



5  
December 2019

Transmedia as a Strategy:  
Critical and Technical Expertise  
for Today's Media Galaxy

Edited by  
Stefano Calzati and Asunción López-Varela Azcárate

---

Guest Editors' Profiles	5
Introduction	7
<i>Stefano Calzati and Asunción López-Varela Azcárate</i>	

ARTICLES

From "Is" to the (News) World: How Facebook Jeopardized Its Life-Diary Nature and Occupied the Network	17
<i>Stefano Calzati and Roberto Simanowski</i>	
Proto-Transmedial Narrative Structures: Lewis Carroll's <i>A Tangled Tale</i>	37
<i>Asunción López-Varela Azcárate</i>	

A Broken Mirror Held to History's Face. On the Narrative Use of Computer Screens, Multi Screen Experiences, and a Transmedia Theoretical Console in the Popular <i>Assassin's Creed</i> Series <i>Michel Ottens</i>	61
Off-Modern Hybridity in TV Theatre: Theatrical, Cinematic and Media Temporalities in Rupert Goold's <i>Macbeth</i> (BBC - Illuminations Media, 2010) <i>Víctor Huertas-Martín</i>	81
Transmedia Narratives of Social Intervention: Affecting Reflexiveness in the Communicative Phenomenon as a Key Competence in Education <i>Xiana Sotelo</i>	103
New Possibilities in Audiovisual Ergodic Narratives <i>Raquel Crisóstomo Gálvez and Marc Valderrama Carreño</i>	123
Electronic Art: Modern Short Fiction Transmedia Storytelling in Japan <i>Evelina Saponjic Jovanovic</i>	135

# From “Is” to the (News) World: How Facebook Jeopardized Its Life-Diary Nature and Occupied the Network

Stefano Calzati<sup>1</sup> and Roberto Simanowski<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Politecnico di Milano*

<sup>2</sup> *Freie Universität Berlin*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7358/ijtl-2019-001-casi> stefanocalzati@hotmail.com  
roberto.simanowski@bluewin.ch

---

**ABSTRACT** – This article focuses on self-narratives and identity construction in the context of social networking sites (SNSs). It does so by discussing the findings of a research that had at its core a practice-based module titled “Facebook and Autobiography”, which was designed and taught at a major Hong Kong University. Through a cyber autoethnographic approach, which aligns to the methodological orientation of the second wave in narratology studies, the research explores how the infrastructure of Facebook affects the processes of self-narration in comparison with traditional written dairies. Contrary to previous studies, the interviews with students-participants and the analysis of their Facebook’s profiles suggest that the retrieval on Facebook of even small self-narratives is impaired by the fact that the platform has abandoned its life-diary orientation in favour of a news-based business model where the posthuman connotation of profiles prevails.

**KEYWORDS** – cyber autoethnography, Facebook, narrative, posthuman identity, self.

## 1. BIG STORIES, SMALL STORIES, NETWORKED STORIES

In recent years the body of research conducted within and through narratology has witnessed a refocusing – which also implies a questioning – of its primary corpus of case studies. Traditionally, by attempting to derive formalistic patterns that, starting from specific instances, could eventually account for the functioning of all narratives, structuralist narratologists focused on precise, limited sets of texts: written (fictional and non-fictional) books (Genette 1997). The narrowing down of the spectrum of narratives amenable to analysis also occurred with regard to the autobiographical genre. Despite

the variety that autobiographical forms can take – from letters to confessions, from diaries to proper autobiographies – the attention was primarily turned towards long retrospective written accounts. Autobiographical forms, hence, were long deemed relevant to narratology only insofar as they consisted of “big stories” which took a coherently organized form (Labov 1972) – i.e. with a beginning and end – for which the materiality of the text itself served as a frame (Ochs and Capps 2001).

In recent years, however, under the impulse of what is now considered the “second wave” in narratology, the focus on big stories has been counterbalanced by an increasing attention to so-called “small stories”. Contrary to big life stories, small stories have the characteristic of being contextually dependent. This means that they are shared stories that spring out of the everyday and give shape and meaning to it in an ongoing process of telling and re-telling which goes back and forth from the past to the present and also the future (Georgakopoulou 2006; Bamberg 2010). In this sense, small stories see their own horizon of signification and the actors involved constantly redefined, so that the “becoming” of the self(ves) is conceived as a deeply interactional, contingent performance. From the “finished” and somehow self-standing autobiographical texts, we have passed to the unfinished – and unfinishable – stories that we create and/or that fill up our daily lives: face-to-face interviews, phone calls, emails, chats. This shift has brought to the foreground the role of the context and the medium that, respectively, “frame” and “carry” these small stories, pushing pushed narratology towards an ethnographically inspired path that demands new tools to understanding autobiographical practices beyond narrative activity (Poletti and Rak 2014). For instance, Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (2008, 250) support the need for a narrative ethnography that can account for the interplay between “experience, storying practices, descriptive resources, purposes at hand, audiences, and the environments that condition storytelling”.

Within this scenario, SNS platforms have long been identified as a privileged environment for all analysts interested in the study of identity construction as an interactional process. Within the ideology of trust and culture of transparency that permeates the Web 2.0 scholars have detected continuity between online and offline forms of self-telling (Kennedy 2014). In fact, both realms require the complying with a certain degree of authenticity concerning the self-representation provided of (and by) the subjects – what Philippe Lejeune (1989) defines “autobiographical pact” – so that such accounts can be trusted as accurate. Still, differences between online platforms and tra-

ditional autobiographical writing are also evident: online self-representation occurs within a specific set of technical protocols implemented by each SNS platform. These protocols (e.g. click-in-effect of pre-set lists, type-in-effect of fill out-prompts, suggestion of brevity through the design of the status update-box, auto-tagging) leave eventually a limited set of options to the users, perpetrating an integrally commoditized and disciplined representation of identity. Moreover, the self-narration on SNS responds to strict and coercive social patterns, chiefly in the form of immediate, quantifiable evaluations by other users/readers. To be sure, offline self-representations do also bear technical – related to the medium – and social – related to the context – constraints (just think of the volatile and dialogic nature of an interview). However, in offline occurrences the subject is still generally the master of his/her own story: s/he remains in control of the telling and can craft it and adjust it according to the evolving situation (see Hull, Lipford, and Latulipe 2011).

These differences highlight the extent to which the impact of digital technologies over the processes of self-representation has reshaped the practice that itself underpins the narration of the self, thus making an ethnographic investigation even more compelling. For instance, self-expression on SNS is not necessarily narrative, temporal, or linear; it is rather carried out through repeated updates that frame moments in an ongoing “still present”. Ruth Page (2010) notes not only that the temporality constructed in Facebook status updates, which favours the present tense and the “ing” durative form, “is quite distinct from the past-tense forms typically used to narrate more canonical personal experience narratives” (*ibid.*, 422), but most importantly, that “the emphasis is thrown upon interpreting the updates as self-contained units” (*ibid.*, 437) rather than as the bricks of a broader narrative. This implies that the self is generated as a chain of snapshots rather than as a hermeneutical re-collective process. Hence, hypertextual, mediated autobiographies escape a coherent narrative as a “construction of a whole out of fragments tied together by networks of links” (Lejeune 2014, 256), and take rather the form of “auto-assemblages” in which the subject is no longer the master, but plays a role alongside other users/readers and the logic of functioning of the platform itself. McNeill (2012) perfectly sums up the hybridization of techno-(post)human self-construction on Facebook by highlighting three different processes. While the template of the profile page largely responds to a conservative conception of identity that adheres to offline norms of self-representation, the possibility for both other “friends” and Facebook’s algorithm to publish on one’s own newsfeed clearly steers

the identity construction in the direction of a collective, if not fully post-human, endeavour.

More generally, the question of the extent to which “algorithmically generated news items” that SNS blend with “user-authored ones” into a “unified narrative” constitute “an act of authorship on the part of a life writer, and [whether] we are to understand them as part of the digital life writing practices” (Morrison 2011, 124) has not been systematically answered. As Roberto Simanowski (2017, 235) points out by taking on Page’s (2010, 440) claim that “in order to perceive the sequence of status updates as a coherent whole, one must [...] ‘fill in the gaps’ between them”, “it remains to be seen”, Simanowski argues, “how probable the ‘fill[ing] in the gaps’ between status updates and offline experience is”. Indeed, Simanowski (2017, 237) continues, “these questions need to be explored on the basis of comprehensive empirical studies”.

## 2. MODULE DESIGN: BETWEEN NARRATIVE ANALYSIS AND CYBER AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

It is from these premises that together with prof. Roberto Simanowski we have designed and taught a practice-based module at a major Hong Kong University, titled “Facebook and Autobiography”, which led to ethnographically explore the practices of self-narration on Facebook and how these differ from traditional written diaries.

We had 54 students – between the ages of 18 and 22 – enrolled in our course. 43 of them (80% of the class, 32 females and 11 males) agreed to take part in our research. This number dropped to 38 after five students withdrew from the research due to lack of posting on Facebook<sup>1</sup>. Methodologically speaking, we elaborated a cyber autoethnography which co-opted our participants into the analysis: on the one hand, as researchers, we entered Facebook via the creation of a profile that students befriended, on a voluntary basis, in order to allow us to monitor their activities for five weeks; on the other hand, we demanded our participants to self-reflect upon their Facebook use

---

<sup>1</sup> We initially set as a threshold the posting/sharing of content at least five times a week, but as we will see such requirement was not met, leading to question the active engagement of participants on Facebook.

through a number of assignments. In this way, we accomplished what Natalia Rybas and Radhika Gajjala (2007) define as the study of “the discourses that emerge at the intersection of online/offline and the offline context through which the online worlds are entered”. The assignments that students had to complete – and which were part of their final evaluation – consisted of:

1. A first round of questions aimed at providing us with a general understanding of their Facebook use. Questions were: (1) “Why do you use Facebook?”; (2) “To what extent would you say that your Facebook profile reflects yourself?”; (3) “What is a diary for you?”; (4) “Does Facebook work as a diary for you?”; (5) “Why or why not?”. Students were asked to write down the answers to these questions and elaborate on them as freely as they wished.
2. The tagging all their Facebook posts by using a set of previously elaborated tags. We developed four categories of tags which respectively referred to: (a) the type of the posts’ content; (b) the authorial stance responsible for the posts and its relation to the user’s self-representation; (c) the mood of the posts; (d) if/how posts had a time-related connotation or interrelation with other posts on the user’s Timeline. Specifically, the first category was inspired by Roman Jakobson’s (1960) communication functions. Participants were instructed that posts would have a “referential function” whenever the Facebook’s user, or one of his/her friends, geolocated themselves or tagged other friends; posts (and comments) bore an “emotive function” when they overtly expressed the user’s emotion or state of mind; posts (and comments) had a “phatic function” when they were meant to simply keep in contact with friends (this function comprised emoticons, bare expressions of agreement/disagreement, likes and similar reactions). The second category of tags moved along the Self-Other axis: we asked participants, on the one hand, to identify if they had published the post themselves (“self-authored”), or if this activity had been outsourced (“other-authored”, further disentangled as “shared by user”, “shared by other friends”, “frictionless sharing”, either by other pages, or apps); on the other hand, we wanted to know whether the content of the post directly referred to the user (“self-related”) or to a different topic/issue (“other-related”, such as news, commercials, entertaining content, etc.). The third category addressed the mood of the posts: “euphoric” (positive content), “dysphoric” (negative content), or “neutral”. Under the fourth category fell those tags that dealt with the unfolding of time, which, from a narratological point of view, constitutes

the precondition of any narrative. Hence, we were interested in investigating if/how posts connected to each other along one's Timeline, as well as in those occurrences where a single post contained a "small story" within itself. From here we defined three tags: "temporal", which signalled the centrality of time (either as a single moment or a duration) with respect to the action/event described in one or several posts (e.g. journeys, anniversaries, timeframe of the semester, etc.); "hermeneutic", in which posts (or comments) displayed an effective process of understanding among users (it is the case of posts and comments that contain questions and answers); "cause-effect", when posts on the Timeline were linked by a clear cause-effect relation (e.g. when a post is published as a critique or in support of precedent posts or comments). Since, in practice, these tags overlap and can be co-present, we instructed students that each post could well be labelled with more than one tag belonging to the same category (e.g. a post might be, at the same time, self-related and other-related, or bear a durative and hermeneutic value).

3. Alongside the tagging of all posts, which we observed as a list of screenshots, we also asked the participants to keep a written diary in which they jotted down, on a weekly basis, reflections about their SNS diet and all their activities on Facebook, from posting, to sharing and liking, to commenting. The goal, in this regard, was to let participants digest their daily SNS use and prompt a "distanced" reflection via the traditional act of writing which could trigger a retrospective assessment of the users' SNS activities and the process of self-representation.
4. Lastly, because the befriending of our Facebook avatar was on a voluntary basis, those students who opted to take part in the project but not to reveal their own profile to us were required to write a final essay which reflected upon the whole experience of having kept a written diary alongside their use of Facebook and other SNS.

Eventually, all participants (43) answered the first round of questions, then, after the dropping of five students, two groups were constituted: Group A (16 students) submitted a diary, the tagging, and a final essay. Group B (22 students) – those who befriended us on Facebook – submitted a diary, the tagging, and answered a second round of questions at the end of the five week survey period, which was customized for each participant depending on what we found on their Facebook's profiles.



### 3. DOES FACEBOOK REFLECT OUR-SELVES?

These assignments provided us with a rich and varied set of materials, which we triangulated with our close reading of the Facebook’s profile of Group B. From the replies to the first round of question, we soon realized that for the majority of the participants (33 out of 43) Facebook is no longer the preferred social network. This finding is in line with recent surveys according to which the most common age demographic for Facebook users is between 25 and 34, at 29.7% of the total (Zephoria 2017). By contrast, younger generations – such as our corpus – seem to opt for other SNS, such as Instagram and Snapchat (Statista 2016). Below, we will further elaborate on the students’ feedback to our questions.

Q1: For the great majority of the participants (31), the primary reason for keeping a Facebook account is to remain in contact with friends by checking their statuses, rather than disclosing personal information. Such trend is corroborated by the overall amount of posting and sharing performed by the 22 participants of Group B. We reported a total of 378 posts, which means an average of 17.1 posts/user over five weeks, i.e. a bare 3.4 posts/user per week. Moreover, of these posts the majority (8.1 posts/user) were tagged as “phatic”, thus reasserting the primary function of “keeping in contact” rather than providing information about one’s own life (6.8 posts/user were tagged as “referential”, 5.2 as “time-related”, and 4.8 posts/user as “emotive”). The phatic dimension of Facebook’s communication appears more vividly in relation to comments: out of a total of 678 comments reported, 420 simply consisted of emoticons or phatic expressions (such as “Wow”, “Great!”, “Damn!”, etc.). One student’s reply exemplifies this trend well: “the reason why I am still using Facebook is because it’s one of the most famous social networking website and I feel like if I am not on Facebook then I am cutting myself off”. Instead of being used as a tool for presenting themselves, we could suggest that for these participants Facebook constitutes, above all, a safety net for maintaining social connections – or better, the feeling of it.

This assumption is also supported by the answers to Q2. On a scale that moves from “very little” to “fully”, with “to a certain extent” and “to a large extent” as intermediate options (“nothing at all” was excluded *a priori*, given that once one is on Facebook one’s profile does represent oneself in some ways), the majority of participants (28) thought that their Facebook profile does not reflect who they are in “real life”. In other words, for two thirds of our corpus their Facebook’s self-representation is not accurate, if not dis-

torted (aligning to the findings in Gonzales and Hancock 2011). As the replies to Q5 suggest, this is largely due to two main reasons: on a quantitative level, more than a third of the participants (16) do not post regularly (e.g. on a daily basis), thus implying that their Facebook profiles do not necessarily cover all episodes and events of their lives. On a qualitative level, around a third of the participants (13) declared that they carefully select what to post and that they only publish positive materials about themselves. In fact, posts tagged as “euphoric” by Group B participants are the most frequent: 9.6 posts/user against only 2.1 dysphoric (and 6.1 “neutral”). To these data it must be added that posts tagged as “other-related” outnumber those tagged as “self-related” (14 and 11.9 posts/user, respectively), a trend that displays the predisposition to post and share content that does not refer directly to the user’s life. The cautiousness with which participants approach and use Facebook seems to be due, in turn, to the fact that for the majority of the participants (31) Facebook is perceived as a public space into which too many people can peep. “If I post negative stuff on Facebook”, one student wrote, “people won’t understand why I am posting that, and they might think I am mad. I prefer express negative stuff with one or two friends or on Whatsapp”. It is clear, then, that on Facebook users feel over-exposed, a feeling that is quite understandable when considering that each participant in Group B had on average 908 contacts. The disproportion of such data is neater when compared to the average Facebook user who, according to recent statistics, has roughly 155 friends (Expanded Ramblings 2016). Epitomizing, in this regard, is the reply of one student, for whom “Facebook cannot work as my diary because it connects me with too many people I don’t know”. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that this amassing of friends affects how the platform is eventually used in terms of self-representation: under the burden of its own founding logic, which promotes the constant expansion of one’s own network, Facebook has eventually turned into a showroom in which people refrain from releasing too many private details; on the contrary, by sharing and liking they do provide an endless flow of information of themselves as consumers. From here, we attempted to better understand what is left on Facebook by and about the users and the extent to which it is them who are responsible for what appear on their Timelines.

#### 4. FROM USERS-GENERATED STORIES TO THE MEDIA WORLD: FACEBOOK REPOSITIONS ITSELF

The low frequency of posting, the reluctance to get over-exposed, and the favouring of the posting/sharing of other-related content, makes it difficult to retrieve even small self-narratives on Facebook: "to fill the gaps" between statuses, as Page (2010, 440) suggests, is getting increasingly problematic. This is even more evident when looking at the authorship of the posts: taken individually, the tag "posted by user" is the one that recurs slightly more often than the other two: 6.5 posts/user against 5.5 ("shared by others") and 4.8 ("shared by user"). And yet, as soon as we add up all posts that are not authored by the Timeline's owner ("shared by user" and "shared by others") they amount to almost two thirds of the total. This means that, for the greatest part, the Timelines of our participants are already outsourced projection of them. It is in light of these data that, rather than tapping into these Timelines for analysing the processes of identity construction, we deemed more appropriate to investigate how our participants' use Facebook, depending on the kinds of posts published and/or shared, their authorship, and the feedback received (i.e. likes and comments).

To begin with, we elaborated an overview of the whole corpus by detailing which users received most/least likes and comments: (1) in total; (2) per post; (3) calculated on the average of their friends<sup>2</sup>. *Table 1* sums up the findings (names have been abbreviated for privacy reasons). Overall, when number of friends, number of posts, and number of likes/comments are combined we get a rather heterogeneous picture. A higher number of friends does not necessarily lead to a higher amount of likes and comments; similarly, a regular, consistent commitment to posting and sharing does not imply a quantitatively stronger feedback from the network. This scenario compelled us to complement the analysis with a more detailed discussion of both content and authorship of what is published on the platform. Hence we tried to understand in absolute terms what kinds of posts receive most likes and comments by combining the tags of the second category, notably: (1) who the author of these posts is ("self-authored", "shared by user", "shared by others", "frictionless sharing"); (2) what these posts are about ("self-related", "other-related").

---

<sup>2</sup> Only the number of friends of 17 participants was available. As for the others an average for the whole corpus was calculated. IDs with an asterisk are those of the users of whom the number of friends was not visible.

Table 1. – An overview of the participants' postings and feedbacks.

ID	FRIENDS	POSTS	LIKES	LIKES/POST	LIKES/FRIEND	COMMS.	COMMS./POST	COMMS./FRIEND
1.AC*	908	22	327	14.86	0.36	18	0.81	0.019
2.CC1	1207	14	624	44.57	0.51	146	10.42	0.12
3.CC2	1382	25	335	13.4	0.24	32	1.28	0.023
4.CK*	908	12	25	2.08	0.02	2	0.16	0.002
5.CSF	1507	28	670	23.92	0.44	72	2.57	0.047
6.CTY*	908	33	635	19.24	0.69	15	0.45	0.016
7.CM	600	12	219	18.25	0.36	17	1.41	0.028
8.GC	1047	17	348	20.47	0.33	17	1	0.016
9.HA	1324	8	2	0.25	0.001	10	1.25	0.007
10.HCG	1214	10	221	22.1	0.18	2	0.2	0.002
11.IL	585	32	135	4.21	0.23	51	1.59	0.087
12.KW	918	28	103	3.67	0.11	8	0.28	0.008
13.KL*	908	12	68	5.66	0.07	6	0.5	0.006
14.KSM	1350	16	346	21.62	0.25	22	1.37	0.016
15.MA	213	9	129	14.33	0.60	29	3.22	0.136
16.SAR*	908	10	189	18.9	0.20	31	3.1	0.034
17.TC	348	17	207	12.17	0.59	29	1.70	0.083
18.VN	313	18	246	13.66	0.78	56	3.11	0.178
19.WN	258	15	60	4	0.23	27	1.8	0.104
20.WL	1035	14	467	33.35	0.45	12	0.85	0.011
21.YS	884	8	135	16.87	0.15	37	4.62	0.041
22.S	1232	18	399	22.16	0.32	39	2.16	0.031
Total/Av.	19.957/908	378/ 17.1	5890/ 267.72	15.8	0.29	678/30.81	1.8	0.033

We came up with three major options at the intersection of our two sets of variables: (1) posts authored by users which are self-related *and* other-related; (2) posts shared by users which are self-related *and* other-related; (3) posts shared by others which are self-related *and* other-related<sup>3</sup>.

We then assumed that if option 1 is the one receiving most likes and comments, then it means paradoxically that users tend to post less what interests their friends most. Indeed, as shown above, posts that are other-related and other-authored outnumber those posted by the users and self-related. However, if option 1 gets validated, it means that self-authored posts are, in fact, the most appealing ones. If option 2 is the one receiving most feedbacks, then it means that users tend to value the platform as an aggregator of diversified and heterogeneous content that does not necessarily relate to the user's life; if option 3 gets the highest amount of likes and comments, it means that users value especially the inclusiveness of the platform (i.e. its social nature), insofar as much of the content on the Timelines has been circulated around by other connections. *Tables 2, 3, and 4* provide a schematization of each option.

The data of the three tables corroborate the first of our assumptions. In total, the posts authored by users are 143 against 122 (shared by users) and 106 (shared by others). What is remarkable is that the first group gets roughly half of the whole number of likes (2831 out of 5890) and more than 40% of all comments (278 out of 678). It is also significant that when users decide to share something from a third source this action receives the least amount of feedbacks in terms of both likes (683) and comments (195). By contrast, when posts are shared by friends on someone's Timeline, this triggers a consistent amount of likes (2234) and comments (203) very likely because such action puts in contact (by default) at least two people and two networks.

---

<sup>3</sup> We also further disentangled these three options by looking at posts (4) posted by user and self-related; (5) posted by user and other-related; (6) shared by user and self-related; (7) shared by user and other-related; (8) shared by others and self-related; (9) other-related and shared by other. However, given the small corpus, these options are less relevant here.

Table 2. – The ensemble of the posts published by users which are self-related & other-related.

POSTED BY USER $\cap$ (SELF-RELATED U OTHER-RELATED)					
ID	POSTS	LIKES	LIKES/POST	COMMS.	COMMS./POST
1.AC	7	131	18.71	0	0
2.CC1	4	190	47.5	16	4
3.CC2	6	179	29.83	4	0.66
4.CK	12	25	2.08	2	0.16
5.CSF	15	544	36.26	57	3.8
6.CTY	7	188	26.85	6	0.85
7.CM	2	33	16.5	2	1
8.GC	12	215	17.91	0	0
9.HA	4	0	0	0	0
10-HCG	1	79	79	0	0
11.IL	4	46	11.5	11	2.75
12.KW	5	93	18.6	4	0.8
13.KL	2	34	17	1	0.5
14.KSM	2	72	36	8	4
15.MA	7	120	17.14	29	4.14
16.SAR	3	90	30	25	8.33
17.TC	16	194	12.12	29	1.81
18.VN	0	0	0	0	0
19.WN	13	59	4.53	27	2.07
20.WL	5	161	32.2	0	0
21.YS	7	135	19.28	36	5.14
22.S	9	243	27	21	2.33
Total/Av.	143/6.5	2831/128.6	19.79	278/12.63	1.94

Table 3. – The ensemble of posts shared by users which are self-related & other-related.

SHARED BY USER $\cap$ (SELF-RELATED $\cup$ OTHER-RELATED)					
ID	POSTS	LIKES	LIKES/POST	COMMS.	COMMS./POST
1.AC	11	54	4.90	9	0.81
2.CC1	1	15	15	44	44
3.CC2	13	55	4.23	12	0.92
4.CK	0	0	0	0	0
5.CSF	13	126	126	15	1.15
6.CTY	11	39	3.54	0	0
7.CM	3	10	3.33	1	0.33
8.GC	0	0	0	0	0
9.HA	3	0	0	1	0.33
10. HCG	2	0	0	0	0
11.IL	24	64	2.66	37	1.54
12.KW	4	10	0.45	4	0.18
13.KL	9	30	3.33	5	0.55
14.KSM	5	28	5.6	0	0
15.MA	2	9	4.5	0	0
16.SAR	4	58	14.5	0	0
17.TC	0	0	0	0	0
18.VN	9	64	7.11	50	5.55
19.WN	1	1	1	0	0
20.WL	0	0	0	0	0
21.YS	0	0	0	0	0
22.S	7	120	17.14	17	2.42
Total/Av.	122/5.54	683/31.04	5.59	195/8.86	1.59

Table 4. – Ensemble of posts shared by others which are self-related & other-related.

SHARED BY OTHERS $n$ (SELF-RELATED U OTHER-RELATED)					
ID	POSTS	LIKES	LIKES/POST	COMMS.	COMMS./POST
1.AC	4	142	35.5	9	2.25
2.CC1	9	419	46.55	86	9.55
3.CC2	6	101	16.83	16	2.66
4.CK	0	0	0	0	0
5.CSF	0	0	0	0	0
6.CTY	15	408	27.2	9	0.6
7.CM	7	176	25.14	14	2
8.GC	5	133	26.6	17	3.4
9.HA	1	2	2	9	9
10. HCG	1	0	0	0	0
11.IL	4	25	6.25	3	0.75
12.KW	18	0	0	0	0
13.KL	1	4	4	0	0
14.KSM	9	246	27.33	14	1.55
15.MA	0	0	0	0	0
16.SAR	3	41	13.66	6	2
17.TC	1	13	13	0	0
18.VN	9	182	20.22	6	0.66
19.WN	1	0	0	0	0
20.WL	9	306	34	12	1.33
21.YS	1	0	0	1	1
22.S	2	36	18	1	0.5
Total/Av.	106/4.81	2234/101.54	21.07	203/9.22	1.9



## 5. IDENTIFYING FACEBOOK’S TYPES: A FORMALIZATION OF DATA THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHIC WORK

As the last step of our analysis, we combined these considerations with what Group B students told us about their Facebook’s activities, through the second round of questions. This allowed us to identify six different types of Facebook users, along the human/posthuman axis inspired by McNeill’s (2012) work on the “networked self”. Specifically, at the “human” extreme of the axis, we identified those *user-based profiles* that are mainly composed of self-related posts authored by the users themselves (see *Tab. 5*, blue users). Theoretically, these are the profiles that, more than any others, reveal something about the user’s life and should provide evidence of small self-narratives. However, it is also the case that these profiles present a low amount of posts, making it difficult to connect posts into a coherent whole. Student MA justified such scarcity as follows: “There is both a selective and reflexive process that precedes my postings. I tend to spend much time wondering about what I can post and [what] I want to keep private”. This further corroborate not only the idea that our participants are reluctant to disclose too much information personal details, but also that, when they do so, they carefully think about it.

Secondarily, users who post/share a balanced mix of self-related and other-related materials produce *hybrid profiles* (yellow users in *Tab. 5*). In this case, the number of posts on the Timeline is consistent and encompasses a broad spectrum of topics. User SAR specified that: “I share everything I am passionate about but I also like to choose what is worth posting. I like to use Facebook for informative stuff and sometimes for personal life”. In this case, then, other-related content appears to take over self-related posts, but it is still possible to retrieve both kinds of posts, creating a mix that largely remains dependent on the user’s action.

Subsequently, whenever one encounters users who mainly share other-related posts we enter the realm of *pastiche profiles* (orange users in *Tab. 5*). These profiles appear as a patchwork of incoherent posts – at least from a self-narrative perspective – which, rather than telling us something about the user’s life, signal his/her urgency to share. The content published on these profiles is often phatic and basically exhausts its function in the mere act of being shared without the pretension to fuel discussion, prompt replies from friends, or reflect key thoughts of the user. Student IL confirmed that “Indeed there are quite a number of posts on my Facebook, but some of them are too randomly shared to reflect myself. So, yes, I would say that my postings are largely phatic”.

Table 5. – A chromatic representation of the different types of Facebook users.

ID	FRIENDS	POSTS	LIKES	LIKES/POST	LIKES/FRIEND	COMMENTS	COMMENTS/POST	COMMENTS./FRIEND
1.AC*	908	22	327	14,86	0,36	18	0,81	0,019
2.CC1	1207	14	624	44,57	0,51	146	10,42	0,12
3.CC2	1382	25	335	13,4	0,24	32	1,28	0,023
4.CK*	908	12	25	2,08	0,02	2	0,16	0,002
5.CSF	1507	28	670	23,92	0,44	72	2,57	0,047
6.CTY*	908	33	635	19,24	0,69	15	0,45	0,016
7.CM	600	12	219	18,25	0,36	17	1,41	0,028
8.GC	1047	17	348	20,47	0,33	17	1	0,016
9.HA	1324	8	2	0,25	0,001	10	1,25	0,007
10-HCG	1214	10	221	22,1	0,18	2	0,2	0,001
11.IL	585	32	135	4,21	0,23	51	1,59	0,087
12.KW	918	28	103	3,67	0,11	8	0,28	0,008
13.KL*	908	12	68	5,66	0,07	6	0,5	0,006
14.KSM	1350	16	346	21,62	0,25	22	1,37	0,016
15.MA	213	9	129	14,33	0,60	29	3,22	0,136
16.SAR*	908	10	189	18,9	0,20	31	3,1	0,034
17.TC	348	17	207	12,17	0,59	29	1,70	0,083
18.VN	313	18	246	13,66	0,78	56	3,11	0,178
19.WN	258	15	60	4	0,23	27	1,8	0,104
20.WL	1035	14	467	33,35	0,45	12	0,85	0,011
21.YS	884	8	135	16,87	0,15	37	4,62	0,041
22.S	1232	18	399	22,16	0,32	39	2,16	0,031

It is interesting to remark, in this regard, that not only is phatic content associated with a low representativeness of who the user is, but it is also linked with a certain sloppiness and superficiality concerning the choice of what to share and the decision to post it.

Then, at the right extreme of the human/posthuman axis we find those *posthuman profiles* (red users in *Tab. 5*) in which the majority of posts appearing on one's Timeline are outsourced. Within this group we differentiate between *node profiles* – nodes stands for the idea that these users are particularly popular insofar as they receive many incoming posts in which they are tagged – and *frictionless profiles*, when the posts are straightforwardly posted on the user's Timeline by other apps or by Facebook itself. Student CC1, representative of the node type, said: "Although my timeline is quantitatively quite rich, I seldom write down my thought directly. I prefer to check others' statuses. [...] I would say that my profile is written more by others, although their posts do represent me somehow". CC1's reply points to one key feature of posthuman profiles, namely the fact that sharing posts among contacts – especially self-authored ones – facilitates the circulation of one's own profile throughout the network, prompts reactions from friends, and ultimately strengthens connections. It is for this reason that the participant expressed the idea that "to be written by others" may still compose a portrait – however deferred – of himself, insofar as the posts in which he appears are to some extent part of his self-representation. As for frictionless profiles, we had one standing example in the corpus. The Timeline of student KW was filled with music videos that were automatically shared on it by the app JOOX of which she is a frequent user. She explained us the functioning of the app as follows: "It requires users either to pay a fee to get access to songs, or to share the files, for free, on SNS". As a consequence, because KW did not want to pay for music, her Timeline appears boldly outsourced: its authorship is delegated not to other friends, but to the automated algorithm of the app, which eventually erases the direct human intervention.

Lastly, there are the so-called *peeping profiles* (green users in *Tab. 5*). These users do check Facebook, read news, remain updated about their friends' lives, but they rarely post anything (nor are they tagged). The use they make of the platform (and the "use" that the platform makes of them) is mainly passive. Indeed, it was possible for us to uncover this group only by collating the first and second round of questions. Participant HA admitted: "I have much time to read news during commuting time. But I seldom share anything on Facebook unless it's really interesting to me or something

that is very important to society”; similarly, HCG claimed “Despite I daily use Facebook, I usually avoid ‘washing’ my Facebook wall with all my posts as I would feel disturbed if someone else updated too many things in one day”. These testimonies show that, beyond the attested reluctance to post too much, the sharing of content does also represent a small percentage of the entirety of materials scanned in a day and time spent on the platform. The table below sums up the Facebook’s types identified in our corpus.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Albeit being based on a small corpus of participants, our cyber autoethnography did help us get interesting insights into how young people use and perform themselves on Facebook. Overall, our Facebook users favoured a passive attitude towards the platform (i.e. to remain in contact with friends and check others’ statuses). When they did take action, it was often to share something not about themselves but other-related. Lastly, when they did publish about themselves the content was carefully curated, with positive posts dominating over negative ones. This means that Facebook is projecting more and more the reflection of itself – as a varied media provider – rather than the representation of the users’ lives. We could argue that Facebook has jeopardized its life-dairy nature by occupying the network with its refurbished business model as news-aggregator.

At the same time, we further elaborated on our data by connecting them to our participants’ self-reflections and this allowed us to provide a formalization of Facebook users’ depending on the authorship of the posts and the type of content posted or shared. More in detail, the fragmentation of the corpus into the six types of users identified suggests a rather skilful and personalized re-appropriation of the platform’s technical features by the participants. Each user, far from being merely “played” by the platform, proves able to customize the use s/he makes of Facebook according to the audience addressed, his/her interests and purposes, as well as the adoption of other SNS alongside Facebook.

REFERENCES

- Bamberg, Michael. 2010. "Blank Check for Biography?: Openness and Ingenuity in the Management of the 'Who-I-Am' Question and What Life Stories Actually May Not Be Good For". In *Telling Stories: Language, Narrative, and Social Life*, edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Anna De Fina, and Anastasia Nylund, 109-21. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Expanded Ramblings. 2016. "400 Facebook Statistics and Facts". Accessed March 31, 2017.  
<http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/by-the-numbers-17-amazing-facebook-stats/>
- Genette, Gérard. 1997. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, translated by Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Georgakopoulou, Alexandra. 2006. "Thinking Big with Small Stories in Narrative and Identity Analysis". *Narrative Inquiry* 16 (1): 122-130.
- Gonzales, Amy, and Jeffrey Hancock. 2011. "Mirror, Mirror on My Facebook Wall: Effects of Exposure to Facebook on Self-Esteem". *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour and Social Networking* 14 (1-2): 79-83.
- Gubrium, Jaber, and James Holstein. 2008. "Narrative Ethnography". In *Handbook of Emergent Methods*, edited by Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, 241-264. New York: Guilford.
- Hull, Gordon, Heather Lipford, and Celine Latulipe. 2011. "Contextual Gaps: Privacy Issues on Facebook". *Ethics and Information Technology* 13 (4): 289-302.
- Jakobson, Roman. 1960. *Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics*, edited by Thomas Sebeok. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kennedy, Helen. 2014. "Beyond Anonymity, or Future Directions for Internet Identity Research". In *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online*, edited by Anna Poletti and Julie Rak, 25-41. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Labov, William. 1972. *Language in the Inner City*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Lejeune, Philippe. 1989. "The Autobiographical Pact". In *On Autobiography*, edited by Paul. J. Eakin, 3-30. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lejeune, Philippe. 2014. "Autobiography and New Communication Tools". In *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online*, edited by Anna Poletti and Julie Rak, 247-258. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- McNeill, Laurie. 2012. "There Is No 'I' in Network: Social Networking Sites and Posthuman Auto/Biography". *Biography* 35 (1): 65-82.

- Morrison, Aimée. 2014. "Facebook and Coaxed Affordances". In *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online*, edited by Anna Poletti and Julie Rak, 112-131. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Ochs, Elinor, and Lisa Capps. 2001. *Living Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Page, Ruth. 2010. "Re-Examining Narrativity: Small Stories in Status Updates". *Text and Talk* 30 (4): 423-444.
- Poletti, Anna, and Julie Rak, eds. 2014. *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Rybas, Natalia, and Radhika Gajjala. 2007. "Developing Cyberethnographic Research Methods for Understanding Digitally Mediated Identities". *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 8 (3): Art. 35.
- Simanowski, Roberto. 2017. "Instant Selves: Algorithmic Autobiographies on Social Network Sites". *New German Critique* 139 (1): 233-244.
- Statista. 2016. "Statistics and Facts about Snapchat". *Statista*.  
<https://www.statista.com/topics/2882/snapchat/>
- Zephoría. 2017. "The Top 20 Valuable Facebook Statistics – Updated January 2017". *Zephoría Digital Marketing*. Accessed March 31, 2017.  
<https://zephoría.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>