointing to a range of collective identities. Along with the first-person plural, the "you" has also been adopted to achieve a sort of flipped-perspective reading experience (e.g. in *Black Box* by Jennifer Egan), not to mention the collaborative forms of authorship through social media. It seems only fair to acknowledge that a new challenge revolves around two main hinges: first, an ever-changing range of communication tools through which new pragmatics are coded whilst various media are used as icons or symbols within the unfolding narrative(s); second, a range of new collaborative identities, on- and off-line communities and group actions which are presented as a collective agent, often (intentionally?) further blurring the chances of outlining a main identity.

Aiming to tackle the new praxis and need for identity representation with its growing complexities, this paper looks at the current combined re-fashioning of conventions: both of the material aspect of literature – be it in book, digital or electronic form – and the narrative voice(s) as in*forming* factors that edit the writing/reading procedures while dismissing the conventional author, layout, word/image relationship, narrator and implied (passive) reader. By comparing novels in digital, electronic, and book format, this study will try to unveil how contemporary prose fiction exposes its structures in order to be a more efficient showcase of the "conceived links between cultural innovation, new kinds of knowledge, cognitive practice, and ethical and moral dimensions of civic and social coexistence".

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"Stop deef stop come back to my earin stop": Some examples of (tele)communication in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*

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This paper investigates how James Joyce incorporates and discusses contemporary technological tools for telecommunication in his last and most compelling novel, *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Joyce employs telecommunication at both the plot level (if one could use such a term for a text like the *Wake*) through his characters – particularly HCE, the Chapelizod pub-owner, and his twin sons (Shem and Shaun) – and the level of language, which mimics the linguistic codes and communication modalities of radio transmitters, telegraphs, telephones, and other technological tools. More precisely, in *Finnegans Wake* technology becomes consubstantial with characters and language, whereby not only does HCE morph into a radio transmitter in II.3, but he also changes the semantic value of his utterances in accordance with the jargon of radio communication. In its highly experimental structure, the *Wake* proves to be a magnificent example of the impact that the technological development of the first half of the twentieth century exerted on Modernism and its writing.

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Harry Potter and Brexit

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Literature, even the more speculative one, can always be said to depict reality, or, at least, to be inspired by it in the construction of its fictive world. Fiction as sense-making can also be considered as reality-making in the way it shapes readers' identity through the experience of fictional re-enactment. The Cultural Studies assumption that a culture's grassroots origin is to be found in the elaboration of people's experiences, desires, and interests perfectly applies to the case taken into consideration here.

The books of the Harry Potter saga may be said to anticipate and represent England's experience of the 2016 Brexit campaign and the consequences of the "Vote Leave Campaign" victory which are still influencing the contemporary political scenario. Brexit propaganda was based on the idea of "taking back control" of the borders – but also of a certain typically British identity – and was accompanied by racially-biased episodes of violence and discrimination directed towards non-European people, who were actually extraneous to the core of the debate, which concerned the possibility that the U.K. might leave the European Union. A similar creeping climate of hatred and fear was also present in the last books of the Harry Potter saga. Voldemort's condemnation of the "others" – the Muggles, non-magic people, or Muggle-borns, witches and wizards with Muggle parents – reminds of the outbursts of violence and racism following the "Yes Campaign" victory in the U.K. Indeed, during crucial historical periods the delineating and strengthening of the identity concept has often entailed a group's opposition to an indefinite "other". This latter entity is placed in stark contrast to a constructed idea of identity which represents and re-enacts mediated political messages, carefully fashioned, articulated and even paralleling fictional narrations.

The weaknesses in the Leave campaign and the ascent of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) from a minor party to the one affecting the fate of the country, moreover, seem to mirror the silent and slow advance of Lord Voldemort: a mere parasite in the first book, at the end of the saga he becomes the head of an army, appropriates the means of communication, and even threatens Hogwarts, the symbol of the magical world. The aim of the paper is to analyse this kind of parallelisms between works of fiction and reality, including propaganda discourses, which make use of particular communicative strategies and bring them near to fictional narration. Finally, I will offer insights into the ways literature often seems to foresee real-life events, thus stimulating the development of the reader's critical perspective.

PANEL

Complexity and creativity in environmental discourse

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Environmental discourse has attracted a considerable body of research since the birth of ecocritical discourse analysis in the 1990s. Recently, new ecocritical and ecolinguistic paradigms have emerged, such as ecofeminism, ecosemiotics and the Anthropocene. Furthermore, new notions such as eco-trauma, greenspeak and ecometaphor have started to be explored by linguists as well as by literary scholars. At the same time, some environmental issues have often been ignored as either myths or hyperbolic threats. In this context, different genres and media, new and old, play a central role in the communication of environmental issues. The main research questions emerging from this panel are related to how our perceptions of the environment and of the crises that are threatening it are creatively constructed and reconstructed through language, literature and culture.

In particular, this panel brings together studies that focus on the complex and creative nature of environmental discourse, including both theoretical and practical approaches to ecocritical discourse analysis. Attention will be devoted to issues such as the critical investigation of recent theoretical developments in ecolinguistics and ecocriticism; the proposal of innovative empirical insights into environmental discourse, including literary, linguistic and multimodal analyses of environmental texts; the exploration of power relations in environmental discourse and of the dynamics between dominant and marginalized discourses; the analysis of how environmental discourse at large may affect environmental policy and planning.

The papers in this panel will combine a variety of ecocritical and ecolinguistic approaches in order to analyse different kinds of texts, namely eco-trauma fiction, photo captions, environmental blawgs and patents dealing with environment-related inventions. The interdisciplinary framework encompassing literary, linguistic, discursive, and legal perspectives is aimed at offering a multiperspectival view on the complexity of environmental discourse and its societal implications.

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Eco-trauma fiction: Myth, metaphor and environmental catastrophe in Liz Jensen's *The Rapture*

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The inherent complexity and creativity of myths and metaphors make them ideal tools for representing post-apocalyptic realities in what I am going to define "Eco-Trauma Fiction", that is, fiction dealing with environmental catastrophe and the various forms of individual and

collective trauma directly or indirectly connected to it. Liz Jensen's *The Rapture* (2009) perfectly epitomises and is underpinned by the notion of eco-trauma, according to which we treat the ecological crisis as a trauma, defending ourselves from fear "through separation ideologies and practices (war, religious fanaticism, racism, and sexism), psychological defense mechanisms (denial, dissociation, psychic numbing), and an array of debilitating behaviors and responses that bear the signature of trauma, ranging from depression, anxiety, and addictive lifestyles to violence toward self, others, and nature" (Amorok 2007: 29).

Set in England in the near future, *The Rapture* portrays a world threatened by climate change and swept by hurricanes, tsunamis and earthquakes, combining science fiction with the more recent genre of ecothriller. The plot revolves around the relationship between Bethany, a teenager who brutally murdered her mother and is now confined in a psychiatric hospital, and her wheelchair-bound therapist Gabrielle, who realises, albeit reluctantly, that Bethany's disaster fantasies anticipate (or maybe cause?) real environmental catastrophes. The two protagonists are evidently traumatised by their past experiences, but also the population as a whole seems to have suffered a collective trauma that has led to the birth of two different but equally fatalist groups: the Planetarians, people of science who believe that the extinction of the human species is inevitable and that nature is just taking its course as it has done for millions of years, and the Faith Wave creed, a religious group whose members await signs of the Rapture as prophesised in the Bible.

The question of whether Bethany *foretells* or *causes* these catastrophes raises further questions about creativity and the use of metaphors: is this special skill of Bethany a form of creativity itself? How does she "read" signs and communicate them? How can scientists verify her predictions using the language of science? And how does the use of different metaphors for Bethany's role as either a psychic or a prophet influence her own and other people's actions? These and more issues, such as the use of Christian mythology, the science-religion dichotomy and the complexity of human-natural systems, will be explored in this paper according to the most recent developments in ecocritical and ecolinguistic theories, taking into account the notions of ecocosmopolitanism, the Anthropocene, and eco-trauma.

Amorok, T. (2007) "The eco-trauma and eco-recovery of being". *Shift: At the Frontiers of Consciousness* 15(28): 31-37.
Clark, T. (2015) *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept.* London: Bloomsbury.
Heise, U. (2008) *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Jensen, L. (2009) *The Rapture*. London: Bloomsbury.
Narine, A. (ed.) (2015) *Eco-Trauma Cinema*. New York: Routledge.

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Environmental law and the dissemination of knowledge through blawgs

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Environmental law has attracted considerable scholarly interest in recent years in terms of discursive approaches. Given the importance assumed by the definition of "environmental rights" in contemporary society, this paper aims to investigate the representation of this type of rights in a specific genre, namely the environmental blawg. In light of the relevance which

English has acquired in environmental communication (Schlosberg 2013), I will be focusing on English texts.

Legal blogs play an important role for the understanding of environmental rights and can offer new perspectives for the interpretation of environmental discourse at large. Whether considered from a linguistic, communicative, social, or legal point of view, environmental blawgs are then to be seen as critically important genres. More specifically, the analysis of blogs as springboards for social action opens up a series of questions: How do the exigencies of internet technology interplay with the constraints of established legal conventions? To what extent are the formalities of legal language preserved in this specific genre? How do the demands of blawgs, such as the need to attract and maintain readership, influence the process of knowledge dissemination?

The rationale of this work lies in the need to deepen the understanding of the processes through which environmental rights are discussed. Indeed, the traditional philosophical-axiological reflection on anthropocentric vs non-anthropocentric approaches has to be integrated with discursive and communicative perspectives focusing on empirical instances regarding how environmental rights are represented in the media. The overall objective is thus to examine how environmental rights are textually represented in influential environmental blawgs and to observe what rhetorical strategies are predominant. The analysis also aims to point out differences and analogies with the formulation of such rights in purely legal texts. Popularization strategies (Calsamiglia and van Dijk 2004) will be finally investigated in order to understand how blogs may play a popularization role concerning environmental rights among the public at large.

Calsamiglia, H. and T.A. van Dijk (2004) "Popularization discourse and knowledge about the genome". *Discourse & Society* 15(4): 369-389.
Schlosberg, D. (2013) "Theorising environmental justice: The expanding sphere of a discourse". *Environmental Politics* 22(1): 37-55.

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Capturing/captioning nature "as an experience and as history": *Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Portfolio 26*

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"The photographer is now charging real beasts, beleaguered and too rare to kill. Guns have metamorphosed into cameras in this earnest comedy, the ecology safari, because nature has ceased to be what it always had been – what people needed protection from. Now nature – tamed, endangered, mortal – needs to be protected from people. When we are afraid, we shoot. But when we are nostalgic, we take pictures". With these words, Susan Sontag (1979) describes the inherent predatory nature of photography as sublimation of the act of killing and transformation of an aggressive mood into an elegiac one. Captions, the short texts that accompany pictures in photojournalism, seem to share the same idea.

As the etymology suggests (from Old French *capcion,* "arrest, capture"), captions are meant to capture the story told by the picture and condense it to its essence. From this perspective, it is interesting to observe that the captions of photographs of the natural world have progressively ceased to sound as mere scientific descriptions of animals and plants; rather, they have emphasized the storytelling paradigm in the attempt to capture, along with the shot, not only a lifeform but an instant in which the delicate balance of the ecosystem has

become visible. At its 50th edition, the "Wildlife Photographer of the Year" competition organized by the Natural History Museum of London insists on the principle that "photography accurately and inspiringly documents wildlife in ways that can help understanding and conservation". The pictures selected (100 out of 50,000 entries from 95 countries) and published in the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Portfolio 26* are "icons of nature as an experience and as history […] ethically sourced and ethically produced". Acknowledged as a powerful form of environmental discourse, the captions that accompany them are consciously meant to enhance awareness and emotional involvement: they tell stories that "can move us to action".

The aim of my paper is to present the results of a quantitative and qualitative analysis carried out on the captions in the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Portfolio 26*, highlighting word choice, modality, the frequency of verbs of cognition and perception, narrative patterns, the use of direct/free indirect speech, etc. As remarked in the foreword, the portfolio "presents a time capsule of what we think now about wildlife". It is, therefore, a sort of multimodal showcase of the ways in which the complexity of wildlife is now filtered and assessed "by Homo Sapiens for Homo Sapiens" through the image-led, creative use of language in the captions.

Cox, R.K. (ed.) (2016) *Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Portfolio 26*. London: The Natural History Museum.
Sontag, S. (1979) [1971] *On Photography*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
Stibbe, A. (2015) *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live by*. London: Routledge.

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Linguistic justification of usefulness in patents: The case of environmental U.S. patents

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One of the three rhetorical requirements that patent applications must fulfill is to convince patent examiners that the invention described is useful. To demonstrate its usefulness, patent drafters present existing inventions with their shortcomings. Once the limitations of the existing technology are exhibited, the description of the new invention is presented as the solution to the previously identified problems. This argumentation strategy is not exclusive of patents, but it is prototypical and motivated by how patent examiners determine novelty and non-obviousness (the two other rhetorical requirements for patentability).

For this study, a 1-million-word corpus of U.S. patents has been analyzed. The patents for this corpus have been selected following the categories specified by the Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) system (roughly 1,270 categories related to environmental technologies). The CPC has been jointly developed by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and the European Patent Office (EPO).

The goals of this study are the following: first, identifying those words that suggest technological weaknesses and their collocates; and second, detecting keywords related to the environmental technologies semantic field along with their semantic preferences and prosodies (Sinclair 1991). On the one hand, uncovering how technological weaknesses are worded shows the framing strategies used in patents to justify the usefulness of the invention seeking intellectual property protection. On the other hand, pinpointing the semantic preferences of certain keywords allows the identification of conceptual patterns that relate environmental terminology to argumentation strategies. Additionally, the study of the

semantic prosodies of some words reveals how some concepts are characterized as shortcomings or disadvantages and others as improvements or advantages.

Sinclair, J. (1991) *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

PANEL

The criminal hero complex

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This panel proposal is inspired by the current activity of the *Criminal Hero Research Centre* (CRC) of the Università degli Studi di Milano and aims at exploring new critical and analytical perspectives related to the character of the Anglophone "criminal hero". The purpose of the CRC is to shed light on the complexity of this figure, as well as to explore the increasingly problematic representations of this new character type in the conventional form of the detective-story and its most recent hybridizations (Croci et al. 2016).

For this occasion, our research will focus on the identity-making process of the criminal hero in some instances of contemporary representational forms as seen from a postmodern perspective. The end of the *Grand Narrative* as proclaimed by Lyotard (1984) puts us up against the need to consider the new ethical implications involved in the construction of the heroic figure, who, like the postmodern subject in general, possesses a multiple, fragmented, and protean identity. This often disturbing fragmentation, besides providing the core of the ontological complexity of the criminal hero, concurs in determining his/her confused, disoriented and at times ambiguous nature. Our aim is to retrieve the fragments of this complexity in order to arrive at a specific and archetypal profile and, most importantly, in order to identify its political implications.

A re-contextualization of the "intersectionality" concept provides the theoretical link between our speeches. In that spirit of eclecticism typical of Cultural Studies, we make this definition, born among gender studies, our own, so as to scrutinize the power hierarchies underlying the modulation of every *positionality* (Crenshaw 1989, Narayan and Harding 2000, Gay 2014, Hill Collins and Bilge 2016).

A peculiar attention will be placed on serialized narrations (in literary, comic and television productions) in order to examine closely the interaction between political characterization and the criminal hero identity-making process (Anderson et al. 2015). These serialized narrations, indeed, are marked by a deep attention on the identity evolution of the character, his/her social relations, and on the aftermaths of all this on his/her *positionality.*

Anderson, J., C. Miranda and B. Pezzotti (eds) (2015) *Serial Crime Fiction: Dying for More*. Crime Files Series. Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Crenshaw, K. (1989) "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics". *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140: 139-167.

----- (2016) *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. New York: New Press.

Croci, D., D. Monegato and A. Pasolini (2016) *Cattivi, cattivissimi, cattivi? Sulle tracce di eroi criminali nelle narrazioni di genere: UK, USA, Italia*. Milano: Mimesis.

Gay, R. (2014) *Bad Feminist: Essays*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Gordon, H. and A. Gansa (2011) "Homeland". USA: Showtime.

Hill Collins, P. and S. Bilge (2016) *Intersectionality*. Key Concepts Series. Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Kohan, J. (2011) "Orange is the New Black". USA: Lionsgate Television.

Lyotard, J.-F. (1984) [1979] *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Repr. Theory and History of Literature 10. Manchester: University Press.

McCall, L. (2005) "The complexity of intersectionality". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3): 1771-1800.

Morrison, G. (2013) [1988-1990] *The Animal Man Omnibus*. New York: DC Comics.

Narayan, U. and S.G. Harding (eds) (2000) *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

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"You'd think it was almost human": Appropriating H.G. Wells in Grant Morrison's *Animal Man*

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The criminal hero within: Complex intersectional profiles in *Homeland*

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Complex and/or complicated? Investigating intersectional female identities in *Orange is the New Black*

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PANEL

The intellectual international: Complexity and creativity in contemporary forms of public engagement

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In recent years, a resurgence of populist rhetoric across Western societies has engendered a deep crisis in conventional notions of intellectual engagement. On the one hand, social media allow anyone on the right side of the digital divide to broadcast their (not necessarily informed) opinions; on the other, writers, scholars, and activists alike have found themselves under attack in the general debunking of the humanities and the related cultural competences. The aim of this panel is to explore the complexity emerging from contemporary practices of political intervention, highlighting the emergence of innovative or "creative" as well as the resurgence of traditional or "conventional" forms of public engagement.

In this landscape, the figure of the organic intellectual – in the sense elaborated by Antonio Gramsci and then by Stuart Hall as the one bearing "the responsibility of transmitting [ideas] to those who do not belong, professionally, in the intellectual class" (Hall 1992: 281) – is arguably undergoing an interesting shift; in particular, the contemporary public debate is witnessing a proliferation of new forms of engagement by intellectuals from a conventional background as well as the emergence of figures with a strong political stance from what would have previously been considered popular forms of entertainment. Some examples may include Sara Ahmed's blog *feministkilljoys*, Teju Cole's use of Twitter for creative writing and social commentary, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "pop" creative writing, or Rafeef Ziadah's protest poetry, disseminated on YouTube and other multimedia platforms. These forms of political engagement, explicitly aimed at social justice in matters such as sexual and racial politics, find a shared language in English while featuring a decidedly transnational agenda; they also feature "literary" intersections while working on increasingly multimodal platforms.

This panel intends to investigate this landscape, conjoining theoretical elaborations and the analysis of case studies, in order to discuss the challenges these practices pose to scholars and teachers alike. While the idea at the core of cultural studies that all culture is both contemporary and political seems to find a deep resonance here, the changed political scenery, with the resurgence of the political right and the exacerbation of toxic nationalisms in the face of migrations, solicits an enquiry into how these complex forms of political intervention challenge – or maybe reproduce with a creative take – conventional notions of public engagement. Particular attention will be dedicated to the affective interpellation of audiences through the use of narratives – spun through literature as well as visual and social media – as a tool to fuel critical thinking and fight for social justice.

Hall, S. (1992) "Cultural Studies and its theoretical legacies", in *Cultural Studies,* L. Grossberg, C. Nelson and P. Treichler (eds). New York and London: Routledge, 277-294.

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Subjectivity, performativity, self-narrative: Randa Jarrar and Suheir Hammad's online and off-line literary constructions

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This paper looks into the parallel, but also undeniably overlapping, forms of self-narrative produced through "traditional literature" and new media, by two Palestinian-American writers: Randa Jarrar and Suheir Hammad. Jarrar is the author of a semi-autobiographical novel (*The Map of Home*, 2005) and a collection of short stories (*Him, Me, Mohammed Ali*, 2016), while Hammad is a published and spoken-word poet (*ZaatarDiva*, 2006; *Breaking Poems*, 2008; *Born Palestinian Born Black*, 2010, among others). Both writers very actively use social media as a means to consolidate and strengthen their participation in the Arab-American (literary, and wider) community, but also as a(nother) form of "self-narrative", a tool for empowerment, and a space for self-experimentation. The analysis will focus on the questions surrounding the idea of a (re?)-emerging subjectivity of the writer, and more specifically in this case of the postcolonial/diasporic intellectual, who uses new media alongside "traditional" literary publications (though perhaps with varying degrees of intentionality) to shape a public persona that inevitably intervenes in the reader's contact with the author's works. Clearly, issues of the "literariness" of new media are also at stake, as are debates over the market/marketing of postcolonial literature and authors.

In the cases of Jarrar and Hammad, it is particularly interesting to look into the separations and continuities of their published works and their "media self-narratives". More specifically, this paper will analyze the parallel re-writing of embodiment in Jarrar's fiction and in her online profiles, and the use of language and linguistic play to narrate the self in Hammad's poetic twitter-narrative, parallel and contiguous to her published poetry.

Georgakopoulou, A. (2014) "Small stories transposition & social media: A micro-perspective on the 'Greek crisis'". *Discourse & Society* 25: 519-539 (Special Issue).

Hassan, W. S. (2011) *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McKim, E. and B. Schiff (eds) [in press] *Life and Narrative*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Naber, N. (2012) *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism.* New York: New York University Press.

Schmidt, S. (2014) *Re-Framing the Arab/Muslim: Mediating Orientalism in Contemporary Arab American Life Writing*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Smith, H. (2011) "Creative writing and new media", in *The Cambridge Companion to Creative Writing,* D. Morley and P. Neilsen (eds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, M. (2014) "From Twitter to Facebook, social media is bringing literature to life". *Daily Nation*. June 14. URL: http://www.nation.co.ke/.

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Mediatic creative engagement and the *Palestinian Diaspora*

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As late as 1996, Stuart Hall asserted that "since migration has turned out to be *the* world-historical event of late modernity, the classic postmodern experience turns out to be the diasporic experience". Since then, mass migration has become more and more *the* event in late modernity. Another historical event has been the advent of mass (digital) mediation, through which artistic performances, while losing their auratic present tense dimension, may be reproduced and spread in unprecedented (viral) ways.

As appalling political news from both sides of the Atlantic spread, it may seem odd to remind ourselves of Appadurai's quote according to which "as the nation-state enters a terminal crisis (if my prognostications prove to be correct), we can certainly expect that the materials for a postnational imaginary must be around us already. Here, I think we need to pay special attention to the relation between mass mediation and migration […]. In particular, we need to look closely at the variety of what have emerged as diasporic public spheres" (1996).

We do not know whether the nation-state is entering a terminal crisis, although the brutal resurgences of nationalism in the West seem to deny it. What is undisputable is that new forms of intellectual and artistic public engagement (spoken poetry, videos, music, graffiti, etc.) are emerging, thanks to global mass migration helped by digital mass mediation, which are renovating the idea of "popular culture".

Though not limited to it, this paper tries to tackle the issue of the diasporic experience in its public sphere, and to focus on some case studies connected to the *Palestinian Question*. In particular, hip-hop activist singers (like Omar Offendum, Shadia Mansour, DAM, the first Palestinian hip hop crew), film makers (like Amer Shomali and his award-winning animated documentary *The Wanted 18*, Sharif Waked and his seven-minute video *Chic point*), spoken word artists (like Rafeef Ziadah) will be analysed as forms of public mediatic engagement, which turn the diasporic artist into a new kind of "organic intellectual" in the age of mass mediation-cum-migration.

Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
El Hamamsy, W. and S. Mounira (eds) (2013) *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Postcolonial Outlook*. Front Cover. London and New York: Routledge.
Hall, S. (1996) *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.

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"My feminism is intersectional". #BlackLivesMatter and the public debate about gender and race in the U.S.

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February 2012: following an altercation in the street, neighborhood watch George Zimmerman kills Treyvon Martin, a 17-year-old unarmed African American, in Sanford,

Florida. July 2013: a jury acquits Zimmerman of all charges as they find no evidence contradicting his justified self-defense plea.

The case raised huge media attention as the black community took to the streets and the social networks to protest state-sanctioned violence and indifference toward African American lives, and eventually opened the eyes of many, who had cheered Obama's election as the inauguration of a post-racial phase in American history, to the still bleeding wound of racism in the U.S. Among the most powerful responses to Martin's killing and Zimmerman's acquittal was the founding in cyberspace of "a sociopolitical media forum" (Ruffin) called #BlackLivesMatter by activists and community organizers Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. This paper aims at exploring the communication strategies of this movement that are allowing it to successfully build a renewed sense of community among black folks across gender, class, and educational barriers, and to expand its reach beyond the realm of social protest to effectively impact the current conversation on rights, justice, and equality.

Starting as a hashtag and gaining momentum across several social media, the #BlackLivesMatter platform evolved into a website, a Twitter account, a Facebook page, and led to the foundation of local chapters of the movement, thus bringing its keywords to street protests, new and traditional media campaigns, the academia, and popular culture. A number of artists and public figures, as well as private citizens, have since embraced its rhetoric and standpoints. Others have borrowed (or rather stolen) its strategies, bending them to their own ends, witness slogans such as "Brown lives matter", "All lives matter", and "Blue lives matter", all aiming at deflecting the explosive power of the use of "Black" as a designation of the subjects involved in and addressed by the movement. What such knee-jerk linguistic and ideological reactions seem to both ignore and unconsciously respond to is the new sense of community that is forged and advocated around the mobilization of the category of blackness. Far from being divisive or unnecessary, the deployment of such a category is justified by the very reactions it elicits and finds its rationale in the unassailable truth that being black (i.e. being visibly black) exposes people to state violence and complex forms of disempowerment that are not to be experienced by any other racial group in contemporary U.S. Color is thus back at the center of the American experience and public debate, and yet the #BlackLivesMatter is not merely a replica of past civil rights movements, since it "affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum". A complex vocabulary aiming at grasping the most nuanced experiences of gender, sexuality, embodiment, social positioning, and past history is thus being (re)elaborated through a "group-centered model of leadership" (Harris 2015) that moves away from the male-centered, clergy-based tradition of the Civil Rights Movement. The result is epitomized by the spread and self-aware use of keywords such as "intersectionality", "gender spectrum", "cis", "afro-womanist" outside the realm of academic discourse where they have long circulated as theoretical and critical categories, and among people who deploy them in their horizontal interactions with allies and opponents alike.

#BlackLivesMatter. http://blacklivesmatter.com.

Coates, T. (2015) *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel and Grau.

Cohen, C.J. (2015) "Afterwords: When will black lives matter? Neoliberalism, democracy, and the queering of American activism in the post-Obama Era", in *The Hip Hop & Obama Reader,* T.L. Gosa and E. Nielson (eds). New York: Oxford University Press, 280-290.

Collins, P.H. (1990) *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York and London: Routledge.

Crenshaw, K. (1991) "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color". *Stanford Law Review* 43: 1242-1299.

Harris, F.C. (2015) "The next Civil Rights Movement?". *Dissent*. URL: https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/black-lives-matter-new-civil-rights-movement-fredrick-harris.

Ruffin, H. [n. d.] "Black Lives Matter: The growth of a new social justice movement". URL: http://www.blackpast.org/perspectives/black-lives-matter-growth-new-social-justice-movement.

Samy Alim, H. and G. Smitherman (2012) *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the US*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tylor, K.-Y. (2016) *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

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The intellectual's body as complex site of struggle: Binyavanga Wainaina's intersectional politics

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This paper focuses on the work of Kenyan writer and activist Binyavanga Wainaina in the wider context of an investigation on the intellectual international of African origin in the contemporary literary landscape. A winner of the prestigious Caine Prize for African Writing in 2002, Wainaina subsequently published a widely acclaimed memoir, *One Day I Will Write about This Place* (2011). His activism spreads out on a multiplicity of platforms, conventional ones, such as literary writing – he is among the founders of *Kwani?*, one of the most influential African literary magazines to date – as well as the now rampant social media: it was on Twitter that Wainaina came out, first as gay in 2014 – in response to a wave of anti-homosexual laws passed in many African countries that year – and then as HIV positive in 2016, on World AIDS Day.

Wainaina's activism – as happens with many writers of African origin – is characterized by a complex set of interventions that include a creative deployment of well-established strategies of political struggle. Tuning in to the current academic debate about the role of postcolonial writing in the elaboration of a new exoticism (see Huggan 2001, Brouillette 2007, Ponzanesi 2014), Wainaina has been one of the first intellectuals to ignite the debate about "How to Write about Africa" (as the title of his 2005 essay reads). Following this lead, his public engagement has been characterized by a constant questioning of the very same discourses (about gender identity, sexual practices, and racial and national positionings) that allow for his own visibility and public viability as a black gay African intellectual. In particular, his practices relentlessly expose the unexpected vulnerability of the body of the public intellectual which, far from being sheltered in any "ivory tower", is constantly at the forefront of political struggle, either because HIV-positive, victim of a stroke, or assaulted by a taxi driver in Berlin. These events in Wainaina's life coalesce in a self-narrative deploying the now classical strategic essentialism and body politics of feminist and queer struggles, enacting what Judith Butler has identified as the practice and obligation of "giving an account of oneself" along the lines and against the grain of hegemonic racial and sexual representations.

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PANEL

Memory and obsolescence in the digital age

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Technological, social, and cultural transformations always affect what, how and why individuals and communities remember and forget. In our new hyper-accelerated culture, or technological "dromosphere" (Virilio 2000), the increasing complexity and uncontrollability of the digital (Kelly 1994) is raising new issues about memory – issues fractious and crucial in these times of relentless, and often traumatic, change and mobility. Our conventional way of thinking about the past is put into question as the boundaries between present, past and future seem increasingly unstable; in addition, with the rapid advance of technologies, our fascination with the possibilities of artificial memory enhancement is counterpointed by growing fears for the declining powers of organic memory. As Diana Taylor points out, the latest "anxiety about loss and forgetting might explain our current obsession with archives and the nostalgia both for embodiment and for the object" (Taylor 2010: 15); that is, both for "all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral" that converge into the "repertoire" epistemic system, and for all the "supposedly lasting, stable objects such as books, documents, bones, photographs, and so on that theoretically resist change over time" (Taylor 2010: 2) and that build individual and collective memory as "archive".

Indeed, the theoretical and cultural significance of past histories and stories has never been greater, thus feeding the recent field of memory studies and igniting the prolific production of memoirs, diaries, biographies or autobiographies, in both print and online form, as well as in performance. In fact, even though the simultaneous system of transmission of the digital media is not replacing traditional archives or repertoires, individual and cultural performances of memory are being insistently enacted and massively stored on the web. The inherently processual and performative quality of these new forms of memorization/memorialisation, emphatically charged with affect and even explored in their therapeutic/redemptive effects, raises crucial questions on the different ways of knowing, and of preserving and transmitting knowledge which are being provoked or affected by the new systems.

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PastPerfect: Memory on display in near-future dystopias

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The paper aims to discuss the contemporary obsession with archives and memory through the analysis of dystopian scenarios such as those envisioned by Charlie Brooker's tv series *Black Mirror* – in particular the 2011 episode "The Entire History of You" – and by Dave Eggers' novel *The Circle* (2013). As Diana Taylor puts it, in a time which is going too fast, and in which obsolescence threatens to outpace us, we are growingly using the digital to store anything connected to us, experiencing "the need to preserve not just *things* (documents, bones, fossils) but ways of *thinking* and *knowing* – sociability, affect, emotions, gestures, memories" (Taylor 2010: 15). In the near-future imagined by the creator of *Black Mirror*, this all-inclusive digital archive could take the form of an incorporated memory chip capable of recording and storing each and every instant of our life, as well as of projecting the re-plays of our past "scenes" on a screen in a room, so that everybody can watch them. But a society in which it is impossible to lie or to keep a secret is a Big Brother-style surveillance society.

In the age of transparency, inaugurated by the introduction of the Internet and social networks, the separation between private and public is becoming too weak. Eggers further elaborates on the concept, exhibiting the potential dangers of pouring too much of our private data and experiences on the web. In his novel, the IT corporation ("The Circle") where the story is set reminds us of the panoptical structure imagined by Michel Foucault (1975) in a regime of perfect control. Both its employees and the users of its search&social media system "TruYou" are not only warmly "invited" to publish and share every single detail of their life (the company's slogans are "Sharing is Caring", and "Privacy is Theft"): they are also offered the chance to use a software called PastPerfect to satisfy their insatiable need to know any single detail related to their own and other people's family history. The program uses the sharing force of the community to "map" anybody's present and past, and to make them "eternally" and publicly available to the world. Both *The Circle* and the tv episode "The Entire History of You" can be seen to add speculative substance to a widespread debate on the crucial issues of public and private memory in the passage from older, closed systems of knowledge and transmission to the new, open culture of the Internet; on today's need, as Taylor suggests, to find a way to preserve our sense of self, and to be "seen" and remembered in a world that is too complex and rapidly changing.

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The metamorphic pressure of memory in William Kentridge's transitional art

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> "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying, and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear".
>
> A. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*

Ours is an age of "travelling" concepts, of repeated "turns" and "returns", of increasingly permeable spaces and borders, a world of increasingly contentious geopolitical orders and borders, which has combined a vertiginous global expansion and an unparalleled process of pervasive technological interrelatedness (Mauro and Bauman 2015). In such fluid "post-age" scenario of global and digital information, one of the most cogent and complicated issues is the entanglement of memory and oblivion which has dramatically called attention, on the one hand, to the risks of the forgetful rhetoric of innovation and quick consumption and, on the other, to the rampant resurgence of old and new violent epistemologies.

Starting from the contemporary critical conjuncture of novelty and obsolescence, my paper aims to discuss the distinctive inflection of memory and oblivion in William Kentridge's art as "transitional" and "metamorphic" stages of his lifelong engagement with the "interregnum" of post apartheid South Africa (as well as the broader "interregnum" of our critical age). Comments will range from the two huge artworks that Kentridge realized in collaboration with Doris Bloom for the first Biennale of Johannesburg (1995), devoted to "Memory and Geography", to his recent installation – a monumental and yet ephemeral frieze – on the travertine walls of Rome, *Triumphs and Laments* (2016). Indeed the artist's creative process of marking, smudging, and erasure always aims to excavate the hidden and the invisible and, as a critic has put it, his obsolete "drawing and filmmaking techniques reinscribe transition back into landscape and memory" (Rothberg 2012: 15).

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William Gibson's *Agrippa* and the quest for irrevocability

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The last decades have witnessed an increased popular awareness of the changing qualities of information, which is becoming ubiquitous and exponentially increasing. The vast amount of data produced and spread over the internet, thanks to the rapid advances of digital technologies, has raised new issues concerning the possibility to organize, store and access information – i.e. to build archives (Derrida 1995, Taylor 2010) – as well as to remember "affectively" and in non-linear ways (Terada 2001).

The paper focuses on William Gibson's 1992 digital experiment *Agrippa: A Book of the Dead* – containing a poem, which is a memoir of Gibson's father, and images by New York artist Dennis Ashbaugh – and its live broadcast performance known as "The Transmission". The peculiarity of *Agrippa*, which was one of the earliest works of electronic literature to attract popular media interest, could be found in the mechanisms it set in motion while being read. The poem, originally stored on a 3½ inch floppy disk, contained an encryption program inside the diskette that would erase each line as it scrolled up the screen. As the publisher conceived it, *Agrippa* had to be "an art book that vanishes", and also the pages of the book containing the illustrations by Ashbaugh were treated with chemicals so that they would fade away over time, leaving at the end only blank paper. Gibson and Ashbaugh's project was thus designed to embody at the same time the ephemeral and enduring nature of memories, as the disappearing text and vanishing images would result in a transformation of the artists' work into no more than readers' memories. However, the intended irrevocability of *Agrippa* ironically turned out to be ephemeral itself, as some hackers got into the code during the live broadcast and gave the poem an afterlife.

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