Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Multimedia Communications

Diploma thesis

2014   Mathew Buch

Transposition of Narratives Between Mediums

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ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **B.A. Mathew Buch**
Osobní číslo: **K12530**
Studijní program: **N8206 Výtvarná umění**
Studijní obor: **Multimedia a design – Grafický design**
Forma studia: **kombinovaná**

Téma práce: **Převod příběhu mezi médii.**

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Rozsah diplomové práce: 'Viz. Zásady pro vypracování
Rozsah příloh: Viz. Zásady pro vypracování
Forma zpracování diplomové práce: tištěná

Seznam odborné literatury:

The Translation Studies Reader – Lawrence Venuti ISBN–10: 0415613485
Film Art: An Introduction – David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson ISBN–10: 0072484551
Understanding Comics/Making Comics/Reinventing Comics – Scott McCloud ISBN–10,
006097625X/ISBN–10, 0062045849/ISBN–10, 0060953500
Alan Moore Writing For Comics Volume 1 Paperback – Alan Moore ISBN–10: 1592910122
The Mindscape of Alan Moore (2008) – ASIN: B001BEGB3O
"The Teaching Company" lectures
Various internet sources

Vedoucí diplomové práce: **Mgr. Pavel Krutil**
                                  Ústav vizuální tvorby

Datum zadání diplomové práce: **2. prosince 2013**
Termín odevzdání diplomové práce: **16. května 2014**

Ve Zlíně dne 2. prosince 2013

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ABSTRAKT

Hlavním zaměřením této práce je příběh nebo samotné vyprávěni a druhy medií jimiž jsou komunikovány. Zpočátku se snažím popsat základní principy a zásady procesu komunikace. Závěrečná část se snaží stanovit vymezující faktory pouziti optimálního média . Vyprávění nebo příběh lze považovat za fundementální jednotku paměti či myšlení. Každá malá jednotka je postavena na kombinacích smyslového podnětu a naší emocionální reakce na tento podnět. Narodíme se a začneme shromažďovat příběhy a vyprávěni, a tyto údaje využíváme jako jednotky řídící naše jednaní, náš přístup k pravdě, nebo k předvídání výsledku. Kolekce těchto nervových vypalování může být uspořádána do masivně složitych příběhu a lze ji přenášet z jednoho člověka na druhého. Naše schopnost komunikovat se rychle rozšířila z našeho prvního gesta na pohybu a řeč, z písně do textu, kresby, sochy, az na mechanizovanou reprodukci a tisk, na elektronicka média a dále do globální vesnice digitálního webu, který v současné době objímá celou planetu. Každé médium má své silné a slabé stránky, ale mohlo by se říci, že jedno je lepší než jiné?

Klíčová slova: vyprávění, příběh, zpráva, medium, mediální, transponovat, explicitní/implicitní obsah

ABSTRACT

The key focus of this work is narrative, and the mediums with which we communicate it. Initially we seek to describe the underlying principles beneath the process of communication. The concluding part attempts to establish the defining factors of the optimum medium. Narrative or story can be considered the fundamental unit of memory or thought. Each tiny unit is built by combining a sensory input and our emotional response to this stimuli. From before we are born we begin gathering and stockpiling narrative, and we use these data banks to guide our actions, access truth or predict outcomes. Collections of these neural firings can be organised into massively complex stories and transmitted from one human to another. Our ability to communicate has rapidly expanded from our first gestures/movement to speech/song through writing/drawing/sculpture to mechanised reproduction and print, into electric media and beyond to the global village of the digital web that currently embraces the planet. Each media has its strengths and weaknesses, but could it be said that one is superior to another?

Keywords: narrative, story, message, medium, media, transpose, explicit/implicit content.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim

I hereby declare that to the best of my knowledge the print version of my Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are almost identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Why do some narratives translate well to other media and other things don't? Distilled to it's essence, this dissertation examines the difference between various mediums and how these differences affect the message they carry. It explores the potential difficulties of transposing content from one container to another; providing contrast and comparison with selected contemporary examples. In order to establish a context and basis for our understanding much of the essay focuses on the exploration and definition of a number of pertinent ideas. The underlying and fundamental postulate of this writing is that communication is always between (potentially radically different) individuals: One side generates content and the other interprets it. The mediums or media are the transporters of the information, from the spoken word to the printed, from sequential art to film. (We are primarily concerned with established traditional media, so although newer digital mediums are mentioned - due to time considerations - they're given less in-depth consideration). The carried content referred to will be the 'narrative' or 'story'; which can be seen as the ultimate storage format of human activity and experience. My fundamental contention is that some media translations are inherently problematic; ultimately such translations seek to replicate a primary media; that of a pattern of neurons firings in the brain.

THE THEORETICAL PART

1. DEFINING TERMS

As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online:-

"A narrative (or story) is any account of connected events, presented to a reader or listener in a sequence of written or spoken words, or in a sequence of (moving) pictures".[1]

It will be referred to throughout the text as the 'content', 'narrative', or 'story' interchangeably. It can be divided into various genres; detective, romance, science fiction, etc.: There are traditional forms; epic verse, fable, drama etc... and it represents the data that is carried by our mediums. Most stories have a *beginning*, *middle* and *end*; a 'situation' an 'action' and a 'result'. Where the first part sets up some potential, the second, the action takes place, and the final reveals a conclusion: Much like: A large rock on the peak of a hilltop on a windy day; the beginning. With a strong gust of wind it starts down an interesting path of devastation and destruction; the middle. Before finally settling in a peaceful valley; the end.

Owen Flanagan of Duke University, a leading consciousness researcher, writes:-

"Evidence strongly suggests that humans in all cultures come to cast their own identity in some sort of narrative form. We are inveterate storytellers".
[2]

There is narrative in all forms of human creativity and throughout history stories were an important aspect of culture. The communications Professor Walter Fischer takes this further postulating that:-

"The presuppositions that structure the narrative paradigm are:
1. people are essentially storytellers;
2. we make decisions on the basis of good reasons;
3. history, biography, culture, and character determine what we consider good reasons.
4. narrative rationality is determined by the coherence and fidelity of our stories.
5. the world is a set of stories from which we choose, and thus constantly re-create, our lives".[3]

We structure our lives and thoughts through narrative, making it both fundamental and

essential. Weight and validity of these ideas can be found in the burgeoning field of narrative psychology. This is a position within psychology interested in the "storied nature of human conduct" (Sarbin, 1986)[4]. It explores the notion that "human activity and experience are filled with 'meaning' and that stories, rather than logical arguments or lawful formulations, are the vehicle by which that meaning is communicated"[5]. Theodore Roy Sarbin (1911–2005) a pioneer in this field "adopted a method based upon the primacy of stories as a way of understanding human behaviour in preference to the constraints of traditional psychological research paradigms"[6]: Proposing that *narrative* becomes the root metaphor for psychology, replacing the mechanistic and organic metaphors which shaped so much theory and research within the discipline over the past century.

'The Coffee strip' [1]

Above is a simple sequence of images, with a beginning, a middle and an end. The narrative idea is that coffee wakes you up; sleepy man, drinks coffee, instant dynamism. In it's purest form the story is built on a sensory input (the experience of drinking coffee; feel, taste, sight, sound, smell,) and the connected emotional response to the experience (Coffee is great, it is a magic black cure for the soporific, it makes me feel like superman).

2. A PHYSICAL BASIS FOR NARRATIVE

A December 2012 Scientific American article, by David Pogue, discusses experiments in Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) technology which have yielded some interesting results. Using real-time functional MRI scanners, for thought recognition, they are able to view ideas, as they are created. What is curious is that "regardless of our native language or personal history, the same parts of our brain 'light up' when we think of certain nouns. For example 'strawberry', we might think 'red', 'eat' or 'hold in one hand.' The computer knows which brain areas are active for which qualities".[7]

Strawberry   Jahoda
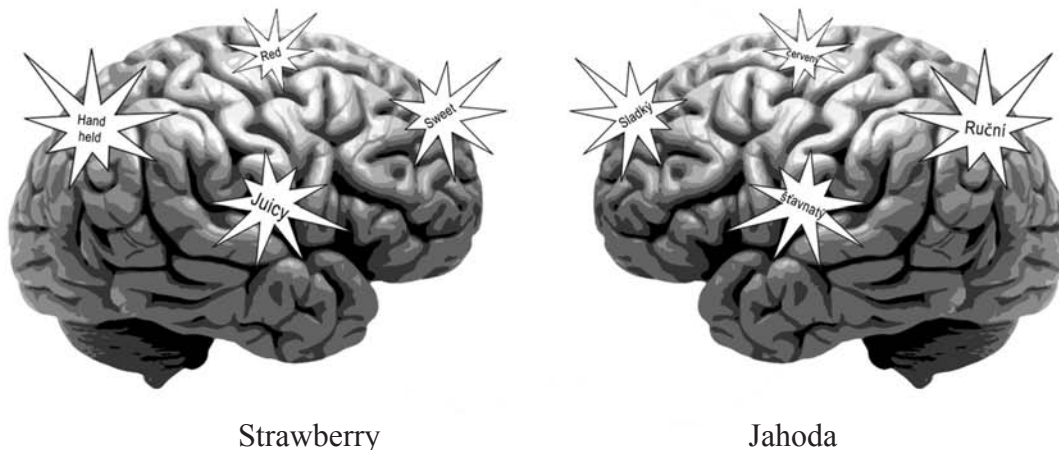
When we communicate, in order to be understood, we must organise *shared experience* into a sequence and transmit these stories to a receiver. Regardless of language, if our audience has had the experience and we are able to stimulate the areas pertaining to it, then we will be understood. Generally we are not placing new thoughts into the audiences mind; merely arousing ones that already exist. It is a resonance of ideas; like tuning a guitar when your finger is pressed down between the correct frets - if the guitar is in tune - a second string will vibrate. When explaining new ideas we often do so using metaphor or simile, making reference to existing known quantities. The degree of explicitness required to communicate an idea will correlate directly with how closely aligned the experiences are of those involved in the communication: If you ask a computer scientist to log in, he may ask you for your password: If you asked my grandma, she might ask you; "a log in where?"

3. EVOLUTION OF NARRATIVE IN SOCIETY

No man is an Iland

No man is an Iland, intire of itselfe; every man
is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine;
if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe
is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as
well as if a Manor of thy friends or of thine
owne were; any mans death diminishes me,
because I am involved in Mankinde;
And therefore never send to know for whom
the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

- John Donne [8]

John Donne meditates on a theme that we can read as far back as Aristotle, "man is by nature a social animal. Society is something that precedes the individual." [9] We have gained our superior status on earth through our societies, which by definition, need a level of cooperation and social cohesion. As the anthropologist Robin Dunbar proposes, in 'Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language' that:-

"Language may have arisen as a 'cheap' means of social grooming, allowing early humans to maintain social cohesion efficiently."[10]

Without language, Dunbar speculates,

"Humans would have to expend nearly half their time on social grooming, which would have made productive, cooperative effort nearly impossible." [11]

Language was then the first significant medium, carrying the narrative that has allowed us to develop as a race. It reveals the symbiotic relationship between the data and it's delivery and also the significance and impact that the medium can have on the message. As our technologies have developed so have our societies and intrinsic to the whole process so has our media; from gesture to oral, to manuscript (craft), to print (mechanical), to radio/movies/TV (electrical), to the internet and computers (digital). In all things external we have made rapid and dramatic progress, with relatively little evolution as a species.

4. ANCIENT TO MODERN UNCHANGED

In terms of recorded history, change is imperceptibly slow, and seemingly time hasn't much affected the human race. As Byron comments:-

"History, with all her volumes vast, hath but one page".[12]

When reading texts like those from Pliny the Younger we observe that our social and mundane concerns are much the same as his, 2000 years ago. Humans as a species, in all our essential details, are unchanging; needing food, warmth and air (and desiring, possibly, love and understanding). Following on from these universal needs and desires, there are ideas with common appeal, that cut across all human history and culture; Shakespeare for example, despite all our industry and electronica, is still - across the planet - enjoyed because his words continue to hold relevancy to people. Through his themes (already explored by ancient Greek authors) he records insightful observations into the human condition; the English language still counts many of his collocations and inventions in common usage.[13]

Shakespeare's ideas have translated well, again many of his collocations and inventions can be found in common usage in other languages; German for example "was ist ein Name?" or "der Anfang vom Ende". (Curiously, the German Shakespeare Society (die Deutsche Shake-speare-Gesellschaft or DSG) is the oldest in the world). [14] However in communication it is not just language, but cultural context that raises barriers to understanding.

"Society is an organised aggregate of people, subdivided in certain ways
so as to allocate rights and duties among the individuals and groups com-
prising it".[15]

Each member constituting a society is individually shaped by a different physical, socio-political and historical environment and so each social group varies. (An example of this, humorously expressed, is the old joke:-

Heaven is where the police are British, the chefs are French, the mechanics
are German, the lovers are Italian and it's all organised by the Swiss. Hell
is where the chefs are British, the mechanics are French, the lovers are
Swiss, the police are Germans and it's all organised by the Italians.

As an extension of this there is also a book series called the Xenophobes guides. None of which would be funny if there were not some truth to these prejudices).

"Foreign countries have different visions of Shakespeare, and every nation
has it's own cultural and social perspectives by which it views the dramatist".
[16]

His work still contains some level of universal truth from the grand themes to the everyday phrases, like "cold comfort" or "kill with kindness", that resonate despite the striking discrepancy between cultures.

"In China Shakespeare is considered fortunate because his acceptance by and
large has not presented difficulties".[16]

Shakespeare is not the only author to have been successful across continents, time and despite cultural barriers. There are many English children with fond memories of 'Journey to the West', written in the 16th century during the Ming Dynasty and attributed to Wu Cheng (commonly known as 'Monkey' after the TV series adaptation). There are many narratives that transcend time, culture and language, that resonate, delight with a universal appeal. The evidence for such stories is easily acquired viewing list of international best-sellers.[17]

Although other factors bias the results; like the dominance of English speakers on the planet, or this centuries material wealth -especially in western countries; and with "all books of a religious, ideological, philosophical or political nature having been excluded from this list"[17]; All these books have sold millions of copies; we see many narratives from many countries and many ages, all translated into tens of languages. From France, Russia, Japan, Germany, China, Norway, Portugal, South America, Sweden and more... with the oldest book on this list first published in 1754. These books stand up for the idea of a universal narrative which appeals to some aspect, constant in all humans.

5. THE MEDIUM, THE MESSAGE AND MCLUHEN

5.1 Extending man

Just as electricity needs a conductor for transmission so the story needs a medium though which it can travel to reach it's intended audience. Marshall McLuhen's ideas have engendered more discussion of mass media than any other theorist in the field. However, quoting him can be problematic, because there is a level of inconsistency and sometimes contradiction in his work. Although he seems to consider this a positive attribute, as he states in a 1966 interview with Eric Goldman:-

"If I wanted to avoid attack I would occupy one fixed position..."

To which Goldman notes, such a man "is sometimes called inconsistent"

which Marshall McLuhen counters claiming, such a man is "...exploring".

[18]

In his 1964 book "Understanding Media - The Extensions of Man" McLuhen observes that "we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media".[19] For McLuhan a medium is "any extension of ourselves",[19] so for example the radio or telephone is an extension of our ears; a book, our memory, television the extension of our eyes, clothes are an extension of our skin, transport the extension of our feet etc... All media somehow extends our reach and "any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex".[19] McLuhan states that all medium "amplifies or accelerates existing processes", and therefore introduces a "change of scale or pace or shape or pattern into human association, affairs, and action",[19] resulting in "psychic, and social consequences".[19] Secondly the "characteristic of all media, means that the 'content' of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. If it is asked, 'What is the content of speech?' It is necessary to say, 'It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal'."[20] ...And initially these thoughts are patterns of electrical firings in the brain, which real-time functional MRI scanners seemingly indicate are a constant across all cultures and languages.

5.2 Extending McLuhen

Probably the two most well known terms coined by Marshall McLuhen are the "global village", which was conceived before the advent of the World Wide Web, and "the medium is the message". In the first McLuhan explains that the globe has been contracted into a village by electric technology; "we have extended our central nervous system itself in a

global embrace".[21] He predicted that "The next medium, whatever it is - it may be the extension of consciousness - will include television as its content, not as it's environment, and will transform television into an art form".[22] The second idea is the title of the first chapter in "Understanding Media - The Extensions of Man". In the aforementioned interview with Eric Goldman when questioned:-

"The medium itself you say is the message, does this mean the content doesn't matter at all? Or that it matters much less than people think it matters?"

McLuhan responds that; "Yes, it matters much less than they imagine."[23]

In the book, using the term in it's broadest sense, he stresses the "personal and social consequences of any medium".[24] The example he uses is that of the electric light bulb: "The electric light is pure information. It is a medium without a message",[25] it facilitates human communication but "the electric light escapes attention as a communication medium just because it has no 'content'".[25] McLuhen stresses "the psychic and social consequences of the designs or patterns as they amplify or accelerate existing processes. For the "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs".[26]

5.3 Concluding Mcluhen

McLuhen's theories are pertinent to the examination of media and communications, and his ideas have created many useful tools with which to analyse this area. However, perhaps they swing to an extreme, in order to redress his perception of the imbalance of emphasis between the medium and the message. To prevent this work spilling beyond its intended scope, we will curtail our definitions to traditional limits; only considering media that carry narrative in its capacity to entertain and educate: Primarily exploring the effect that media has on the resonance of ideas. We shall view the carrier and the content as intrinsically and symbiotically linked and in this relationship equally important. Stories have kept us alive, instructing us how to plant crops or describing the effects of licking certain frogs, the means of communication has facilitated and affected these stories. Any communication is dependent upon its participants. People are an essential component in these interactions and the variations between individuals, (language, experience, culture etc.) affect this. As human society has developed so has its technology, with this we see the parallel progression of its communication from primitive gesture and oral traditions, to handcraft, to mechanical, to electrical, to digital. If we consider the primary goal of any interaction to create a resonance of understanding between the orator and their audience we observe that each medium has it's pros and cons.

6. BUILDING COMPLETE MEMORIES

In order to explicate and achieve ultimate comprehension in an audience, they will need to have participated in the experience - exactly as the author of the content had. This would impart a total empathy with the narrator's thoughts and feelings. But it would require an intimacy that confounds reality, and yet it should be what every unequivocal interaction aspires to achieve. There is no perfect transition; something will always be lost from the content as it is conducted through the medium and reinterpreted by the receiver.

Let us start with the most constant factors in the process: There is always a giver and a receiver and their wish to communicate is the raison d'être for the message and the medium. The human element is the least predictable aspect of any exchange. In essence all people are alike, whilst in detail all people are, to a greater or lesser degree, different. When interacting, we attempt to connect through our similarities whilst overcoming our discrepancies. The fundamental aspects of people are the same; our differences evolve through variations in our environments, parents, culture, experiences, language etc.. Shared attitudes and experiences bind us together in social groups, creating empathy and understanding: Individual attitudes and experiences serve to create feelings of isolation and estrangement. Our memories constitute the information upon which we construct our world view. Our primary urges are the engine that drives the gathering of our experience, and to these experiences we connect an emotional response.

We perceive the world through our senses; hearing, sight, smell, touch and taste. Our senses deliver raw content for our mind to interpret. An experience is holistic, it involves all of our senses to varying degrees and in the process of interpretation this stimulation becomes intrinsically linked to an emotional reaction. When physically interacting, the more stimuli involved, at higher levels, the stronger the impact of the experience. The act of sex potentially leaves a stronger impression on the memory than that of viewing a pornographic magazine, although both can involve all the senses. The difference being the majority of interaction with the latter is with the medium and not the act: The soft whispers as the glossy pages turn revealing the voluptuous figures spread across them, the delicate perfume of ink, the smooth paper skin, but perhaps licking the magazine is going too far! Repetition also affects the memory of the experience. No content can be fully expressed through all the senses by any media. Engaging in sex is five parts sensory data at maximum levels - viewing a pornographic magazine is one (static snapshot) part eye candy and four parts medium. Our memories and imagination are required to create and complete the missing sensations.

7. VERBAL COMMUNICATION

7.1 The Voice

The medium of words when spoken: The most significant difference between humans and other mammals is our ability to use language to communicate explicitly. With this development "language has allowed societies to remain cohesive, while reducing the need for physical and social intimacy".[27] The effect of which has allowed "productive, cooperative effort"[27] and the development towards our current world.

Words are verbal symbols that connect an abstract sound to a full range of sensory experiences, which correlate to a pattern of neuronal firing and -as we explored earlier- can be independent of language. Participation in understanding requires knowledge of both the word and, to varying degrees, the experience. Dialogue is usually complimented by facial expression and gesture, and occasionally touch. In richness of participation, this medium is the strongest. In an optimum exchange it can engage almost all the senses. So depending upon the situation, the spoken word can interact with, between one - for example talking through a high prison window with no sight, smell, touch or taste of the other participant - and four senses; as her words breathed across his skin, her fingers spoke of sensual intention, their scents entwined. If the final sense - taste, becomes involved the verbal dialogue stops ...and it would sound like he was speaking (as his mother would never have allowed him) at the dinner table, with a full mouth.

A huge range of information can be extrapolated from the voice alone. We can garner details about the speaker; their education, origins or class: We can discern how impassioned the speaker feels about the subject; Their attitude to ourselves; their sincerity, and a whole range of other meta data. This correlates to a theory in narrative psychology of how we assess truth by comparing the mass of accumulated narratives which we have experienced and trust, in order to assess the potential validity of new ones. If skilled, a speaker can engage in oratory tactics without alerting the listener to the mechanics of their use, with; repetition, pause, adjusting volume and injecting qualities of emotion, and using the voice in a way that resonates with the listener, they can create plausible and engaging narratives. Also they can adjust delivery according to the reaction of the listener. It is a totally interactive medium, it can change to fit any imagined possibility; it can change and move in any direction at any moment. It can laconically illumine a thought or pour torrents of words for as long as the listener can bear. The voice is only limited by the orator's ability and stamina.

7.2 Body Language

The voice is the primary means of transposing the narrative, but there are secondary modes delivering data though other senses. According to the eminent psychologist Paul Eckman "facial expressions could be reliably identified through empirical research." He also found that, "human beings are capable of making over 10,000 facial expressions; only 3,000 relevant to emotion".[28] The universality hypothesis of recognition and interpretation of facial expression has it's supporters and detractors, if you can understand the speech it is likely that you will be able to interpret the signs. As well as facial expression we have body language and gesture in our communication armoury:-

"The impact of gestures on language acquisition is significant, in that they create a bridge from pre-verbal communication to speech."[29]

It is intrinsically part of our communication skill set. This gives us a secondary source to compare and contrast with the voice, to monitor the validity or truth of a story. Reinforcing this touch can be used to underline certain emotions; like affection, anger, or sympathy. In general smell and taste are incidental, but in some circumstances can also become an integral aspect of verbal communication when demonstrating certain levels of affection.

The distance of communication is limited to the hearing and sight of the receiver and the power of the speaker's voice. There are optimums depending on the desired goals; generally, the closer - the fuller the sensory experience; the greater the distance the poorer the experience. The longevity of the communication is also limited and exists only as long as the memory of the words and ideas do; oral traditions developed mnemonics so that these ideas would be passed from generation to generation, but if a people died so did their memory.

8. UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

The linguist Noam Chomsky argues that "all humans share the same underlying linguistic structure, irrespective of socio-cultural difference".[30] Which is interesting when considered with the aforementioned discoveries made with brain scans in relationship to mind reading. A simile can be made here with smart phones: All essentially carry the same hardware, with some variation in processor speed or memory size etc., much like humans. Much of the low level programming is the same. The difference is the surface languages, again much like humans. Many "linguists believe that this 'universal grammar'[31] is innate and is embedded somewhere in the neuronal circuitry of the human brain".[32]

Language is a frequency that allows ideas to resonate between individuals, it is something that we constantly adjust, attempting to become more in tune with each other. Over time differences develop as we adapt to our immediate peers: When this happens we create a dialect that may be unintelligible to speakers, even within the same language set. For example, in the right generation and location, this English sentence quite clearly expresses part of a narrative; "'spruced up in me piccolo, I rabbetted to some geezer with an oily rag, about some Charlie I'd just clocked in the frog'", but to most other English speakers it's unintelligible. This is the greatest limit of the spoken word; people who share a dialect communicate efficiently, those who don't struggle increasingly to understand the further it diverges.

9. HAND WRITTEN WORDS

The hand crafted mediums - "The content of writing is speech"[33]: Different languages attempt to set down and record ideas, communicated through the spoken word, in different ways: From Western alphabets to Eastern character forms to Egyptian hieroglyphics. However, as we previously explored, the vocal delivery of the narrative is more than just words; and the hand crafted medium is more than just symbols representing words. Access to books was limited, mainly to churches or universities, but these manuscripts brought a new commodity into the marketplace, one which changed the "psychic, and social consequences"[33]:-

> "Manuscript culture in the cities created jobs built around the making and trade of manuscripts, and typically was regulated by universities. Late manuscript culture was characterized by a desire for uniformity, well-ordered and convenient access to the text contained in the manuscript, and ease of reading aloud".[34]

Books held pictures, diagrams, and letter forms (each form in itself can carry levels of visual expression). From which arise three variations; that of pure words, from writing tables through scrolls to the codex; words accompanied by diagrams, the illustrated manuscript or codex; and pure image, from the Bayeux Tapestry to William Hogarth and beyond. Words and images make connections with us in different ways. The written word is a visual symbol representing an audio symbol representing the experience or concept. (The more experience you have of reading the closer it gets to supplanting the spoken word and communicating without intermediary). It provides much of the effect of the audio, but without the range of expression the voice contains. Pictures and indeed sculptures carry information without the need for the mind to interpret implicit learned symbols. However this is not necessarily an advantage. Rene Magritte's "Ceci n'est pas une pipe",[35] deals with the treachery of image and its attempt to usurp experience. There is no substitute for real life and real life provides a full range of sensory inputs: Words attempt to remind us, but pictures try to replace it with shadows. An actual pipe provides a full range of sensory experience and associated memory and feeling. An image removes the need to remember and provides an archetype placeholder that becomes our experience of a pipe, (unless we've already had prior contact). This can be useful, but in excess, tragic: If you see a night-time image of a homeless man curled on a bench, your emotional response will differ depending on; whether you have ever had the misfortune of spending a night barely able to sleep, because of the shivering cold with no where else to go; or whether you have just seen a picture of it. In both instances you recognise the position, but the former allows you to

empathise with the figure, giving you a deeper understanding of his immediate situation. The latter is just the picture of a man on a bench at night. The more abstracted or diagrammatic an image the more your imagination is required to complete the details, the more realistic it is the less you're required to invest.

Both the handcrafted word and illustration stimulate only one sensory input. All other senses, if in use, are engaged with the medium itself. Curiously, although it is possible to generate a whole range of secondary information or emotion through the gesture of calligraphy, the primary concern of scribes was legibility. This emphasis biased the writing to a very uniform style. Human craftsmanship means that, with every tiny variation, a unique item is created; it also means that it is a very labour intensive and time consuming process. The main advantage of this medium is that it makes a verifiable and permanent memory of the narrative. It adds a robust quality to the content making it portable through both time and space, exactly as it was first created (save for a little wear and tear). As with the spoken language any one who is able to decode the symbols has access to the ideas. Also because of its reviewable physical nature, it's easier to reproduce or to translate, with precision, than speech. Also, like spoken language, understanding the text becomes harder the further you move away from it in terms of dialect or time (because language is not static, unlike spelling). The only restrictions on the range of a book is how far you are able to carry it. Although you are able to move back and forth at your own pace it is not an interactive medium. Another big advantage of a manuscript is the quantity of information you are able to store; with even a small library you are able to have more information that would comfortably fit, ready for verbatim recall, in the mind.

10. CONVENIENCE OVER QUALITY

Not all innovation is improvement, but if it is not better then why change? The pattern generally followed is that of convenience over quality. An obvious example of this is music, which also parallels the development of the history of the medium and the message. The highest quality is live, and this engages all the senses with perhaps the exception of smell. This is a full experience; but it is impractical, for example, to bring an orchestra into your dinning room for some light music whilst eating. The next innovation (after a short development period) was the vinyl record; and with a good stereo system the analogue sound is pretty good, and will stimulate both audio and (with enough volume) touch. It is location bound, but it is more practical than live music, it also has benefits in terms of ease of access to variety. The next innovation welcomed increased portability, but again sound quality was sacrificed. Cassettes were smaller and more robust than vinyl, and with the advent of the Ghetto blaster and Walkman, infinitely more portable. However there are practical limitations to the size of speakers, and amplifiers etc. and the sound quality once again suffered. The other issue was poor battery technology, which meant that portability came at a price. Then came digital and the CD which in a blizzard of promotion was hailed as the new benchmark in quality, durability and convenience. Unfortunately this fell short of the reality and once again quality dropped. Which brings us to where we stand today with mp3 players. Once again the benefits are remarkable I can carry a lifetime of music on a low power consumption, pocket sized device, and once again this achievement has been made at the expense of listening quality. Any portable music device is a single sense experience, but now you can add a sound track to your life; which arguably adds a richness to it - if you can avoid being hit by public transport that you failed to hear whilst stepping into the road! This correlation of 'convenience over quality' is evident in much of modern life from food to furniture.

11. IN PRINT

Mediums from the age of mechanisation: Words and images are the content of print. It transfers narrative in a purely visual manner. The mechanisation of the process increased standardisation, so the medium lost much of its idiosyncratic appeal. Although the smell of a new book still transports people to past places. Of all the mediums it is the most tactile and despite all the modern advancements the BBC news technology web page, on the 1st May 2013, observed that "the sales of physical books have fallen just 1%"[36] in the last year, but in "some genres, notably children's books, sales actually rose".[36] The mass production of media, as with every change before it, revolutionised the "pattern of human association, affairs, and action",[37] resulting again in "psychic, and social consequences".[37] Printed books have allowed a dissemination and democratisation of knowledge. They have also created a vast publishing industry and populated it with dedicated enthusiasts. With the advent of the printing press formats and genres exploded; brochures, novels, mysteries, poems, fairy tales, comics, novellas, flyers, manuals, magazines, etc.. It took the hand crafted manuscript and expanded it in every direction. Ironically, whilst the hand crafted work grew increasingly towards conformity the mass produced unit (- in order to distinguish itself), moves towards diversity, variety and novelty: There are thousands of typefaces to choose from, huge differences in layouts, designs, and formats. Again three main variations arise; that of pure text, pure image and every level of combination between. Newer formats have established themselves, and artworks have become mass produced. Please refer to the visual essay in the appendix in order to compare and contrast the treatment of speech meta data in the traditional manuscript and the recently renamed hybrid – the graphic novel. As we can see, in every way, the text in the bubble is superior. We don't need to attribute ownership; we don't need to ascribe emotion or volume. We can include icons and symbols without needing to make reference to another source. Whether it is thought or speech is explicitly indicated. All this information is transported whilst delivering the dialogue without the need for the text metadata - 'said John with a furious volume'.

In Japan, where the written language is traditionally composed of characters not letters, comic books are a staple part of any literary diet for all generations and genders. Their comics industry is known for its variety and innovation and every aspect of the comic is used optimally to present the narrative, from the text, speech bubbles, page layout, to their expressive often abstracted line work. Despite all this potential, in the west, once again we have chosen convenience (and time/cost saving) over quality, and flicking through most comics reveals little visual experimentation, especially from corporations like Marvel or DC. The distinction is between art

and commercial diagrams; the artistic attempts to evoke the narrative whilst the diagrammatic tries to trap the explanation in visual representation. An idea that we explored earlier with 'the treachery of image and its attempt to usurp experience'. Both words and expressive gesture try to connect directly or resonate with the experience in the audience's mind; whilst diagrammatic images try to explain, which 'provides an archetype placeholder that often becomes the experience'. Not many people have experienced a real explosion and yet feel that they know exactly what one is from the constant pyrotechnic visual/audio bombardment in action films. The real thing is far more unpredictable, intense and frightening. In the aftermath there is a great deal of air pollution that pours into your mouth and nose, stinging your eyes; the deafening sound leaves a ringing silence, and a stumbling confusion and shock. Not forgetting the potentially fatal effects of shrapnel.

Film offers a sanitised version; sensational, safe and incomplete. Depositing Fiat experience in your narrative bank account is potentially harmful to the whole economy. Investing in true experience gives a robust and reliable result, worth its weight in gold.

12. A, THE, PLATO AND THOUGHT

12.1 Articles

In understanding articles, 'a/an' and 'the', we gain important insight into two types of mediums. One that uses symbols or abstraction to trigger the memory of an event, the other provides a concrete example and demonstrates the content. ('A' or 'an' is an old Anglo Saxon word meaning 'one'. We can see this has Germanic roots if we look at modern German today: ein, zwei, drei – one, two, three/ ein messer – a knife). 'The' can be both singular and plural; the difference between 'a'/'an' and 'the' is that 'the' identifies a specific or known quantity while 'a'/'an' indicates an ideal.

12.2 The Cave

A parallel for this exists in the allegory of Plato's cave where he "describes a gathering of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all of their lives, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of a fire behind them, and begin to designate names to these shadows. The shadows are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality. He then explains how the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall do not make up reality at all, as he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners".[38] 'The' is the shadow whilst 'a'/'an' is the true reality. This is particularly apt when looking at cinema - the moving shadows on the wall.

12.3 The Wellspring

The initial content begins in the mind, and from this point we can observe three parallel progressions. Thought is the content of speech which is the content of the written word then to the printed word and on to analogue recording: Thought is the content of music to the written notation to the printed notation to the analogue recording: Thought is the content of gesture then to art to the printed art to the analogue recording (film). Not everything fits comfortably into this definition of the progression through these mediums - sculpture for example. There are also some overlaps; moving images and sound (spoken words, music and effects) quickly became partnered. From this point we move into the transmitted medium of television and radio.

13. IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT

When a new medium is born it relies heavily on the previous content carrier for guidance. 'Nosferatu' is still a dramatic and effective film, despite the primitive filming technology of the time, because it plays with implied meaning. It doesn't show you every explicit detail, but provides just enough of it to establish the scene in the viewers mind. It strikes a balance between the implicit and explicit which leaves space for the emotion and imagination, thus involving the audience in the process. Much like the idle joy of finding images in the clouds. This older style of film is much more akin to theatre than films produced for modern cravings. Also it is not in complete contrast with the printed word: Instead of learned abstract symbols evoking a complete memory of an experience and feelings bound up with them, it uses shadows and lighting. These exist in the mind of the reader, and require an exercising of imagination to conjure meaning.

The masterful opening in the novel 'Brideshead Revisited' by Evelyn Waugh describes the few essential details of "the camp, just coming into full view below me through the grey mist of early morning";[39] that provides just enough detail to build the complete scene in the reader's mind. These mediums, the written word, theatre, early movies, all require a suspension of disbelief; to be lead by the suggestion of the author, using imagination to complete the empty spaces. Modern film, with the aid of more advanced technologies, has developed its own visual language quite divorced from their predecessors. If contemporary films reflect current appetites, then we hunger for hyper-realism; so complete and intense a visual and audio experience as to immerse us in a different reality. This can be very powerful as a CNN article notes:-

> "James Cameron's completely immersive spectacle "Avatar" may have been
> a little too real for some fans who say they have experienced depression and
> suicidal thoughts after seeing the film because they long to enjoy the beauty
> of the alien world Pandora".[40]

It establishes a different way of interacting with film, moving closer to virtual reality. With film it is easy to be seduced by a continuous stream of explicit imagery that is a projection of reality, but not reality itself. By increasing the sensory bombardment of sound and image we become so engaged in the medium that there is little space or need for our other senses. These mainstream films (and as indicated by the vast revenues generated, most popular in the genre) have several potential flaws: Firstly too much exposure eventually leads to a numbness of experience. As Shakespeare so aptly wrote; "give me excess of it, that surfeiting, the appetite

my sicken and so die"[41] Where do you go when you run out of superlatives? Secondly the balance of the focus swings towards the visual experience and not the intellectual content. It becomes a very beautiful, but relatively empty, container; which is ultimately unsatisfying and becomes increasingly dated with every new wave of effects. As with most things the human mind tunes out constant sensory bombardment and its attention is drawn to change. With images, it can be argued, it is important to curb a tendency to become too obvious or explicit. There is nothing that kills understanding or empathy as quickly as indifference or apathy created by talking 'at' people and not 'to' them. If you provide complete description and explanation then there is no role left for the audience, it makes him unnecessary. Unless the world you create is so complete that the audience resides there allowing their imagination to explore it. However this is a different experience with the artist as creator, on the level of a god and the audience subjugate themselves to his vision. Yes but... and so the debate circles with each advocate stressing the pros of their favorite container or format and the cons of the other.

14. FILM IS KING

For whatever reasons film is currently the ultimate medium, content from other media is constantly translated into this format, more so than film into other media; it includes everything, from theatre, to novels, to comics, to radio plays, although some more effectively than others.

Although currently the most popular format, it is not necessarily the best for every aspect of narrative story telling. Each format has its strengths and weaknesses, and as a medium develops its content creators explore and established its boundaries. There are many aspects to consider: How many senses it engages? How portable it is? How much control the receiver has? How interactive it is? How exclusive or inclusive it is? How robust or reliable it is? And how does it deliver the content, explicitly or implicitly? Most media presents narrative through a single sense, modern film uses two; impressive, but as mentioned earlier, dialogue typically engages at least three. The portability of a narrative has increased through technological advancements, but any physical manifestation requires transportation. Traditionally, of all media, books were the most portable, cinema probably the least. Although with the advent of computers all mediums are becoming transposed into the hand held realm of the digital format. A format that also gives a greater control over other mediums allowing you to move at your own pace, skip back and forth and even edit and alter the medium and it's narrative.

Dialogue is a very flexible and fluid medium, printed materials less so -but there is still the option of reading at your own pace and skipping or skimming the narrative as you wish, where as recorded media like film or radio move at a fixed pace over a period from beginning to end. Dialogue is a highly interactive medium limited only by the skills and imagination of those taking part. There have been attempts to build interactivity into other medium, like the "fighting fantasy" book series, but practical considerations necessitate restrictions of choice and the success is limited. Again confounding the traditional boundaries of media by containing the content (to a lesser or greater degree) of all other mediums, digital technology is redefining possibilities; pushing the limits by creating vast and complex virtual worlds, mixing real-time dialogue with highly detailed interactive environments and complex interwoven story-lines into social events like M.M.O.R.P.G.s (Massively multi player online role-playing games).

Not surprisingly "the United Nations has ruled that Internet access is a basic human right that should be guaranteed and protected by states." In the UK there are free wireless points in almost every town and devices to connect to this are cheaper and more powerful year by year. The internet has democratised all content in every media, far more effectively than the library

system in the pre-digital age. Access to other media in the past has often been curtailed by cost and restricted by 'academic and media gatekeepers', making it exclusive and not inclusive. One striking weakness about all these advancements is that the more the medium has been created by technology the more reliant it is on it. Dialogue, gesture, song are as robust as the participants, but digital media uses relatively fragile devices that rely on electricity. Books, even paperback, are more robust and reliable than modern electrical or digital devices. There are no moving part and no reliance on an external power source, save natural light.

Finally the main and most significant difference between media is whether they carry implicit or explicit media, whether it describes an event or demonstrates it. Symbols, like words or speech, represent and conjure; moving image or sound mimic and demonstrate. Some media can do both and obviously, all inclusive, so can digital.

THE ANALYTICAL PART

15. PROBLEMS WITH POEMS

15.1 Language Translations

Does the content take the shape of the container like water in a bottle? Or is the relationship more complex than this simple metaphor? Different media have different characteristics; different genres and styles of narrative have different features and emphasis.

Within the category of the written word, ideas mantel a variety of formats; none possibly more tricky than poetry in terms of transposition, even within the medium of writing - between languages. In terms of the individual word, can it be translated without loss of meaning? The German word 'echt' in English means 'really', but common and general usage of the word differs between the two languages. The English are much more likely to use it sarcastically, the Germans more likely to use it to indicate surprise. Can you translate collocations like the German "tote Hose"? Literally it means 'dead trousers', but to the speaker it expresses something like "nothing going on" or "off-time", something that is lacking in energy. You can either translate the intended meaning or the actual word symbol meaning, but not both. How can a concept like hypothermia be communicated to a tropical culture that has no experience of the phenomena let alone a word for it? Scale this up from individual words or collocations to complete poems and the complexity of the task is immediately apparent.

The problems inherent is translating a poem that describe an idea or action in a series of simple statements is surmountable. For example:-

Я вас любил/I loved you

by Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkins

Я вас любил: любовь еще, быть может,

В душе моей угасла не совсем;

Но пусть она вас больше не тревожит;

Я не хочу печалить вас ничем.

Я вас любил безмолвно, безнадежно,

То робостью, то ревностью томим;

Я вас любил так искренно, так нежно,

Как дай вам бог любимой быть другим.

Although arguably much of the beauty of the original is lost in translation even Google translate produces a reasonable facsimile. A search of the internet reveals dozens of different versions of the same poem, so which one captures most closely the essence of the original? None of them will be as the original, something is always lost in translation.

Я вас любил/I loved you

Translated by Walter Arndt

I loved you – and my love, I think, was stronger

Than to be quite extinct within me yet;

But let it not distress you any longer;

I would not have you feel the least regret.

I loved you bare of hope and of expression,

By turns with jealousy and shyness sore;

I loved you with such purity, such passion

As may God grant you to be loved once more.

Я вас любил/I loved you

translated by Google translate

I loved you more, perhaps,

In my heart is not extinguished;

But now you're not worried;

I do not want to sadden you.

I loved you silently, hopelessly,

Shyness, jealousy was stressed;

I loved you so sincerely, so tenderly,

As God grant you to be loved.

15.2 Translations issues

The first issue is with the concepts the words represent; no two people will have exactly the same understanding and emotional response. The second comes with the development of languages, which grows to accommodate usage: The discrepancies in environment, technology or society will be reflected, even within the different dialects, of the same language. Some poems play specifically with the language container itself, punning on the double meaning of words or playing with grammar that simply don't exist in the language of intended translation. For example translating the following from English to Czech would cause difficulties, not least because the Czech language doesn't use determiners like 'a':-

Amen by John Hegley

Surely it should be A man or some men.

Or some women. Eh men?

A process further complicated by the poetical form of concrete poetry (elucidated in "the concrete poem" by Noel Petty).

15.3 Transposition issues

Now try to imagine the complications of transposing a poem into another media entirely. Often a work is accompanied by illustrations, but these accompany the text adding emphasis, their purpose is to illumine not to replace the words. There is debate as to whether a poem can be translated from one language to another and still keep its essence and beauty. Although poems have been transposed they create a very different experience when in another medium. One challenge that translators from many languages seemingly enjoy is attempting to translate 'the Jabberwocky'[42] by Lewis Carol. In 1977 Terry Gilliam moved this poem from the written word into a Movie format. Part of the poems appeal is the manner in which it plays with the formation of words. As Humpty Dumpty explains in the book Alice through the looking glass: "'Well, 'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy,' 'Lithe' is the same as 'active.' You see it's like a portmanteau--there are two meanings packed up into one word'".[43] For many the joy of the poem is the manner in which it plays the language, its story is short and simple, after the warning "Beware the Jabberwock, my son!"[44] the son takes "his vorpal sword in hand",[44] he travels to find and slay the creature and with "its head, he went galumphing back".[44] In the film "A young peasant, with no interest in adventure or fortune, is mistaken as the kingdom's only hope when a horrible monster threatens the countryside".[45] Although the film found some level of a cult following it failed to garner critical praise, scoring only a 6.2 rotten tomato status. Forged in the restrictive expectations of commercial film, it is a loose interpretation on the poem. It takes key narrative elements and blends them with a more traditional formula: Much like taking a glass of fantasy action adventure and adding some Jabberwocky cordial.

Film needs to follow a set grammar in order to communicate its ideas to an audience, poetry follows different rules. Regardless of what the merits of each are, they are different. Film is also expensive so there are commercial considerations that can hobble artistic experimentation in film. Poetry is relatively cheap and is free to do as it will. Poetry relies on the experience of the reader, and this particular example plays with the expectations of the form and usage of words. Movies work through explicit demonstration that doesn't require the same level of previous experience. The biggest criticism leveled at film adaptations is the dictatorial role it takes with imagination, diametrically opposite to text, in that it imposes an others interpretation and vision. In poetry the words combine with the audience to create a subtly unique image of events, personally fitting to each individual's experience. To surrender to the experience of film you need to suspend your disbelief, which effectively powerfully replaces your imagination. Few people carry two versions of the same memory, one is redundant and so the weaker fades.

The Jabberwocky

Lewis Carroll - Alice through the looking glass

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!

The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!

Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun

The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:

Long time the manxome foe he sought--

So rested he by the Tumtum tree,

And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,

The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,

Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,

And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through

The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!

He left it dead, and with its head

He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?

Come to my arm, my beamish boy!

O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"

He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe

16. PROBING FILM

16.1 Hybrid Vigour

Most mediums either communicate using symbols with implicit meaning (spoken or written words etc.) or using explicit demonstration. Some media use both. Words and images are juxtaposed in comic books, where both implicit and explicit narrative can be combined. The same can be noted in film where speech (and occasionally a limited use of text) are blended with moving image and sound effects. As Alan Moore notes:-

"Whenever anybody talks about comics, they usually make a great deal of the similarities between comic and film."[46]

Of both hybrids much can be made through experimentation and play between the implicit and explicit. For example; with comics

"A tremendous amount of information, can be, included visually in every panel" explicitly and implicitly; also much can be made of "the juxtaposition between what a character is saying and what the image that the reader is looking at"[46]

Or with film; visual magical realism can be grounded with mundane dialogues adding a plausibility to the fantasy; or background music can heighten the drama of a visual sequence. This exponentially increases possibilities for expressing narrative, more so in film because it also has the option of communicating with both sight and sound. However "if we only see comics in relationship to movies then the best they will ever be are films that do not move".[46]

Each has aspects that they excel in and limitations that restrict them. Meanwhile single serving, more traditional, formats (like literature or painting) seemingly still garner greater kudos from academia and 'educated' society. In contrast, the mongrel constitution of film and comics engenders a level of disdain for both mediums. We observe a parallel attitude in the discerning lady or gentleman's preference for the pure over the blended in everything from whiskeys to pedigree dogs. With comics this lowly status is further compounded by the view that it is a transitional media; much as gesture is in language acquisition or illustrations are for reading and writing. Thus it is often considered a sign of immaturity, lower intellect or lack of refinement, especially by an older generation where comics strips where relegated to an obscure

section of the Sunday papers. Amongst comic fans there is much speculation as to how, such a creative and expressive media, continues to be viewed with such low regard. Especially because in other countries, notably Japan, it is accredited equal footing with literature. (Despite common prejudices comics in Japan (Manga) is more than just "tits and tentacles"[47] and "Japan has a very high literacy rate, far ahead of America"[48]).

Another interesting development is that in the west, contrary to comics, film has moved from a sideshow novelty to a respectable industry. A promotion that could be partly due to the vast financial rewards that this medium can reap. Films are increasingly revered, much as literature, with superlatives like 'classic' and a veritable army of critics.

16.2 Comics to Film

As observed in translating poetry; the more independent of the media the content the more readily and successfully it can be transposed from one media to another. Conversely the more integral the media is bound up with the content the more difficult the translation. A poem that is a series of logical statements can exist regardless of the container. Whereas when meaning and form are integrated and dependent, it's obviously harder to extrapolate one from the other. Graphic novels which have the larger part of their narrative based on action (a demonstration of explicit content) transpose well into film. There is much evidence for this over the last few years with the slew of comic to film adaptations: Everything from 'Ghost World' to 'Scott Pilgrim' to 'Sin City' to 'X-men'. It takes little effort to list over 50 such live action film adaptations,[49] (and if you include adaptations into animations this number rockets into the 1000's).

Currently the most prominent genre to be adapted is the 'super hero' format. Almost every comic in this genre is a narrative variation on the same theme: One value set defeating another, good triumphs over bad; symbolized by the struggle of the hero (who embodies the accepted righteous social values) against the villain (his antitheses): Superman champions truth, justice and the American way; Batman preys on criminals; Spiderman protects the innocent from harm; Captain America is a living legend and embodiment of freedom; Wonder Woman came to America to fight for peace, justice and truth; all defending their value set against the usually selfish power-hungry anti-American gangsters and villains. These simple themes transpose well into all formats, and we see that they have been adapted to everything from radio to the novel to movies to video games. Originally the characters where more symbolic and as such rather one dimensional: There has been much effort fleshing out these bare bones with back stories that build the character and help to justify their actions.

16.3 Who watched the Watchmen

The Watchmen is a superhero comic written by Alan Moore in the 1980's. Amongst much critical acclaim it also was recognized on 'Time's list of the 100 best novels'[50] as one of the best English language novels published since 1923. The film companion 'Watchmen', published in 2009 by Titan books, dramatically announces on the flyleaf that: "It is the most eagerly awaited comics-to-film adaptation of them all. The graphic novel that changed the industry is finally a film." Page 119 of this guide is entitled "Filming the unfilmable". As Alan Moore comments "I'd found it, in the mid-80s, preferable to try and concentrate upon those things that only comics could achieve".[51] Thus "I suppose that you could say that most of my work from the 80's onward was designed to be unfilmable".[51]

Evidently it was turned into a film, but it is unlikely to be ranked in a top 100 list of greatest films. The originally proposed film was to be directed by Terry Gilliam who declined it saying: "Reducing [the story] to a two or two-and-a-half hour film [...] seemed to me to take away the essence of what Watchmen is about".[52] Alan Moore told Entertainment Weekly in 2008, "There are things that we did with Watchmen that could only work in a comic, and were indeed designed to show off things that other media can't".[53] So what exactly makes the transposition of this super hero comic into film so problematic? The most fundamental issue to resolve is not the look (the film faithfully reproduces the visual appearance of both characters and backgrounds), but the form; the comic uses a nonlinear narrative structure, the story skips through space, time and plot. "The world that was presented doesn't really hang together in terms of lineal cause and effect"[54], something that most movies rely heavily upon. "But was instead seen as some massively complex simultaneous event with connections made of coincidence and synchronicity".[54]

In addition to presenting a narrative (that is structurally impossible to carbon copy across), the comic also featured supplementary fictional documents to add back-story to the series. Text is a very information rich source that requires a surprising amount of time to unravel into film. With the average film length (in 2000 according, to the mdb-film-length-project, is about 128 minutes) restricting the amount of information a it can hold. Much like trying to pour a litre into a pint glass. As Terry Gilliam commented about the Watchmen "Reducing [...]takes away the essence"[52]. Transposing it from its native format to another media resulted in a recognisably Watchmen flavoured film, but unlike most super hero comics-to-film (possibly because there isn't any), much of the depth and complexity has been lost.

16.4 Time in my Head

Book to film translation highlights another issue; directly transposing, implicit to explicit, text to image or voice rarely produces a satisfactory/faithful reflection. Not only because of the quantity of information, although this is intrinsically part of the problem. If we take the well known trilogy 'Lord Of The Rings' we can compare cinematic release running time of 557 minutes (or the extended box set film running time of 681 minutes)[55] with (at the average reading speed of 300 wpm[56] at a word count of 473k[57]it would take approximately) 1576.7 minutes to read the books: So about 26 and a half hours compared to 9 and a half hours (or 11 and a half hours in the extended version). Just in terms of time interacting with the narrative the text requires longer contact. Inevitably this means "while the films follow the book's general storyline, they do omit some of the novel's plot elements and include some additions to and deviations from the source material".[58] This is not an attempt at establishing a value judgement that one medium is better than the other, rather that we interact to different media differently. It naturally follows that a narrative requires adjustment when transposed. With the novel we need to personally construct the story in our minds, based on our experience. With the film we are immersed in an interpretation, often restricted by the limits of technology or location or budget. A common complaint of novel-to-film adaptations, from those who have first read the text, is that characters, places, scenes, are not as they imagined them. Everyone has a subtly different and personal imagination and viewpoint; why should we accept the direction and vision of one creative dictator? This is not the case with comics-to-film which provides such visual information, creating an irrefutable consensus of opinion. The 'Watchmen' is painstakingly faithful to the original.

16.5 The Cost of it all.

One last factor that should not be ignored is the financial cost of different media. Compared to all other media, films are expensive -making them big business- for although they cost more to produce the rewards are potentially astronomical. The highest-grossing franchises and film series has Harry Potter at the top of the list with an obscene worldwide box office total of $7,723,431,572.[59] Much higher than the GDP of many of the worlds poorest countries. [60] The first film in this series at $66.1 million earned over three times that of the book it was adapted from. However in order to reap such benefits investment is required; currently "'Avatar' is the most expensive film ever made with speculation that it cost $280 million".[61] This type of sum will naturally lead to a certain caution as speculators desire returns not

losses on their investments. This concern will guide the creative process down tried and tested paths rather than into the unknown. The majority of films narratives are shaped by formulas that have been demonstrated to be successful; most follow the same plot structure -which fits into an average time of around 128 minutes. All the listed top twenty most financially successful franchises and film series follow these basic criteria. When we go to a film we often choose it by genre; romance, action, adventure, documentary, etc... people expect these formulas to deliver a certain content, and as McLuhen observed, the content "matters much less than they imagine". [62] On the other hand, with much less at stake in other media authors have greater freedom to explore. This can lead experimentation and a diversity of forms, lengths, styles etc. not being pursued if financial constraints were looming like a threatening storm of retribution if we fail.

SUMMARY

We have covered a disparaging range of ideas, all relevant, from the human mind and narrative psychology to the mediums that carry our thoughts via our 5 senses. In essence, information (narrative) is transmitted from one human source via a medium to another. From conception and as we grow we take in data. Our raison d'être is survival, our senses warn us of dangers, narratives grow: Hunger is unpleasant, food satisfies etc... The combination of a sensory input and an emotional response to it, creates a unit of narrative. Whilst emotional reactions differ amongst humans the location of sensory stimulation is apparently universal. We all, to a lesser or greater degree, have the same hardware.

If current theories prove true then narrative is the fundamental unit of memory and thought; what Dawkins would call a meme. (In fact eminent people in different fields seem to be approaching this idea from various angles; a disparity in labeling and a tendency towards specialisation in academia initially obscure huge overlaps. Unfortunately there is not space to explore this further here). Contrary to Darwin's theory of evolution which is explicitly competitive, Axelrod and Robert put forward the idea, in 'The Evolution of Cooperation',[63] as to "how Darwinian natural selection can lead to complex behavior, including notions of morality, fairness, and justice. It is shown that the nature of self-interest is more profound than previously considered, and that behavior that seems altruistic may, in a broader view, be individually beneficial".[63] When we communicate we share information. As our ability to communicate has evolved and expanded, so has our ability to organise and develop our societies. We are now entering the "global village". As McLuhen stresses "the "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs." The spoken word being our first significant development, had huge "psychic and social consequences" for without language, as Dunbar speculates, cooperative effort would be nearly impossible.

What we communicate is as important as is how we communicate it. Each medium has it's strengths and weaknesses and moving narrative between different media will affect the resulting message. The key factor that influences the success of any communication is the audience's expectation and experience. When moving a narrative from one medium to another the two essential considerations are the message's dependency on the original medium and whether the original medium carries the message in an implicit or explicit form. Each narrative will have it's optimum format, and some are more adaptable than others.

There are several significant factors that should be considered when transposing a story:

From birth we have built a world view from experience which amounts to thousands of small narratives. A narrative is stronger if experienced rather than explained or demonstrated: Sometimes summarised "learning by doing"; being in an explosion is very different from watching one in a movie. The more senses involved in an act the fuller and truer the experience. Communication aims to resonate or build upon ideas that already exist in an audience. You cannot transmit something that is not understood, you must translate it into terms that your audience already knows.

As demonstrated in the poetry examples; the more a narrative is dependant on a language or medium the more problematic it is translate or to transpose to another. Moving from an implicit to an explicit media is also inherently problematic, although to travel in the other direction is less so. A novel must be skillfully interpreted into film if it is to transfer the subtleties of the original, and it will only ever be a strongly flavoured version. To take the same novel and make it an audio book, from written symbols to spoken symbols, is straightforward and the sound of the voice adds to the experience. Also the more you include explicit sound effects the more immediate it becomes; but the harder transpose back into the written word. As mentioned earlier in the document a different example on this same theme can be viewed in the appendix with "Speech: comic vs novel".

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion we should shy away from claiming one medium's superiority over another. Unthinking prejudice seems to spread like infectious repetitious; books are for the intellectually superior (poetry more so), comics are for the intellectually inferior, films are for the masses and appeal to the lowest common denominator, spoken word on the radio is for the thinking man. The variety created by the number of media should be enjoyed for the diversity it brings. If a narrative is captured in it's ideal medium why move it? If it is better suited in another why not move it? Transposing narratives from novels into a more popular format like film may guarantee a wider public consumption, but something is usually lost in translation. The same process for a superhero comic may actually improve the experience ...or it might not. The myriad of factors involved, including personal taste, require that we approach the transposition of narratives between mediums thoughtfully and without prejudice, striving to find the most effective and suitable way of communicating the narrative from one to another.

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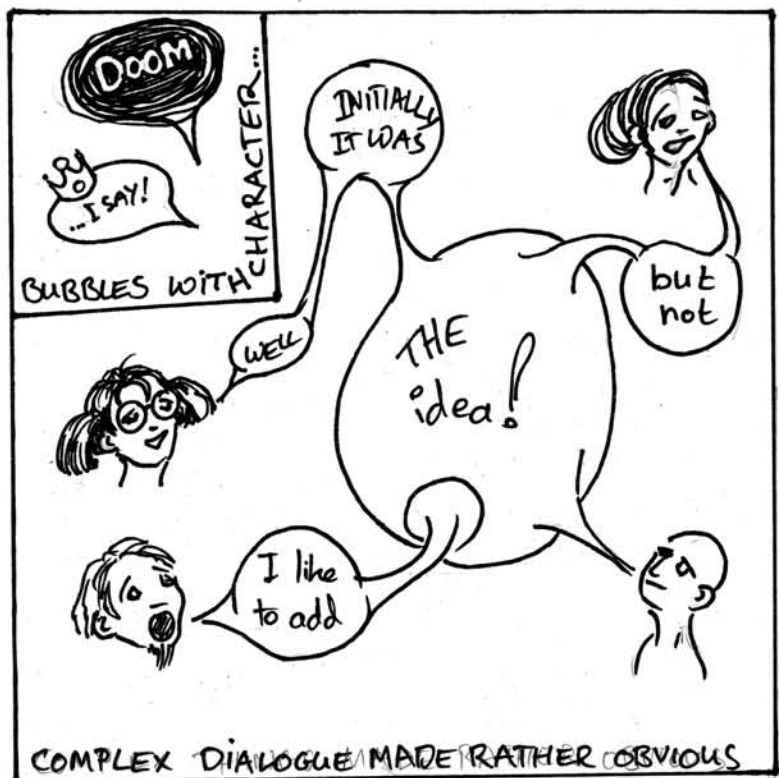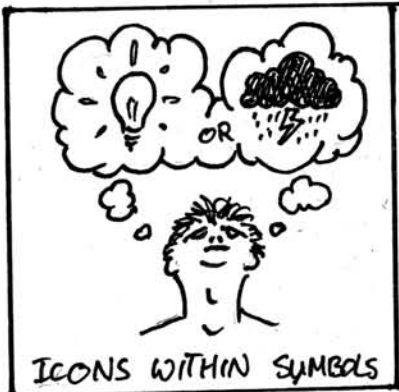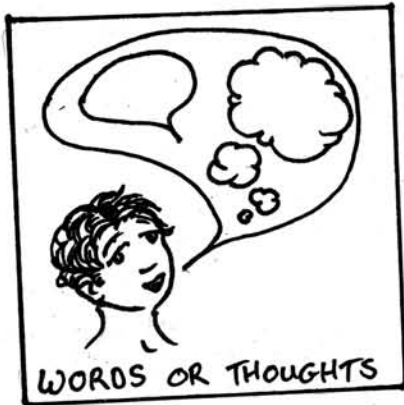# THE APPENDIX

SPEECH

NOVEL VS COMIC

1. THIS IS NOT AN EXPLANATION OF COMIC BOOK MECHANICS...

OH YES
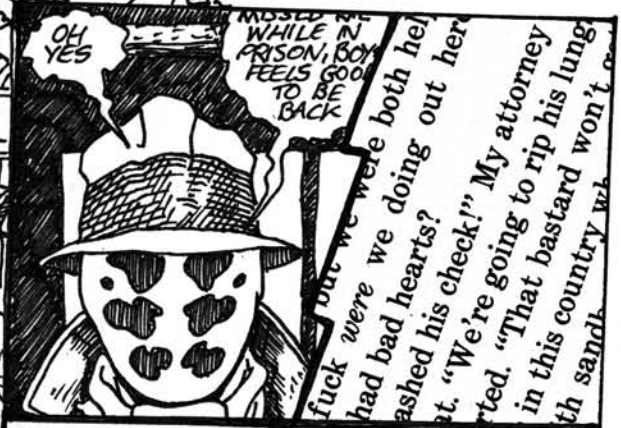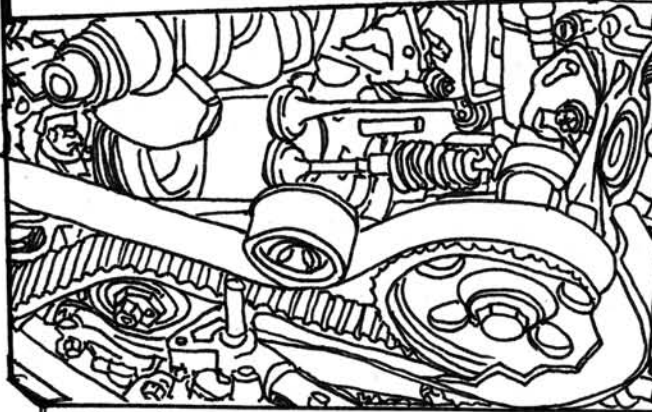
2. IT IS A COMPARISON OF SPEECH IN NOVEL & COMIC.

3. IN NOVELS " " SPEECH MARKS DENOTE AREAS OF THOUGHT OR SPEECH AND META-DATA TAGS INDICATE OWNERSHIP AND MANNER...

4. THIS IS THE NARRATORS BOX. IN COMICS THERE ARE FOUR TYPES OF CONTAINER...

Thought balloon

SPEECH BALLOON

Label → Label

CHA CHA CHA

SYMBOLS AND ICONS ARE MORE RAPIDLY PROCESSED THAN WORDS: HENCE THEIR USE IN ROAD SIGNAGE SYMBOLS CROSS CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC BARRIERS: HENCE

WORDS OR THOUGHTS

LOUD OR QUIET

AND CHANGING TONE

ICONS WITHIN SYMBOLS

BUBBLES SPEAK VOLUMES

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

WHO SAID WHAT

BUBBLES WITH CHARACTER...

COMPLEX DIALOGUE MADE RATHER OBVIOUS

OR SPOKEN TOGETHER

IN DARKNESS

IN RAIN

IN SNOW

Speech: Comics vs Novel

So symbols transcend language.
So symbols are more rapidly
processed and understood. "You
don't need speech marks and
meta data," said John quietly. "In
comics." Comics present speech
thought, narrative and labels in
a context that doesn't need an
explanation. Comics do volume,
tone, emotion, use symbols, show
ownership and sharing and, a,
just amazing and better...
...except it took ¼ of a page and
10 minutes to write this, and **6**
hours and two pages for the previous.

10 MINS. TO WRITE THIS
AND

6 HOURS TO DRAW THE OTHER

COMICS ARE GREAT BUT DO I REALLY HAVE
THAT MUCH FREE TIME?