

When the Literary Mutates and the Digital Emboldens:  
Transformations in Spanish Electronic Literature of the 21st Century

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Spanish and Portuguese and the Graduate Faculty  
of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **Abstract**

My dissertation analyzes Spanish-language electronic literature from Spain produced using new media technologies over the last 20 years. It more specifically looks at blogs, hypertext novels, hybrid publications that use digital codes needing scanning, and authorship. This project argues that new media technologies are exerting agency on both the physical and cyber world by affecting how literary texts are produced, presented to the reader, and embedded into everyday life. To achieve this, I propose looking at electronic texts through an Actor Network Theory approach as presented by John Law that treats all actors as interacting with various elements, both human and non-human, to create meaning. Supporting this approach is a combination of cyber-ecological and queer methodology that treats digital elements as having agency. In particular, I engage with scholars Stacy Alaimo and Jane Bennett to show that new technology has enabled the formation and visibility of original forms of literary and cultural expression through social media and traditional publishing avenues. Thus, the environment of digital works must be incorporated into any interpretation of the text as a whole.

I employ this approach to better analyze a growing presence of individuals, cyber-intellectuals, engaged in social justice causes related to women's, LGBT, and human rights who are able to network online via blogs and in the physical world to advance their activism. The analysis on hypertext novels provides a more complete understanding of the assemblages that construct meaning in digital works. Hybrid projects, where the content is partially in print and partially available on the Internet, serve to address the convergences of the digital and the physical worlds. Convergences such as these are also impacting the role of authorship in the production of texts in 21st century Spain. Digital components have become a part of everyday life and, subsequently, demand our attention as scholars in order to understand technology's role in literature and, by extension, society and our lives.

## **Acknowledgements**

For a project that is anchored on environments and the larger mesh of connections, I want to acknowledge the broader groups of individuals and communities within both academic and personal spheres that often overlap and coexist. I would like to thank the faculty, graduate students, and many other individuals affiliated with the Departments of Spanish and Portuguese and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The academic openness and the camaraderie in both departments at The University of Kansas have made me a better scholar.

Individually, I would like to first and foremost acknowledge Dr. Jorge Pérez and his unwavering support and patient advice over the years. His guidance, friendship, and leadership have made this project and the doctoral program at The University of Kansas an enjoyable experience. His mentorship has been invaluable and key to this project's success. He is a role model I can look up to for years to come. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Margot Versteeg for her thoughtful reading and poignant interjections on the work I have completed. Her comments, suggestions, and questions have allowed me to engage my work in a better and more critical manner.

A special thank you to Dr. Marta Vicente not only for agreeing to be a committee member, but, also, for allowing me to engage with some of the topics presented in this project while I was a student in her seminars. I would also like to recognize committee members Dr. Robert E. Bayliss and Dr. Verónica Garibotto for their generous participation and feedback.

Lastly, but just as notably, thank you to my family: the family I was born into and the one I have carved out over the years. In particular, thank you to mom, dad, Fabiola, Olivia, Stephanie, Julia, Bryan, Michael, and Armando. Gracias.

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"When a literary work interrogates the inscription technology that produces it,  
it mobilizes reflexive loops between its imaginative world  
and the material apparatus embodying that creation  
as a physical presence."  
-Katherine Hayles

“aquí [en Internet] me quito trajes y máscaras, e intento empezar de nuevo,  
con nuevas cicatrices, viejos miedos, un tanto más de soledad y un mucho más de vida.  
No seré débil haciéndome la fuerte, ni me agarraré a mi debilidad escapando de todo.  
Como dice cualquier primer post de wordpress: Hola mundo.”  
-Nuria Rita Sebastián

## **Introduction: Building Connections, Establishing Links**

Over the last three decades the culture in Spain, along with many other countries worldwide, has seen a digitization marked by new media technologies and powered by the World Wide Web.<sup>1</sup> The growing capital of the Internet due to the increase in popularity and usage make digital environments important spaces in the 21st century. The Internet and its associated technologies can be found in almost every aspect of this century's social, cultural, and political spheres. These new technologies have also assimilated into literature to varying degrees. Consequently, technology in literary and cultural production must be assessed on its own, as it interacts with other technology, and in relation to humans. New media technologies and digital

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<sup>1</sup> While the term *new media technologies* may be understood by most, the phrase usually refers to technologies developed and made popular during the 1990s. Lev Manovich has described this set of media as cultural objects "which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition" (Manovich, *The Language of New Media* 18). In more concrete terms, [t]he so-called new media technologies [...] encompass a wide variety of web-related communication technologies, such as blogs, wikis, online social networking, virtual worlds and other social media forms [...] The wide range of characteristics of these new media technologies can be summarized by the 5 C's: communication, collaboration, community, creativity, and convergence. (Friedman and Friedman 1, 10)

innovations have transformed how we discuss and experience culture, literature, and other social facets. The Internet has mutated from a basic information center to become a dominant active feature of culture, a culture that is both local, global, and neither due to its digital environment that cannot be pinned down to one particular location.<sup>2</sup> As a result, electronic literature is a representation of the cyber-culture that we all partake in, either directly or indirectly.

This project is interested in the electronic developments and accomplishments in literary and other texts that have materialized over the last few decades in Spain. The Spanish case is particularly intriguing for its early development of new media technologies and continuous participation with Internet possibilities since the last couple of decades of the 20th century to present times. The active role this European country has taken positions Spain as an early innovator in digital technologies, something that is generally overlooked. The wide contributions of Spanish writers and cybercitizens along with the abundant examples of electronic literature demonstrate that Spain is a suitable environment for analyzing the Web's possibilities. In what follows, I analyze Spanish-language electronic texts from Spain produced using new media

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<sup>2</sup> Briefly put, the World Wide Web has evolved from being a depository of information where a user could log in to find desired data or to perform basic tasks; this is known as Web 1.0. The second version of the Web, Web 2.0, is primarily identified by its interactive function where the user does more than just read. The users are active participants in a Web ecosystem; they are a creator of sorts, who can upload content, interact with other Web users, and participate on the Web via software like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Currently, we are seeing the Web mutate into a Web 3.0 or the Semantic Web. This is described as a smarter Web where the machines are able to communicate with the human actant and with other machines via smarter readings of data already on the Internet. A Semantic Web tries to understand what the user is really trying to search for or accomplish while online in order to simplify the large quantities of information on the Web (Fleerackers). Thus, one can see that over the short life of the World Wide Web, the definition of what the Internet is and what it can do has mutated to reflect advancements in technology and the needs of its users. These rapid developments should not be seen as strictly positive. The Internet's rapid changes can also hinder research as any assessment made today, or within this project, may be altered as the authors of my primary texts change the content in their websites, alter delivery formats, or decide to pull material off the Web.



technologies. My focus throughout will be on technology's role and on the digital environments that these works create and then cultivate. The medium an author chooses to employ becomes pivotal when assessing both the contents of digital projects and the electronic ecosystem in which a work is enmeshed. Consequently, my project's analytical framework and the content of my primary texts fall within the larger ongoing fusion of fields that have been materializing over the last few years: the Ecological Digital Humanities. The environmental and digital components play important roles in the critical discussions of texts and of the greater social and political issues in society. More specifically, I follow a queer cyber-ecological approach that treats texts with an understanding that the Web is an agential, malleable, and constantly shifting entity, which should be treated different from traditional bound published works.

Writers have been able to experiment with these innovative digital propositions in order to create new forms of art, literature, and cultural texts. Accordingly, critics and scholars have also noticed the original electronic productions and those who heavily employ digital means within a work. Furthermore, scholars have used digital means in order to analyze new and traditional texts and, thus, have created novel approaches to existing and canonical works.<sup>3</sup> Scholar María Goicoechea asserts this by stating that “information technology has had the power to make literary critics revise their old presuppositions, reread the past in the light of new interests promulgated by the new paradigm and rediscover works of literature that appear to fit better than others with new trends in electronic media, such as intertextuality or interactivity”

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<sup>3</sup> It was through database mining and the cross-referencing of databases that in 2013 Spanish scholar Alejandro García-Reidy discovered *Mujeres y criados*, a long-lost piece by Spanish playwright Lope de Vega. Through a collaborative effort of universities and researchers in Spain and Duke University, García-Reidy found the original manuscript and was then able to sample the calligraphy of the text to confirm its author (Constenla). This form of cultural archeology also serves as an example of the wide-ranging possibilities of the Web's technologies.

(“Hyper-paradigm” 18). Goicoechea’s insights on the possibilities that information technology can have beyond creative purposes shows not only that individuals in Spain are aware of the potential that technology has to offer, but, more importantly, that authors, critics, and scholars are engaging and interacting with these new technologies in an active and innovative manner. This type of interaction comes after computer hardware and the Internet has reached large majorities of people in the Western world. However, scholar Juan José Díez believes that what is really driving the production of electronic texts and then the consumption of these works is the introduction of tablets during the beginning of the 2010s (Díez, “Panorama”). To Díez’s argument, I would add that smartphone and WiFi technologies have also aided in the ease of traveling with hardware technology and accessing the Internet from any place a wireless connection can be established. The lightweight features of these new hardware components and the relative ease of accessing the Web facilitate the creation, reading, and overall consumption of digital works.

Spanish electronic literature is a growing field that merits exclusive attention due to the robust number and high quality of the texts being produced, and for its pioneering nature, an element often overlooked in the broader field of digital humanities and of Spanish electronic literature. Along with asserting the importance and significance of Spanish electronic literature, one of the goals of this project is to analyze each type of work within its own digital environment. That is, I wish to generate an analysis that is specific to the digital constructs that contribute to each digital text’s material (electronic) uniqueness. This is why I treat electronic works as having their own agency and give these projects equal importance next to that of their respective author. While the scope of what entails an electronic text is quite wide and growing in definition (see below), my project does not assess Spanish electronic literature in a

comprehensive manner. Instead, my focus resides in blogs, hypertext novels, publications and city projects that incorporate barcodes and Quick Response (QR) codes, and a chapter that addresses the evolving nature of authorship. I begin by analyzing a blogging community of networked Spanish cyber-intellectuals immersed within a culture of activism as it relates to women's and queer rights. The analysis on hypertext novels shows the progression of Spanish capabilities and innovations over the last 20 years and the often-overlooked early production of electronic texts in Spain of the mid 1990s. I then shift to digital convergences in the form of hybrid projects: a poetry collection, a compilation of short stories, and projects throughout the city streets of Barcelona, that embed codes which in turn need to be scanned in order to fully experience the text. The final topic assesses the changes that the figure of the author has undergone as a result of working alongside technology and generating literary texts through the digital realm. These four broad topics point to very popular means of communication (blogging), a commonly utilized software for any online text (the hyperlink), and two areas that illustrate the types of convergences that new media technologies are having both on the published world (via barcodes and QR codes), and on individuals as they publish and develop their work on multiple platforms in print and online (authorship).

With each of these topics, briefly outlined above, the digital environment or e-scape in which these works are born into and thrive in plays an important role in assessing the meaning and significance of the text. Articulated differently, my project can be seen as a sort of digital ethnographic analysis that incorporates, for example, the location of a blog, the electronic publishing house, or the network of links that authors choose to employ either within a work or from outside sources. In the case of blogs, the blogger's choice of how the blog is published (stand alone or through a blogging service) is taken into account along with the links placed

outside of the blog entries that serve to contextualize the blog as a whole. Other environments that play a key role are created via intertextual hyperlinks that add images, sound, video, external websites, and historiographical information within an electronic text. The environment being generated by these links is establishing the electronic work within a network of digital actants, introducing the work to various individuals in the digital and physical world, and creating a space in the larger network of the World Wide Web. The hybrid environment of projects that use barcodes and QR codes is a unique one that more tangibly traverses the digital and the physical world transporting the reader-user to the World Wide Web while in the physical realm. As a result, the reader-user engages in both worlds, both environments, at the same time, much like many individuals in the 21st century. In a time when digital creators have a plethora of options at the time of creating a text, the location where these authors choose to place and insert their work and voice within the larger electronic environment of the Internet is pivotal as the author aligns with preexisting digital voices or chooses to create new perspectives that were not present. Given the larger role that technology and software play within digital production, the electronic element in new literary and cultural productions must be given more importance and be treated as an actant, any element taking an important and active role that holds agency and is able to act and influence others on its own.

In order to show the impact digital works are having on other digital texts and humans alike, my approach for this project is one that seeks to treat humans and technology as equals interacting in a world and space that mutually affects the other. I position technology as something that holds agency on its own and that is able to act on human and nonhuman things. This agency materializes through established links that the author may have placed and embedded in a text, but also from the connections that search engines build on their own as users

move from one digital environment (website, application, email, etc.) to another. With this latter example, technology can go on to suggest content, provide similar hits in a search query, or invite the user to click or scan an item, and, thus, provide more content or information. In the case of a QR code, we see the agency as the code itself calls out to an individual who would then scan the image in order to retrieve the stored data. We can also observe agency as technology becomes the enabling factor that allows for the space in which a character or author/pseudonym can thrive in. Seen in this manner, technology is enabling and acting as the catalyst, but what must be understood is that technology is playing an equal role to humans.

For some people, aligning technology and human beings as equals may be off-putting, but technology has come to play a pivotal role in society by infiltrating all aspects of everyday life. Additionally, with the introduction of smartphones, large populations of people experience their life through the screen on their phone. There is, after all, at least one basic element that allows both electronic gadgets and human bodies to continue functioning at appropriate levels: electricity. As geneticist and ion channel physiologist Frances Ashcroft details in *The Spark of Life: Electricity in the Human Body* (2012),

[w]e're all familiar with the fact that machines are powered by electricity, but it's perhaps not so widely appreciated that the same is true for ourselves. Your ability to read and understand this page, to see and hear, to think and speak, to move your arms and legs – even your sense of self – is due to the electrical events taking place in the nerve cells in your brain and the muscle cells in your limbs. (5)

Ashcroft goes on to detail the historical discoveries of electricity within the human body and clarifies how it is really the many ions and chemicals in the human body and their charges that

produce the electricity that our bodies need to function. At a fundamental level, whether organic or not, humans and machines have been linked together.

Even so, the coexistence of human and machine in the 21st century is much more exhaustive and takes many forms. Because of these reasons and a few more which I will explain in more detail below and in the next chapters, treating technology and its propositions as agential elements equal to humans allows for a better understanding of what electronic literature is doing. This frame of mind may be helpful in retrospectively explaining what literature has been suggesting. Katherine Hayles, a well-known electronic literature scholar, already showed a notion towards nonhuman elements exhibiting agency. Hayles characterized this as enacting subjectivity when she noted that “electronic literature is both reflecting and enacting a new kind of subjectivity characterized by distributed cognition, networked agency that includes human and nonhuman actors, and fluid boundaries dispersed over actual and virtual locations” (*Electronic Literature* 37). As such, it not only makes sense to think of electronic literature as holding agency, but given that I seek to analyze the medium as well, an approach that addresses the agency of content and the medium can allow for better acknowledgement of the underlying processes that are fueling the digital culture in Spain and, by extension, the global digital culture as well.

Therefore, my framework for analyzing the contents of the next four chapters can be summarized as a queer cyber-ecological approach that seeks to analyze electronic texts (cyber) in the environment they are created in and meant to be consumed through (ecological) from an understanding that these texts, the authors, and the medium in which they are presented is a weird, unstable, and counter-hegemonic manner (queer) from the status quo. It is through this approach that electronic literary and cultural texts can be better explained and analyzed. As a

result, this approach may open the possibility to the analyses of canonical texts through new digitized filters that can serve to complement and, even, question previous assumptions of humanistic thought. While the approach I offer can be considered more innovative, there are already many scholars (i.e. Laura Borràs, María Goicoechea, Christine Henseler, Alexandra Saum-Pascual) and scholarly publications (more on these below) that have been closely analyzing electronic literatures. What is more exciting is the rapid pace of literary production and the increasing number of critics and scholars from various fields who are showing interest in electronic literature.

Before explaining this project's framework in further detail, I will first take a moment to discuss what electronic literature is and how it has been defined both in English-speaking countries and in Spain. Then, I briefly note the development of Internet technologies in Spain to contextualize the growing number of digital humanities centers across the nation and to show the level of innovation from three authors in this project whose digital ventures date back to 1995, overlapping with early advancements in Internet technology in Spain (see Javier Sáez in chapter 1 and Edith Checa and Javier Badosa in chapter 2). A detailed queer cyber-ecological framework within the emerging and converging field of Ecological Digital Humanities (EcoDH) follows along with an outline for the chapters ahead.

### **Electronic Literature: A Definition of Sorts**

Electronic literature, as a category and field, presents some obstacles as it has been defined in various ways and with very fluid definitions. Similar to English, in the Spanish language the name alone has a variety of designations including *literatura electrónica*,

*ciberliteratura*, and *literatura digital*. Their corresponding direct translations to English are also commonly used and are interchangeable. I will also use these terms interchangeably throughout this project and only in a few exceptions when noted will the term be specified to mean something outside of this understanding.

There are many things that electronic literature encompasses and, then, there are other types of literature that are unfortunately associated with electronic literature. Past incorrect assumptions have clumped any previously published text that has been digitized to be a part of the electronic literature description. This is not a definition I will follow in this project. Katherine Hayles defines electronic literature in a simple yet constructive manner by first noting that “electronic literature can be understood as both partaking of literary tradition and introducing crucial transformations that redefine what literature is” (Hayles, *Electronic Literature* 3). These crucial transformations will be the focus of this project as they have come to mutate preexisting literary figurations and create new ones altogether. In her definition, Hayles clarifies that electronic literature “exclude[s] print literature that has been digitized, [electronic literature] is by contrast ‘digital[ly] born,’ a first-generation digital object created on a computer and (usually) meant to be read on a computer” (ibid.). This is a key distinction that points at the content and the historical relevance of production since computers were not generally available until the mid-1980s in the United States and late 1980s in Spain to select sectors of society.

Thus, electronic literature “work[s] with an important literary aspect that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer” (Hayles, *Electronic Literature* 3). This last descriptive element is identical to that of the Electronic Literature Organization’s (ELO) definition. It is also no coincidence that Hayles is an active member and has held leadership roles within this organization. The ELO describes e-literature as



a type of literature that “refers to works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer” (“What is E-lit?”). These definitions, Hayles and the ELO’s, are purposefully broad and intended to capture a wide array of new works produced online and using new media technologies.

In Spain, the Real Academia Española’s Literatura Electrónica Hispánica section in the Cervantes Virtual proposes a similarly broad definition.<sup>4</sup> This definition, along with its contemporary in the ELO, is the more widely used description of electronic literature in Spanish language publications. Opening the dialogue for this electronic literary section in the Cervantes Virtual is its curator Juan José Díez, a respected scholar and author of fiction, who defines electronic literature in the following way,

[c]reemos que tres rasgos distinguen a una obra literaria electrónica de una convencional: el hipertexto, los recursos multimedia y la interactividad; las tres palancas que ofrece Internet. Son, pues, narraciones diseñadas para la red, viven en un espacio puramente virtual donde la ficción narrativa ya no se materializa en formato código -hojas de papel impresas, cosidas y numeradas- sino en pantallas de ordenador. (Díez, “Presentación”)

These are also the defining attributes that guided the Cervantes Virtual in the selection of the works it highlights under the Literatura Electrónica Hispánica section of its webpage and the works it regularly links to through its blog, *Literatura Electrónica*.

With this definition of what electronic literature can be, the array of possibilities quickly multiplies. The Cervantes Virtual’s section quickly lists a few categories with examples meant to demonstrate information technology’s possibilities. Works are classified in what is not meant to be an exhaustive list: *hipernovelas*, *hipermedia*, *web-novelas*, *blognovelas*, *novelas colectivas*,

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the Real Academia Española’s and the Cervantes Virtual’s role within the field of digital literatures, see chapter 2.

and *wikinovelas*. Unfortunately, the list of examples provided on this section of the Cervantes Virtual website is limited to electronic texts in prose. These categories hold examples of novels and collections of short stories. Lacking from this list are e-poetry works, cyberdrama texts, and performance pieces. To some extent, this list mirrors the type of genre that is most often analyzed by e-literary critics. Prose is not only the type of electronic literature that gets produced most often, but it is largely the type of literature that is analyzed by scholars. Coincidentally, the majority of the texts analyzed in my project are in prose. I do include a poetry collection and art installation by Tina Escaja and a digital photography project by Kika Fumero. This is not to say that digital poetry, performance pieces, or other digital works is of lesser quality. The Cervantes Virtual website does regularly post examples of these latter types of digital works through the above-mentioned blog.

There are many manifestations of electronic literature in today's connected world. Most of the examples continue to find their base among ELO's list of possible forms of e-literature:

Hypertext fiction and poetry, on and off the Web

Kinetic poetry presented in Flash and using other platforms

Computer art installations which ask viewers to read them or otherwise have literary aspects

Conversational characters, also known as chatterbots

Interactive fiction

Literary apps

Novels that take the form of emails, SMS messages, or blogs

Poems and stories that are generated by computers, either interactively or based on parameters given at the beginning

Collaborative writing projects that allow readers to contribute to the text of a work

Literary performances online that develop new ways of writing (“What is E-lit?”)

Absent from this list is any form of the popular genre of videogame literature which combines the use of some electronic gaming format and the narrating of a story to give context and further the game being experienced. Videogame literature could be associated with interactive fiction, but over the last few years this type of electronic production has been given more attention separately from other interactive works of fiction. The ELO’s list also does not assess the collaborative nature that many authors engage in while producing digital projects. The absence of a clear national entity governing what electronic literature is in Spain or elsewhere in other parts of the Spanish-speaking world have led scholars to use this listing of types of digital works when describing the possibilities of electronic texts (Díez, “Panorama”; Romero López, “La literatura” 46). Yet, this listing can appear to be too broad and encompassing while at the same time unfit to characterize the intricacies of electronic works.

This present project follows the definitions and parameters posed by Hayles, the ELO, and Díez. Through an analysis that makes use of blogs, hypertext novels, Quick Response (QR) codes and barcodes, and the digitizing of authorship I seek to expand the research that others have also embarked on relating to Spanish electronic literature and digital literatures in general. However, where some scholars have focused on the influence of technology within literature (Henseler, *Spanish Fiction*; Moreiras, *Cultura herida*; Saum-Pascual, *Mutatis Mutandi*, “Literatura española post-web”; Urioste, *Novela y sociedad*), this project is more concerned with technology itself and the medium through which electronic literature is being produced, consumed, and disseminated. Where digital authors choose to place their works online is important and part of the meaning-producing element. Thus, the combination of technologies

employed by the author and the environment (also read placement) is key to reading and understanding 21st century texts. Due to the particular focus of the chapters to follow, I propose that electronic literature be analyzed on its own terms, that it be looked at because of the digital nuances and propositions it poses, and that these electronic texts be contextualized accordingly, historically and otherwise, to adequately show Spain's unique and early involvement with new media technologies of the 21st century.

### **Historical Developments – the Internet and Accessibility in Contemporary Spain**

The developments seen in Spain associated with electronic literature and the many digital humanities organizations that support these projects and research might come as a surprise given the large-scale political, economic, and social transformation undergone since the death of Francisco Franco in 1975 and the end of his authoritarian regime (1939-75). Unfortunately, Spanish digital innovation related to information technology is not well documented, but Internet and technologies related to the World Wide Web in Spain show an early interest in this field that has been accelerating during the late 20th century. In Spain, Telefónica, a multinational broadband and telecommunications Spanish company that operates in Europe, Asia, and the Americas, plays an important role in the development of Internet technologies.<sup>5</sup> It is through Telefónica's resources that the initial Internet developments in Spain spread beyond its small and limited network of computers. While the Internet in the United States was developed with a militaristic background by the Department of Defense in 1969 and was then ceded to the National Science Foundation for further development (Rheingold 78), Spain's Internet origins

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<sup>5</sup> At the time of writing, the main companies that form Telefónica are Movistar, O2, and Vivo.

point to a more scholarly beginning.<sup>6</sup> The Spanish origins of the Internet, as Telefónica and the Spanish Asociación de Usuarios de Internet like to underscore, have a much different beginning, one anchored in science and research (“La historia”; “Las primeras redes”).<sup>7</sup>

In Spain, the first project was labeled FAENET (Física de Altas Energías Network) and was created in 1984 through the work of a few groups and universities in Spain collaborating with the Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN) or European Council for Nuclear Research, now better known for its efforts to find the Higgs Boson particle (“La historia”; “Las primeras redes”). In 1985 these Internet developments connected to other databases in Barcelona, Madrid, and to a few European servers and this is when a truer Internet was established, one with a definition we come to understand today (“Las primeras”). Further efforts to increase the capabilities of computer hardware and connectivity yielded the “Proyecto de Interconexión de Recursos Informáticos” that would in 1991 become “RedIRIS” (“Sobre RedIRIS”). By 1986 and with the advancement of research at the universities that had nurtured this technology, Telefónica introduced Ibertex, which allowed for the transmission of information across the Web within Spain (“La historia”). It is not until 1990 that Spain was able to officially connect to the World Wide Web and a year later the Spanish network would boast over 1,000 connected machines. In 1993 the Universitat Jaume I (Castellón de la Plana, Comunidad de Valencia) hosted the first Web server (“La historia”). By the middle of the

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<sup>6</sup> This first project, Arpanet, was intended to connect four super-computers in 1969 with the goal of relaying information from coast to coast in the USA. These computers and the programs that were evolving would expand, but a few decades later the United States government would cede the operation of this network to the National Science Foundation. In 1984 Arpanet was expanded and opened to the scientific community becoming NSFNET (Rheingold 78).

<sup>7</sup> The Asociación de Usuarios de Internet (AUI) was established in 1995 and is a national non-profit organization that aims to promote the developments of Internet, protect and defend its users, and promote good practices of the World Wide Web.

decade, in 1995, Spain had over 20,000 connected computers and over 4000,000 users; this last figure would jump to a million by the end of the decade and turn of the century (“La historia”). Spain’s infrastructure made bold steps during the two decades closing the 20th century, which laid the foundation for the proliferation of hardware, software, and Internet connectivity in the decades that would follow.

The latest statistics published in January of 2017 show a Spain that can boast of having Internet access for 82% of its population with about 81% with higher bandwidths (“Encuesta sobre equipamiento”; Kemp).<sup>8</sup> This is a relatively great accomplishment given that in 2003 that figure rested at 23% nationwide with only Catalunya at 32.7% (Cerno and Pérez 334). The speed to which Spain has been able to quickly incorporate, use, and develop new technologies like the Internet and the technologies that have developed because of the Internet is commendable. These changes have also forced Spain into a hybrid state where the identity of a post-Franco period was “determined by the collision between old, archaic morals and models and a youth culture heavily steeped in commercial culture, new technologies, and secular values; it was also shaped by an internal process of reform that intersected with larger European and North American pressures and visions” (Henseler, *Spanish Fiction* 14). These collisions have come to develop a society where 81% of Spain’s adult population uses a smartphone throughout their day for Internet, social media access, and other uses (Kemp). Spain also leads on smartphone usage among European countries; it is not surprising that Spanish people use smartphones as their choice of

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<sup>8</sup> Of the current 46.07 million people in Spain, it is estimated that over 37.87 million of the population has access to Internet (Kemp). Additionally, these statistics come from a relatively new company, We Are Social, but one that uses data and figures from 7 other Internet and new media companies such as GlobalWebIndex, GSMA Intelligence, Statista, Akamai, Google, StatCounter, and Ericsson. The reports from We Are Social encompass all areas of the world and involve detailed information on Internet usage, social media activity, and smartphone technologies.

hardware to access the Internet regardless of the purpose they may have (“2013 Spain Digital”; “Informe ditrendia”). This is another high statistic that adds millions of Internet users each year. Thus, Spain positions itself not only as an early innovator in the field of information technology, but the country has rapidly embraced these new modern propositions at a speed greater than most European nations. As a result, the cultural and literary production from Spain is digital and the digital is a very active component in everyday life in Spain. This is evidenced by the accomplishments and the statistics listed above, but also by the contents of this project, which show a wide range of literary and cultural works.

### **Digital Convergences and a Call for More Linking**

The advancements over the past decades in hardware and software developments as they relate to the World Wide Web have allowed Spanish universities to develop centers dedicated to the digital humanities. This has also included some stand-alone organizations. The increasing interest in digital propositions have been slowly materializing and generating interest in scholars from various disciplines (information technology, engineering, the sciences, and traditional humanistic fields). In Spain many institutions now offer a graduate degree, usually a masters, in digital humanities. Among these universities are the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,<sup>9</sup> the Universidad Complutense Madrid, the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha,<sup>10</sup> and the

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<sup>9</sup> The master’s program at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona is credited for the beginnings of incorporating digital humanities in Spanish higher education institutions (Zalbidea 145).

<sup>10</sup> The master at the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha was available from 2005-11. It was discontinued due to a lack of funding.

Universidad Pablo de Olavide.<sup>11</sup> The digital sphere has clearly invigorated not only the artistic aspects of society, but it has also demanded new approaches to studying and analyzing material that is produced using digital and new media technologies.

Regarding the state of Spanish Digital Humanities, scholars Sagrario López Poza, Paul Spence, Elena González-Blanco, and Antonio Rojas Castro have published articles that extensively, but not exhaustively, detail the history and current state of the convergence of technology and humanistic thought in Spain. I do not wish to summarize the rise and, in some cases, the short-lived life of the institutions and organizations in Spain. Instead, I choose to enumerate some of the reoccurring conclusions and concerns found in the individual work of these scholars and note where authors make similar calls to action across their respective research. These academics and their work stress the early involvement of digital technology and *informática* in humanistic thought in Spain and, in particular, to the Spanish languages.<sup>12</sup> Despite the early contributions of new technologies for the study of language, “Spanish digital humanists have generally not received the kind of international attention afforded by some of their counterparts in other fields related to digital culture” (Spence and González-Blanco). Furthermore, until the last couple of decades the majority of the work in digital humanities in Spain revolved around language and linguistics (López Poza 157; Spence and González-Blanco). Among one of the challenges that these scholars see is a need to make their work and the work of

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<sup>11</sup> The Universidad Pablo de Olavide in Seville offers a master’s degree in conjunction with history.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Spence and Elena González-Blanco’s article highlights the early project PhiloBiblon which had landmark international collaborations such as BOOST (the Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts), which initially emerged in the 1970s to explore the application of computer-based methodologies to the study of the Spanish language, and were then extended to provide bibliographies for medieval and early modern texts from the Iberian Peninsula under the umbrella project ‘Philobiblon’ [sic]. (Spence and González-Blanco)



other digital humanists visible to scholars both within Spain and abroad. Due to the scattered number of digital humanities organizations, the work that is being produced does not receive enough attention (López Poza 158; Spence and González-Blanco). To this component, one can also add the under-funding of humanities organizations across Spain due to the financial crisis of 2008, a crisis that persists and prevents adequate advancements in this and other areas.

The isolation of the current digital humanities projects, organizations, and programs within academic institutions or not related to centers of higher learning is a problem that these scholars address as needing immediate attention. Communication between various digital humanities organizations in Spain is lacking and coordination of resources such as research tools, information databases, and of researchers themselves would greatly advance the goals of digital humanistic endeavors. Two institutions stand out as potentially changing this environment. Until recently, attempts to create and foster national organizations that would encompass the many topics under the umbrella of “Digital Humanities” had not come to fruition nor survived a few months of existence. However, with increased interest in the digital realm and with many universities offering courses, seminars, or special certificates on digital studies, the organization Humanidades Digitales Hispánicas (HDH) consolidated in 2012.<sup>13</sup> This organization is the host of the III Congreso Internacional de la HDH in Málaga, Spain in October 2017. Additionally, the Laboratorio de Innovación en Humanidades Digitales (LiNHD) was founded in 2014 by Spain’s government and by the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) with direct funds from the Ministerio de economía y competitividad.<sup>14</sup> Both national organizations seek to supply scholars with the necessary tools, hardware and software, and connections (in-person and

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<sup>13</sup> The website for the HDH is <<http://www.humanidadesdigitales.org/inicio.htm>>.

<sup>14</sup> The homepage for this project can be found at <<http://linhd.es/>>.

online) to further develop research projects within the digital humanities. Coincidentally, scholar Elena González-Blanco heads these two national organizations. At the moment, both organizations have a healthy membership and steady funding. What may be of greater significance is that the membership of these organizations is able to include scholars from across Europe, the United States, and Latin America, which in turn signals a strong interest in Spanish digital works and research. Consequently, the establishment of these national institutions will give Spain and Spanish scholars the potential to establish a Spanish Digital Humanities on their own terms and it will allow them to showcase the work of past scholars who were pioneers in Spain and, in general, of digital humanities across the globe.

With the increase in organizations that cater to the digital fields and the establishment of the two young national organizations mentioned above, there is also a growing concern about the quality of research and publications that are being generated. While Rojas Castro sees the current state of the digital humanities in Spain as optimistic and in constant development, he concludes his article by noting the need to promote

[un] uso de estándares que garanticen la preservación de los contenidos y faciliten el intercambio de datos, la difusión de buenas prácticas relativas al acceso abierto, que permitan la reutilización del patrimonio digitalizado con fondos públicos, y el fomento de una estrategia de la documentación que facilite el examen crítico de los proyectos por parte de todos. (Rojas Castro)

On this latter issue, López Poza agrees as she sharply criticizes that “[t]ampoco nos debemos dejar obnubilar por quienes venden la etiqueta ‘Informática + Humanidades’ como un marbete que pretende fascinar con palabras abstrusas, amparándose bajo el medio instrumental para disimular la poca sustancia de sus investigaciones” (151). Though these critics fail to give

examples of what they deem to be high quality or popular literary examples, the recurring cautionary tale regarding the quality of critical texts is something that worries scholars in Spain and elsewhere within the digital humanities. Scholarship on electronic texts has seen a rapid spurt in individual articles to full-length volumes and I now turn my attention to this literature both in Spanish and Spain, as well as in English, primarily from the United States.

### **Rising Interest in the Digital and an Issue with Literary Generations**

Spanish language volumes that focus on electronic texts begin to show promise. Early volumes like Núria Vouillamoz's *Literatura e hipertexto* (2000) provide clear background information of hypertext in the electronic literature field. While Vouillamoz very concretely explains the trajectory of technology and hypertext elements, the volume – with few exceptions – steers clear of Spanish-specific examples and instead analyzes its precedents and current criticism. Nonetheless, it is a valuable book because it is written in Spanish and because of some of the analysis assessing the shortcomings of critics like Jay David Bolter, Theodore Nelson, and George Landow. Another great volume in Spanish that is able to group together the works of important scholars in the field of electronic literature is *Teoría del hipertexto La literatura en la era electrónica* (2006) edited by María Teresa Vilariño Picos and Anxo Abuín González. This collection includes some of the pressing theoretical topics in electronic literature ranging from interactivity, hypertext possibilities, the need for collaboration across academics, fragmentation, and the role of and need for an involved reader, in Spanish language with a couple essays from Spanish authors. Similar to Vouillamoz, this collection serves to insert Spanish critical thought

into the larger English-dominated discussions and market of the digital and the literary, an assessment that the editors make early in the introduction (14).

A well-known scholar in the field of electronic literature from Spain is Laura Borràs who edited *Textualidades electrónicas: Nuevos escenarios para la literatura* (2005). This volume collects various essays from a series of seminars hosted by the group Hermeneia and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. Borràs is also the director of Hermeneia and an important scholar of Spanish electronic literature both in Spanish-Castilian and Catalan languages. The volume offers approaches to analyzing literature while highlighting the work that the Hermeneia group aims to accomplish while trying to prove that, “la irrupción de la tecnología en el espacio textual no ha sido ni de lejos tan extraña, perversa e improductiva como querían hacernos creer o como a muchos les hubiera gustado que fuera” (Borràs, “Teorías literarias” 26). Additionally, other scholars from Spain include the earlier discussed Elena González-Blanco, Dolores Romero López, and Amelia Sanz. The latter of these two scholars have edited a volume, *Literatura del texto al hipermedia* (2008), in which they combine canonical text from US American and English authors on electronic literature with Spanish scholars implying an interrelated connection where Spanish texts seek to interrogate the Anglo-American conceptions of the digital through a Spanish anchor. Two more scholars in Spain stand out: Eloy Portillo, professor of telecommunications at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, problematizes subjecthood in the digital world and the overall interactions of individuals and social structures of the physical

world in the Web.<sup>15</sup> José Ángel García Landa, professor of literature at the Universidad de Zaragoza, specializes in the study of narratology, cyber spaces, and theory.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, Spanish scholars have advanced critical analyses of digital texts through the creation of electronic journals and unique scholarship. The journals *Caracteres* and *Digithum* began publication with a clear focus of propagating electronic texts and criticism of the digital work being produced. For the time being most of the material published in these journals has failed to get noticed and mix with scholarship in the United States. *Ciberletras*, an online journal of literary criticism and culture often publishes articles related to electronic literature. Their early special section on digital works in 2001 addresses the possibilities and concerns that this new area of study brought forth, “[e]ste inmenso raudal cambiará el lenguaje crítico y común a cada disciplina así como el lenguaje interdisciplinario y traerá como consecuencia un gran enriquecimiento al tiempo que un gran desafío para cada uno de nosotros” (Guiñazú and Haydu). In broad strokes, this small section is able to note the positive elements of electronic texts that still center on the freedom to publish anything one wishes with relative ease and speed. One thing that the editors to this section hypothesized was right, “[p]robablemente resulte necesaria la búsqueda de nuevos modos críticos capaces de valorar las nuevas obras digitales” (ibid.). The wide range of possibilities visible at the turn of the century already signaled that a critical perspective on e-texts would require new methods and approaches to accurately engage with these types of works.

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<sup>15</sup> For Portillo, see “Los sujetos en el mundo digital” in *Archipiélago* and “Disputas fronterizas entre el ciberespacio real y la presunta realidad efectiva” in *Hartza.com*.

<sup>16</sup> The majority of García Landa’s scholarly work can be accessed through his personal site from which he links to his articles, books, and blog on literary theory, <<http://www.garcialanda.net>>.

In the United States, two well-established journals like *The Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* and *Hispanic Issues On Line* have devoted substantial space to electronic texts within their publications. *The Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*' volume (2010) approaches the digital through the field of cultural studies. While the editor, Benjamin Fraser, states that "contemporary critics need not move away from 'traditional' literary forms to embrace the cultural productions that now characterize new/digital/electronic/hyper media" (6), the examples from the collection of essays indicate a shift that may have happened already where the analysis of digital works must happen on its own. Cultural studies does provide for a wide set of approaches to any type of text from whichever position one wants. To give an example, the already mentioned Borràs goes on to analyze how digital texts have their unique elements among those being "al mismo tiempo que leer, bien podríamos decir que, según los casos, también navegamos, interactuamos, cooperamos, co-creamos, re-leemos, re-escribimos, remediamos o, simplemente, practicamos el arte de la 'serendipia' o del 'accidental meaning' en la lectura (en digital)" ("Leer literatura" 178). Borràs' analysis notes the intricacies of e-literature by focusing on the flexibility of typography and on the highly visual element of digital works. Thus, electronic literature, while it can be approached in a traditional sense, must also be critically interrogated through its particular elements that distinguish it from other literatures.

It is *Hispanic Issues On Line*'s (*HIOL*) volume from 2012 edited by scholars Christine Henseler and Debra A. Castillo that more completely dedicates its contents to electronic texts by engaging with hybrid forms of electronic publications while focusing on "the effects on narrative of new televisual and cybernetic media spaces (YouTube, blogs, Google maps, Yahoo Jukebox), new genres (videoclip novels, zapping fiction, docufiction, hypertext), new processes (mashups, mapping, sampling, remixing), and new critical forums (blogs, webpages, videos, open-source

publications)” (Henseler and Castillo 2). Unfortunately, and as the editors mention, the volume mostly focuses on the importance of new media on print. There is a substantial mention of exclusively electronic texts, but a reliance on publications continues to abound throughout the critical volume. Henseler and Castillo note that, "it can no longer surprise us that some of the most exciting and innovative cultural work will never be found in between the pages of a book; instead, it is available for viewing and downloading, on thousands of sites, to a wide, appreciative (if highly segmented) potential audience" (3). Nonetheless, this volume does pay heed to digital projects employing hypertext, blogs, narrative on Twitter, electronic digital archives, remixing and mashing, and Google's search engines.

Other Peninsularists have also noted the influence of technology in the texts produced during the last decades of the 20th century.<sup>17</sup> The work of Carmen de Urioste and Cristina Moreiras Menor serve as stepping-stones that chronologically lead one to the other. Urioste's *Novela y sociedad en la España contemporánea (1994-2009)* (2009) uses novels published during the 1990s and early 2000s to show how Spain has entered a period beyond the commonly denoted democratic and, then, Europeanized concepts of previous decades. Instead, “la cultura española de los noventa se identifica con un capitalismo consumista regido prioritariamente por la estética de la sensación, en la cual la identidad no se busca en modelos nacionales o europeos, sino en modelos internacionales auspiciados por la tecnología dentro del nuevo orden social y económico” (Urioste 39). The book's examples show how television, video, videogames, and

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<sup>17</sup> While I now move to specifically focus on scholars who have furthered Spanish electronic texts, a series of individual academics have engaged with electronic texts produced in Latin America such as Diego Bonilla, Osvaldo Cleger, and J. Andrew Brown. Specific volumes on Latin American digital works include *Latin American Literature and Mass Media* (2001) edited by Edmundo Paz Soldán and Debra A. Castillo; *Latin American Cyberculture, Cyberliterature* (2007) by Claire Taylor and Thea Pitman; and *Revista Iberoamericana's* 2007 volume. See also *Hispanic Review's* special section, “New Media and Hispanic Studies,” edited by Michael Solomon and Aaron Ilika from 2007.

computer games are brought to the forefront by novelists while presenting aspects of Spanish society deemed less-than-ideal including youth unemployment, drug dependence, the undoing of the traditional family, violence as entertainment, a mediated society by mass media, and madness (Urioste 39-40). Urioste's analysis positions Spain as a country wrapped in the international propositions being made by technology.

Cristina Moreiras Menor's *Cultura herida: Literatura y cine en la España democrática* (2002) assesses the topics of memory, violence, drugs, and trauma in democratic Spain by analyzing texts via a metaphor of a wound that has not healed since the Franco regime, "[e]sta herida tiene que ver, sobre todo, con la pérdida del sujeto 'posmoderno' de posiciones estables frente a una realidad que se confunde con su imagen espectáculo" (Moreiras 22). She traces literary and cultural expression since the end of the dictatorship to the end of the 20th century maintaining that "la democracia no sólo ha traído la libertad, sino también un afecto herido cuyo origen se encuentra en la incertidumbre que la propia democracia trae consigo" (Moreiras 15). Moreiras argues that the average Spanish citizen lives "sumido" in the new mass communications culture of television, video, and, above all, the computer (19). *Cultura herida* questions the formation of literary generations by critics since the culture, reality, and overall immersion of the authors in present time goes beyond the national and usual sense of time that buoyed past definitions of literary generations. The main problem, as articulated by Moreiras, "radica, en mi opinión, en esta necesidad de categorizar cada obra y autor en base a presupuestos literarios que ya no son, o no deberían ser válidos, dada la transformación de los valores culturales sobre los que estos autores construyen sus relatos" (196). While this statement was published in 2002 and in relation to early discussions on the difficult to describe Generation X of Spain, the same could be articulated for electronic literature, which has a lot of its



presuppositions and background studies in US American, English, and, at times, Australian scholars. Furthermore, electronic literature cannot only be analyzed with norms of past genres where presuppositions for these publications materialize through print and in a bound format. This is one large area where my project differs from previous ones. The various assemblages that form the analysis of blogs, hypertext novels, hybrid publications, and authorship in the 21st century maintain some traditional literary analysis components, but by and large my project develops new approaches that surpass previous parameters of literary and cultural critique by interrogating the digital spaces in which these electronic works are published and embedded to while looking at larger connections they bolster in the physical and digital spheres.

Much of the attention paid to the digital in literature and electronic literature has been in relation to the literary generation Generation X, which Henseler associates with an age cohort and a worldview unique to the writers in Spain who began publishing in the 1990s (*Spanish Fiction* 7). What is most interesting from Henseler's influential work is the fluid approach she has to both the description of this generation and the second wave of authors whom she labels *Mutantes*. This second wave of Generation X writers or *Mutantes* has also been labeled the "Nocilla Generation" in reference to author and critic Agustín Fernández Mallo's trilogy and "After-Pops" due to Spanish scholar Eloy Fernández Porta's critical work.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, I find Henseler's label of *Mutantes* to be more fitting as it more clearly addresses the shifting and constantly mutating characteristics of Generation X and *Mutante* writers. In her book, Henseler situates "'Generation X' as an age cohort *and* a worldview, a group with particular experience and conscience, as a term pertaining to a specific demographic and a label that metamorphoses

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<sup>18</sup> Agustín Fernández Mallo's trilogy includes *Nocilla Dream* (2006), *Nocilla Experience* (2007), and *Nocilla Lab* (2009). For Eloy Fernández Porta see *After-Pop: la literatura de la implosión mediática* (2007).

through space and time” (7).<sup>19</sup> The changing or flexible nature of this literary group is key as Henseler later addresses the *Mutante* generation, a generation which she argues springs off of the Spanish Generation X foundation. Key elements of Generation X are the uses of a multiplicity of voices in their work. They are avid consumers of worldwide literatures and cultures and are rather active writers who grew up immersed in technology: radio, television, and, later, computers. Henseler loosely positions the Spanish Generation X writers as having been born between 1962 and 1977 with their publishing beginnings in the early 1990s. The latter generation, the *Mutantes*, is one that actively refuses to be labeled as Generation X.

The *Mutante* generation is described as comprised of global citizens, multilingual, who live, travel and work abroad, and are highly educated. Henseler specifies,

[m]ost importantly, their work disrupts conceptions of culture, space, time, and reality, presenting more fluid mutations in genres and character identities. Their implicit and explicit attention to new models of authorship and readership force the literary establishment to imagine new ways of portraying the narrative landscape in Spain in the twenty-first century. (*Spanish Fiction* 8)

The fluidity and mutations to which Henseler alludes to are key elements both to the definitions of the literary generation and to the new realities of literary production in an interconnected global society. Henseler has gone on to clarify and expand on this literary generation, “[t]he *Spanish Mutant Fictioneers* are not ‘just’ authors, they do not ‘just’ write fiction. They are constantly changing hybrid embodiments of authors/critics/producers/performers/video

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<sup>19</sup> For more on Generation X from a world-wide perspective see Henseler and Randolph Pope’s volume *Generation X Rocks: Contemporary Peninsular Fiction, Film, and Rock Culture* (2007) and Henseler’s *Generation X Goes Global Mapping a Youth Culture in Motion* (2014), where contributors note the similarities of Generation X across various countries in each continent by also assessing the specific characteristics that have mutated within a given culture.

artists/scientists/poets/bloggers. They infect the printed word with Google maps, video games, reality television shows, and hypertexts (“Spanish Mutant”).

While criticism can be raised against these writers for the “deformations” they can be imparting to literary traditions, “the *Mutantes* are successful transmedia artists who move fiction across a variety of media platforms, developing new products that interrelate, converge, and mutate into new shapes and forms along the way” (“Spanish Mutant”). To understand this new wave of writers, regardless of the title attributed to them, critics will require knowledge of the various mediums that these writers are using, “scholars must follow the *Mutantes* across media platforms” (ibid.). Even more important will be to read and analyze these texts in the context they are being published so that a traditional reading of a hypertext poem is not short circuited by an analysis that only references the text at a superficial or literal level. A complete analysis of how hypertext comes to mutate a traditional form of poetry and where this poem is connecting to and being published will undoubtedly convey information about the poem, the content, the author, and the culture in which it is being uploaded to and from. Henseler concludes by highlighting that “the power of the *Spanish Mutant Fictioneers* is to multiply identities and to deform narratives across platform, often in real time” (ibid.). The multiplication of identities both in narrative and in the physical world by Generation X or *Mutantes* has generated some criticism of Henseler’s work.

Younger scholars, like Alexandra Saum-Pascual and Luis Prádanos, have marked their interest in Spanish contemporary literature and culture as it intersects the digital realm. Both of these emerging scholars created some distance from Henseler’s literary generation approach in varying ways. Saum-Pascual’s work chooses to circumvent the idea that *Mutantes* are a literary generation and, instead, opts to treat this group as a set of authors “in progress” (*Mutatis Mutandi*

45). She adds, “[l]a nueva literatura es absolutamente co-dependiente, tanto temática como estructuralmente, del momento tecnológico presente y la identidad del creador se solapa con la red de identidades globales de las cuales se nutre” (*Mutatis Mutandi* 48). Saum-Pascual’s analysis of Vicente Luis Mora, Agustín Fernández Mallo, and Jorge Carrión’s novels places technology as a cultural backdrop while analyzing electronic influences within the works of these authors’ publications. What may be more interesting is her work on what she calls “post-web” where Jorge Carrión’s novel *Crónica de viaje* (2009) serves as an example of a work guided by the Web’s layout and resources. This novel’s plot moves through Web searches, videos, and electronic posts that have been screenshot into the published book. The Internet, in this case, has been published and a return to the book, according to Saum-Pascual, signals a questioning of “el medio digital que la posibilita y que se promulgaba como discurso del futuro, democrático y liberador” (“Literatura española post-web” 131). For Saum-Pascual, print, via Carrión’s novel, has returned to question the utopian feel and advancements of electronic productions. The caution brought forth by Saum-Pascual’s work in relation to the digital is something that is partially echoed by Prádanos who also takes issue with Henseler’s *Mutantes*.

In arguing for an ecocritical approach that is specific to Spain and the Euro-Mediterranean region, Prádanos argues against Henseler’s *Mutantes* since this, to him, is a restricted global vantage point of Western epistemologies (Prádanos 44). Instead, his example of a Euro-Mediterranean ecocritical framework is anchored on de-growth or slow movement that addresses growth from a slower position in coordination with what the Earth can provide. His framework follows similar parameters to this project in that Prádanos is able to use a local context and specific environment in order to better assess regional and literary developments. His focus on alternative ecocritical processes that serve local economies, peoples, and cultures of the

Euro-Mediterranean provide a critical framework for assessing larger environmental issues. Prádanos argues that his approach and the set of processes seen in parts of the Euro-Mediterranean region are a better articulation of environmental discussions whereas the current ecological rhetoric is only transferring the capitalistic system onto the environmental discourse. This shift continues to exploit the Earth from a different position that is just as unsustainable and only perpetuates the atrocities on the environment by, at times, shifting a region or nation's needs to other places (Prádanos 32). While his call for a closer theoretical and ecocritical approach holds merit, I disagree that Henseler's *Mutantes* are a grouping forged from Western epistemologies. Henseler's depiction of the *Mutante* evolution of Spain's Generation X is grounded in the specific history of Spain as that culture entered the globalized stage of digital actants and electronic production. The immediacy of these literary generations or the globalized associations with Generation X and *Mutantes* may be the root of disagreement between Saum-Pascual and Prádanos. These two elements continue to shift the meaning of what both literary groupings are and will be, but if they are a literary generation of their own, it is clear that it is the likes of one that Spain has not seen before in part because of the social, historical, and cultural background, but more importantly for the many mediums that have been introduced over the last few decades, which Spanish individuals have welcomed and partaken in.

While this project can insert itself in this trajectory of literary generations of Spain, I wish to focus my analyses on how new media technology is creating new forms of literature and, in other instances, subgenres (see blogs, hypertext works, Flash poetry, literary bots, software that creates literary texts on its own, etc.) and on the means to achieving this. In analyzing literature with a focus on the digital elements, I also endeavor to develop approaches to better understand electronic literary and cultural production being developed in Spain. I am less interested in

technology within the contents of a literary text – though I do touch upon this briefly – and more so with the new forms of production and dissemination that the digital realm provides authors and artists alike. In order to analyze these electronic texts accordingly I will borrow from Henseler’s guiding principles: “[t]he writing and the study of narrative in Spain, then, must take place within this increasing web of organic and virally moving connections, the convergence of media technologies, and the hybridization of media and social cultural forms on a variety of platforms around the world” (*Spanish Fiction* 22). Understanding cyberspace culture and the electronic texts of 21st century Spain must come from an understanding and analysis of the technology being employed and the digital format in which these works are being produced.

An analysis of electronic literature that focuses specifically on the digital is needed in order to highlight Spain’s early achievements, ongoing developments within the field, and to raise consciousness of electronic works being produced in Spain and by Spanish authors in the peninsula and abroad. Authors and artists in Spain are using and interacting with technology in ways that must be assessed on those particular terms so as to adequately evaluate Spanish literature and culture in relation to a digital globalized culture whose speed can hinder the accomplishments of these authors and, by extension, the scholars who study them. Like Henseler argues,

[in] the realm of literature, it is not enough to say that authors are appropriating more media technologies to promote and create their work, but rather, that they are partaking in a cultural mind shift in which their positions have changed in relation to the world at large – from computer science to science, art, society psychology, advertising, news, and so on. (Henseler, *Spanish Fiction* 154-55)

Given this scholarly background, I now shift to a more exhaustive explanation of my theoretical framework guiding my analyses of digital works.

### **An Evolving Framework**

When I began working on this project it was clear to me that I wanted to analyze the digital texts that interested me through the combination of lenses as I have been articulating in these pages: digital spaces, the relationships that the electronic works are forming with the larger ecosystems of the World Wide Web and the physical world, and queerness from a position of the content being analyzed and as a critical approach to the Internet's possibilities. At the time, describing and naming this framework as a queer cyber-ecological approach seemed the more obvious and productive path. Since then, a fusion within flourishing academic fields has materialized. Its fluid definition and almost nonexistent boundaries give this grouped framework the potential to analyze electronic literature of the 21st century, provide new approaches to existing and canonical literary texts, and offer a direct path for citizens to take action in their immediate environments (Cohen and LeMenager 340). The Ecological Digital Humanities or EcoDH provide an umbrella term under which this project's texts, approaches, and media intersect.

The increasing attention given to the ecological digital humanities shows a viable way of critically looking at literature and culture at the intersection of information technology and the environment; this latter term, environment, used loosely for a wide array of settings, physical and not. In March of 2016 the Modern Language Association (MLA) devoted a large portion of its journal, the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America (PMLA)*, to the

Ecological Digital Humanities. The fusion described in the name itself is one that combines the environmental humanities and ecocriticism with the digital humanities. The editors of this section of the *PMLA*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Stephanie LeMenager, note that both the environmental and digital humanities

are known for being interdisciplinary and collaborative; challenging business-as-usual scholarship by imagining new forms and employing new media for academic works; emphasizing making, composing, retrofitting, and repairing over unsustainable cycles of innovation; valuing archiving and preservation while looking to forge the future; and insisting on the necessity of diversity now and in the past, whether in a space of practice, a data collection, a human community, a multispecies assemblage, or an ecosystem.

(Cohen and LeMenager 340-41)

This fusion also serves to exemplify the fast rate of the digital world and its countless mutations even in the academic realm. The framework I propose for this project does fit the parameters being created by these two larger fields. After all, as Cohen and LeMenager note, “[m]atter matters: the digital is still material, and the media through which stories are conveyed and archived are not inert” (345). As one can probably conclude, the type of environments that mainly interests me for this project are the electronic landscapes or e-scapes that have evolved over time since the creation of the World Wide Web.

### **E-scapes, All Things *Matter*, and Environmental Agency**

In order to show that technology and, more specifically, digital literature hold agency I will approach these texts through a cyber-ecological understanding using the work of two



specific scholars, Stacy Alaimo and Jane Bennett. Their work, though not directly linked to the humanities, provides a useful approach into seeing the daily elements that people interact with and how these elements have an effect on humans. To fully grasp the proposals of these two scholars one must allow nonhuman and inorganic elements the capacity to have agency and come to affect the lives and bodies of the Internet's human users and machine components. This type of movement is facilitated through Stacy Alaimo's concept of *transcorporeality* and Jane Bennett's *vital materiality*.

Alaimo's core interests lie in the traffic of toxins and how these modify the way people view their bodies, other non-human entities, and the environments they inhabit. In *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), Alaimo strategically conceptualizes matter as an agential element, something that has purpose and is capable of taking action. Alaimo's transcorporeality connects environmental justice, environmental health, and environmental hazards and risks. This trans-corporeal concept posits that human bodies and non-human natures are open to one another. Thus, what we do to the environment – whatever this may be – has a direct effect on individual bodies. Alaimo details: “[transcorporeality] is the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors” (2).<sup>20</sup> With this base, the focus of her work becomes the movement across bodies (organic and inorganic), the interactions between different elements,

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<sup>20</sup> Coincidentally, in the same year, Timothy Morton, professor of English, published *The Ecological Thought* (2010) where he was espousing similar connections as Alaimo. At present, Morton's work has been closely associated with the EcoDH. In his book, Morton anchors his argument of *ecological thought* on concepts of interconnectedness, “but it's also a thinking that is ecological [...] It's a practice and a process of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings – animal, vegetable, or mineral” (7). Morton continues by assuring that even when we, humans, think that things are not connected, they are. The ecological thought “is a vast, sprawling mesh of interconnection without a definite center or edge [...] The ecological thought fans out into questions concerning cyborgs, artificial intelligence, and the irreducible uncertainty over what counts as a person” (8).

and the “material interconnections of human corporeality with the more-than-human world” (ibid.). Alaimo’s goal is to level all matter and position it in one horizontal plane in order to more clearly analyze the toxins that interest her, “the material self cannot be disentangled from networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial” (Alaimo 20). By blurring categories of what it means to be human and what has agency and control of itself, Alaimo more clearly sees power dynamics and actions and reactions in a given environment. She specifies, “[u]nderstanding the material world as agential and considering that things, as such, do not precede their intra-actions are, I think, crucial for twenty-first-century environmentalisms in which the existence of anything – any creature, ecosystem, climatological pattern, ocean current – cannot be taken for granted as simply existing out there” (21).

Along similar lines, Jane Bennett has presented a related framework that challenges “the idea of matter as passive stuff, as raw, brute, or inert. This habit of parsing the world into dull matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings) is a ‘partition of the sensible’” (J. Bennett vii). She does this while anchoring her argument to the Actor Network Theory; an approach conceptualized by sociologists Michael Callon, Bruno Latour, and John Law.<sup>21</sup> The Actor Network Theory is described by Law as “a disparate family of material-semiotic tools, sensibilities, and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located. It assumes that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations” (Law, “Actor Network Theory” 141). The actors involved in this approach could be anything; Law provides examples “including objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, ‘nature,’ ideas, organizations,

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<sup>21</sup> Callon, Latour, and Law advanced this research while working at the Centre de Sociologie de l’Innovation (CSI) of the École nationale supérieure des mines de Paris.

inequalities, scale and size, and geographical arrangements” (ibid.). In essence all materials can be included in this approach, which “asks us to explore the strategic, relational, and productive character of particular, small-scale, heterogeneous actor networks” (Law, “Actor Network Theory” 145). As a result this approach is interested in the inter-relations of stuff whether these materials are organic or not. Bennett partially employs Bruno Latour’s development of this Actor Network Theory as expressed in *Politics of Nature* (1999) and his interpretation of actants to human bodies.<sup>22</sup> For Latour actants can be any type of actors, but extended to include nonhuman and non-corporeal entities that, “[account] for the very essence of societies and natures” (“On Actor-Network Theory” 369). More specifically, actants are things that act on their own “or to which activity is granted by others. It implies *no* special motivation of *human individual* actors, nor of humans in general. An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action” (Latour, “On Actor-Network Theory” 373). Moreover, this approach places things as equals regardless of their classification in the world and it further gives each “thing” interacting with another element equal power and agency. For this project the networks to be analyzed include the literary interconnections found online via blogs, hyperlinks, the multiple mediums employed within a digital work, and the relationships that authors have with each other both in person and through digital spaces.

In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010), Bennett’s Actor Network Theory approach gives agency to elements that are typically not thought to possess this trait and allows for every thing to have a “fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies” (J. Bennett ix). To expand her concept Bennett borrows from Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of assemblages or “ad hoc groupings of diverse elements” in which each

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<sup>22</sup> The term actants was introduced by A. J. Greimas, but in regards to narrative and linguistic semiotics in the 1970s (Greimas 793-94).

grouping does not contain a dominant agent (J. Bennett 23-24). She argues that “what this suggests for the concept of *agency* is that the efficacy or effectivity to which that term has traditionally referred becomes distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts” (J. Bennett 23). Agency is thus inherent to all actants, all matter, independently of their androcentric categorization as human and organic. In an electronic literature setting this agency materializes through links within a literary work that guide and tell the reader of the options available. Agency is also translated through the mutual linking that blogs and other blogs or websites may establish. In this case, the linking informs search engines and Web browsers of the importance of these relationships and of the strength of the websites involved. Also, encountering a barcode or a QR code in a published text or in the streets invites the reader to take action: to scan the code and immerse one’s self in the digital realm for a few moments or even longer. The digital realm also takes up agency by providing a space for individuals or, in the case of my last chapter, for authors and literary creations to continue evolving and growing, as is the case of the character Mara Palés and the pseudonym Lola Van Guardia. Technology in these instances is the agent *doing* and *enabling* the human and the physical world in a symbiotic process now assimilated into our culture. Understanding this agency permits for a crisper analysis of digital texts in their own environment. Thus, by taking the core of both Alaimo and Bennett’s propositions, placing these in a cyber environment, and treating the Internet and digital derivatives of it as another form of matter and actants, a more accurate analysis of the forces that are interacting with people via digital mediums such as blogs, links, codes, or other electronic means, can take shape independently of whether individuals are connected to the Web.

Alaimo's ecofeminist approach and Bennett's new materialism are useful here as they treat all environmental elements as interacting with the human body.<sup>23</sup> There is no separation between nature and humans, the living and nonliving, or the various types of environments (digital or physico-material). Toxins are not compartmentalized along with plants, animals, etc. All elements are granted the same level of importance and influence in the world. Cyberspace is no different; it is a type of scape after all, but one that covers both the physical and digital world it has created. Its physical elements (computers, tablets, routers, keyboards, cyber cafés, lounges, etc.) exist and interact with the human world and these have created a layer of cohabitation unique to those elements. Additional elements are not directly visible, such as the wavelengths that enable the networking of modems, multiple computers, and wireless technologies (WiFi, digital networks, antennae and satellite signals, etc.). These remain essentially invisible, but with a strong presence in the reality that is practiced by all humans and machines.

Electronic elements in the environment such as hardware and software combinations may not appear to hold agency. However, Latour insists there is a possibility for objects to have a form of agency transferred on to them by human action or, more specifically, human creation. Even so, in Alaimo and Bennett's propositions, objects in and around an environment can act upon humans or the nonhuman and interact with people without needing to have had an initial agency transferred onto them. This latter concept of machines and digital technology that is able to exact action on the user is less of a myth and more of a reality, but one must keep in mind the

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<sup>23</sup> While ecofeminism is, like feminism, understood in its plural form, ecofeminisms, the broad understanding of this field takes at its base the need for an ecological and environmental intervention into feminist studies. For Noël Sturgeon, an ecofeminist scholar, "ecofeminism claims that the oppression, inequality, and exploitation of certain groups (people of color, women, poor people, LGBT people, Global South people, animals) are theoretically and structurally related to the degradation and overexploitation of the environment" (9). In turn, I will be employing a much more flexible definition of "environment" allowing the term to go beyond what is natural by incorporating man-made spaces, much like Alaimo and Bennett.

coding of this technology, which is instrumental. A device's code, be it for a computer's physical functioning or software's basic processes, consists of the instructions necessary to perform given tasks. Code is the roadmap to the many commands that a user may give the device. But coding of electronic objects can go wrong, may be incomplete, or the coding itself may allow for hardware or software to act or think on its own accord. Recent forms of technology, some of which are labeled smart as in phones, watches, or, even, houses, are programmed to make relatively accurate predictions as to what the user may want and can even make suggestions on what to buy, read, or which videos the user may find enjoyable.

It should be understood that technology is not a passive form of matter waiting to be activated by the user. Hardware is not waiting to be turned on at the touch of a human and software does not only follow directives from human coding or direct instruction. Instead, both hardware and software elements have already acted on the human self, suggesting that the individual turn on a device and interact with a given software program such as a Web browser or a Web application. These digital actants, some of which may have been placed directly by the user-author such as links to pages, blogs, and other digital elements serve to strengthen the content or message of the author. While the author may have only wanted to transport the reader to a specific article or image in a website, the link creates a relationship between the two or more sites and informs search engines of the relevance of both. This relationship in turn facilitates the flow of information by validating the existence of both pages linked. It can also further a capitalist outcome where links either facilitate purchases or where advertisements find more logical spaces due to the actions of the user throughout cyberspace.

In more concrete terms related to electronic literature, Hayles has teased this agency of the digital within e-texts. First in 1999, with the publication of *How We Became Posthuman*, she

noted “that the overlay between the enacted and the represented bodies is no longer a natural inevitability but a contingent production, mediated by a technology that has become so entwined with the production of identity that it can no longer meaningfully be separated from the human subject” (xiii). Hayles sees a clearly important value of the digital within the body and within literature that has embedded itself in a way that may be difficult to discern. Hayles would go on to clarify the role of technology nearly a decade later with her well cited book *Electronic Literature* (2008), but with a focus on computers. In her opening remarks she addresses the agency that must be attributed to computers:

[d]isplays of the computer’s agency are common in electronic literature, including animated Flash poems that play by themselves with little or no intervention by the user,<sup>24</sup> generative art [...] that disrupt the narrative poetic line every few seconds, and interactive fictions [...] with a] sophisticated program that produces different responses [...] depending on the precise dynamics of the player character’s actions. Because the computer’s real agency as well as the illusion of its agency are much stronger than with the book, the computer can function as a partner in creating intermediating dynamics in ways that a book cannot. (*Electronic Literature* 58)

But the agency that I am proposing here goes beyond the hardware elements that are easier to see. As my analysis will show in the coming chapters, I treat the processes of sharing, linking, and embedded features to be playing a significant and active role in the formation of meaning within the texts and in relation to works outside of a text. With this framework in mind one more

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<sup>24</sup> Flash software allows a user to create files that incorporate animation, graphic illustrations, and some basic interactivity that is able to stream easily online. This software is popular for its speed, compact delivery, and for its relative ease of uploading artwork to then create animations and special effects.

component must be addressed as it guides the selection of the majority, if not all, of the texts for this project.

### **Queer: Identity Politics and Methodology**

The most visible and reoccurring theme in the following chapters is the queer content that fills the websites and digital spaces, but in using “queer” I want to employ this term to not only the content, but the medium as well. The digital realm is a space in constant flux, changing almost daily, and allowing for anybody to enter cyberspace for whatever the need may be. This elasticity found in the World Wide Web and its counterhegemonic potential is what enables for a queer method to the texts I will be analyzing. Due to the changes and accumulation of meaning over time, the term and concept of queer require some explanation. While in its more literal definition the term stands to mean odd, different, or out of the ordinary (“queer”), it has acquired new definitions through the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) movement and identity politics. Queer was used as a derogatory term towards those who identified as LGBT, but over the last few decades, with the activism of the LGBT community, the word has been reclaimed:

[i]n general terms, we have moved from the ‘homosexuals’ of the first half of the twentieth century to a small number of ‘homophiles’ in the 1950s: from ‘gay liberation’ in the early seventies to the lesbian and gay movements of the mid-eighties and early nineties to contemporary lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender or ‘queer’ activism.

(Beemyn and Eliason 5)



To complicate matters, the term queer has become a synonym of those who identify as L, G, B, and T while, at the same time, queer has developed in contrast to those same identity markers. Queer is also something which is not LGBT and which stands in contrast to those identities, refusing fixity.

Teresa de Lauretis, one of the first scholars to theorize the field, writes: “[i]n a sense the term ‘Queer Theory’ was arrived at in the effort to avoid all of these fine distinctions in our discursive protocols, not to adhere to any one of the given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities but instead to both transgress and transcend them –or at the very least problematize them” (de Lauretis v). This concept is also echoed by theorist Annamarie Jagose who writes that “incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire [...] queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire” (3). The development of technology and the commercialization of the Internet towards the end of the 20th century saw a coupling of queer identities and cyberspace in the figure of the cyberqueer. In cyberspace, queer-identifying individuals found a space that did not tie them to their bodies, their sexualities, or the harassment and even persecution for who they were: “cyberspace promises, at least in theory, an emancipatory and community-building realm that transcends intranational boundaries and international borders” (Heinz et al. 108). As queer individuals took to the Web for a variety of purposes, blogs and online forums became an important medium with which to connect with others, express themselves, and organize politically.

Moreover, in a world of publications and books, the Internet can be seen as a queer space free from the constricting norms of pages, page sizes, limits on publications, and the overall limiting medium of what a book can encompass. The Internet does not have page limits, projects of all sizes can find a space, and previous media like television or photography can find a way of

converging and evolving with the digital possibilities of new media technologies. The Web is queer and it has managed to “[create] a new arena for group and individual self-representation, changing the power dynamics of representation for traditionally marginalized groups” (Wilson and Peterson 462). But, I want to avoid becoming too utopic; the Internet has only created the space for marginalized groups to express themselves and build digital and physical networks with like-minded individuals. The Internet does not make any guarantees, but having a space and platform from which to spring from is a step forward. One can just as easily find regressive or anti-LGBT content on the Web or come across digital filters that block queer content deemed offensive by others.<sup>25</sup> This last example happened in early 2017 when YouTube put forth a new feature that was intended to block offensive material. The controversy that ensued was due to the association of most LGBT content with YouTube’s “Restrictive Mode” where any video that had the tags gay, queer, etc. attached to it was categorized as offensive along with “mature subjects”

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<sup>25</sup> Drawing a stark cloud over the business, it was revealed that Facebook had engaged in ethically questionable research in 2012 when it was reported that it manipulated users’ newsfeed to test if their emotions would change based on the content they saw. The manipulation of user newsfeeds went public in 2014 and sparked a strong conversation on whether the study had been conducted within the ethical demands required of most researchers (Meyer). Psychologist and founder of PsychCentral, John M. Grohol noted that what stood out for him was that “they [Facebook researchers] put too much faith in the tools they’re using without understanding - and discussing - the tools’ significant limitations” (Grohol). Scholars have also taken issue with the methods that Facebook used in assessing whether they had successfully been able to impact a user’s feelings based on the manipulation of their newsfeeds (Ferrara and Yang). Facebook would go on to avoid any litigation by arguing that the algorithm for what users see in their newsfeeds is continuously being modified with different goals in mind. Another current example of adverse uses of new media technologies is the constant news-making tweets from the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, whose excessive use of tweets has had various negative effects on politics, the economy, and society as a whole. Scholar Brian L. Ott in his early article immediately following the presidential election of 2016 argues that the social media culture, and Twitter in particular, fosters incivility. This incivility led, in part, to the election of Trump. He summarizes his argument by noting two major concerns: “the uncritical acceptance of social media platforms such as Twitter as the principal source of news and information concerning public affairs, and [...] the mainstream news media’s treatment of Twitter itself as news” (65). These two brief examples show that technology has the capacity to act in aggressive and negative ways from both individuals and companies.

[including] terrorism, war, crime, and political conflicts that resulted in death or serious injury” (Bea; Voss). YouTube has since modified its code and issued an apology, but this serves as a reminder that the Web is constantly changing and mirroring the culture of its many users. Thus, it can include negative components that adversely affect queer people.

Expanding on the possibilities of queer theory, Michael Warner notes that queer theory’s scope goes beyond sexuality and can also be used to explain elements which go against systems of normalization that in turn favor the weird, the more abstract non-conforming elements in society. This becomes particularly useful when establishing subjectless critiques:

[n]ervous over the prospect of a well-sanctioned and compartmentalized academic version of ‘lesbian and gay studies,’ people want to make theory queer, not just have theory about queers. For both academics and activists, ‘queer’ gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual, and normal includes normal business in the academy. (Warner xxvi)

Warner’s subjectless approach is something echoed by Alaimo who while rendering everything and everyone at the same level refuses to give any element subjecthood, given that all things stand as equals. Warner’s positioning of queer also allows for the Internet to have a “queer tone” to it. The Internet is thought of as a disembodied place where one could be anything without users presenting their true identity. Moreover, the Web, if seen in opposition to the restrictions of the physical world or the publishing world, can be a queer space that incorporates a polyphony of voices to more closely represent all actors in the culture at large. As writer and blogger Nuria Rita Sebastián expresses, “aquí [en Internet] me quito trajes y máscaras, e intento empezar de nuevo, con nuevas cicatrices, viejos miedos, un tanto más de soledad y un mucho más de vida. No seré débil haciéndome la fuerte, ni me agarraré a mi debilidad escapando de todo. Como dice

cualquier primer post de wordpress: Hola mundo” (9-10). Social norms, established languages, and existing means of communication are challenged via digital protocols as one enters chat rooms, interacts with users on websites, or creates content for others.

With this in mind, this project has notes of queerness throughout its chapters. At times the authors identify as queer and in other instances the content (blogs, short stories, etc.) is queer. The critical framework I have chosen for this project, cyber-ecological, can also be characterized as queer. This critical lens borrows from compartmentalized academic fields that tend to not meet (literature, environmental studies, and information technology) and fuses them to better understand both the meaning of electronic texts and actions performed within cyber spaces. I use this queer framework to approach texts in a critical way that goes beyond established ways of analyzing literary works. Additionally, my framework is one that refuses fixity by accommodating to the specifics of a combination of genre(s) and medium(s). This is pivotal in generating detailed analysis and, thus, avoiding blanket statements on the technology employed or the practices taking place as a work is produced. However, the most pressing queer element as expressed through the scholars in the above paragraphs is the flexible, malleable, and unstable possibilities of the World Wide Web. The Internet and digital spaces which have been created over the past three to four decades still continue to evade a static description and are open to multiple functions that are conducive to queer experiences, but which, more importantly, enable individuals to express themselves more freely from the norms of the physical world and challenge established constructs. Thus, a cyber-ecological framework is a notable framework, “one that attempts to know its object of study in and through awareness of its complex set of relations to both the totality of the mesh and to its immediate neighbors in a larger assemblage” (A.R. Bennett 356). The analyses of the next chapters will do just that: analyze the type of

literary and cultural text in a given digital environment and through the specific medium while addressing the larger connectivity of the work to other projects and the World Wide Web.

### **This Project's Chapters**

In the following chapters I endeavor to assess the digital production of a selection of types of electronic works. As stated earlier, these chapters are not meant to be an exhaustive analysis on electronic literary possibilities, but, instead, are a selection of common digital forms within the field of electronic literature. This project's critical materialist approach to literary studies allows for careful consideration not only of the content and contexts of texts, but also of their form as vibrant objects by noting the particularities of the medium that produces them and the environment that they connect to and that connects them. In line with previous scholars who see technology as an entity needing its own methods and procedures for analyses, the following chapters "interrogate the form of the question itself, both with respect to the canonical literary-historical substratum that underlies presumptions of value about 'art,' as well as the old-fashioned presumptions of single authorship that defines the book as dominant literary form" (Henseler and Castillo 1). This type of approach also aligns with Hayles' earlier concept for Media-Specific Analysis (MSA) guidelines, "a kind of criticism that pays attention to the material apparatus producing the literary work as physical artifact" (*Writing Machines* 29). In turn, this leads to "[u]nderstanding literature as the interplay between form, content, and medium, MSA insists that texts must always be embodied to exist in the world. The materiality of those EMBODIMENTS interacts dynamically with linguistic, rhetorical, and literary practices to create the effects we call literature" (*Writing Machines* 31). Henseler, in *Spanish Fiction*

expands on this notion by noting that when authors have countless choices to produce works in the 21st century, attention to how these texts are presented is of great importance. Henseler details,

[w]hen authors have at their fingertips an entire world of information with a myriad of possible entry and exit points, individual sensibilities and experiences break down pre-established categories and critical approaches. This demands that scholars engage with new media technologies not in a generalized fashion, but rather on a very material, user-based level. (148)

This project approaches its primary texts in exactly this fashion in order to better understand not only the literary content, but also its connections with the larger digital and physical ecologies.

While I agree with both Henseler and Hayles in their advocating for a focused interrogation of an electronic text that looks at the specific constructs of a digital work, my project looks at the larger picture by incorporating the mesh or network in which a digital work is created. While I may be incorporating, at times, traditional close reading approaches, the broader foci are the relationships with the digital environment. Whereas Hayles asked for a MSA and Henseler for a focus on the electronic text, I broaden the analysis to more accurately see the convergences happening in the digital realm and the physical world inhabited. This type of ethnographic engagement serves to explain the selection of a particular medium by the author(s) of a given work or project. As a result my analysis does not stop at the analysis of the contents of a blog, a hypertext novel, a hybrid poem, or a hybrid short story. Instead, I also look at the digital and physical world connections: the e-scapes where electronic texts are being produced whether in personal sites, blog hosting companies, digital publishing houses, or the physical cityscape of, for example, Barcelona.

Current digital culture does not exist in a vacuum. Consideration of how a text lives in a digital environment that is constantly changing is a requirement for digital works as this element is an important factor, actant, in understanding Spanish culture and its digital assemblages. For example, my analysis of Edith Checa's *Como el cielo los ojos* in chapter 2 is strengthened because of the analysis in the production history of the electronic publishing house that Checa utilized, badosa.com. Subsequently, this publishing house's existence, since early Spanish Internet developments, dispels the stereotype of a Spain who has historically seen many setbacks in its efforts to modernize. Checa's work, hailed as potentially the first hypertext novel in Spanish language along with badosa.com's digital publishing house jointly help explain the levels of involvement of a Spanish culture that embraced and understood the potential that the digital could offer. Therefore, my analyses of the following chapters are both a close reading and an ethnographic contextual assemblage analysis that interrogates the text, but also incorporates the digital natures key in the development of meaning and functionality of projects.

Up until now, in the traditional publishing world, we could consider the library as the closest comparison to what I am proposing as a form of analysis, which in turn can almost return us to Borgesian propositions. Books are linked physically by the alphanumeric systems of organization; in English-speaking countries the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) codes come to mind. As for many print publications, this system is rather restrictive and does not allow for diversity or multiplicity of classification within the environment they are placed in. Books, shelves, and rows of these exist in a relatively monotone environment that does not particularly come to affect the text. Library patrons, upon entering the library stacks, may experience a book calling out to them as an actant force, but this analogy fails to capture all the nuances from the digital realm within the physical space of a

library. The Internet facilitates the access of content at more complex and personalized levels than a library's stacks can provide. The digital enables for more links and better explanations of the assemblages that give a work meaning (both external and internal) than any library system can offer. Keywords, new media, and mutual linking to a given text from human and digital actants can better inform users as they engage with, for example, Flash poems or of works with similar features and content. The multiple sensory elements like music and video that can accompany an electronic project mostly go unnoticed in this library metaphor and traditional analyses of literary works. The digital literary ecosystem is pivotal in understanding the content of electronic works. The path to this understanding comes via the agential components within digital literature. Subsequently, acknowledging the agency within literature is instrumental in understanding a text's potential, its technological capabilities and possibilities, and the mutations that the literary has undergone, is experiencing, and can transform into.

The following chapters argue that new media technologies are exerting agency on both the physical and cyber world, affecting how texts are produced, presented to the reader, and embedded into everyday life and within the Internet. This agency in new media technologies influences individuals by demanding attention via constant updates to software and making suggestions through data collected. Cyber technologies can also seek out new information by collaborating with search engines and social media. Technology has enhanced the presentation of texts by exploiting the screen through which readers must access content. Webpages also have the capability of tracking what the user does or what the user will do by, at times, anticipating the



user's actions.<sup>26</sup> These new mediums have enriched intertextuality from a material perspective by adding photographs, music, and moving images to a text, thus, transforming the notion of traditional literary works. Furthermore, the democratization visible in the writing, production, and dissemination process must now be incorporated into criticism of 21st century texts.<sup>27</sup> This can be achieved by following an approach that addresses the convergence of cyber-cultural properties. These elements have become part of everyday culture and, as a result, demand our attention as critics in order to understand their role in literature and, by extension, society and our lives.

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<sup>26</sup> Smart technology and anticipatory design are becoming more common both online and in physical spaces. Scholar Richard Harper in *Inside the Smart Home* (2003) addresses the technologies available to homes at the turn of the 21st century. These include control of the electrical grid, the temperature of the home, access to basic appliances via one's phone, and other features (3-4). Since the publication of his book, smartphones and increased availability of software, WiFi, and additional hardware have made smart features more common in Western countries and with a greater range of capabilities. Additionally, anticipatory design has been embedded into almost all areas of the Internet's webpages. This type of design allows webpages to predict when a user may be leaving a page and prompt the cybernaut with more information to try and keep the user engaged for a longer period of time. Anticipatory practices also allow websites to suggest similar products to what is being purchasing or has been purchased in the past, remember previously entered data, and adequately help the user perform tasks that need completing. The goals with this type of technology and design are meant to facilitate the tasks a person may want to complete, increase the productivity of both humans and businesses, and make things simple (Busche).

<sup>27</sup> On the democratization and collaborative nature and processes between humans and Internet technologies see Luis Moreno-Caballud's *Cultures of Anyone* (2015) and Mario Morales' "Hacia la democratización narrativa." Moreno-Caballud discusses various online events that explain a sampling of democratized Internet cultures. Of particular note is his example of the collaborative writing process that went into the "Manifiesto en defensa de los derechos fundamentales en Internet" (2009). This manifesto was published in reaction to the Law on Sustainable Economy or, as it was known popularly, The Ley Sinde, from the second last name of the Minister of Culture who promoted it, Ángeles González Sinde (Moreno-Caballud 139). The manifesto, when published online in 2009 was authored by over a dozen individuals who were not listed in the text, but the document was subsequently edited over a thousand times by the general public through shared electronic documents online. Additionally, Morales' article briefly outlines the major elements that go into the creation of online texts such as coders/coding, editors, readers, reader-writers, wiki-texts, etc., while also looking at human and electronic factors in hardware and software, as is the case where a written program can generate short poems.

Given the wide variety of electronic mediums of the late 20th and 21st centuries, to ignore the manner in which electronic literary or cultural texts are produced would disregard a major component that serves as part of the meaning-producing element and, of course, as a contextual element. The incorporation of the materiality or format in which electronic texts are being produced, published, and even consumed not only helps to understand the digital text, but as other scholars have done, this approach can serve to analyze the publishing world and practices that largely remained untouched for over 500 years. One can understand that “[l]iterature was never only words, never merely immaterial verbal constructions. Literary texts, like us, have bodies, an actuality necessitating that their materialities and meanings are deeply interwoven into each other” (Hayles, *Writing Machines* 107). Thus, an analysis on the medium that produces and lets flourish electronic texts will lead to a better understanding of literature, culture, and to a broader and increased understanding of cultural and social processes.

An approach that levels the various elements in the production of literary and cultural texts so that each element is of equal and similar importance leads to a better understanding of how one area of society, electronic texts in this project, can directly influence other similar objects or bodies, those who consume them. Within electronic literature, a clear element is the hyperlink, which serves to connect different pages or sources in the Internet. New media and computer science scholar Lev Manovich adds, “in the case of hyperlinking as implemented by HTML [...] no such relationship of hierarchy is assumed. The two sources connected through a hyperlink have equal weight; neither one dominates the other” (Manovich, *The Language of New*

*Media* 76).<sup>28</sup> In doing this a clearer image of the processes undergoing within digital texts and the Internet is made true, “the acceptance of hyperlinking in the 1980s can be correlated with contemporary culture’s suspicion of all hierarchies, and preference for the aesthetics of collage in which radically different sources are brought together within a singular cultural object” (ibid. 78). With these goals in mind, the following chapters aim to expand on the growing field of Spanish electronic literature while arguing for an analysis that not only takes note of the medium, but that critically interrogates the medium as an acting force in the creation of meaning and formulation of Spanish culture.

My project is organized into three chapters that sample various new media technologies and one chapter that addresses authorship’s convergence with the digital realm. Chapter 1: Emerging Networks, Active Bloggers, and 21st Century Public Intellectuals turns to engaged intellectual and literary figures of contemporary Spain, which I advance as cyber-intellectuals, who either maintained or currently have an active blog that they use in order to further their activist causes. In order to anchor my analysis within Spanish contexts and culture, I employ scholar and cyber-intellectual Remedios Zafra’s concept of the mythical *netiana*, a creature born and thriving in the World Wide Web that has the potential to create, inspire, and spark action in women users of the Internet. The topics or content of the mentioned blogs are all closely tied to women’s issues, queer politics, and human rights. The first two blogs, *Hartza* and *dosmanzanas* stand out from other blogs for their decentered approach in communicating matters related to the LGBT community by questioning and circumventing the institutional forces of traditional

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<sup>28</sup> Manovich continues, “[i]n the 1980s many critics described one of the key effects of ‘postmodernism’ as that of spatialization – privileging space over time, flattening historical time, refusing grand narratives. Computer media, which evolved during the same decade, accomplished this spatialization quite literally” (Manovich, *The Language of New Media* 78).

academia and news media. Furthermore, I make note of the importance of *Hartza* as a historical artifact by analyzing its unchanging interface, or visual webpage format, since its digital publication in 1995. I then turn to Beatriz Gimeno whose work is interconnected with different blogs and electronic magazines through a series of mutual links that are acting as a megaphone and creating a cross-listing effect that magnifies the reach of the author's work and the work of those she incorporates. The last case study is Kika Fumero's blog, an author and activist deeply concerned about gender issues and women's rights in Spain. In particular, I note the digital photography project that led her to reclaim her body and demystify women's menstrual cycles. Bloggers in these examples are activists who through the content of their blogs and the way they engage with other like-minded blogs are creating emerging networks of physical and digital resources to circumvent traditional and mainstream media. These cyber-intellectuals are succeeding, to varying degrees, in part because they understand the inherent energy that lies within the digital; their understanding (conscious or not) of new media technologies as having agency allows them to more easily connect with readers who are open to the propositions outlined in their blogs.

Chapter 2: Spanish Hypertext Novels: Navigating Contained Distractions argues for a complementary approach in analyzing hypertext novels like Edith Checa's *Como el cielo los ojos* and *Don Juan en la Frontera del Espiritu* by Juan José Díez. The chapter also contains a brief section that addresses digital avenues for publication in the form of badosa.com, an electronic publishing house. This also serves as a prime example of digital leaders who have created a cyber-ecosystem for authors to publish in. Checa's novel is one work published through badosa.com; some of Tina Escaja's work (see chapter 3) can also be found through this digital publisher. I begin my discussion by briefly contextualizing the development of hypertext novels

by analyzing Edith Checa's project *Como el cielo los ojos*. Checa's novel also serves as an example of a Spanish culture that was actively involved in the digital frontier. *Como el cielo los ojos* was published in 1998, a relatively early date for digital Hispanic projects. Checa's novel is likely the first Spanish hypertext novel and would position the author as a pioneer in the field of electronic literature and of Spanish electronic texts. Díez's work is a multimedia Web novel that can still classify as a hypertext novel, but which he insists in calling a *webnovela* due to the extensive use of Internet sources throughout. His novel should be read as a series of assemblages that connect with various sensory elements. *Don Juan en la Frontera del Espíritu* masterfully incorporates music, images, and links to videos and government webpages in Spain and the United States of America. For this chapter, I establish how a traditional analysis for a published novel would be inefficient and insufficient since such an analysis would not acknowledge the sound, music, photographs, moving images, and the overall production process that accompany these projects. In the case of Checa's novel, which uses minimal new media technologies, it would be impossible to publish and, consequently, read the novel in a traditional manner because of the structure that governs the hypertext novel. While traditional literary genres allude to other works, hypertext novels allow for direct engagement with outside components through the use of links, embedded images, and accompanying media in order to add meaning to literary projects.

In chapter 3, *Scanning Through New Fusions: How New Technology Hybridized Publications and Public Spaces*, I examine some of the effects that digital projects and technologies have had on the production of published texts by looking at hybrid books that incorporate electronic codes within the text. *Código de barras* by Tina Escaja, a poetry collection and *Por mis muertos*, a collection of short stories by Flavia Company demonstrate how smartphones and the Internet have come to infuse literature and create hybrid publications. This

chapter also includes an analysis of a few projects that the city of Barcelona has completed and continues to embark on by embedding their physical cityscape with Quick Response (QR) codes. Escaja's poetry collection and the digital art exhibit that accompanied the presentation of this project show technology at the center of a process that is creating meaning. When the barcode is scanned, or now clicked on, the dimensions of the publications are exponentially increased as the many barcodes serve to add sound, music, poems, and a firm grounding of historical and cultural components to the meaning being conveyed in the poems and collection as a whole. The openings and attachments that the barcodes create throughout the collection of poems are instrumental in explaining the themes in Escaja's poems. Without these the conclusions on her project would be inadequate and incomplete. Company's more scaled back use of QR codes in her collection of short stories falls under a similar analysis, but in her book, the embedded codes are achieving other goals. The more present effect of the QR codes and of the content within Company's short stories is the disregard for what is real and what is fiction. The fusion of what can be confirmed in the physical world we inhabit is constantly questioned by the characters and situations narrated along her book, but this is also achieved through the QR codes that, once scanned, confirm some details or provide further information to continue the play on reality. The more interesting effect for this project is the blurring of the physical world with the digital world as the reader must navigate both at the same time while reading the publication and scanning the QR codes as they come up while flipping through the pages. This, in turn, mimics the cultural reality experienced by many in the 21st century who must live in both the physical and digital spheres. The last case study of this chapter turns to the streets of Barcelona, though other cities have incorporated QR codes for various purposes. The projects presented show the convergence of how Barcelona has accepted the digital realm by carefully embedding QR codes throughout its

streets in important historical spaces or culturally significant quarters of the city. All three case studies show how the codes used by the authors or city projects are expanding the reach of the published text or physical object by imbuing it with a digital life in cyberspace that mirrors the current culture of those who inhabit both the physical world and the digital via their smartphones or tablets.

The final section of this project, chapter 4, *The Author Is Dead, Long Live the Author: How Technology Reconfigured Authorship* analyzes the role of the author in the 21st century within a new media technology context. After briefly presenting some historical components about the rise of the author and of copyright law, I turn to the trajectory of two Catalan authors, Isabel Franc and Thais Morales. This chapter proposes that authorship has continued to act as a malleable concept. Franc and Morales have turned to blogs and their readers in order to develop their respective and mutual works and, at times, have directly incorporated suggestions from readers. This further complicates what is an author or where authorship resides. The chapter explores the trajectory of both writers and their pseudonyms as they navigate through print and digital mediums. After a discussion of pseudonyms and heteronyms, I put forth a new form of looking at authorship: dynamic authorship. Dynamic authorship traverses different mediums and employs heterogeneous discourses in print and digital publications allowing for a multiplicity of voices to emerge and consequently expand the reach of the author-individual. This form of authorship prioritizes collaboration in an implicit manner, where an author-individual relies on pre-existing templates (for blogging, tweeting, publishing webpages, etc.), and explicitly, where two or more individuals jointly work on a project. Dynamic authorship is aided by partnering with the digital revolution of the last decades of the 20th century and amplified with social media and the Internet during the 21st century. It is a highly mediated form of authoring that relies on

the interdependent use of new technology to produce and reproduce a text. This approach into authorship better explains the processes that are taking place in the production of texts within highly digitized environments.



“[La literatura tiene] el papel de despertar por un lado la imaginación y la proximidad del lector a otras vidas ... la literatura en general y la narrativa en particular permite que la narración de la historia, la narración de lo que nos ha ocurrido a todos no dependa solo de los vencedores porque la Historia, la historia canónica, siempre la dan los vencedores. En cambio, la literatura o la novela permite que haya voces que no han tenido la posibilidad de contar la historia desde ese punto de vista.”  
-Eduardo Mendicutti

“... through the efforts of thought in language, or precisely through the excesses of the languages whose very multitude is the only sign of life, one can attempt to bring about multiple sublations of the unnameable, the unrepresentable, the void. This is the real cutting edge of dissidence.”  
-Julia Kristeva

## **Chapter 1: Emerging Networks, Active Bloggers, and 21st Century Public**

### **Intellectuals**

My first interaction with the blogs I will be analyzing in this and other chapters was almost accidental. I had begun my graduate study and noticed that the authors and scholars that interested me also had blogs to which they regularly posted. What was most exciting at the time was that these bloggers appeared to interact on a regular basis with their readers in the comments section or by including them in their posts. As my scholarly pursuits progressed I returned to blogs and the digital humanities and noticed that the Spanish blogs were behaving as more than typical blogs in that they were not only detailing autobiographical incidents about the blogger nor posting random topical entries. Instead, these blogs were, in effect, creating a larger network of sources for a given community and building on an engaged public intellectual tradition in Spain. Blogging allows Spain to emerge as a 21st century nation that is not only technologically aware, but also very engaged with current digital advances and, as part of my analysis will show,

it positions some Spanish bloggers at the forefront of digital innovation by having engaged with blog technology during its early years.

Blogging is a rich writing form that has been made popular since the mid 1990s after the commercialization of the Internet to the masses. This popularity and momentum of the genre led Merriam-Webster to choose “blog” as the word of the year in 2004. However, Merriam-Webster’s definition, even for 2004, is lacking: “blog (noun) [short for *Weblog*] (1999): a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer” (“blog”).<sup>29</sup> Blogs have become incredibly versatile as I will explain below and now almost always require a qualifier in order to begin understanding its content and purpose: literary blog, political blog, news blog, etc. It is estimated there are over 181,000,000 blogs in cyberspace with a new blog created every 1.5 seconds (“Buzz”). Tumblr is the latest blogging technology to emerge from the Internet with a mass appeal worldwide, but with a focus on audiovisual technology that facilitates the sharing of photographs, short videos, and gifs along with the standard, but usually shorter, text entries (tumblr). This microblogging form comes from a more extensive form of digital writing that goes back to creating lists of hyperlinks that would help cybernauts navigate the Web and find similar content – before search engines were available.<sup>30</sup> Blogs with only lists eventually evolved into what can be described as digital versions of lengthy day-to-day writing that resembled personal journals. Posting of topical segments in varying length would also follow (Rak 171). The popularity of this medium is

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<sup>29</sup> The brackets and formatting are from the original.

<sup>30</sup> Additionally, what constitutes the microblogging form becomes nebulous given that common media are associated with these posts (for example: photographs, videos, gifs, memes). The subjective definition: “freedom and brevity are the current appeal of microblogging over traditional blogging, which often focuses on established topics using stylized and sometimes lengthy prose” (DeVoe 213; see also Kaplan and Haenlein 106), does not provide clear parameters, but instead points to a general framework.

supported by the ease with which one can find a particular blog on any subject by simply typing a blogger's name or the topic of interest into a search engine. However, given that over a short period of time websites such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo! to name a few have become powerful search engines through which almost all data on the Internet flow, the role that blogs play is more pivotal both online and in the physical world.

This chapter will analyze the new and established ways in which blogs are affecting both the digital and physical world through their flexible and networked nature. I will explore how not only their content, but most of all the ways in which bloggers organize their blogs and links to others becomes a strategic tool to inform readers, question existing norms, and establish new and more inclusive practices in society that take into consideration marginalized communities. In this chapter I will especially engage with blogs that focus on women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities. In a way, what these bloggers are doing is creating their own network of sources and content on the Internet, an emerging network that in part mirrors their friendships from the physical world and their overlapping interests in social activism with the LGBT community. What is being witnessed with these individual and collective blogs is a form of public intellectuals as theorized by philosophers Antonio Gramsci and Julia Kristeva. However, in the 21st century, public intellectuals must navigate through a highly digitized milieu.

Public intellectuals are individuals or groups of people who are meaningfully engaged with social issues. These intellectuals can come from various walks of life: artists, teachers, professors, activists, writers, and even politicians who will often challenge the status quo. An influential definition of what makes an intellectual comes from the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci who distinguished between traditional and organic intellectuals. For Gramsci, the

traditional intellectual has a formative base in established concepts of reason and truth and receives the status of intellectual mostly or exclusively from institutional and dominant social groups such as learning institutions or the government (Gramsci 142). Gramsci details, “there are historically formed specialised [sic] categories for the exercise of the intellectual function. They are formed in connection with all social groups, but especially in connection with the more important, and they undergo more extensive and complex elaboration in connection with the dominant social group” (142). The traditional intellectual serves to refine existing knowledge for the ruling class or existing social structures.

Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, speak to the interests of a specific class of the proletariat or a particular disenfranchised subgroup of the working class. They are distinguished less by their profession and more by the function they play in directing the ideas of the group they seek to represent, a group aligned in opposition to the ruling structures of society. Gramsci is particularly interested in those intellectuals that will tend to the interests of the working class. Scholar Helen Small continues this line of thought when she writes that

[t]his kind of organized, and organizing, intellectual does not just speak to or for these constituencies, but gets involved in struggles between different interests and alliances which will, inevitably, be divisive at times as well as co-operative. He or she turns thought into action, but modestly (or not immodestly) seeks to let both thought and action be responsive to pressure from others. (8)

The point Small articulates here is pivotal as will be discussed below: the bloggers at hand will also pressure their fellow colleagues and friends to create strains within marginalized groups of society.

In contrast, the public intellectual in 21st century Spain should be understood as a *cyber-intellectual*. This type of intellectual thrives in the digital world, straddles both the physical and digital spheres, and is thus mindful of the state of contemporary culture. These intellectuals are able to reach out to and captivate large audiences in order to share their opinion and knowledge on a particular area. Additionally, they embody a strong dissident component as the French theorist, Julia Kristeva, has theorized when she expanded on Gramsci's intellectual. A problem does arise when an organic intellectual from a disenfranchised class becomes part of the hegemonic order in that these organic intellectuals could be absorbed by established power structures. This makes distinguishing between the previous traditional intellectuals and until then organic intellectuals troublesome. Moreover, the initial concept of organic intellectual has led way to other possibilities of intellectuals not associated with the traditional working class that was of interest to Gramsci. Many of these intellectuals are now associated with feminist, queer, people of color, or other disenfranchised groups of society. One of these is the feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva who in her essay "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident" stresses the need for a "re-evaluation of the relationship of the masses to the individual or intellectual, and on our ability to break out of the dialectical trap between these oppositions and to recast the whole relationship" (*The Kristeva Reader* 293). For Kristeva, the dissident intellectual can take different shapes: the rebel, the psychoanalyst, the writer, and the women who feel exiled (ibid. 295-96). For the purpose of this chapter, the writer is of particular interest as Kristeva explains, there is the writer who experiments with the limits of identity, producing texts where the law does not exist outside language. A playful language therefore gives rise to a law that is over-turned, violated and pluralized, a law upheld only to allow a polyvalent,

polylogical sense of play that sets the being of the law ablaze in a peaceful, relaxing void.

*(The Kristeva Reader 295)*

Furthermore, Kristeva's dissident intellectual is of interest since her intellectual requires an element of theory, or critical thought, not as prevalent in Gramsci's public intellectual. Kristeva elaborates on this and writes that, "[f]or true dissidence today is perhaps simply what it has always been: thought [...] thought is tenable only as an 'analytic position' that affirms dissolution and works through differences. It is an analytic position in the face of conceptual, subjective, sexual and linguistic identity" (*The Kristeva Reader 299*). I see this thought, which Kristeva underscores, as something that can be translated as the organizing, informing, and disseminating of information through appropriate channels, channels that in the 21st century must be digital and, more specifically, through the blogosphere.

Thus, we could see the cyber-intellectual, Spain's 21st century digitally connected public intellectual, as a likely evolution of the concepts of the figure developed by Gramsci and Kristeva. The cyber-intellectual has a strong sense of social commitment in bettering the lives of a particular disenfranchised group and, by extension, of society at large. More specifically, for these intellectuals it is of high importance that they are digitally versed with new technologies and interconnected with others in order to adapt to the needs of a particular collective and of society's fast-pace rhythm. Technology plays an important role in disseminating their work and thought; the Web is a powerful partner. Additionally, there is an interconnected element, collaborative in nature, which makes visible a web of relationships and organizations working together for common goals that serve to highlight the diversity of issues that affect an already wide group of people. With this in mind, a cyber-ecological approach will expose the counter-hegemonic potential of queer blogs by directly inserting marginalized voices in ongoing

discussions, establishing emerging networks through content uploads and linked sites, and, thus, circumventing established power by dissolving digital and physical boundaries that otherwise limit queer-identifying individuals.

Digital innovations in science and technology have had repercussions throughout society and across the globe affecting every area of study while also creating new fields. How technology comes to affect and interact with the lives of women was a key interest of the first cyberfeminists during the early 1990s.<sup>31</sup> Cyberfeminism has come to influence mainstream feminism by theorizing the problems that women face in association with rapidly changing technology. Cyberfeminists also acknowledged the attraction to the prefix “cyber” from younger generations in society and incorporated this prefix as part of their label and practice (Fernandez and Wilding 17-18; Sollfrank 1). While the origins of the word and concept can be traced to multiple distinct actors (mainly collective and individual art projects that then multiplied across the globe) from Australia, the United States of America, and England, cyberfeminism’s propositions and theoretical implications have gone beyond those boundaries.<sup>32</sup>

This chapter, however, will focus on blogs that take on an explicitly activist role aimed at furthering women’s rights and LGBT causes. The literary field has not been exempt from digital influences. Literary blogs may be one of the clearer reactions to new media where authors – established or new – can directly publish their work without having the backing of a publishing

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<sup>31</sup> I would like to briefly acknowledge the complexity and problematic nature of the word woman/women. In this chapter woman/women refers to a wide and inclusive range of cis- and trans-gendered individuals who identify as women. The sampled blogs in this study tend to use women to identify a range of individuals independently of their sex, sexuality, or other identifying characteristic.

<sup>32</sup> For a lengthier summary of this field and its Spanish implications see Margaret Andrews’ “Ethics, Gender and the Internet: An Exploration of some Spanish Feminists’ Praxis” in the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*.

house. Concha García and María Castrejón are among those authors who publish original work directly to their respective blogs. García, a poet and professor of literature at the Universidad de Barcelona, publishes poems on a regular basis to her blog, *café la lejana*. Often times these poems are accompanied by photographs, links to websites, or the blogs of other individuals, elements that would not be feasible in print publications. Castrejón, a scholar and poet, also routinely publishes poems and short stories, along with excerpts from her non-fiction books.

Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells in his three volume work on Internet culture and politics writes, “it is in the realm of symbolic politics, and in the development of issue-oriented mobilizations by groups and individuals outside the mainstream political system that new electronic communication may have the most dramatic effects” (Castells 352). The networking of like-minded people through digital forms of communication can allow groups with social goals, such as LGBT issues, to meet, organize, and exact force on the physical world. However, his and others’ analyses continue to place humans at the center of the individual analysis, but what I propose here is that technological advances in both hardware and software are actants in their own right. Technological elements are, at the very least, agential objects that are now independently acting, and may have always been doing so, on human beings.

In what follows I will present philosopher and cyber-intellectual Remedios Zafra’s *netiana*, an heir to Donna Haraway’s posthuman and cyborg theories, to clarify the agency that nonhuman elements and technology hold. The blogs below are four case studies: four individual Spanish blogs that are able to capture various aspects of new materialist theories that will lead to a better understanding of how blog technology is affecting and interacting with the human component of society by catapulting the authors as leaders of a community. The first two blogs, *Hartza* and *dosmanzanas*, stand out from other blogs for their decentered approach in



communicating matters related to the LGBT community by questioning and circumventing the institutional forces of traditional academia and news media. By existing as a blog in opposition to the status quo and as a blog that is circumventing the processes of academia and mainstream news media, their target communities, and anyone who may find their content of interest, do not have to enter into social restrictions to access this content. I then turn to Beatriz Gimeno whose work is interconnected with various blogs and electronic magazines and journals through a series of links that are acting as a megaphone and creating a cross-listing effect that magnifies the reach of the author's work and the work of those she incorporates. The last case study is a blog by Kika Fumero, an author and activist deeply concerned with gender issues and women's rights, particularly from Spain. Her young career is overshadowed by the extensive work that incorporates various Spanish artists and activists, making her blog a chorus of dissident voices that speak on behalf of gender identity and women. Before delving into the individual blogs, I would like to begin with a theorization of technology and its confluence with the human.

### ***Zafra's Netiana, an Heir to Haraway's Cyborg***

Donna Haraway's theory of the cyborg is arguably the best-known machine-human theory of recent decades. In "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1984) Haraway describes her cyborgs as "creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted [...] couplings between organism and machine" (291-92). She conceptualizes the cyborg as a creature in a post-gendered world, "a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" (Haraway 302). Her theories combine a physical human embodiment with a non-organic element bound to the body. However, Haraway's cyborg

theories do not incorporate the machine perspective of the cyborg nor, much less, treat that element as agential. She writes, “[w]e can be responsible for machines; *they* do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are *they*” (315). Her vision of the combined elements that form the cyborg is a full fusion where human control continues over the machine component. Little importance is given to the machine side before and after it has fused with the human body; it is only associated as a single object that does not take into consideration external inorganic elements.

With time, Haraway’s initial theory of the cyborg has been expanded and interpreted beyond a physical joining of machine and human. With the development of new technologies in the 1990s and turn of the 21st century, interest in cyborgs has grown and with it emerged a variety of branches. While Haraway is hailed as the most prominent theorist and credited with making the field more visible, additional definitions and theories became necessary as the field expanded. In the introduction to *The Cyborg Handbook* (1995), the cyborg is described and divided into four classes: *restorative*, *normalizing*, *reconfiguring*, and *enhancing* (Gray et al. 3). Of interest for this chapter are the reconfigured cyborgs described as “posthuman creatures equal to but different from humans, like what one is now when interacting with other creatures in cyberspace or, in the future, the type of modifications proto-humans will undergo to live in space or under the sea having given up the comforts of terrestrial existence” (ibid.). This type of cyborg is one that is not discernable from others. The machine elements that have interacted with the human side of the person have been incorporated without visible changes or prosthesis to the body. The physical visibility of the machine side on the human body is still a possibility under the first two examples listed by the authors.

For many individuals the machine and human combination has been a relationship

quickly assimilated, but the processes that have taken place have modified human physiology and social interactions. In the field of psychology some have noted that the heightened use of visual technology has increased visual intelligence, but “the cost seems to be deep processing: mindful knowledge acquisition, inductive analysis, critical thinking, imagination, and reflection” (Greenfield 71). This coincides with pop culture development when it comes to instant gratification through technology and the fast pace of information generated by Internet technologies (Green et al. 447-48; Prensky 3). Some studies from the World Health Organization have shown that constant contact with digital hardware or being near equipment that emits constant electromagnetic fields for WiFi and other invisible wavelengths needed to operate smartphones and tablets have had an effect on the users’ minds and their skin (“Electromagnetic”). Other studies go beyond these reactions to technology noting there could be deeper effects on people’s brains, but these studies also stress the lack of research on long-term exposure with technology that emits low-level electromagnetic wavelengths (*The SEAWIND Project*). The digital field’s expansion must include technology as the source of action not only to adequately gauge technology’s effects on the human body and the environment, but also to better understand technology itself.

In Spain, Remedios Zafra, a scholar devoted to the study of critical theory and the intersections of women, technology, and art, has furthered the expansion and development of the cyborg field. In 2005, well over a decade after Haraway’s cyborg first appeared, Zafra introduced the mythical *netiana*, an heir of the earlier theorized cyborg: “[un] sujeto posthumano e inmaterial que n(h)ace en Internet.<sup>33</sup> Figuración teórica alternativa del sujeto en red [...] que sugiere nuevas preguntas sobre las formas de ser y de relacionarnos en el universo on line”

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<sup>33</sup> Zafra is combining *nacer* and *hacer* or to be born and to do in order to better explain the fusion of these two components and describe the creation and development of the *netiana*.

(*Netianas* 23). The *netiana* was intended to act as a theoretical and praxis-oriented figure emulating the type of work Zafra advocates. This new digital creation, desirous and productive, is one that inhabits the Web (*Netianas* 23). Zafra's *netiana* is aware that the Internet offers only an opportunity for diversity and creation that may give new meaning to the political condition of women online and, by extension, in the physical world (*Netianas* 161). To interpret the Internet as a purely positive or negative entity would be problematic: "the Internet has been harnessed for progressive purposes as well as for reactionary ones [...] but it does facilitate the opening of discursive spaces within which they [the counterhegemonic discourses] may be formulated and conveyed" (Warf and Grimes 263, 270). The Web can be a space to create counterhegemonic discourses that can destabilize the status quo and, for Zafra, the rigid categories of gender and sexual identity.

Consequently, Zafra is also aware of the symbolic weight that the Internet carries favoring heteronormative and patriarchal values. In *Netianas*, Zafra acknowledges that the Internet or "papá Microsoft [...] controla de la misma manera que Internet repite, los patrones de jerarquización patriarcal del mundo off line" (*Netianas* 33). Zafra is weary of the implications from the physical world and its social, patriarchal, and hierarchical norms from which the Internet is not completely exempt. This approach is a departure from the more utopian positioning of other theorists in that Zafra is able to articulate that more than technological advancements is necessary to change models of thinking (Núñez and García 44). Additionally, 2-red.net, one of the websites that Zafra manages, acts as the grounding of her theory in order to prevent it from becoming overtly utopian. The site is presented as a space only for women, which Zafra titles "habitar en (punto) net." The site serves as a depository for some of her work, but is intended to promote social and political change for Spanish women by also including

essays and art pieces from other scholars and activists. For Zafra, inhabiting the Web entails an exchange between the person and the environment that surrounds the individual that goes beyond a mere visual exchange. She notes that for women and marginalized people, “[s]on los espacios por hacer los que ofrecen más posibilidades para la no-repetición de los viejos modelos de jerarquización social, más posibilidades para imaginar las nuevas condiciones creativas, sociales y políticas de un mundo post-Internet” (Zafra, “habitar”). Zafra is very conscious that the Web has a lot of potential to create given that marginalized people may find less obstruction online than in the physical world.

With this in mind, the *netiana* inherits characteristics of Haraway’s cyborg, but also of theorists Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic subject and Judith Butler’s concept of performativity. Braidotti sees nomadism as “the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior [...] It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling” (*Nomadic Subjects* 5). The nomad is able to disengage and destabilize established forms of consciousness and being by favoring spaces (mental or physical) that allow for transitions and movement. Nomadism refuses to adhere to any identity as permanent and “aims to rethink the unity of the subject, without reference to humanistic beliefs, without dualistic oppositions, linking instead body and mind in a new set of intensive and often intransitive transitions” (*Nomadic Subjects* 31). Braidotti would later further this concept with regard to the use of the Internet suggesting that women’s ethical commitments should include digital spaces, “a new embodied becoming, a shift of perspective which allows individuals to set their pace and rate of change while moving towards workable social forms of consensus” (“Cyberfeminism with a Difference” 257). Additionally, Zafra’s *netiana* borrows from Butler’s idea of performativity, where gender is an expression, but much more than a

performance from an individual: “[i]n other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of *signifying* absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause” (Butler 173). These acts, gestures, and productions of one’s gender

are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. (Butler 173)

Unlike Butler’s explanation, Zafra’s *netiana* goes through a performance on the Web where she could more freely express herself clearly separated from corporeal restrictions and aesthetic norms in and because of the physical world.

Zafra’s digital creature is posthuman and immaterial, born and thriving in the Internet, positioned as an alternative to the subject who connects and disconnects from the Web. Like the cyborg, the *netiana* is positioned beyond gender and stands against hegemonic structures (Zafra, “El mito netiana” 142). This creation is purely digital and here lies a potential pitfall since Zafra does not connect the *netiana* to the individual on the other side of the screen, outside cyberspace. Zafra goes on to clarify in her essay that “[n]uestros cuerpos netianas (de haberlos) no podrían ser entendidos como una categoría biológica, sí tal vez como una *performatividad*, una nueva variedad de cuerpos-verbo de apariencia múltiple y cambiante que al enunciarse están ya realizándose” (“El mito netiana” 143). However, Zafra does not reconcile how *netianas* connect back to the physical and material world of women cybernauts. While Zafra’s goal could be said “to alert women to the online construction of new female identities and communities, through affective strategies of infiltration in the technological realm like, for example, active

participation on activist blogs” (Núñez and García 45), the *netiana* distances its self from this active role. Zafra’s *netiana* may exist, but Zafra fails to reinsert this mythical creation into an environment that can mold or even create identities from within the Web or, most importantly, beyond, its digital confines. In order to reconcile Zafra’s *netiana* within a blog framework one must allow nonhuman and inorganic elements the capacity to have agency and come to affect the lives and bodies of the Internet’s human users. This type of movement is facilitated through Alaimo’s concept of *transcorporeality* and Bennett’s *vital materiality* as discussed in the introduction.

Technology should not be understood as a passive form of matter waiting for the user to activate it. Hardware is not waiting to be turned on at the touch of a human and software does not only follow directives from human coding or direct instruction. Instead, both hardware and software elements have already acted on the human self suggesting that it turn on the device and interact with any given software program such as a Web browser or an application. These digital actants, some of which may have been placed directly by the user-author such as links to pages, blogs, and other digital elements, serve to strengthen the blogger(s) content and website. While the author may have only wanted to transport the reader to a specific article or image in a website, the link creates a relationship between the two sites and informs search engines of the relevance of both. This relationship in turn facilitates the flow of information by validating the existence of both pages linked. It can also further a capitalist outcome where links either facilitate purchases or where advertisements find more logical spaces due to the actions from the user throughout cyberspace. These ideas take better shape when joined together with Zafra’s *netiana*, a creation from cyberspace and within cyberspace that has agency, but that does not materialize into human form.

While Zafra is visualizing and developing her mythological creation from within cyberspace and indirectly, but coincidentally, giving cybertechnology the agential power to create and then affect the physical-material world, she does not address the latter details. It is in cyberspace that the *netiana* exists by digital means and non-human action. Because of these factors this digital creation from the 21st century can be an actant impacting the material and digital world of those who inhabit both. The link making this possible is Alaimo and Bennett's agential concepts through which the *netiana* can find a path to exact, instigate, suggest, have tangible effects on the individuals interacting and engaging with digital content, and, by extension, empowering women. If we see identity as something porous and in constant contact with agential elements such as the Web, we are left with a self that can be and is continuously being modified, molded, and influenced by the digital world. Some of the self resides within the materiality of its body while a portion of the self resides in cyberspace. Both places are in constant flux. Given these parameters, the content of any and all material found in cyberspace becomes of greater importance. This cyber environment becomes a ripe location for contesting social, political, and economic norms given the mass availability of digital content to people across various geo-political and economic boundaries.

### **Queer Activism and Blogging**

The most visible and reoccurring theme in the following Spanish blogs and bloggers (Javier Sáez, *dosmanzanas*, Beatriz Gimeno, and Kika Fumero) is the queer content that fills their entries. Blogs, as a specific cyber platform, serve to accentuate the Internet's queerness by having the malleable capacity to become what the author needs and to hold multiple purposes.



As stated earlier, the Internet “may be of particular importance to small or marginal groups with limited finances or expectation of mainstream support for their views” (Friedman 5). While blogs were originally used as a way of keeping track of hyperlinks and various digital lists, blogs quickly evolved to a type of journal writing that was published on the Web (Rak 166). Around the turn of the century blogs saw their popularity soar, enough that various companies created user-friendly platforms that facilitated the creation of blogs (Bruns 250-51). LiveJournal, Blogger, and WordPress are but a few of the more important providers of this service of which WordPress is currently the most popular. In more recent years blogs, through these host sites, have seen an evolution that makes blogging more difficult to categorize. While some bloggers continue to use this digital tool as a form of daily journal writing, others have used blog spaces as an activist platform from which to speak out, as a publishing source for their creative writing or art work, and, even, as an academic platform from which to develop theoretical and critical frameworks (Kjellberg).

Activism regarding Spain’s lesbian and gay culture is a relatively recent development of the last few decades. Even more recent is Spain’s theoretical tradition with queer theory, which has seen a steady rise since the late 1990s. These statements could come as a surprise given the progressive laws the Spanish government passed in 2005 and 2007, which led to the legalization of same-sex marriages and gender protections, respectively. The latter of the laws established protections and clarified freedoms such as facilitating the process for transgender individuals to change their identification card and other documents without having to get surgery, which some transgender individuals do not find necessary. Despite not receiving as much attention for its theoretical production revolving around queer theory, Spain has seen publications on this topic since 1997 with the anthology edited by Xosé María Buxán, *Conciencia de un singular deseo*.

However, it is Ricardo Llamas' text, *Teoría torcida* (1998), which is arguably the first queer theoretical publication. This text marks a formal beginning to queer theory in Spain. Besides being the first full text dedicated to theoretical thought, Llamas is able to engage with previous theorists that form the base of queer thought such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Monique Wittig, to name a few. However, Llamas brings to light the Spanish experience by pulling in examples of Spanish law and culture. What Llamas does in this publication is interrogate queer theory by giving it a Spanish setting and context for the Spanish audience he is targeting. Llamas' text has generated many more original publications from Spain by Lucas Platero, Paul B. Preciado,<sup>34</sup> Javier Sáez, and David Córdoba.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, some of these individuals have translated canonical work on gender and queer theory into Spanish, an invaluable undertaking that allows Spanish scholars and philosophers to engage with both English language and Spanish texts. The theoretical production in Spain has managed to develop a very complex and thoughtful theoretical framework interwoven with its national activist culture that is showing ripple effects outside of Spain. It is this precise combination of theory and activism that is fueling Spain's theoretical richness. The multi-front approach exhibited in these philosophers and activists is being powered in the 21st century by a heavy electronic and Web-based component in blog and electronic publications. This combination of elements is what has

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<sup>34</sup> Previously known as Beatriz, Paul B. Preciado announced his transition and detailed a few aspects of his transition in an interview with *Página 12*. He has chosen to keep only the letter "B" as a middle initial to remember his past. I have included Paul's birth name in the works cited in the hopes of not confusing those who may want to search for his work and who would need to look under a slightly different name.

<sup>35</sup> See Works Cited for individual texts by these authors. Additionally, a couple of volumes stand out related to queer theory: *El eje del mal es heterosexual*, edited by Carmen Romero Bachiller et al. and *Teoría Queer: Políticas Bolleras, Maricas, Trans, Mestizas* by the already mentioned Córdoba, Sáez, and Vidarte. Many of these authors and their texts can be found in *Hartza*, the first case study analyzed below.

led to the following analysis that treats blogs, hyperlinks, and interface as actants holding the capacity to take active roles from within cyberspace and onto the physical world.

I would like to stress the agency that these blogs hold independently from the author(s)-blogger(s). Many of the entries are filled with information intended for the target audience of these blogs, which one could safely assume intersects: those who would read *dosmanzanas* would have an interest in *Hartzza* or the posts from Gimeno; the entries by Fumero hold relevance in relation to Gimeno and the work found in *Hartzza*. Even more important here would be the links which many of these blogs employ. The hyperlinks in fact serve the purpose of transporting the reader to the blogger's intended destination, but hyperlinks do more than just this. After directing the user to the specific page the blog's author intended to show, the original blogger's purpose could be in peril, but this is not an exclusively negative effect. The reader of a blog who has followed-up on a hyperlink is now being affected by this new webpage environment and, in return, this page could have countless hyperlinks, buttons, and tabs that continue to engage the reader. A new page, like most websites, is intended to keep a user in that site for as long as possible to either garner more hits for economic purposes or to advance a political goal. Bennett would agree with this setup since she sees actants as never really acting alone: "[an actant's] efficiency or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces" (J. Bennett 21). This digital ecology is one that heavily influences both the reader who would be immersed in the material of a webpage or in the advertisements of a given site. For the blogger, the environment acts in similar ways since this digital author needs to create pages that will speak to those who visit the site and will inform the visitors in a quick and logical manner (this logical manner could manifest itself in different forms).

The linking to other similar blogs, sites, organizations, etc. is rather useful as search engines have come to dominate which information and data comes up when one completes a search. Running a basic search on sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo! will result in search hits deemed most “relevant.” These are results that search engines find important based on algorithms they use while looking for the keywords that the user typed into the search engine. The algorithm is based on the way that a search engine has indexed the Internet and “other factors” (“How Search Works”), which are not published by companies but that likely include the number of views a webpage has received, the number of clicks, and the potential for usefulness or, the opposite, spam. The relevance of a site can also be based on recent or potential monetary gains. Suggestions given by search engines can be improved based on the specificity or combination of keywords that the user types, but the average user may not be as conscious of the requirements of the search engine. The content of many LGBT sites, blogs, and organizations, which continue to be marginal within the digital confines, is susceptible to these algorithmic parameters. Thus, LGBT blogs or websites with little traffic or with a very particular type of content may not be deemed relevant enough to appear on a Web search. Networking, as it was understood in the earlier years of the World Wide Web, becomes crucial once again as these search engines transform into the center of the digital world,

[f]irst, because search engines use link structure to help predict useful pages, bloggers, as the most prolific and timely linkers, have disproportionate role in shaping search-engine results. Second, because the blogging community is so highly self-referential, bloggers’ paying attention to other bloggers magnifies their visibility and power. The ‘echo chamber’ that critics decry is also an amplifier. (O’Reilly 41)

Direct links and mentions from within the blog carry more weight as they seek to create an emerging network with like-minded blogs, sites, and other new media by directly informing the user of content that may be of interest.

Queer themed blogs, then, begin to act as micro search engines within a given field by quickly guiding the user to similar blogs, bloggers, and other sites through links and informative blog posts. The caveat here is that the information that this mini search engine generates is biased from the perspective of the blog's author and this could turn problematic. However, all things would be biased. The bias of a huge corporation like Google is not clear, but its goals definitely are: generate earnings through the organizing and ordering of the World Wide Web to its users via the current social, political, and economic establishments – establishments which do not favor a LGBT public (Perales 142). In turn, a blog can restructure part of the power that search engines have amassed by establishing its own links for information, consumption, and overall enjoyment. An example of this form of production is *Hartza*, a website in blog format that links to work in queer theory, LGBT activism, and psychoanalysis, among other topics.

### **An Early Blog With a Lasting Impact: Sáez' *Hartza***

*Hartza* is a blog-site founded by Javier Sáez, an influential Spanish philosopher whose interests are mirrored in the website: psychoanalysis, queer theory, LGBT activism, and, in particular, HIV awareness. The blog maintains an earlier 1990s blog aesthetic compared to that of the newer platforms that Blogger and WordPress provide. The overall appearance is indicative of when the blog was first created, in 1995. Sáez' site presents sets of blog entries in the form of hyperlinks that either open up files or transport the user to other sites. The contents of these

entries can only be read by clicking and opening the file or going to the new page that *Hartza* links to and cannot be easily skimmed like current blog entries. This format could be interpreted negatively as the aesthetic of the site is deemed old, at the moment of writing this in 2017, or outdated even though it is kept relatively up to date with new content and links. This site, originally a depository for Sáez' work, houses texts from a variety of influential Spanish theorists and critics who often times engage with each other on various matters.

The contents housed in *Hartza* include works from well-known theorists and activists from Spain. Entries are organized by topic and then by author and range from short critical pieces to academic publications (articles or full length books that have been made available free of charge by the author and with permission by the publisher). Sáez also includes critique of his own work via book reviews of his publications and of other prominent theorists and scholars, both positive and critical. *Hartza* is a weblog page that defies some of the conventions of academia as practiced in the United States by posing as a formal academic site even though it is the creation of a private citizen in collaboration with other scholars. It is a mixture of website, blog, and scholarly database making it a hub of queer works and activity. Various essays and books published by academic journals can be found on the website with the accompanying references, thus mimicking electronic scholarly databases such as JSTOR and Project MUSE. Some content on the site also links to other Spanish academic databases such as Dialnet which is maintained by the Universidad de La Rioja and RedIRIS funded by Spain's Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and managed by a private corporation, Red.es.

One major difference from the rest of the databases mentioned above is that the majority of *Hartza*'s content is freely accessible to anyone, regardless of academic or institutional affiliations. Whereas academic databases often come at a cost to the individual user or to an

institution, *Hartza*'s content remains readily accessible and without major obstacles. Its author section informs that,

[la] página social de Hartza es un proyecto colectivo. Ha sido creada y se alimenta gracias al trabajo y la ayuda de muchas personas. Agradecemos a tod@s su colaboración desinteresada.<sup>36</sup> Los artículos de Hartza publicados en esa web han sido publicados en revistas o en libros. Se autoriza su difusión citando la fuente y el autor. (“Los autores”)

The content of this blog is intended for a general public with goals of informing and engaging with the average person. These intentions are a reoccurring theme in Spanish queer thought as evidenced by other scholar-activists of Spain like Francisco “Paco” Vidarte as he indicates in his queer theory book *Ética marica* (2007). In the introduction Vidarte points to a need to inform about queer experiences and to engage the general Spanish public with queer issues. Vidarte writes, “[n]o he querido hacer un tratado complicado, farragoso, ilegible, académico. No he querido hacer teoría queer para especialistas” (Vidarte 12). This is a characteristic associated with the activist role that Sáez and *Hartza* take by seeking out a participatory public that engages with the material presented. Furthermore, this practice points to an engaged individual, cyber-intellectuals, who feel the need to inform the larger Spanish community in order to bring awareness of social issues and change that improves the LGBT community. A population engaged with LGBT issues, they hope, will enable a better future where society is more accepting of the queer community.

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<sup>36</sup> The “@” sign is used by many to signal a more inclusive use of plural nouns in Spanish, which according to Spanish grammar must always be in masculine form. Despite the Real Academia Española’s official stance of not needing to clarify for example “los y las lectores” many individuals choose the @ symbol to be more inclusive. Thus, “tod@s” is meant to address *todos*, all-masculine and *tod@s*, all-feminine.

In keeping with the more contemporary form of a blog, *Hartza* also publishes essays and responses to critical work that have not been published elsewhere. In blog-style, Sáez uploaded a brief entry titled “El amor es heterosexual.” Through this brief essay, Sáez presents his argument on how love is a concept created by heterosexuality, a social construct that

[e]s un discurso totalmente inofensivo y domesticado, algo que no molesta en absoluto al sistema patriarcal y homófobo. Por el contrario, los bollos, las maricas e incluso los trans son mucho mejor digeridos y aceptados cuando tienen pareja (‘qué chicos más sanos, ya no son promiscuos’) y sobre todo cuando proclaman ‘su amor’ (‘fíjate qué majos, se quieren; son como nosotros’). (“El amor”)

Sáez notes the difficulty in establishing relationships that do not conform to the binary model of couple, love, and marriage. He then finishes his argument noting, “[e]l amor es la herramienta del amo. Estaba escrito, pero no lo veíamos: AMOR” (“El amor”). This short essay elicited a lot of responses from well-known Spanish theorists and scholars, many of whom also have work posted in *Hartza*. Among these scholars were Paul B. Preciado, Sejo Carrascosa and Marcelo Soto. Some criticized Sáez for his negative portrayal of a recently married couple, which he used as an example in his short essay, while others came to the defense of Sáez’ position. This exchange of ideas shows a clear dialogue with theory produced in formal print publications from other scholars throughout the post and the responses that follow.<sup>37</sup> In addition to the direct

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<sup>37</sup> In this context, I am trying not to differentiate between theory produced by academia and termed “theory” and the texts that philosophers, like Sáez, and others, are creating outside of formal, academic institutions. The distinction truly lies in the style and format of the text where theory tends to be attached to high registers of a given language, be formatted to include references to many scholars and philosophers, and have select publishers whereas the “non-theoretical” texts are presented as lacking those characteristics. In reality, theory can exist in varying formats and be published through a variety of venues and writing registers (academic publishing editorials, journals, and, as is the case here, websites).



allusion to Audre Lorde's essay "The *Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*" in Sáez' concluding lines, one can also see the lines of thought in Sáez' argument engaging with established scholars like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, the exchange that takes place in this example is one that would be unlikely in academia in the United States where the more appropriate setting for this dialogue would be in structured academic journals and specialized academic conferences, which are inaccessible to the general public. In this case, *Hartza* is able to counter not only the hegemonic institutions of the United States who safeguard most articles for a select academic audience, but also question the boundaries of intellectual debate by opening up the topics to the average person with similar interests. There is a sense of openness that permeates the site from allowing materials free of charge and by clearly identifying where a given text is coming from. Furthermore, the public discussions posted, like the exchange over love being a heterosexual construct, are in sync with the relaxed environment of the site that is reinforced by the links to other organizations and individuals' pages. *Hartza*'s ecological set-up, in part Sáez's, but partially caused by the links and the general cyberspace ecosystem, allows users to more easily reach their search queries with minimal restrictions. The links function as extensions of the site itself. While intended to only direct the user to a source, the links also extend the reach of *Hartza* to other sites by way of informing search engines of the value and interest that resides in *Hartza*'s content. Lastly, the

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<sup>38</sup> Of Foucault, Sáez writes: "[c]omo decía Foucault, lo que molesta al poder no son las relaciones homosexuales, sino la amistad. Es decir, la posibilidad de crear redes de amigos, apoyos, afectos, solidaridades, difíciles de localizar, que escapan al control social y que van más allá del modelo binario individualista o liberal: 'pareja- amor- matrimonio'" ("El amor"). Sáez connects Butler's concept of performativity where gender is a social product of practices and norms that are performed. He applies these to the practices and ways in which people love: "aprendemos a sentir y a desarrollar afectos bajo el referente de 'el amor'" ("El amor").

links inform users working with other databases, organizations, and sources of information to build their personal knowledge on issues directly or tangentially discussed in *Hartza*.

Sáez' site also manages to inform and circumvent the ivory towers of academia through its voluminous content. With every article added to the blog, the site itself becomes a more important and logical search result for those going through search engines and typing keywords associated with *Hartza*. In addition, *Hartza*'s wide range of topics allows for traffic from a broader audience. This is mostly due to the many projects that Sáez is involved with. Some projects are related to AIDS prevention programs and others are a wide array of LGBT activist and academic panels at book fairs or academic institutions. He is also constantly asked to be a part of translation projects for major texts in the field of LGBT studies, queer theory, and psychoanalysis. Sáez is also politically engaged with organizations in Spain and the European Union with relation to LGBT politics. Due to the content, format of the material, and its multiple topics, the site itself is able to maintain its relevance through clicks, page views, downloads, and external links from other sites that link to it – this, of course, after setting aside the importance of the content found within the site. Unfortunately, given that only Sáez updates the site and that other projects have taken his time, *Hartza* is currently not being updated as regularly as in the past. This may not be related to Sáez' busy work schedule, but could also be due to Spanish institutions that have been developing and expanding digital databases like the above mentioned. Regardless, *Hartza* stands out as a repository for many of the founding texts on Spanish queer theory and as a blog that is able to freely disseminate information. It does this while also challenging established practices in academia by introducing Spanish philosophers and theoretical thought unique to Spain's social, cultural, and political environment to the general public. Thus, Sáez clearly establishes himself as an early, if not one of the first, cyber-

intellectuals of the 21st century who has cleverly managed to partner with technology to question the pre-established notions and stereotypes that affect the LGBT Spanish population.

Earlier in this section I noted how *Hartza*'s look was a striking feature, a result of the blogger's choice to not upgrade the overall aesthetics and structure of the site. This has allowed for a blogging practice employed in the early 1990s: that of providing lists of links to similar content. This area, however, deserves further analysis since a website's interface is an important feature that not only organizes the content, but constitutes the way in which the site or, in this case, blog reaches out to the audience. Johanna Drucker, a scholar of media studies and visual theory, explains that a site's interface

is an artifact of complex processes and protocols, a zone in which behaviours [sic] and actions take place, but it is also a symbolic space in which we constitute ourselves through the experience of its particular structures and features. Interface is what we read and how we read combined through engagement, it is a provocation to cognitive experience, but it is also an enunciative apparatus. (147)

With this in mind, *Hartza*'s layout does not only list different texts in a rather simple manner by topic or author, but its interface, unchanged, communicates much more. Digital humanist Jan van Looy has argued that when we see a digital text or project we do not just see the text or the Web, but the Web-text at that moment in time when it was created (van Looy 102). This is particularly important for *Hartza* and the broader Hispanic tradition of electronic texts. As mentioned earlier, *Hartza* was officially launched, digitally published, in 1995, only a couple of years after the Internet's commercialization in the early 1990s. This timeline places Sáez' work at the forefront of digital production and innovation in Spain, competing with early projects from the World Wide Web. Often times, Hispanic digital histories are pushed aside in favor of more acceptable

narratives that align with the electronic cultures of the United States or England, which have had their digital traditions well documented. *Hartza* proves not only that there is a long-standing digital tradition in Spain, but also that this tradition was at the forefront of the digital revolution at the end of the 20th century. While *Hartza* could benefit from interface upgrades that enable the user to better access the material housed by the site, the interface functions as a constant reminder of the site's importance in a specific time and place and, thus, outweighing any drawbacks.

*Hartza* is a blog that stands out on its own by challenging the status quo whether that is the common digital practices (its unchanging interface), social norms (queer thought), and avenues for knowledge (the Internet and, specifically, blogging). Though Sáez manages the site, the inclusion of various important Spanish scholars, founders to queer thought in Spain, is also able to decenter authorship of *Hartza* itself. The work of these authors presents a sort of assemblage of texts, where not one author takes a more valued role, but instead is equally interacting, and exacting a force on academia's status quo while engaging with the average citizen, much like Jane Bennett discussed for her actants of vital materiality (23-24). *Hartza*'s content, both in quantity and quality, signals that we can no longer point to the ivory towers of academia "as an objective, separate sphere of knowledge making, but rather we must recognize and grapple with its entanglements [of production]" (Alaimo 65). These entanglements are showcased as cyber-intellectuals like Sáez present complex social ideas to the general public in order to make advancements in the world we inhabit. The decentering of knowledge production and multi-author collaborative projects can be better exemplified in the blog *dosmanzanas*, where not only authorship is decentered, but where news is presented in a manner that diverges from that of standard news sources.

## Apples, Arithmetic, and the Birth of a Blog

Like *Hartza*, *dosmanzanas* is a blog with content from a variety of user-authors, but unlike *Hartza* this blog has entries independently uploaded from multiple authors and publishes entries on a daily basis. *Dosmanzanas* is a LGBT-news blog collectively managed by many people that focuses on topics that impact queer individuals primarily in Spain, but also around the globe. The name of the blog is derived from a statement made by the former Prime Minister of Spain, José María Aznar's wife Ana Botella. She is also the former mayor of the capital, Madrid. In an interview reacting to the passing of same-sex marriage laws in Spain, Botella declared, “[s]i se suman dos manzanas, pues dan dos manzanas. Y si se suman una manzana y una pera, nunca pueden dar dos manzanas, porque es que son componentes distintos. Hombre y mujer es una cosa, que es el matrimonio, y dos hombres o dos mujeres serán otra cosa distinta” (qtd. in “Inicio”). Some media outlets instantly picked up her failed logic as they critiqued her and questioned her stance. *Dosmanzanas* was originally created as a blog through Blogger, a company that provides preexisting templates from which to publish blogs. However, the popularity of the blog and the volume of traffic eventually led to the need for a bigger platform with its own Web domain from which to publish news, entertainment, and a multitude of issues

that affect and interest the *colectivo LGTB*.<sup>39</sup> The separation from its host site, Blogger, can be seen as a symbolic gesture in that the site has matured enough to separate from its host, something that is not required. Having its own domain allows *dosmanzanas* to publish articles, content, and material more freely without the restrictions from the terms and conditions set by Blogger. Additionally, the domain itself allows the site to capitalize on user views and to expand its advertisement and commercial posts (more on this later). Throughout its existence, *dosmanzanas* has been a blog that maintains an open policy on its authors, letting multiple bloggers publish entries and, thus, generating a wide selection of topics at national and international levels.

The separation from its former host and the recent interface upgrade in 2016 signal that *dosmanzanas* will continue to blog about news that interests the queer community. The recent interface upgrade to this site saw the blog-site distance itself from more traditional layouts. Whereas typical blogs will only post stories in a backwards-chronological order with few features on the front page, the new page layout for *dosmanzanas* incorporates lighter color backdrops, more use of images that accompany all articles, and the addition of a menu bar that allows users to navigate more freely by topic. Despite these interface changes to the site, the blog element of keeping the most recent entry at the top remains and, thus, resists the traditional news media site where a particular news story is highlighted. Incorporating an interface analysis into

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<sup>39</sup> This is the term utilized in association with groups and political organizations working towards the betterment of LGBT people. The term, used as a general grouping, can be problematic as those with more visibility can dominate public discourse at both local and national levels. The term is sometimes shortened to *colectivo* if already in a queer context. Additionally, Spain has adopted a change in the order of identities within the acronym *LGTB* by moving the transgender group before the bisexual one. This is partially to bring more attention to a group that continues to face more discrimination despite legal advances within the queer community. A similar move occurred in the United States at the turn of the century where the L superseded the G and the acronym changed from GLBT to the current LGBT.

digital texts further exemplifies how an agential materialist approach is able to elucidate how technology and technological elements hold agency. People constantly come into contact with digital interfaces and this interaction between digital and human is a prime example of Alaimo's non-corporeal agency of things from the "more-than-human world" (Alaimo 2). The interface can be seen as a narrator that guides the user (Harris 152), but that is also independent of the individual blogger who produces the content to the site. This is especially true here with *dosmanzanas* since the site is a collaborative project by many contributors most of who are from Spain, but also from various countries in the United States and Latin America.

Some of the key features of the new interface are the menu bar with drop-down categories and the right-hand column of information and resources for the reader. The menu bar, along with the drop down menus, simplifies the categories that individual blog entries or news articles are categorized in via tags, labels, or keywords. *Dosmanzanas* has also kept a right-hand column with information that remains static regardless of content addition. This right-hand column, typical of the standard blog interface provided by blogging companies, includes a link to donate to the organization, buttons to the social media pages of *dosmanzanas*, various polls for users, lists of trending articles, and the needed element of digital advertisements. A particularly important element from this column of content is the use of social media as it is a free resource for the blog site and an important form of communicating with and reaching out to its readership and potential audience. This social media feature allows the blog to expand its reach through the networking of social mediums. More specifically, the site illustrates collaboration between blog forms and social media software in the form of a Twitter feed that combines different cyber ecologies to express news and events on one hand and on the other reactions from users in the form of tweets and re-tweets from social networks. Thus, it is one technology form aiding

another to better understand not only the queer happenings in Spain or the world, but also the reactions from the average connected individual, via tweets. This also exemplifies Zafra's concept of the *netiana* who through the Internet is given the opportunity for diversity, to include many voices, tweets, to in turn suggest "nuevas preguntas sobre las formas de ser y de relacionarse" (Zafra, *Netianas* 23). *Dosmanzanas* is already a news site, specifically a digital site, where marginalized people are able to inform others of issues that affect their own community, but, particularly through this combination of e-scapes, the leaders of *dosmanzanas* allow the public to engage with the content and with each other, creating a living community envisioned by Zafra.

*Dosmanzanas* has not only become a complementary source for news, but a counter-normative entity that challenges standard news outlets. The site publishes news items that most certainly could be covered by major traditional media outlets, but are not deemed important or of significance for their general audiences. Queer topics found in *dosmanzanas* can range from the ongoing efforts to provide equal rights for same-sex couples in various parts of the world to the discrimination faced by transgender people and the legal victories that improve the lives of LGBT individuals. National newspapers do not cover this type of content unless the government is actively discussing a related issue or if some editor of a newspaper or news site finds the topic worthy of publication. *Dosmanzanas* fills that void not only by discussing the topics that directly impact LGBT populations, but it does so in a manner that runs against the status quo: there is no editor dictating what gets published. There is no front-page news, which typically dominates the screen of a news site. This element is typical of blog formats that treat every entry in a rather homogenous format. The blog entries found in *dosmanzanas* also continue the standard of a backwards chronological order by date whereas typical newspaper or media sites will choose



which stories appear near the top of the page and in which format. Thus, *dosmanzanas* carries a destabilizing force through its content, format, and informative goals by not prioritizing or directly showing a bias to an ongoing story. Such a concept runs parallel to what Ladelle McWhorter, a scholar in the field of environmental studies of women, gender, and sexuality studies, has presented as *counter-memory*, which “helps us escape from the cage of official truth and start thinking again and [...] is the very stuff of alternative matrices of knowledge and power, because it can function as the building material of alternative systems of meaning” (199). Blogs can easily aid in creating a new and, perhaps, better reality as, like *dosmanzanas*, blogs seek to present content that is either ignored or mishandled by traditional and hegemonic media sources.

A relatively new element in blog and digital media technology that *dosmanzanas* employs is the use of Rich Site Summary (RSS) feeds or Web feeds which allow for summaries to any blog or site that permits this function to be sent out to blog readers via a Web reader format or to the reader’s personal email. Blogs and webpages similar to *dosmanzanas* can have a lot of content published in a day or even hours and a user-reader would have to constantly keep refreshing a browser or continuously return to the website. RSS feeds allow blogs to send the user all updates to a different platform, which the user specifies. In this sense the blog speaks directly to the user as it delivers the latest content without the user having to enter the home site and scroll through multiple entries. A limitation of RSS feeds is that the user-reader will not see any comments by others who log on to the site and discuss any of the entries. Unless the blog provides an RSS feed for user-generated comments, those comments are kept strictly in the site. The additional content that is fixed on the site such as general information, links to external sources or organizations, and marketing/publicity for other companies is not accessed through

RSS feeds. These external links and advertisements can shape the blog as well and offer additional outlets affectively endorsed by a blog's author(s). This was the practice of *dosmanzanas* until late 2016 when the RSS feed update became a more typical news summary where news pieces deemed more important or popular were sent in emails. These new updates do not contain all the content published in the site. The change is likely due to the increase in large volumes of articles the website is publishing and to the potential loss of income that may come through advertisements directly on the site that cannot be included in emails or RSS feeds – for the time being.

In maintaining these feeds, *dosmanzanas* continues not only to keep the readers informed, but also to be a relevant site for information and news dissemination. The previous practice of sending detailed summaries of news and events may have had a negative effect in a decrease in site visits and, by extension, a decrease in earnings-potential, which is key for the survival of independent sites. When a user gets these RSS feeds, it eliminates that individual's need to enter the site, which translates to fewer visits. It also equals less revenue from advertisers. This is the case for *dosmanzanas*, which has seen a decrease in visits and a drop in income generated by the publicity on the site ("Dosmanzanas.com"). However, the economic gains of the site are only one way of measuring the success of the blog. One could also point to the constant involvement from users who comment on every news post and interact with one another providing opinions and additional information. Thus, the site moves users towards a participatory experience (Gil de Zúñiga and Rojas 68), one that goes beyond viewing or clicking on material.

To summarize, *dosmanzanas* is a site that decenters control over news and content by, like Alaimo argues, treating all material as equal in value as it is published collaboratively through the site. In a non-hegemonic manner, exemplifying ad-hoc assemblages as previously

discussed, various authors without privileging one over another, present content that questions not only mainstream media, but also social norms that continue to discriminate and denigrate those who identify as queer. Additionally, RSS feeds aid the blog by facilitating the flow of information to readers and, at the same time, the feeds visualize the collaborative efforts of the many bloggers who contribute to the site. In conjunction, these elements show how “an actant never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaborative, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces” (J. Bennett 21). These bodies and forces are the individual bloggers who publish the articles, but also the digital agents that integrate readers and online participants through social media and the use of RSS feeds. While these first two blog examples have incorporated various authors and have worked to destabilize academic and traditional media spheres, respectively, the following blogs employ different tactics to interact with as many people as possible while continuing a queer activist perspective.

### **Engaging the Public at a more Critical Level**

Beatriz Gimeno is a well-known figure within the queer community of Spain and, now, with the larger population of Madrid. She is currently a representative to the Asamblea de Madrid, the unicameral regional legislature of the Autonomous Community of Madrid for the left-wing political party Podemos. However, most of Gimeno’s life has been dedicated to the advancement of women’s and LGBT rights through a very involved participation in, among other groups, the Colectivo de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales de Madrid (COGAM) and the Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Transexuales y Bisexuales de España (FELGTB), two very important national organizations advocating in favor of Spain’s LGBT

community. Gimeno was also president of FELGTB from 2003-07, the same period that saw laws approved or drafted relating to same-sex marriage and gender protection laws and major events like Euro-Pride Madrid in 2007. Her tireless advocacy for the *colectivo* has found a home through her blog where she posts personal entries, but, more importantly, transcripts of her speeches, links to her academic publications, and excerpts from her work on other electronic and print publications (magazines, newspapers, journals, etc.). Gimeno details that part of her desire to start and continue posting to a blog was the need to have a space that chronicled some of the efforts of queer activism in Spain and a digital location to direct those who emailed her requesting information about a given talk or about a particular entry on a journal or magazine. Furthermore, this blog also fulfills a personal need: “[n]ecesitaba un blog que sirviera, entre otras cosas, como base de datos de lo que he venido escribiendo en estos años” (Gimeno, “Sobre el blog”).

Gimeno’s self-titled blog seeks to engage the population at large through her writing and inform the general public of issues that will in turn better the lives of the *colectivo LGTB*. Though Gimeno’s blog entries resemble a blog-like and editorial aesthetic and steer away from academic, theoretical format, and styles of writing compared to those in *Hartza*, they do seek to engage the public in critical concepts. Gimeno’s blog has entries exclusively destined for her blog and excerpts with links to the prolific amount of articles that are published in digital magazines and newspapers throughout Spain. Additionally, she encourages and continuously engages with the many blog readers that enter her site and, thus, establishes a direct relationship with part of her audience by creating a digital environment prone to discussion and openness. Take for instance her entry “Transexualidad y rechazo del género,” where she highlights the binary social format in which most live. Gimeno faults the system of binary oppositions, now

embedded in everyday life, as something that is thwarting the lives of trans-identifying individuals. After explaining that not all transgender people feel completely comfortable with transitioning to a specified gender, Gimeno continues, "la culpa de eso la tiene la existencia de los roles y características de género, porque no toda persona que siente un profundo rechazo hacia eso que se ha llamado género es transexual" ("Transexualidad"). Gimeno, though not directly citing theorists or philosophers, is bringing theoretical elements into her blog from an activist perspective that seeks a plural form of looking at people, far-removed from the current binary standard. Her argument, here and otherwise, engages with theoretical ideas of gender production and performance as Butler has outlined (mentioned earlier) and the additional queer elements (see section above on queer theory) that try to theorize that which does not fall under the binary understanding of people and relationships.

Overall, Gimeno's blog entries are not academic like those of *Hartza*, but at the same time are far distanced from the more informative and newsworthy style of *dosmanzanas*. This is due to Gimeno trying to engage with her online audience while also infusing critical thought from her activist practices. Gimeno's work shows how Spanish scholars' work is constantly interacting with activism, thus blurring another division in Spanish queer thought. Gimeno herself is a clear example of a cyber-intellectual, critically involved with multiple marginalized communities (women and queer, which at times intersect) and actively seeking to better the lives of these individuals by partnering with technology to ensure that her voice and that of others is heard and materialized in demonstrations, political settings, and anywhere in people's day to day activities. Gimeno is very conscious that, like Zafra notes, Web spaces offer better "posibilidades para imaginar las nuevas condiciones creativas, sociales y políticas" (Zafra, "habitar"). Being

cognizant of the possibilities of the Web is one thing, but the larger structure of how technology partners with Gimeno is an equal part in her propositions as a cyber-intellectual.

One way that Gimeno tries to expand her audience is through the cross listing of articles in newspapers and magazines. For example, Gimeno had a constant presence in the online magazine, *MiraLES*. This online magazine, founded in 2009, is intended for lesbian- and bisexual-identifying women. Its goals include making women more visible, empowering them, and facilitating the networking of women with other women across the globe (“Quiénes Somos”). The topics on this site include visibility politics, the implications of the law, entertainment, and social activities. With a variety of other digital social media accounts that branch out to Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, the goal of the magazine has been to create a “universo online y real para que cada una elija la forma en la que quiere participar” (“Quiénes Somos”). In *MiraLES*, Gimeno had a monthly column from its founding year to 2013 when she left the magazine to embark on scholarly projects. In September of 2011 she dedicated her *MiraLES* post to the topic of the closet or, as it is sometimes translated, *el armario*. Specifically, Gimeno criticized the constant re-introduction of individuals, but in particular lesbians, into the closet by the media. Gimeno states, “‘el armario’ funciona como un instrumento de la lesbofobia y se usa metiendo en el mismo a las lesbianas con el objeto de que no se les vea, porque la visibilidad es la principal herramienta de normalización y empoderamiento” (“Sacar”). Gimeno sees this as a reversal from previous tendencies where the lesbian, or other queer individual, was outed or forced out of the closet as a form of threat. Now, she argues, with similar objectives we see the individual forced back in the closet. Being out used to complicate an individual’s life and be a defining blow to the individual’s career or social life, but “ahora se trata de armarizarlas, especialmente si las personas en cuestión pueden convertirse en referentes positivos para todas

las lesbianas” (“Sacar”). Gimeno’s column in *MiraLES*, directly questions the role that mainstream media has assigned to lesbian and bisexual women. At the same time that she articulates the changing uses of the closet she does not shy away from noting media’s double standard of women and lesbians. It is through digital media, or a combination of assemblages, that Gimeno’s blog entries and columns for electronic magazines can trigger affective responses in humans (J. Bennett 119-20). Gimeno exemplifies how digital forms can help generate better articulations of lesbians and better narratives of these people for the rest of society. Gimeno’s blog and the many women that contribute to *MiraLES* provide perspectives that have been sidelined in the past. Like many theorists, activists, and scholars have articulated before: women must write, and now they must do so by typing and connecting online.

### **Kika Fumero: The Rebel**

Kika Fumero is one of many bloggers who signal a new wave of younger activists within Spain. As mentioned earlier, she is a schoolteacher, author, and a very avid blogger whose collaborative projects, which are linked to and from her personal website, have allowed her to become a very vocal member of various organizations. Two of these organizations are *Diversidad afectivo-sexual y Coeducación*, which she founded, and *Lyceum Club Femenino*, a project in partnership with Paz Montalbán. The first of these has a goal eliminating homophobia in grade schools and the latter project aims to discuss important contributions from Spanish women and early feminists from Spain’s Second Republic to present times. However, Fumero’s main and self-titled blog was subtitled “Mujer en (de)construcción.” This has since changed during the summer of 2017 as Fumero consolidated many of her projects under her own personal

web domain, <http://webkikafumero.com/>. A more informative subtitle has taken the place of the original one, which stood in place since its creation in 2010: “Coeducadora, activista por los derechos LGBTI.” Nonetheless, the following discussion will still focus on the previous format while understanding that the reach and importance of Fumero’s work has led her to create a digital environment for herself that better fits the needs of her activist objectives. The upgrades and fusion of her projects under one domain will likely improve how potential readers reach the materials she presents and the issues she advocates for.

Fumero’s frank and direct blogging style resonates through her blog and activist work. In an early entry in December of 2011 she introduces herself to her future readers and informs them of the goals behind her blog: “la mujer rebelde que habita en mí ya no soporta la ausencia de un espacio virtual en el que poder reivindicar sus ideas, sus valores, sus principios; un lugar que invite a la reflexión, al diálogo. En una frase: un lugar en el que plasmar la metamorfosis de mí misma” (“Mujer en construcción”). She goes on to explain the three more important elements that make up her being by letting the reader know that she is a rebel: “con los años he tenido que aprender a canalizar mi rebeldía y a utilizarla a mi favor” (Fumero, “Mujer en construcción”). Second, she is a feminist, not a sheep-following feminist, but one that thinks on her own while agreeing that feminists “repudiamos el machismo y abogamos por la abolición del patriarcado” (ibid.). The third element she presents is that of being a lesbian, “[m]i corazón, mis ojos y mi alma, sin embargo, corren siempre detrás de una mujer” (ibid.). Coincidentally, these are elements that fuse both Zafra’s *netiana* and Kristeva’s dissident. The creation from within Fumero’s blog is a special fusion of Fumero’s physical self and that energy form, actant, of the Internet that materialize through her blog and the various types of entries. This is a fusion of Zafra’s *netiana* and that dissident force that Kristeva favors. Fumero achieves this by



incorporating images and art forms to present various types of women and individuals that would otherwise have a more difficult time expressing themselves in the physical world. Fumero's dynamic style shows through the projects she chooses to partake in and in the variety of topics that fill her blog entries.

While Fumero's former blog site used a typical blog interface and a platform template from WordPress on a personal Web domain, Fumero found ways of personalizing her blog. This was a way of showing those rebel characteristics while still having access to the publishing ease that this platform provides. After all, "this virtual space should include a consistent interface, allowing for multiple perspectives and levels of viewing. Unfortunately, there has never been a clear standard for implementing this" (Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print* 66). The author or blogger must then implement consistency and Fumero chose to continue a consistent interface (also read as familiar) by retaining a template from WordPress and by making only minor, but dissenting edits.<sup>40</sup> When one entered her blog, the image that greeted you was that of two naked women, back-to-back, with one laying face-down on the floor. This photograph was then broken down into three different pieces referencing her subtitle and theme: deconstruction. The right-hand column that stretched along most of her blog site was a word cloud graphic listing the main tags that Fumero had used when publishing blogs. Tags, or keywords, that she uses more frequently were shown in a bigger font size signaling the recurring themes in her writing. These personalized elements allow the blog to stand out from other blogs that would use the identical interface and structure or, at least, allow the user-reader to remember the image encountered

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<sup>40</sup> Even with Fumero's current interface and blog layout, the template comes from WordPress, but this is one with a more current look and feel to the structure of the page where blog entries show the title and about 50 words before cutting off. This allows the reader to partially skim the first sentences of an entry before clicking on the full blog post, which would appear on its own webpage.

upon entering the blog. Given these personalized elements, Fumero's content is of equal strength and stands out on its own.

*Mujer en (de)construcción*, and now the current blog site, presents a wide range of topics including legal troubles regarding heteronormative and patriarchal practices in society, women's and human rights, and the constant reminder of projects that Fumero partakes in. The latter include the collaborative work she does with the online magazine *MiraLES*, of which Gimeno was also a contributor, and organizations like *InOutRadio*, a topic that I will return to in greater detail in chapter 4. Suffice it to say that Fumero's work with *InOutRadio* has led her colleagues at that organization to include her as a contributor and author in the anthology *Desconocidas y fascinantes* (2013), a volume that follows a standing podcast, or online radio show, which aims to recover queer women from history. Fumero is a current contributor to this podcast series and will also blog and link about her, and others', entries to the radio show. The organization itself, *InOutRadio*, also has its own links that return the favor by ensuring that any individual who happens to listen to the work of the contributors can easily find their other material on the Web. This reciprocal form of linking is of importance as it serves to establish a website or blog's credibility and overall value (Barabási 12-13). These multiple actant-links are able "to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle" (J. Bennett 7), by presenting a heterogeneous combination of physical and cyber entities to users and by consequently expanding the reach of social content and the professional presence of the author. This is critical in developing an online network and community of users that can materialize in the physical world for any activist purpose. For Fumero, her digital presence establishes her as a professional, an activist, and a digital rebel.

Gender and gender identification are a clear topic in many of Fumero's entries where, for example, she will note the disparity of unemployment's effects on the Spanish population and their distinct effects based on gender. Fumero also blogs in favor of laws that would protect transgendered individuals especially after the recent (2015-16) apparent increase in attacks towards transgender people.<sup>41</sup> Spain's economic crisis during the latter half of 2008 continues to reverberate across the Spanish economy with a very high unemployment rate that has unfortunately become the norm. In "Crisis, género y discriminación positiva" Fumero shares various statistics, from Eurostat, that show that there are ample differences in how this unemployment crisis, of almost a decade, affects women more than men. Unemployed men accounted for 1.9 million while that figure for women reached almost 2.3 million. From the women who were employed, these earned 19.3% less than their male counterparts (Fumero "Crisis"). Additionally, transgender women and men in Spain have become the victims of crime at alarming rates. Fumero does not shy away from addressing these instances of violence rooted in fear and of a phobia towards one's gender. Instead she criticizes the public at large for not being more active in defending the rights of all and, by extension, of transgender people. She writes, "[a] mí me leen allí donde voy como mujer, porque ese es el texto corporal que yo he elegido para mis lectorxs (para lxs otrxs): nadie me lee mujer porque me vaya bajando los

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<sup>41</sup> While in 2014 Spain's *Ministerio del Interior* reported 513 hate crimes based on sexual orientation, the following year, 2015, the same state department office changed its way of reporting and as a result separated crimes based on sex and those based on gender. In 2015 the reported cases decreased to 156 incidents based on sexual orientation or gender identification (Gobierno de España), which led COGAM and FELGTB to issue statements noting that 70% of those who suffer these aggressions do not report them. To add to the confusion, the increase in aggressions is further corroborated by the *Observatorio Madrileño contra la LGTBfobia's* own statistics in relation to LGBT related crimes (see <http://contraelodio.org/>). For the first 4 months of 2016 the Observatorio's statistics show that a LGBT-related crime was committed every 48 hours, a stark difference from the government's reported figures (Vera).

pantalones y enseñando la vulva por doquier.<sup>42</sup> [...] ¡Qué más da! ¡Qué tanta importancia puede tener!” (Fumero, “La socialización”). Fumero does note that these instances of discrimination are decreasing, but implores her readers,

[p]or favor, estamos asesinando. Sí, estamos creando asesinxs y, por tanto, somos cómplices de las agresiones y asesinatos. ¿Dónde diantres está la Consejería de Educación de cada Comunidad Autónoma, la Junta de Andalucía (en este caso), el Ministerio Estatal de Educación? ¿Hacia dónde están mirando, en qué andan entretenidxs? ¿Qué están haciendo para prevenir y combatir estos episodios de odio? (ibid.)

Her criticism here extends to include the queer community who, at times, can be complacent and ignore transgender individuals. Included in this criticism are lesbian, gay, and bisexual people who may not understand that after same-sex marriage laws were approved by the state many individuals’ basic rights were still being ignored: that of transgender people. In this instance, Fumero is a clear example of a cyber-intellectual who advocates for a marginalized group, but does not exempt the queer community in this line of criticism.

Fumero’s blunt and, at times, forceful blogging style also comes across when discussing women’s bodies. In a series of posts that she published for the online magazine *Mujeres-arte y cultura visual* entitled “Biografías rojas,” Fumero sought to analyze “[l]a vergüenza, la culpa, el tabú de nuestro cuerpo [...] Veamos cómo algunas autoras contemporáneas tratan la sangre menstrual y qué reivindican con su obra” (“Biografías rojas I”). These articles were published accompanied with digital self-portraits, additional photographs, and an interview with the artist

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<sup>42</sup> In a similar fashion to the “@” in the plural form of nouns or articles, the use of the “x” is meant to further include those individuals who may be transgender or who do not identify with the masculine/feminine binaries. For some, the use of “@” may still be too restrictive and the use of “x” helps to solve this issue.

at hand. Fumero interviewed fellow artists Isa Sanz, Zanele Muholi, and Judith Vizcarra, but, as the process developed, she felt compelled to end the series by including herself. All of the articles for *Mujeres-arte y cultura visual* were also linked to her blog where she added a short preamble and a direct link to the magazine's article. For the blog entry where she created art with her menstrual blood, the image all users saw was that of her self, naked, holding on to the, likely, bloodied tampon at her fingertips. The photograph was taken from above, thus hiding most of her body, but if the user were to follow the link to the complete magazine article more pictures of Fumero would follow, and that of her menstrual blood art ("Mi biografía roja"). In her blog entry she writes that because of the process of interviewing artists who used their menstrual cycle blood "[c]omencé mi aventura en la revista *Mujeres-arte y cultura visual* impulsada por un motor personal que me hizo adentrarme en el mundo de la menstruación a través del arte y desde una perspectiva de género" (ibid.). However, in the article published for the magazine, she ends asserting herself, her body, and that of women, more broadly:

Reivindico mi regla porque me he sentido discriminada por tener vagina y sangrar.

Reivindico mis óvulos muertos por todos aquellos meses (ya perdí la cuenta) en que me hicieron llorarlos en un duelo doloroso y cruel por no poder acometer mi obligación con la maternidad. [...] Ya está bien de hacernos sentir a nosotras las sucias.

Reivindico únicamente la sangre que tiene que ver con la vida. Y no otra. ("Mi biografía roja" in *Mujeres-arte y cultura*)

It will be clear that Fumero is unapologetic in her writing, her thoughts, and her body. The blog in this case serves to empower her and, likely, various different types of women. In Kika Fumero, Kristeva's dissident comes full circle by presenting an empowered individual who leads a marginalized group in society by writing online and through her own body. Fumero is also a

dissident from her marginalized group, not fearing to criticize those individuals who would quickly ignore the fate of a more marginalized people, in this case, from the queer community.

Fumero is a very intelligent blogger who uses a variety of elements in the physical world and online to delve into critical issues that affect women and queer individuals in the 21st century. The blog she continues to update is connecting with existing individuals and software to better explain the nuances of being queer in a digital age where multiple technologies come together to exact force on people's minds and bodies. The upgrades to her webpage and blog's interface enable Fumero to easily upload material, which in turn communicates her views to the readers while not having to engage with coding components that could trample her message. Fumero's engagement with others is also key both online through links and sharing of current events in other cyber spaces, but also in person through the collaborative commitments she has with *MiraLES*, *InOutRadio*, the two organizations mentioned at the beginning of this section, and those who work to keep these projects alive. Connected, engaged, and unapologetically herself, Fumero is a leader and a prime example of a cyber-intellectual of the 21st century who not only talks about the issues that matter, but she is also someone who gets involved and places her body as a prime example of putting thought into action.

### **Conclusions: Beyond Connecting and Networking**

The blogs analyzed in this chapter exemplify a complex confluence of elements that marked their creation, but it is this combination of components that has kept various bloggers focused on creating entries that attract different types of individuals: activists, philosophers, artists, and engaged citizens. These blogs have also shown that blogging is at the forefront of

organizing, informing, and connecting like-minded dissident individuals and organizations that want to ensure that marginalized people in society have a healthy space to live in. Writers like Sáez, Gimeno, Fumero, and collective groups like *dosmanzanas* and the electronic magazine *MiraLES* are the new wave of intellectuals: cyber-intellectuals who are digitally connected and who use various mediums to lead communities that demand basic human rights and equal treatment under the law in order to transform the society that all inhabit, but through an ample base of thought that translates to politically effective action (Small 6). This is something that the well-known Spanish cultural critic Alberto Mira has also addressed, “una actividad intelectual es necesaria para que la comunidad gay siga viva, en proceso de cambio y cuestionamiento [...] Un grupo no debe limitarse a aspirar al equilibrio y al *status quo*, también ha de saber utilizar experiencias específicas de sus miembros, compartirlas y producir modelos alternativos” (Mira 289). Mira’s view is, perhaps, the closest to what has happened in the last few decades in Spain. The activist movements have had an intellectual component that has kept the queer rights collective in constant motion through the legal achievements of the mid 2000s. Since then, other theorists and scholars have returned to Mira’s argument by restating these points: avoid reaching a standstill in thought, stay away from feeling complacent with what has been achieved, and instead of becoming immobilized, continue to address the many concerns and issues yet to be brought to light regarding marginalized queer members and the issues that affect them.

The continued theoretical element or thought, required by Kristeva’s intellectual and implored by Mira has been fully aided by the Internet’s arrival which in turn has led individuals to more easily express themselves and the social goals they fight for. Zafra’s orthographic play on her title is key in describing what the bloggers analyzed above have been able to do: *n(h)acer*. This word and her *netiana*, which “sugiere nuevas preguntas sobre las formas de ser y de

relacionarnos en el universo on line” (Zafra, *Netianas* 23), have allowed for new diverse voices to enter the Web and create content free of some of the restrictions that the physical world’s social norms dictate. What is being created through blogging is something new, something that did not quite exist before. The discussions over theoretical concepts like in *Hartza* are happening via emails and short messages. The engagement of the public is happening through different avenues of communication while capitalizing on new social media avenues. Cyberspace is also providing that blank space that can act as a confidence build-up, which led Fumero to produce her *biografía roja*. This confidence and energy was something made possible by Fumero’s involvement, but also by the electronic component attached to these experiences that validate marginalized groups, here LGBT people and women alike. As can be seen through the examples, there are many elements that play a part in the discussions, demonstrations, and activism being exemplified, but the various Internet components have paved the way for stronger organized voices to emerge in 21st century Spain.

Thus, the role of those who blog and of blogs themselves becomes more important in a digital world that mirrors some of the physical world’s power structures. Blogs and blog forums allow any individual to have a digital voice that can be magnified through links and mentions, a key element to the growing cyber world of big search engines that feed into world systems. The challenge, of course, is to make physical bodies more audible in order to make this electronic material gain value not only as an expression of the individual blogger, but also independently as an alternative to rigid social constructs. By allowing Alaimo’s transcorporeality and treating all things as agential, the focus then shifts to the movement across bodies, here from the human body to the inorganic and electronic bodies of cyberspace. While the initial purpose to posting a blog may be evident from the content found in these blogs, the underlying effects of blogging by



these Spanish queer scholars, writers, and activists goes beyond the content of their blogs. In linking to other people and sites, any user who chooses to utilize the links provided could circumvent the tidal wave of information generated by search engines. Using the links and materials that these bloggers provide does not just facilitate a flow of information, but the blogs themselves signal to search engines the relevance in those links and of their own sites.

As an expected increase in Web content is published in the future, current search engines will encounter too much data to process. Search engines will generate more results that are irrelevant to a user's query unless search providers quickly modify their algorithms and users become better cybernauts. Treating and understanding blogs as vibrant matter, which is capable of acting on the human user and the physical environment that humans live in, can advance the propositions by marginalized groups such as queer individuals. Zafra contends that the online "espacios por hacer" ("habitar"), are the spaces which have the most potential for marginalized individuals or groups in society. Furthermore, these spaces must be malleable enough to adapt to the user and the user's goals; blogging platforms provide just that. Utilizing blogs could help ameliorate the disenfranchisement felt by queer people. There are many caveats to this as blogs must continue to generate content and must be kept current both in appearance and functionality (i.e. the operation of links, page formatting, and links from external sites). Failing to stay up to date may dissuade the readers from engaging with the material as a website could appear to be old and irrelevant. Blogs could become the first source from which to find entertainment, leisurely or academic reading, and the latest news – or, just about anything.

Given that blogs could be more useful and faster than search engines, the key to the success of these blogs becomes making potential readers aware of the blog's existence. Here is where the multi-faceted bloggers like those mentioned above are able to have an advantage and

an explanation as to why their blogs either did well or continue to attract views. These bloggers have different avenues of making their blogs, and their work, known, have a diverse work history and academic background, and are involved in activist work that requires them to be in contact with a variety of people. This in-person networking in the blogger's life has generated links from outside blogs and webpages that have then connected the blogger's work and many stand-alone projects. These links or digital relationships also signal to search engines that the work of the bloggers mentioned above occurs in relation to one another, or one following the other. In other words, humans, blogs, websites, and links are acting together, all of which are actants and whose "efficiency or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces" (J. Bennett 21). No actant is ever alone and all will, as assemblages, equally have a positive effect on improving society. Relying on search engines may no longer be a logical action and blogs may be the best response to a world with an over abundance of data.

Some criticism towards blogs has been leveled by those who think that specific themed blogs have little effect on the population at large or even on a specific group of people that would otherwise already be vested in a social issue. While this argument could hold for some topics (Warf and Grimes 267), the case with LGBT bloggers from Spain suggests otherwise as bloggers have engaged with blogs to publicize their work and broaden their audiences and market. Blog readers have been exposed to contemporary issues and the blogs can be thought of as affecting those who come in contact with these webpages. Additionally, there is a collective mentality that persists in the blog entries where the topics do not always point to the blogger, but to larger issues affecting the queer community.

I believe the rapid change in Web technology must continue to be matched by queer individuals through a digital engagement seen on Spanish blogs so that a technology that is attached to a patriarchal and heterosexist society does not continue to marginalize and code for queer individuals. Typing in key words typically associated with the queer community should not generate hits from search engines where all the results portray LGBT people as either negative or subpar. In order to improve the status of queer individuals in society through technological advancements, the relationship with this technology must be realigned where technology is understood to be equal to humans. Technology needs to be seen as holding agency, as trans-corporeal, and where human bodies and non human natures are open to one another. Without understanding what technology is, what it does, and what its capabilities are, human potential is hindered by its baseless privileged position over all other matter. Given the technology available today and the examples laid out by previous generations of bloggers, current cyber-intellectual bloggers must

present alternative narratives and other perspectives on history than those provided by combatants on behalf of official memory and national identity, who tend to work in terms of falsified unities, the manipulation of demonized or distorted representations of undesirable and/or excluded populations, and the propagation of heroic anthems sung in order to sweep all before them. (Said 37)

Theorist and public intellectual Edward Said expressed these words, but this quote also resonates with Eduardo Mendicutti whom I used in the opening of this chapter. One of Spain's most important contemporary novelists, Mendicutti sees literature, and novels in particular, as a way of bringing marginalized voices to light in order to have a more complete vision of society

(Mendicutti). Following his line of thought, blogging, a marginalized form of literature, must also be incorporated to continue to build that more complete vision of society.

“Ningún aficionado a la lectura duda de que un libro siempre será un libro, pero no está de más que experiencias creadoras [nuevas ...] nos enseñen y animen también a leer en la red, no para abandonar la lectura de los libros sino para abrir nuevos campos de lectura, nuevas miradas a la literatura.”  
–Sergio Palacios

“This hypertextual dissolution of centrality, which makes the medium such a potentially democratic one, also makes it a model of a society of conversations in which no one conversation, no one discipline or ideology, dominates or founds the others.”  
–George Landow

## **Chapter 2: Spanish Hypertext Novels: Navigating Contained Distractions**

The use of hypertext and its language, Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), are components that have been assimilated and standardized by most users of the World Wide Web. Hypertext and the hyperlink is what allow for seamless transitions and exchanges of information throughout the Internet. Not surprisingly, among one of the more utilized types of electronic literature is hypertext fiction, or literature that employs hypertexts as a key component of a work to link and present a text or multiple texts. Hypertext allows for the reader to read while creating and developing the work that is being read by choosing to click on some or all of the various hyperlinks within a work. Due to its popularity, hypertext works should be read and analyzed not only for content, but also for their flexible, porous, and heterogeneous structure. However, reading and analyzing electronic literature is not without problems. Spanish scholar, Dolores Romero López argues that the two more pressing issues are “helping readers to locate digital literature, and offering them samples of reading and interpretation of the texts in question” (“Poetics of crisis” 311). While this may appear self-evident to some, the complications arise

when electronic literature is read as any other literature without noting the form in which it is presented or the medium that hosts it. Reading the digital, as I have been arguing from the previous chapter, must include the environment in which a given text is produced and, more specifically, the structure which supports the work(s).

In this chapter I analyze two case studies in the form of hypertext novels in order to illustrate Spanish writers' early digital involvement with hypertext formulations, show recent innovations of well-thought new technology components within hypertext software, and draw out the intricate network of assemblages working to portray the socio-cultural intricacies of society through a screen. While this chapter is interested in narrative, hypertext novels, I would like to briefly note the rich tradition of hypertext and hypermediated poetry. An early poetry collection that has been expanded since its first publication is *Interminims de navegació poètica*, by Ramón Dachs. This was originally uploaded online in 1996 and has seen multiple poems added to the collection. *Interminims* can now be read in English, Spanish, Catalan, and French.<sup>43</sup> Pedro Valdeolmillos, born in 1970 and from Barcelona, Spain, is a poet and Web designer and programmer. He published "Tantderêves," a brief poem, which also uses Flash technology. In the poem, the poetic voice engages in a conversation with the computer that in turn responds to the queries posed. Valdeolmillos published this poem and others via Epímone, or epimone.net, a website he co-founded with Lluís Calvo for the publication of e-poetry. Some poetry collections quickly begin to slide outside of the realm of a strict hypertext definition and into the use of multimedia works that are published on the Web. Such is the case of *Mariposas-Libro* (1999/2001) and *WordToys* (2006) by the Argentinian Belén Gache and *VeloCity* (2000, 2002) by Tina Escaja (more on Escaja in chapter 3). The projects by these last two poets use Flash, at

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<sup>43</sup> The poem can be found in the digital database Hermeneia at <http://www.hermeneia.net/interminims/>. More on this database can be found below.

times in combination with hypertext components. Many more poets abound online and can be found through the organizations discussed below in this chapter.

The analysis of this chapter is meant to stress the early engagement of Spanish authors and digital innovators since this type of technology, hypertext, was made available in Spain. For Nùria Vouillamo, a leading scholar in Spanish hypertext literature, the hypertext is “una nueva percepci3n del discurso como materia expansible, abierta e intertextual” (95). As such, the types of structures that hypertext is and that it creates must be incorporated into any analysis along with the types of bonds it creates through hyperlinks. Analyzing the content of a hypertext novel alone would not suffice. More so, Spanish hypermedia works have been and continue to be innovative forms of literature within the digital realm. Doménico Chiappe, the Peruvian-Venezuelan journalist, literary critic, and digital author of many hypermediated works, notes that “[I]as obras hipermedias en espaol mantienen una búsqueda intensiva del nuevo lenguaje, que le exige alto grado de innovaci3n estilística, riesgo artístco y complejidad de programaci3n. La calidad de la literatura hipermedia en espaol ubica a nuestro idioma en la vanguardia narrativa y poética” (Chiappe). Unfortunately, insufficient critical attention has been placed on the avant-garde nature of the many Spanish (and Spanish-language) hypertext works.

Hypertext is not something new to the 21st century and, in fact, has been around for over half a century. While working at Brown University, hypertext was “coined by Theodor H. Nelson in the 1960s, [and] refers also to a form of electronic text, a radically new information technology, and a mode of publication” (Landow, *Hypertext 2.0* 3). This type of text allows for a writing and design of works that is non-sequential, that branches out to other texts, allows users choices, and is best experienced with interactive screens (ibid.). Hypertext novels have become “the prototypical form of interactive textuality (while by no means the most interactive)” (van

Looy and Baetens 14). Hypermedia, by extension, refers to the use of hyperlinking non-written elements: visual, sound, animation, and other forms. With few exceptions I will, however, employ the terms hypertext and hypermedia interchangeably and with the same meaning, as the line between both concepts has blurred. The many links and networking of texts that is characteristic of hypertexts not only decenter a particular work from within, but hyperlinks that link to external works and the general World Wide Web eliminate an established hierarchical perception of a text by not allowing one work to have more dominance or importance over another. Lev Manovich, a scholar of new media, notes that a “hypertext model of the World Wide Web arranges the world as a nonhierarchical system ruled by metonymy. In short, far from being a transparent window into the data inside a computer, the Internet brings with it strong messages of its own” (*The Language of New Media* 65). This, within literature, typically gets expressed through a multilinearity of separate stories interwoven throughout the digital realm. Thus, hyperlinking and Web novels can be associated with contemporary culture’s suspicion of all hierarchies, preferring a collage form and format where radically different sources are brought together within a singular cultural object (Manovich, *The Language of New Media* 76).

Additionally, the use of linking in current hypertext works is closely associated with ideas of intertextuality. In her essay “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” (1966), Kristeva defines intertextuality as “any text [...] constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double” (*The Kristeva Reader* 66). This definition and larger essay is a development of Mikhail Bakhtin and Ferdinand de Saussure’s earlier theorizations of



language.<sup>44</sup> This view of language, and literature, allows for a more dynamic interaction of texts that surround the creation of a work and “[rejects] the New Critical principle of textual autonomy, the theory of intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole, and so, that it does not function as a closed system” (Martínez Alfaro 268). The understanding of intertextuality from Kristeva’s point of view is one that sees text as freely interacting with multiple structures to form meaning: written, social, historical, etc. In 1981, Roland Barthes published his essay “Theory of the Text” where he furthers Kristeva’s propositions and states some of the implications found in her theorizations. Barthes notes that text is a

tissue, something woven. But whereas criticism [...] hitherto unanimously placed the emphasis on the finished ‘fabric’ [...] the current theory of the text turns away from the text as veil and tries to perceive the fabric in its texture, in the interlacing of codes, formulae and signifiers, in the midst of which the subject places himself and is undone. (Barthes, “Theory of the Text” 39).

Thus, both Kristeva and Barthes during the late 20th century have advanced an intertextuality that places a high degree of importance on the interconnectedness of texts across social, cultural, and textual boundaries. Intertextuality, along with the concept of expanding and interconnected stories, has come to conceptually build the idea of hypertext and the hyperlink. Though the term hypertext and Nelson’s work dates back to the 1960s, the conceptualization of this form and its

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<sup>44</sup> Saussure’s view on language was too systemic and Bakhtin was attempting to contextualize language within the social and historical periods. Scholar María Jesús Martínez Alfaro summarizes some of these propositions:

while Saussure is interested in language as an abstract made system, Bakhtin is interested only in the dynamics of living speech. Where Saussure speaks of passive assimilation (in relation to language as opposed to speaking), Bakhtin sees a process of struggle and contradiction. And whereas Saussure dichotomizes the individual and the social, Bakhtin assumes that the individual is constituted by the social, that consciousness is a matter of dialogue and juxtaposition with a social ‘other.’ (273)

potential uses had already materialized with writers like the British-American T.S. Eliot and the Argentinians Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar.

### **Early Concepts of Future Writing**

When T.S. Eliot first published “The Wasteland” in 1922 with its numerous allusions, references, and interjections of multiple languages, many readers and critics did not understand what Eliot was attempting to achieve. Eliot would soon after release notes on his poem explaining where these allusions came from or what they were referencing. Even after these steps were taken, critics like Edgell Rickword from *The Times Literary Supplement* did not have a favorable reaction to Eliot’s creation. The complex level of intertextuality within the text was too troubling. While Rickword acknowledged that Eliot’s poem was “extremely sophisticated” (110), he would go on to argue that the poem’s meaning had become too difficult to grasp. For Rickword, Eliot’s work had become too fragile: “[Eliot’s] emotions hardly ever reach us without traversing a zig-zag of allusion. In the course of his four hundred lines he quotes from a score of authors and in three foreign languages, though his artistry has reached that point at which it knows the wisdom of sometimes concealing itself” (110). His blistering critique of an already established poet like T.S. Eliot concludes with Rickword describing “The Wasteland” as an awry “magic-lantern show [... an] ambitious experiment” (111). Eliot’s poem has since been elevated to one of the greatest in 20th century poetry. In contemporary electronic literature, the level of intertextuality seen in “The Wasteland” is materialized through the hypertext link and celebrated as a crucial technique in digital productions.

Additionally, whispers of hypertext structures have existed within the Hispanic literary tradition and both can be found in two Argentinian writers. In the 1940s Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) published a couple short stories that have been retrospectively associated with hypertext structures (Lister et al. 30). These short stories include “El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan” (1941) and “El Aleph” (1945). These have been associated with functions of hypertext and in particular the use of multiple screens or media working jointly to tell a story. This type of story is one that can be never-ending and one that can be connected via carefully positioned links (Landow, *Hypertext 2.0* 37; Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print* 30).<sup>45</sup> Borges’s “El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan” conceptualizes the infinite book, one that never ends through a series of branching narratives. In “El Aleph” one can see multiple spaces and events that are taking place around the world. But whereas Borges’s Aleph requires the individual to be positioned at a particular location to see the various happenings, hypertext and new technology is not as restrictive. For example, a user can have multiple screens or browsers open while operating a computer.

In 1963, the Argentinian Julio Cortázar (1914-1984) published his now-canonical novel *Rayuela*.<sup>46</sup> This novel is readily quoted as a precursor to the type of writing we see in hypertext novels (Douglas 67; Hoeng 105; Landow, “Creative” 447, *Hypertext 2.0* 37). In *Rayuela*’s “Tablero de dirección,” Cortázar explains how this novel is different from others: “[a] su manera este libro es muchos libros, pero sobre todo es dos libros” (7). The first half of the book is a linear narration that can be read from beginning to end. The second half, which Cortázar states is optional and not needed, is a series of chapters that can be read as the reader pleases or by

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<sup>45</sup> Alessandro Ludovico is an artist, literary critic, and scholar of media theory and archeology. His analysis on Borges centers on the short story “El libro de arena” (1975).

<sup>46</sup> Or, *Hopscotch* (1966) as has been translated to English.

following the suggested order in the “Tablero.” Borges’s short stories along with Cortázar’s influential novel and Eliot’s poem point to proto-hypertext works (Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 29). However, the hypermediated texts we see in the 21st century suggest a field of literature that has evolved far beyond these classic works with innovative concepts and writing formulations. Nonetheless, it is important to have an idea of pre-existing constructions of hypertextual processes. On this matter Katherine Hayles notes, “[i]f we restrict the term hypertext to digital media, we lose the opportunity to understand how a theoretical form mutates when it is instantiated in different media” (*Writing Machines* 31). These mutations have spurred various types of changes beginning with early experimentation in hypertext fiction during the mid 1990s in Spain, and late 1980s in the United States of America. What is inspiring though is that both established organizations and newly formed entities are prioritizing the safeguarding of these digital productions.

### **Origins and Possibilities: The Case of Two Spanish Hypertexts**

This chapter’s case studies come from two separate authors who have cultivated electronic literary projects throughout the last 20 years. Edith Checa, born in 1957, is from Seville, but now resides in Madrid. She is a journalist, author, and poet. Checa has worked in Spanish national radio and television productions and has hosted programs on contemporary Spanish and Latin American literature and poetry. Through these outlets Checa has been able to interview a diverse group of established authors including J.A. Goytisolo, José Ángel Valente, Claudio Rodríguez, Ana Rossetti, and many more. Her published works include the novels *El color del albero* (2000) and *No me pidas silencio* (2004), the poetry collection *Corazones de*

*ancla sin destino* (2014), and her most recent novel *El objeto habitado* (2016). Online, and more specifically through *badosa.com*, she has uploaded various electronic projects that range from short stories, poems, poetry collections,<sup>47</sup> and a hypertext novel, *Como el cielo los ojos* (1998). This novel forms, in part, the analysis of this chapter. Checa's hypertext novel follows the lives of three different men: Javier, Iñaki, and Paco. The only information we are given is that "Isabel ha muerto. Cuando lo digo, porque quiero convencerme de una vez, el suelo se me hunde como si fuera de algodón y la extrasístole se repite y rebota en mi garganta hasta ahogarme, y aún más todavía con esta corbata que intento ponerme y que no sé si es la adecuada" ("Índice"). The reader is then presented with a square numbered chart with an x- and y-axis. The x-axis is numbered 1 through 13 and corresponds to thirteen different moments in time after Isabel's death. The y-axis comprises the names of the three men the novel follows. These men were at one point Isabel's romantic interest (husband, lover, companion). The reader can select a character and a corresponding number (time) in the story to read. I will return to the specifics of this hypertext novel later, but for the time being I would like to draw attention to the placement of this novel and its publisher, *badosa.com*, in digital history.

*Como el cielo los ojos* is a novel that Checa began publishing in May of 1998 through the online publishing house *badosa.com*. This publishing house is a project developed in 1995 by Xavier Badosa, a scholar, statistician, and software developer who started experimenting with electronic literature during the 1990s. In practice, and as a result of its quick popularity, *badosa.com* has become an electronic publishing house that readily allows for authors to create and post works through his site. Additionally, *badosa.com* hosts hundreds of digital works, both original and digitized copies of existing works (ie: from Benito Perez Galdós and Gustavo

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<sup>47</sup> These include *La cantera de la memoria* (1997) and *Letargos violetas* (2000).

Adolfo Bécquer). The importance here is twofold as it relates to Checa's hypertext novel and the digital space that Badosa and badosa.com created for Spanish authors during the mid-1990s. This timeline situates Spain once again as a country that has been connected to the Internet and digital technologies without lagging behind or having to take after the rest of the world. Authors like Checa and innovators like Badosa were at the forefront of new media technologies not just within Spain, but worldwide at a moment when authors, scientists, and technology programmers were experimenting with new technology and figuring what was possible as they forged new media technologies with literature. Furthermore, 1995 is a very early year in Spain for advanced technology given that digital networks (as we understand them today) were still limited to universities, research centers, and government spaces. In order to develop websites and digital apparatuses that would support hypertext novels like Checa's, an individual or group of individuals would need to have a keen vision for this developing field in order to launch digital projects. Checa's partnership with badosa.com positions Spain at the forefront of the electronic literary history.<sup>48</sup>

The second of the case studies is the author and scholar Juan José Díez, born in 1948, and who is also coincidentally, from Seville. His *webnovela*, as Díez prefers to label it, *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* (2006) is his first work of fiction. Díez is a professor of philosophy at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED). Additionally, Díez is the director of the Literatura Electrónica Hispánica at the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes and administrator of the blog *Literatura Electrónica* for the same institution.

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<sup>48</sup> Without being specific, Maya Zalbidea a researcher for the ELMCIP notes that Checa's hypertextual work is one of the "más antiguas de la literatura electrónica en lengua española" (152). Checa's novel may be one of the first hypertext novels, but a lack of research on the field of hypertext literature from Spain hinders this statement for the time being.

In choosing texts for this chapter, a guiding principle was accessibility of the project and reliability in the future existence of these works. Digital works that are not open-access to all Internet users could restrict future research or show that the author, hardware and software, or other entities did not appropriately support the project. Additionally, the selected case studies can be found cross-listed through the following institutions, which in turn suggests an inherent value whether it be artistic, structural, literary, or digital. While the number of institutions with centers or research groups devoted to electronic literature in Spain continues to grow, the main organizations which guided the selection of the case studies below are the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (most commonly known as the Cervantes Virtual for its Web address) from the Instituto Cervantes, Hermeneia, Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice (ELMCIP), and Literaturas Españolas y Europeas del Texto al Hipermedia (LEETHI). These organizations have begun the arduous task of analyzing digital works and mapping the location of Spanish texts, producing a historical context to the works, and providing critical responses to the literary work. In doing so, organizations like the ones just mentioned are not only safeguarding and creating a listing of texts, but an indirect effect, of great significance, is that these organizations are producing a very selective assemblage of Spanish electronic literature. Within these overlapping selective assemblages are the following two case studies of this chapter: Checa's pioneering text *Como el cielo los ojos* (1998) and the more technically involved production of Díez's *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* (2006).

### **Safeguarding Electronic Works While Establishing an Elite Group**

The Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes began organizing in 1998 and a year later presented itself as a digital space where classic Spanish texts could be accessed. This project has since developed into a much larger and encompassing virtual open-access space that seeks to have a greater role with regard to Spanish-speaking language, literature, and culture. In 2013 the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes was awarded the Stanford Prize for Innovation in Research Libraries, an award it shared with the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The Fundación Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (2000) was also created as an executive force to guide the Cervantes Virtual along with the Cátedra Vargas Llosa and the European organization, Centro de Competencia en Digitalización Impact.<sup>49</sup> What has developed is a collaboration of research universities from the United States, Europe, and Latin America along with independent organizations that work together to digitize texts and provide critical analyses of works, their authors, and historical and cultural contexts (“Presentación”).

A unit of particular interest for this chapter within the Cervantes Virtual is the section labeled Literatura Electrónica Hispánica. This section aims not only to catalogue the emerging texts in new mediums, but also to bring attention to the authors via biographies and short critical pieces that engage with their work. This unit of the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes is used strictly for material relating to the electronic texts hosted by the organization or those to which it links. The Literatura Electrónica Hispánica also has an official blog through which an unlimited amount of information, announcements, and new works are posted redirecting the user to the host site.<sup>50</sup> This is unlike the Literatura Electrónica Hispánica site where the works and authors have remained untouched since the publication of the page in 2009. Additionally, the

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<sup>49</sup> The Centro de Competencia en Digitalización Impact’s website can be found at <<http://www.digitisation.eu/>>.

<sup>50</sup> The blog can be found at <<http://webliter.blogspot.no/>>.



texts under this section of the Cervantes Virtual are, like the label “Hispánica” suggests, not exclusively from Spain. Texts from Latin America are also included, though a couple of these were produced while the author was in Spain, signaling the development of resources within Spain and perhaps the lack of sources in the author’s home country. At the moment, all texts in the *Literatura Electrónica Hispánica* are in the Spanish-Castilian language.

Hermeneia is a research group formed during the years 1999-2000. Since its inception at the Universitat de Barcelona the research group has received funding from various sources including the Generalitat de Catalunya; Spain’s Ministerio de Industria, Turismo y Comercio; and the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia. The research group now boasts over 23 international universities as part of the group including universities from France, the United Kingdom, from various countries in Latin America, and from the United States. Accordingly, the website and the publications from this organization are published in French, English, Catalan, and Spanish. Under their menu bar, the section “Areas” comprises their collection of “On-line digital literature” with a growing list of over 700 digital literary works on the Web. The site describes their collection as one composed of “dynamic poetry, hypertextual narrative, hypertext essay, cyber drama and generated literature” (“On-line”). The site’s archive of literary works is perhaps unmatched out of the organizations profiled in this chapter.

The two remaining organizations, which informed the development of this chapter, are ELMCIP and LEETHI. The first, although with a more European focus, has an expanded creative works section from Spain that builds on the selection of digital texts seen in the Cervantes Virtual. ELMCIP’s e-literature sampling is accompanied by critical texts produced within the last three to five years. The list curated by ELMCIP researchers took as its base the works and authors found in the Cervantes Virtual’s *Literatura Electrónica Hispánica* section

(Zalbidea 142). LEETHI, though hosted and partially funded by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, has a clear focus on research and critical analyses of electronic texts. Unfortunately, it appears that this group's activity has decreased or that it has stopped updating LEETHI's activity since there are only a few recent additions to the organization's events and publications.

These research centers and digital groups, independent of how long they have existed or whether they are a branch of a more prestigious institution, have taken a pivotal role in the safeguarding of electronic literature. Whether by coincidence or not, many of the texts that one organization references are found in the others and in the case of the Literatura Electrónica Hispánica from the Cervantes Virtual and the ELMCIP, which appears to be more selective and smaller in number, these are all found elsewhere. In turn, these literary or creative works, as the ELMCIP chooses to label them, have become more talked about and referenced by both academics, critics, and the larger reading public. From these organizations the two case studies below appear in all of them as references or in critical papers by Spanish academics.

I would like to briefly mention some hypertext projects that have received attention by critics and scholars. The following hypertext works fall some where in the spectrum between this chapter's case studies. The intricacy of these texts varies from simple hypertext use to more elaborate coding and linking as experienced in Díez's novel. Again, the following works appear in almost all of the organizations just profiled. Two works by Benjamín Escalonilla stand out: *Sinferidad* (2009) and *Asesinos y asesinados* (2009). In *Sinferidad*, the novel follows three different individuals, all friends who discuss their lives until one of the characters reveals that he is the author of one of the other characters. *Asesinos y asesinados* is a short hypermedia novel about crime. The reader is presented with a dying narrator who has been shot and is part of a multiple homicide. The text is in linear fashion with images in comic book form that appear

throughout the text. At the end the reader is invited to write a possible ending to the story and, even, submit it. Dora García's *Heartbeat: construcción de una ficción* (1999) is a hypertext novel that allows the reader to enter the world of heartbeaters, youth who cannot hear their heartbeat or else they go into a state of panic. These heartbeaters must instead fill their time and the silences with music and other activities in order to not hear their inner voices. *Extreme conditions* (2003/2005) by the Colombian Juan B. Gutierrez is a science-fiction novel written in Spanish despite the English title. The novel presents a mutated race and follows three individuals along three temporal lines: 1998, 2050, and 2090. Félix Remírez's *Trincheras de Mequinenza* (2007) is a hypermedia work that consists of a collection of letters from a Republican soldier during the Spanish Civil War at the Battle of the Ebro (1938). The work incorporates images, maps, and other media of the real-life events within the fictional letters that make up the novel's plot. Remírez has also published *Una contemporánea historia de Caldesa* (2007) inspired by the classic *La tragedia de Caldesa* by Joan Roís de Corella, the Valencian author from the 15th century. This quick sampling of hypertext and hypermediated Spanish works show a very healthy variety of electronic publications proving that hypertext is a viable path for writers to take.

### **Agency Within Hypertext**

Hypertext should also be thought of as an agential dynamic element that is able to reach out to the reader and other digital spaces. Hypertext allows for a work, in this case novels, to network through other creative works and literary environments. The networking facilitated by hyperlinks has been instrumental in organizations establishing an electronic literary corpus that

generates enthusiasm with both the general public and critics alike. Thus, the hyperlinked and well-networked projects are those that have reached scholars and literary organizations, which in turn have exponentially showcased them to the rest of the Web users. Scholars have tended to approach hypertext works through the lens of various post-structuralist theorists and theories.

Among the favored theoretical works for digital texts is Julia Kristeva's *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980). One of Kristeva's interests as she develops some of Mikhail Bakhtin's theories on language is intertextuality. In particular, Kristeva addresses how authors compile a new text from preexisting texts. For her, texts are "a permutation of [other] texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text [... where] several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva, *Desire* 36). This neutralizing and intersectional effect resonates with not only hypertext works, but with an agential approach that understands that texts, including digital ones, must be situated in an equal plane, where all texts are treated uniformly in order to be better understood, engaged with, and analyzed. Later, Kristeva adds, "each word (text) is an intersection of word (text) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (*Desire* 66). I understand this to be Kristeva's way of incorporating the existing discourse of a time to the intersecting elements of a text beyond the standard intertextuality. Her multiple layers of "word" make reference to literal readings, intertextual elements, and the discourse that generates and moves the language employed. Through Kristeva's propositions hypertext works can be understood as a combination of intertextual references, but ones that push the boundaries of her understanding that must also incorporate the mediums utilized. Whereas prior understanding of intertextuality was printed and worded, hypertext works question and push this understanding beyond its boundaries. Intertextuality must now incorporate visual and aural elements as well as the materialization of

intertextual components including software, type of link, and the way in which these intertextual components are delivered on the screen or hardware device.

In some instances, and likely most, Roland Barthes is the most referenced philosopher when it comes to hypertextual environments. His description of the ideal text has found a comfortable niche within electronic literary criticism. In *S/Z* Barthes explains that

[i]n this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*, they are indeterminable (meaning here is never subject to a principle of determination, unless by throwing dice); the system of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. (5-6)

The word network has been a trigger for academics and philosophers alike, allowing for a smooth incorporation of current digital systems. Hypertext has provided an ample field to test these propositions and has produced many examples. Additionally, a text without a beginning or end and a text with multiple entry points describe a cornerstone of hypertext and hypermedia works. Nonetheless, current digital productions prove Barthes to be insufficient or vague. While Barthes's definition from above is able to conceptualize some aspects of hypertext writing, this does not address functions of the elements that connect the networks of texts. Barthes notes that there is an interaction occurring within the ideal texts, but his focus is not the interaction or the structure itself, an important element that must be assessed in hypertext fiction.

Previous theorizations, while assertive in their essence, do not encompass the connections that hyperlinks provide nor do they address the digital materializations of the “galaxy of signifiers” that authors employ to develop works that fully integrate new media technologies for their storytelling. A larger understanding of the current and future possibilities of hypertext is still needed. George Landow’s theories on hypertext in tandem with earlier theorizations as just described are a better attempt at understanding content, meaning, and structure of hypertextual works. Landow’s theories have been easily accessible, readily translated, and often employed by Spanish scholars in the field of electronic literature.

### **Landow’s Hypertextual Ideas in Spain**

As previously discussed, a common thread of analysis on hyperlinks is the association with a more flexible intertextuality or the inherent connectivity it may have with other works. Digital scholar George Landow agrees, but also notes that hypertext should be seen as a distinct form of intertextuality since it “has the capacity to emphasize intertextuality in a way that page-bound text in books cannot” (*Hypertext 2.0* 35). This idea is something that Spanish scholar and professor at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, María Goicoechea expands on. Goicoechea agrees with Landow’s vision of hypertext being more than intertextuality and writes,

[t]he use of intertextuality becomes, not the text’s past but its eternal present, in competition with the free intertextuality evocated by the reader, a reader who is presupposedly forgetful. The need for reading context in which to integrate the hypertextual information becomes redundant since hypertext already is a self-sufficient and self-explanatory unity. (“The Reader” 194)

The hypertext and intertextuality concepts simultaneously become the same element and a new unit of meaning. Goicoechea adds, “[t]he structure of hypertext admits a forgetful reader at the same time that [hypertext] place[s] the reader in a relation of dependence with the computer, which assumes an ever increasing information load” (“The Reader” 196). This relationship of co-dependence aligns both human and nonhuman elements together in equal relation to each other. The hypertext will do what the reader cannot and the reader must act when the hypertext emerges.

Indeed, the hyperlink function not only creates a new intertextuality, but also materializes intertextual components that extend a work beyond the immediate text. Hypertext extends past allusions to other works and beyond previously understood concepts of intertextuality. Whereas the more traditional intertextual component is assumed to be a potential mention, direct or indirect, recognized by the reader, hypertext is able to directly indicate the given element that is being intertextualized via a link. Furthermore, intertextual links in hypertexts tend to be marked in one or another manner; they are underlined, bolded, or may appear in a different color from that of the rest of the text. The reader must still either hover over the word with the computer’s cursor and, at times, also click on the link to extract the information stored within the hyperlink. As a result, this intertextuality is a direct manifestation of allusions reminiscent of the list of references that T.S. Eliot provided for “The Wasteland.” Unlike Eliot’s list, hyperlinks can provide more information than a quick reference and can send users to multiple digital spaces with unlimited content.

Additionally, hypertext must also be seen as an *experienced* visual and audial element that complements or enriches a text, a function previously disconnected from the concept of intertextuality. Portraits, photographs, and other images along with sound recordings and video

clips are creating a multi-sensory literary experience that is becoming a cornerstone of hypermedia literature. Hypertext is able to facilitate the visual component in culture from any given period, whether present or past, and introduce cultural influences and overall ways of life in direct and wide-ranging forms. Embedded music and video clips may resonate with new audiences and digital natives that would previously not have been vested in literary works.

A key proposition made by hypertext is its inherent decentering agency that can be found within, but not exclusively, literature. This decentering in hypertext works can be seen where some works lack one particular starting point. This element is more easily visible in closed hypertext works, where hyperlinks within the literary work only connect the reader to other parts of the text. The hypertext element is, for the most, a contained structure where the reader will not easily navigate away from the main literary text. The user can choose to start wherever the beginning of a text is deemed to be, but as scholars and authors of hypermedia works usually point out, there is no origin or end (Barthes, *S/Z* 5-6; Landow, *Hypertext 2.0* 3, 77-79; Ryan 194; Slatin 874). If readers arrive at a perceived end, they can still continue to another point in the novel. Additionally, what one reader deems to be the end may not be the case for another person. This is an important component of hypertext as it allows for multiple readings since “interpretation depends radically on the reader’s starting point, which will influence (although not necessarily determine) his or her reading experience” (Rabinowitz 37). Thus, without a beginning and end or with the multiple points of entry, the center and the overall shape of the work becomes decentered and fluid.

For those hypertext works considered open, where the hyperlinks transport the user to spaces outside the main work, the act of having these links further decenters the work by placing it within a complex network of other literary and nonliterary texts, fictional and nonfictional.



Consequently, the material makeup of the hypertext work is questioned since the hypertext work is not only the main text, but also the texts to which the hyperlinks redirect the reader. For example, a hypertext novel is both the novel in a traditional sense and the various texts that are materialized through hyperlinks. One is also able to visualize the connection that a hypertext work has with other literary works. For Spanish digital scholar and director of the Hermeneia research group Laura Borràs, hypertext is “un texto que nace desde la fragmentación, desde la dispersión” (“Leed” 195). But unlike others, Borràs sees this fragmentation and displacement force as a positive element within hypertext literature. She adds, “los ‘accidentes’ que ocurren leyendo hipertextos forman parte de la condición del hipertexto como texto y hay que aceptarlos como parte esencialmente constitutiva del mismo” (Borràs, “Leed” 196). For Borràs, the fragmentation found in hypertexts is but another literary form of expression. Furthermore, what some may interpret as fragmentation others will not.

Another important form of expression through hypermedia texts is the interface the author chooses to employ. During the previous chapter I noted how the interface becomes a key component to blog organization and redirection of users to other sites that the blogger-author would want the user to access. In a similar fashion the interface of a hypertext novel or hypertext project becomes crucial, if not the most crucial component. The interface of a program or of a website can be thought of as a simple device (software) that allows for the user to communicate with the language of a given device or of the computer as a whole. In essence, it can be thought of as the screens that allow the users to take action: open a program such as a Web browser, (the interface here is the computer’s desktop or wherever the Web browser may be stored); or the bar at the top of a Word document that permits users to type how they desire by increasing the font size, changing the font type, and incorporating links; it can be, in the case of this chapter’s case

studies, the screen with tools that allow the user to navigate through the novel's plot lines and access the hyperlinks the author has embedded into the text. The interface is where at least two systems meet: the human and the digital. In hypermedia works, navigation takes a central role. Without thoughtful hyperlinks and an interface that enhances the navigation through proper (read: logical) placement of story elements, a hypertext novel will frustrate users before it hooks them to the plot or interactive nature of the text. The interface or, in other words, the layout of a hypertext novel becomes indispensable and crucial to the reading of electronic texts.

### **Checa's Hypertext: Intertextual Relationships**

*Como el cielo los ojos* is a hypertext novel narrated by different first-person narrators. The novel follows the thoughts of Javier, Iñaki, and Paco as they mourn the death of Isabel. The structure of the novel is visually laid out before the reader with a simple chart. Horizontally, the numbers 1 through 13 point to the thirteen different time periods that the reader can use to peek into the lives of the main characters that tell their story and explain their relationship to Isabel. These instances range from the moment each character learns of Isabel's death to after her ashes are spread on the ocean. Vertically, the y-axis, the reader can see the names of Javier, Iñaki, and Paco. The three men are Javier, Isabel's most recent lover; Iñaki, her former partner; and Paco, her ex-husband. *Como el cielo los ojos* captures the emotional aftermath of a sudden death as experienced by three men who must now deal with their feelings towards Isabel when she was alive and go through the difficult process of mourning her. For some, like the very macho ex-husband, this will prove to be a contradiction of emotions that will ultimately not be resolved by the novel's end.

Like Cortázar's *Rayuela*, Checa's novel also has a rather informative prologue serving many functions. The prologues in electronic literature, or even the brief notes within the table of contents section, have become almost indispensable as they aim to instruct the reader on any peculiarity of the work.<sup>51</sup> Where Cortázar's self-authored prologue informs the reader of the possibilities of what is about to be read, Checa's hypertext novel benefits from a prologue to address the interface chart explained above and to give a glimpse of what the author has created in this innovative digital work. The prologue, written by Checa's friend Sergio Palacios, was added to the novel two years after originally published in 2000.<sup>52</sup> The first part of the prologue gives a quick biography and background on the author, but the latter part addresses how the novel functions, "[t]res personajes, trece tiempos y una sola novela, un solo acontecimiento desencadenador: 'Isabel ha muerto...'. No sólo importa el texto en cuanto a la narración sino que la disposición ocupa un lugar principal: 'Seleccione personaje y tiempo pulsando sobre un ojo en

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<sup>51</sup> These elements have been theorized by Gérard Genette as paratexts, elements which surround a book or publication and that are added either by the author or other entity for a better reception and understanding of a work (1). What Genette is arguing for is the inclusion of elements that surround a text as part of a more complete reading and analysis of a work. He adds, "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public [...] the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or - a word Borges used apropos of a preface - a 'vestibule' that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" (1-2). I do not engage in an analysis that treats hypertext as a paratext since I do not want to draw a difference between components that are complementing the text the author produced and the text itself. This would be a complicated task since the material that the hypertext connects to is and is not a part of the text itself. The hypertext work, in terms of Genette's paratext, stands in a gray area questioning those elements that would traditionally be classified as paratext. Other components, however, remain more clearly paratextual, as I will note below. Additionally, in the foreword to Genette's book, Richard Macksey suggests that Genette is avoiding discussion about the hypertext to some extent (Macksey xxi), thus alluding to hypertext as a component outside of the understood categories of paratext.

<sup>52</sup> Palacios was a doctoral student at the time; he now works at the Biblioteca Nacional de España. The prologue can be considered a *later* paratext (Genette 5-6) since it was published after the main text. The "Índice" in *Como el cielo los ojos* had the important navigational information, an *original* paratext, but I would argue that these components are more important in digital texts than the originally presented concept by Genette.

la cuadrícula' rezan unas líneas en negrita" (Palacios). We are also informed of the reader's interactive role over the novel. The reader is able to "[elegir] entre un recorrido por los tres monólogos interiores de los personajes, por un vistazo a distintos momentos de los mismos o por una visión cruzada de la historia" (Palacios). Through these varying visions, the reader can form an idea of what Isabel was like. Isabel's character is formed by clicking on the various sections of each time period/chapter, which coincidentally has an eye as an icon. At the same time, this choice for an icon has a double effect. The eyes are constantly watching the reader since Checa has placed the chart at both the beginning and end of every section. The eye is watching and reminding the reader that the story is not done, that something may not have been read correctly, or that the reader may need to reread a section to fully understand Isabel and her relationships with the three men. While this effect is executed on the reader, the eye icon is also what is seeing Isabel and creating this absent and, yet, pivotal character. These are eyes into not only the action and the thoughts of the three narrators, but it is also eyesight into the type of person Isabel was.

*Como el cielo los ojos* is a novel that, in typical hypertext fashion, can be read in many ways. There is no particular starting point even though there is a chronological order to the chapters or time lapses labeled 1-13. The reader can follow the storyline of any one of the individual narrators exclusively or in a combination with one or both of the other narrators. One can stop reading and come back at another moment or not come back at all. The index to the novel, now with less importance after the prologue was added, only gives one specific instruction after we are informed of Isabel's death, "[s]eleccione personaje y tiempo pulsando sobre un ojo en la cuadrícula, o lea el prólogo" (Checa, "Índice"). This last word has been hyperlinked and bolded to alert the reader of this fact. When clicked on, it transports the user to the aforementioned prologue. The reader is able to click on any of the eyes. This element, though

typical of many hypertext works, would only prove problematic within Checa's novel when Paco, the ex-husband, finds and reads a short story written by Isabel. The short story within the novel fills four different sections of Paco's narration (Paco 4-7).<sup>53</sup> If the reader were to click on the second entry that details the short story and start reading the novel from here (Paco 5), there would be some confusion, but that is one complication that any reader could have elsewhere.

One way that this short story, "La basura", continues to develop the novel is that the short story that Paco finds, although with characters with different names, is supposed to be a nonfictional account of when Paco and Isabel were still together. When the short story ends, or when Paco stops reading, he is left to wonder, "¿Tanto te hice sufrir, Isabel? ¿He sido tan hijo de puta contigo? Has reflejado muy bien las peleas, sí, así de desagradables eran y a veces más, mucho más" (Paco 7). Isabel's short story and a number of poems are scattered throughout the passages, highlighting the authorial side of the absent protagonist. The various texts authored by Isabel throughout the novel become a metaphor for hypertext writing and authoring in the late 20th and, now, 21st century. Isabel's unpublished poems and short stories are scattered throughout different places. Paco finds the majority of her works at Isabel's home and studio. Another portion of her writings, most of which are letters, are at Isabel's mother's home. Many poems, which Isabel would recite and sing, are at her friend Berta's house. When Isabel indicates, through her will, that she wants her poems published, Javier finds himself back at Berta's house requesting any of Isabel's writings that still reside in her home. Isabel's work, scattered throughout various spaces and linked through the relationships she had and the environments she created, allows the reader to understand her literature while continuing to build her persona and trace some of her accomplishments while she was alive. It is the intertextual

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<sup>53</sup> *Como el cielo los ojos* does not have any annotated page numbers. In lieu of page numbers, I am including the narrator and the section/chapter within the hypertext novel.

relationships of the three men and friends of Isabel that are creating a network around the person that was Isabel. As a result, the image of Isabel begins to materialize.

Similar to Isabel's writings within the novel, an author's oeuvre in the digitally networked world is widely dispersed. A reader interested in Checa's work, for example, would need to look in different spaces and learn of the environments that Checa and others created in order to fully understand her collected writings. Furthermore, Checa's titles (including digital ones), as is the case for all of Isabel's poems and short stories, are partially published and partially living in various cyberspace locations. The dispersed nature of Checa's texts further exemplifies a non-hierarchical distribution of her work – this, of course, from a creative standpoint. There may be critics who devalue electronic publications or who prioritize published pieces, but this, one must highlight, is an interpretive assessment and not a matter of fact as it relates to Checa's work or its quality. I, however, do not see the dispersal of an author's texts among published and digital outlets as something questionable. Instead, this scattered materialization of Checa's developing oeuvre should open her texts and lend her material to more and better literary analyses in their own right, through the current milieu, and because of the propositions of digital components.

The ending of hypertext literature, as described earlier, is not as easy to denote and at times may not be a component of a novel. In Checa's *Como el cielo los ojos*, the ending is rather abrupt, if one calls it an ending. The last chapter, which takes place at the scattering of Isabel's ashes, is only told from Javier's perspective. The storylines of the previous chapters just stop without a clear resolution. We do not know what the husband will end up doing with his and Isabel's daughter. Paco had mentioned taking their daughter to live with him even though it appeared that their daughter would be better off with her grandmother, Isabel's mom. Paco has to

return to his life and business and is not present at the ceremony where Isabel's ashes are released into the ocean. Furthermore, the last of Javier's entries only inform us of Isabel's ashes as a few of her closest friends finally reach the location where the ceremony will take place. This event does very little in tying up the plots that were ongoing in the novel. While criticism could be levied against the plot development of this hypertext novel, it is clear that the novel is more about the characters. The focus is constantly on the emotions that each narrator must struggle with after Isabel's death. As the prologue hints, the novel aims to piece together the persona of Isabel by reading some of her scattered writings and through the reflections of three important men in her life. At the core of *Como el cielo los ojos* is the various characters we are introduced to and not a plot with incomplete resolutions to the character's lives. In fact, the very nature of hyperlinks and hypertext prevents any work from having a perfectly closed ending. Digital scholar Jaime Alejandro Rodríguez explains in his book, *Narratopedia* (2011), that this trait of openness and lack of an ending is a broader characteristic found in digital texts, "las obras de la cibercultura no fomentan mensajes acabados, no se cierran, y son por eso obras-acontecimientos, obras-proceso, obras-metamórficas conectadas, atravesadas, infinitamente reconstruidas" (19). The constant reminder and the inclusion of the index chart allow for the reader to once again click on a previous section and continue reading.

The hyperlinks, via the index chart, continue to engage with the reader as agency within the work flexes to influence the reader once more. The narrators may have finished their story for the time being, but the hyperlink is still inviting for a better understanding of, for example, a more intimate reading of only Javier's narration by visually showing that Javier has more entries than Paco, the ex-husband. The work as a whole digitally materializes the importance of the narrators through the chart: Javier, Isabel's most recent partner occupies a larger portion of the

novel's timeline while Paco's eleven entries are further reduced by the short story he reads over the course of four of those entries. Consequently, the reader may choose to reread Paco's entries exclusively, which would highlight his self-obsessed and macho-like demeanor that led Isabel to divorce him. Reading *Como el cielo los ojos* in a chronological manner (all of the "1" entries, the "2" entries, etc.) dilutes the particular characteristics of the narrators, whereas returning to the text and focusing on one narrator at a time will allow for the unique characteristics that each possesses to stand out and, by extension, will re-frame the relationship each had with Isabel. Lastly, the short story (although one could reconstruct some of the poems within the novel) embedded within the larger work is worthy of rereading and can stand separately. The visceral reactions it evokes of the poor treatment of the female protagonist (and, by extension, of Isabel) will resonate with many readers. The abusive relationship that Elena/Isabel suffered while with Andrés/Paco can be catapulted to the forefront and be (re) read as the events that allowed Isabel to then grow as a person. Accordingly, the novel does not just end. The reader is kept in a cyclical rereading of the events and stories that marked Isabel's life as well as the narrators' in order to re-piece their lives.

Hypertext as employed within *Como el cielo los ojos* only transports the reader to other spaces found in the novel. The eye icons, as the key to the closed hypertext structure of the novel, allow the user to traverse time and space through the three narrators, but these links do not extend beyond the novel. Through this structure the project keeps some control of the narration, since the reader must encounter the index chart at the beginning and end of each section. The links, unlike the next case study, do not allow the user to get lost outside of the work and do not send the user to external websites or digital works. This stylistic choice does not diminish the quality of Checa's work, especially if one compares her novel to recent hypertext works. This



technical style and structure is more a reflection of the possibilities during the time of creation. As can be read in badosa.com's introductory page for *Como el cielo los ojos*, the earliest note for the entire work dates to 1995, the year Checa obtained copyright for *Como el cielo los ojos*. The full publication, as earlier noted, began in 1998. These earlier years in technology position Checa as an avant-garde artist of new media technologies. When others were barely experimenting with new media technologies, Checa was finalizing the overall structure of her novel (1995) and then publishing it (1998) with a clear conception of what the hyperlinks would do to her work.

Checa could very well have published her novel like Cortázar published *Rayuela*, but instead developed it for the Web. Had a published version of this work come to fruition many questions would quickly need answering. How would this hypertext project be published? Would it follow the chronological order? Would it be better to tell each narrator's point of view and then return to the beginning of time with the next narrator? Whose perspective would be told first? More importantly, what elements would go unnoticed with a physical copy of this hypertext novel that would need to be explained or lost to the reader? *Como el cielo los ojos* would have to exist in an entirely different form, restrained in hard copy, and forced through various norms of the publishing world and literary practices. Instead, Checa rightfully decided that the digital world was the ideal form and format for her work. With this structure, the reader is left with a novel that carries its meaning through the hyperlink and through the intertextual characters whose experiences and past interaction with Isabel are able to recreate a relentless and powerful protagonist who had an unfortunate accident and passed away.

*Como el cielo los ojos*'s overall simple setup makes this digital novel easy to navigate while referencing the time when it was created for the Internet. The intertextuality that Kristeva theorized of "several utterances, taken from other texts, [which] intersect and neutralize one

another” (Kristeva, *Desire* 36) are able to materialize in Checa’s hypertext, more specifically, through the intersection of the lives of Javier, Paco, and Iñaki with Isabel. But, along with these three narrators, an additional intersecting element is the hypertextual interface that allows for the communication of all elements. The logical and simple chart display, unadorned when compared to the hypermedia possibilities that are available in the 21st century, provide enough guidance and substance for the user to create meaning out of the puzzle Checa presents. Earlier I stated that Checa’s hypertext structure for her novel was a closed one and I do not intend to contradict this point now. However, while the novel is a closed hypertext project, the novel itself does not exist in a vacuum. The interface of the novel includes a banner, or strip, across the top of the webpage that can transport the reader to the home site of badosa.com. Additionally, the far left corner of the browser holds a one-inch box that serves as a navigation box informing the user of the larger categories and literary genres that can be found in badosa.com. Thus, the hypertext novel is never isolated and does not exist on its own, even when the plot of the novel uses a closed system of hyperlinks to navigate through the story. *Como el cielo los ojos* inserts itself within the larger literary network in which it was created and within the growing corpus of literary texts from a digital culture that continues to add links to new literary creations.

### **Hypermedia or *Webnovela*: The Blurring of Borders**

*Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* by Juan José Díez, my second case study, is a hypertext novel that uses a variety of new media technologies. As a result, it is more commonly described as a hypermedia and hypermediated novel whose hyperlinks lead to images, sound, video, and other places in the Web. In stark contrast to Checa’s novel, Díez’s work is heavily

hyper-mediated within every chapter expressing the many possibilities that the hypertext novel can make use of in the 21st century. While Checa's novel provides a blurring of events and relationships and a unique assemblage of views to create a hypertext novel, Díez's work is a blurring of borders at the outer edges of his novel with the rest of the Internet's possibilities.

Díez's hypertext novel falls under the category of historical novel. In *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu*, the unfolding story is that of 19th century Spanish author Juan Valera (1824-1905) as he arrives in Washington D.C. to serve as ambassador to the United States. Valera was a famed writer, statesman, and, as the novel's title may hint at, somewhat of a lady's man. This latter element is not avoided in the novel and many chapters focus on the scandalous relationship that Valera, a married man, had with Miss Catherine Bayard, the daughter of the then Secretary of State for the United States, Thomas F. Bayard (1828-1898). By the time that Valera makes his way to the United States as an ambassador, he is already a well-known and established literary figure. His well-received and popular novel, *Pepita Jiménez*, had been published in 1874. Valera had been unable to earn a living through the publication of his poetry, shorts stories, and novels and, in turn, opted for returning to the political world as a statesman (Cantos 52). Valera would arrive to the United States in January of 1884 and would leave in March of 1886. According to Cyrus C. Decoster (1914-1999), a scholar and biographer of Valera, he likely met Miss Bayard in early 1885 when she was 28 years old and he was reaching the age of 60. Their relationship would be a short one and on January 16, 1886 Miss Bayard would commit suicide (Decoster 157). While Díez has combed through a large amount of letters written to and from Valera to create his historical novel, there are instances where he indulges. One such time is Miss Bayard's death. In *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu*, Bayard commits suicide just outside Valera's office in Washington D.C., but the reports from newspapers would

state she died in her father's home. Additionally, while it is known that Valera also had another illicit relationship during his stay in Washington D.C., Díez chooses to not complicate his novel and excludes any reference to Mary Jessup Sitgreaves, with whom Valera also maintained a detailed correspondence and whose letters still survive (Decoster 157). Nonetheless, Díez uses a long series of new media technologies through hyperlinks to immerse the reader in late 19th century society and culture.

Part of the immersion process that the reader undergoes is facilitated through the interface constructed for the novel. When one first enters the hypermedia novel an introduction, which can be skipped, begins to play automatically. A series of images of New York and Washington D.C.'s cityscapes along with real portraits of the main characters appear on the screen while a version of "Amazing Grace" plays in the background. Then, a bookshelf appears with one book slightly pushed out and the introduction to this work comes to an end. The screen cuts to a new webpage, which will be the next phase for the novel. The split screen shows a book, Díez's novel, to the right and to the left is a quick screen-centered menu with the following categories: *Prólogo*, *Créditos*, *Webnovela*, *Foro*, and *Contacto*.<sup>54</sup> Of these last two, the *Foro*, or forum, is not functional at the moment or not active and the tab *Contacto* allows one to send the author a message.

The novel's prologue, in typical hypertext fashion, has a brief note on how the reader can approach the novel: it can be read without clicking on the links provided, like a typical published novel; it can be read while clicking on all the links as the reader encounters them throughout the

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<sup>54</sup> These components and in particular the *webnovela* section are classified as *original* paratexts, those paratexts that appear with the publication, such as the prologues that the author originally includes (Genette 5). In Díez's work these components are key paratexts that inform, instruct, and allow for a better reading of the hypertext novel. These are key components of the novel, but I again exclude the hypertext elements as directly being paratextual.

pages; or, there is a third option, which the reader is informed is the author's preferred method.

The reader could

leer el texto, detenerse en cada link, conectar con todos los que aparezcan y perderse.

Esta opción saca bruscamente de la historia pero puede desviar al lector hacia otra que le interese más. Si alguien pulsa el link Goya, pongamos por caso, puede pasarse toda la tarde enfrascado en la obra completa del pintor [...] Esta forma más caótica, sin embargo, es, creo yo, la experiencia webnovela. Vuelves al viaje original después de haberte perdido en todos los meandros. O no vuelves. (Díez, "Prólogo")

With Díez, the primary effect through his novel is a historical intertextuality. The abundance of links gives this element equal importance to the rest of the text. Díez's liberal use of hyperlinks to external websites permits the reader to travel outside of the novel without a clear need to return. Hyperlinks will usually send the reader to additional information of a historical figure, photographs of the 19th century, portraits of individuals, and a few songs that can often set the tone of the chapter or event. The links continue to connect the historical texts of the time: speeches, government documents, treaties, and photographs that recorded the 19th century culture. Even though the extensive use of links to outside sources is employed, the reader delves more into the culture and the experiences of life in the 19th century instead of getting separated from the novel itself. This multi-modal experience is one unique to hypertext novels of the 21st century, but as his prologue states, Díez would rather use the term *webnovela*.

As mentioned above, the *Webnovela* section is one of the tabs shown once the introduction to the novel ends. Although Díez clearly differentiates his novel from hypertext works, most academics do not and in turn group all hypermediated digital texts together, including Díez's. On the contrary, the author draws a distinction between hypertext novels like

Checa's, which is comparatively contained within the work, and those whose hyperlinks push the boundaries of the work onto external spaces like the Internet. Díez provides a very particular definition for *webnovela*, but it is important to note that the definition is mostly a description of his hypermedia novel, *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu*. He goes on to first note that the term would not work in English, since a "webnovel" in Anglophone terms refers to digitized versions of existing novels or novels published online that only contain text. The most important element for Díez's *webnovela* is that it must connect to the Web ("Webnovela"). He details, "[e]xisten, cierto es, obras literarias que experimentan con las posibilidades multimedia de la red. Aunque en este nuevo territorio es difícil todavía una clasificación precisa, podemos denominar 'novela multimedia', a un texto literario con enlaces a música, fotos, vídeos" (ibid.). *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* is a novel that employs a variety of media within its project's parameters to prod the boundary of the contemporary digital novel. As mentioned, this is done through the various media embedded into every chapter. Additionally, and a key element in Díez' description and differentiation of a *webnovela* from the basic hypertext form, there is an ample use of the Web via links that continue to direct the reader to the many allusions he employs in his text to allow the search for "más vida y más realidad fuera del texto" (ibid.). These links and use of media are meant to complement and add meaning to the novel, but are in no way needed for the development of the plot.

When users begin to read and experience Díez's novel, they are met with, ironically, a very traditional looking interface that resembles a published book. The cover of the *webnovela* is made to look like those published in the 19th century, the pages are numbered, and the flipping from page to page is very traditional. The reader, with the use of the computer or tablet's cursor can click on the bottom right-hand corner of the page, hold the cursor, and slide it to the left.

This act also generates the sound of a page turning, thus mimicking the common way of reading published texts. The navigation of the novel is made to look similar and natural to the reader of published works. The novel itself is comprised of short chapters and short-length “pages” as well. This is likely to maintain some focus for the readers as they advance through the content. When one encounters hyperlinks, the words that contain the links are in red or blue; the latter of which are for recordings (music, songs, etc.). Navigating through the novel and experiencing *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* has been carefully crafted to appear partially as a published text with the full advantage of hypermedia components. This factor allows for traditional readers to approach the text with fewer reservations, but it also blurs boundaries between the publishing world and the digital production of texts.

The caveat with hypertext works such as Díez’s is that the reader can leave the text, get lost on the Web, and not come back. This is something Díez is aware of. In anticipation, the majority of the hyperlinks in his novel are able to pop up on the same screen without leaving the host site. Once the reader is done viewing the image or reading the additional information, one must, again, click and close the pop-up window. In these instances the reader never fully leaves the site of *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* and is instead reminded of the novel being read. This is not always the case, though, as many hyperlinks also transport the reader to government sites for historical documents, speeches, and other texts, as well as to biographies and works of famous authors as already mentioned from the Real Academia Española’s site and other literary organizations. Thus, Díez is able to choose where the reader could get lost beyond the novel’s confines.

The hypertext in Díez’s case becomes even more crucial than Checa’s novel. The hyperlink takes control of a portion of the interpretation of the work as it guides readers through

the different typeface font and engages with multiple sources to develop a more rich experience. The hyperlink is able to materialize any allusion that the author chooses. Whereas a simple intertextual reference can be included in a literary work, hypertext allows for the visual materialization of, for example, the mention of Emilia Pardo Bazán (Díez, *Don Juan* 105), who was an ardent admirer of Valera. When one clicks on “Emilia,” the word already in red, the reader’s browser opens a new tab and is transported to the Cervantes Virtual’s page on Pardo Bazán. From there, one could read about Pardo Bazán or click on the tab that includes her work to read any of the now-digitized texts she published throughout her career. An added component of the Cervantes Virtual is their “Fonoteca,” recordings of some of Pardo Bazán’s short stories that the user can click on and listen to. The materials available would cause anyone to get distracted and potentially set aside Díez’s work. And this is only one of the authors whom Díez provides direct links to. However, the browser and more particularly the code and setup to *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* have accounted for this. As a result the browser’s unclosed tab for Díez’s novel remains open and the reader at some point will be reminded that this was at one point the focus. A quick retort to this type of hypertext writing could be to point towards footnotes/endnotes or even appendices that briefly explain a reference,<sup>55</sup> but this rigid publishing practice has given way to a larger amount of information with greater detail and multimodal enhancement that better informs the reader.

A potential and common problem with some of the hyperlinks is that a hyperlink can become inactive due to changes in the destination website. The permanent Internet address, or permalink, can become unstable or dead and, as a result, problematizing the relay of information

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<sup>55</sup> Christine Henseler and Debra A. Castillo both argue that even “[a] rather marginalized and flat footnote or endnote in a book may now engage in a process of looping [...] breathing new life into most literary and cultural theories as the static notion of the printed word is increasingly unsettled, rattling words in their place” (Henseler and Castillo 10).



originally intended. While some hyperlinks within Díez's novel have fallen to this inevitable problem, mostly linking to government webpages, Díez has tried to resolve this by preeminently copying partial information to his host site. When Valera's nephew arrives to Helena, Montana, as a guest of the Secretary of State's party, Díez includes a photograph of Helena at the end of the 19th century (*Don Juan* 160). When one clicks on the hypertext, "Helena" the image pops up and below the image is what should be the link to where the digital photograph was originally extracted from, but the link leads to an error message suggesting that the permalink has been modified or that the photograph has been removed. This thoughtful digital writing and planning from Díez's part is not always possible and a small number of links are faulty. Regardless of the mishaps of a few links, Díez is able to work hypertext in a manner that follows Landow's interpretation of smart uses of hypertext. Landow writes that hypertext should "[permit] one to make explicit, though not necessarily intrusive, the linked materials that an educated reader perceives surrounding it" (*Hypertext 2.0* 35). As such, the links that complement the novel follow logical destinations: a link to historical characters tends to have biographical information, links attached to locations will give additional data on such places, and any blue hyperlinks within the novel have a sound recording that is already alluded to within the novel's text. If a link were to become faulty an inquisitive reader would have enough context within the novel to research into the alluded missing component.

*Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* is a clear example of the current possibilities for hypertext writing despite its author's preference for the term *webnovela*. The array of media and links embedded throughout the work point to a more involved novel that does not end with the last page's writing. Any reader can continue to the alluded authors or artists and explore how the intertextuality plays out in the novel. This novel becomes a branch of a wider literary and

nonliterary network where the center is obfuscated. Hypertext not only provides direct materialized intertextual notes, but it creates branches with allusions that blur the boundaries of digital texts and already published ones from both contemporary texts and historical ones. Electronic literature that employs hypertext positions the hypertext as a “transient center” (Landow, *Hypertext 2.0* 37), where the center may lie within the mutable goal of the reader and the unstable propositions of the hyperlink. The multiple storylines converging in digital texts may as well be the future of electronic literature.

### **The Future Is Written in Hypertext**

Hypertext literature may be the new form of literature that casually presents literature in a network of sorts without a clear hierarchy enmeshed in other literatures and cultural texts. While there is a base for past literary histories (see Borges, Cortázar, and Eliot at the beginning of this chapter), the current and future hypertexts are a departure from published works. The digitally materialized intertextuality and the immediate visualization or experiencing of recordings signals a change from earlier forms. Hypertext writing should be seen as a new way of creating literature where the author is directly in dialogue with other authors and works across time and space. The intertextuality created is engaging with other works not only in terms of content, but, and just as importantly, with the digital structures that develop the work. The use of hypertext is “a means of releasing the power of established forms by placing them in new contexts, where they may combine in ways (and through media) not necessarily foreseen by those who created the forms initially” (van Looy and Baetens 38). Furthermore, current technology allows for immediate search of any key term or phrase when reading, whether the text is originally digital or not. In

turn, new technology accelerates the researching of a term or person that the reader may not recognize.

While critics continue to point to hypertext as an unorganized type of writing with many distractions, one could argue just the opposite. Hypertext works may be less distracting than previously assumed since all pertinent information regarding a hypermediated work is already linked to its corresponding information. If the work is written and structured in a manner that is intelligent and constructive, as Checa's or Díez's novels exemplify, then the need for an informed reader to look up additional phrases, characters, events, etc. is drastically reduced. The reader is left to focus on the text and the hyperlinks the author provides within the work. If any distraction does arise from a hyperlink, the reader should be able to easily return to the original text. But even if the reader does not return, Díez has made peace with this type of reaction and still sees it as a positive effect. Díez acknowledges that there is a risk with hypermedia works where the reader may get lost in the Web and never return to his novel or the original hypertext work. He adds, "[e]n todo caso, si el lector no termina la obra, al menos habrá visto mundo" (Díez, "Prólogo").

Hypertext novels, for the time being, can also appease those who strictly interpret a text by what is literally written while also tending to those who deconstruct the text and analyze a work by its "extra-literary" components. Hypertexts invite for multiple and widely positioned analyses not seen in, for example, published texts like *Rayuela*. Hyperlinks and the information they carry are thus caught in an in-between space where they are part of the text, but are not crucial to the plot's understanding, interpretation, or development. The reader does not need to click on all of the links that Díez provides or read all of the sections that comprise Checa's novel. One could accidentally miss a link and not access it or a link may have stopped functioning as

previously noted in examples, but the overall purpose of the work does not change and one or a few hyperlinks are not required for interpreting the entirety of a work. While an analysis of digital texts like those in this chapter could be made under past theorizations and models,<sup>56</sup> analyzing hypertext works separately would show the intricacies of a networked text that expresses current social and cultural elements on the screen.

Thus, hypertext works have the possibility to further remove boundaries, textual and ideological, as the “hypertextual dissolution of centrality, which makes the medium such a potentially democratic one, also makes it a model of a society of conversations in which no one conversation, no single discipline or ideology, dominates or founds the others” (Landow, *Hypertext 2.0* 89). The dissolutions that Landow may be referring to can be physical as texts interconnect with each other through references, literary borrowings, and various media. Díez’s novel, one that thrives on images, photographs, and music stretches the definition of a novel as the reader comes to visually and aurally experience *Don Juan en la frontera del espíritu* and not just through words. Additionally, hypertext can incorporate a polyphony of different voices that creates a work not just from different points of view, but one that can more easily show perspective. This latter type is visible in Checa’s novel as the three narrators must find ways of dealing with their grief and find a resolution to their new reality. An analysis that assesses the hypertextual structure of a novel, whether it resembles something like Checa’s novel or Díez’s *webnovela*, will show the assemblages within characters and events in a novel. In Díez’s case it shows the interconnections with history, culture, present-day society, and other literary works.

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<sup>56</sup> Again, an analysis that approximates the hyperlink and hypertext to a paratextual analysis would only partially acknowledge the mechanisms of hypertext literature and would position the hyperlinked material as extra-literary, as existing outside of the text itself. Hypertext is more fluid and the fixity to which Genette has defined these elements does not allow for a proper analysis of the novels analyzed in this chapter.

This is due to hypertext's quality of not only decentering texts as previously noted, but, according to scholar Alejandra Gutiérrez, because hypertext "presenta también un fondo de discontinuidad que lleva a la concepción del hipermedia como un vasto ensamblaje por su estructura de enlaces interconectados" (Gutiérrez 576). A porous approach that allows for a focused textual analysis of a digital work (looking at more traditional literary elements), but that also allows inquiry into the intertextuality built into hypertext is required in order to arrive at meaningful interpretations of electronic literature.

“The traditional role of print is unmistakably being threatened by the new digital world; but it also, paradoxically, is being revitalized.”

-Alessandro Ludovico

“... las etiquetas en temas literarios así como en la vida [...] me parecen reduccionistas y empobrecedoras. Las etiquetas están pensadas para vender, están pensadas para simplificar, están pensadas para reducir.”

-Flavia Company

### **Chapter 3: Scanning Through New Fusions: How New Technology**

#### **Hybridized Publications and Public Spaces**

At some point during the summer of 2012, while I strolled through the streets of the Barri Gòtic (the Gothic Quarter) in Barcelona, I made my way to the famous modernist café *Els 4 gats*. Once there, I noticed a Quick Response (QR) code to the side of the café’s main entrance. When scanned with a smartphone, the QR code directed me to *Els 4 gats*’ main webpage that, besides providing information on the menu and upcoming events, allowed me to read about its history and the many important patrons who had dined and held events at this locale. This carefully placed and noninvasive digital code is a small square patch of black and white dots that when scanned with a smartphone or tablet releases information to the user. The QR code is a type of technology that the city of Barcelona has actively employed with many goals in mind. As a result, one can find these codes throughout the city in a hybrid coexistence with the physical cityscape. This combination or hybridity experienced in the streets of Barcelona and in many cities across the planet is the topic of this chapter where I will also analyze two literary print

publications that have incorporated the use of codes throughout their respective projects. In her poetry collection *Código de barras*, poet and scholar Tina Escaja makes use of the typical barcode that one may find on any product that needs to be scanned to make a purchase at a store. Flavia Company, in her collection of short stories *Por mis muertos*, employs QR codes like those found throughout the city of Barcelona. These codes provide a digitized window of information and their analyses show a Spanish reality of the 21st century that is neither digital nor analogue, but instead is a hybrid, diverse, and multifaceted experience that is beginning to be captured in works consumed by the population at large.

The innovation within cultural production of texts like those just mentioned does not always move unilaterally in one direction. Often times, if not always, pre-existing forms will meet with new forms and produce hybrid works that are neither purely traditional nor new. These hybrids, within digital confines, must also be included in the analysis of digital texts despite any apprehension due to their hybrid nature. As digital scholar Alessandro Ludovico explains in *Post-Digital Print* (2012), “being hybrids, these strategies and products face an uphill struggle to be accepted, let alone embraced – and in order to do so, they must quickly find their own role and niche, within the global marketplace” (8). The role of hybrid publications may very well be to capture new audiences and act as a bridge between literature, the humanities, and the larger society both in person and through the Web. Additionally, an analysis of texts approached through hybridity will better reflect the realities of society that do not get represented as often or as accurately.

Spanish texts are not immune to these cultural and technological forms and, due to the interventions by the digital on established publishing practices, a variety of hybrid works are emerging from the shadows and receiving attention. In fact, innovation in one area is not a one-

way street where, for example, electronic influences the publishing world. Publications, as has already been shown in the previous chapter, have influenced some of the interfaces and ways that hypertext novels are structured and developed as a whole. Some digital products have an interface that continues to resemble a book or manuscript despite the fact that the digital is not tied to any given formal specifications. In practice, Ludovico goes on to say, “[t]here is no one-way street from analogue to digital; rather, there are transitions between the two, in both directions” (Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print* 153). These potential transitions are the subject of this chapter, transitions that serve to reflect the present state of a culture that is constantly adapting to new technologies while still engaging with earlier mediums like radio, television, print publications, and others. These transitional meeting points and spaces also allow individuals to create and express a hybrid-lived reality where individuals live, experience the world, and express themselves in between spaces and find themselves pulled in more than one direction.

A complication, though, quickly arises with hybrid texts due to their embedded structure and co-dependence between published components and digitally embodied elements. In a separate article, Ludovico defines hybrid texts as “[having] a strategy composed by its software part, which would provide some content through a process, and an analogue part which would frame and contextualise [sic] it. The level that this hybridisation [sic] can reach is only limited by the conceptualisation [sic] and the sophistication of the act and the process” (“Post-digital Publishing”).<sup>57</sup> By embodying multiple components within the work, the classification and categorization is made difficult for critics, scholars, and, in particular, librarians who will be asked to correctly label avant-garde materials. A hurdle when analyzing hybrid works like the

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<sup>57</sup> Ludovico is using the British English spelling for these words.



ones below is that these incorporate a context and text that is neither outside the poem or short story nor within the work, traditionally speaking.

The material components of this type of text and its environment traverse the physical world, the digital realm, our lived reality, and the fictional plane. More specifically, the works analyzed in this chapter, the hybrid aspects along with the “analogue” component, create meaning through published pages and digital material released via digital codes. The work is not exclusively a string of words, but instead fuses images, recordings, and a low level of interactivity through smartphone technology. The combination of varying units, which I only briefly mention here, is not extra-literary as they are not parts that come to complement the text. I see these components more as an *embedded literary element* equal to the text one reads, due to the fact that they are incorporated throughout the (published) text, the piece that is easily read in traditional form. A focus-on-the-text approach,<sup>58</sup> which looks at the traditional environment and structure where the majority of text lies, would fail to incorporate a large and pivotal component of these works. These embedded literary elements can be found throughout hybrid texts and reveal important pieces that develop the larger work presented by the author.

Despite the proliferation of hybrid works in literary studies, in media, and new media studies, there is not really an area within literary studies to address this combination of elements. A potential area within literary studies that could address this fusion and hybrid forms could be comparative literature, but this field largely continues to focus on literatures across languages and cultures and not the avant-garde fusions of literary genres with multimedia technologies of the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Cornis-Pope 1-2). Without an area or a sustained scholarly

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<sup>58</sup> For an example, see the literary school of Formalism. This school of literary criticism and literary theory approached texts in a strict manner by focusing on the inherent structure and exclusive content. Outside elements were not incorporated into the analysis of a text.

focus on this type of cultural production, texts like the ones below may slip by and not be acknowledged given they are not in traditional fields that occupy the time of scholars or critics. Additionally, these new combinations within literature require some form of interactivity. New media technology has forced its interactive component into printed texts and some action is required of the reader from scanning a code, accessing information online, or scavenging components to make sense of the content of a particular work. These texts are currently conceived as hybrids, but they may likely be the new norm of the future. As Lev Manovich writes, “work and leisure activities not only increasingly involve computer use, but they also converge around the same interfaces” (Manovich, *The Language of New Media* 65). The fusion and blurring of lines is thus facilitated not just by the computer Manovich mentions, but is also facilitated by software of the last two to three decades: “[t]oday’s technologies of writing and reading make diverse media texts more accessible, without privileging or aestheticizing any of them” (Cornis-Pope 1-2). This statement echoes Jane Bennett’s actants model and by extension Deleuze and Guattari’s work on assemblages where each component is understood as having equal literary weight without one actant being a dominant agent (J. Bennett 23-24). For example, the digital elements for the publications analyzed below can be accessed through the scanning of the embedded codes within the publication and should be seen as the main agent within the larger project.

With hybrid projects like the ones below another problem arises when we continue to focus exclusively on electronic literature. Critics continue to pay a sustained and not surprising attention to traditionally published texts even as we enter the second decade of the 21st century. A growing field of digital scholars is also analyzing the digital works that the Internet hosts. However, a multitude of texts are both published and digital with each component

complementing and completing the work and not just copying one or the other.<sup>59</sup> While Ludovico's earlier assertion that "being hybrids, these [...] products face an uphill struggle to be accepted, let alone embraced" (*Post-Digital Print* 8) rings true, these hybrid publications may be eluding both the public eye and that of the critic. This chapter aims to focus on this subcategory of texts, neither fully digital nor traditional publication, but a fused form that requires the reader to interact with the text in order to access all the multimedia components that complete the work. As critics give more attention to the analysis of exclusively digital texts while traditional published texts continue to be consumed, hybrid texts risk being overlooked.

This chapter contains three case studies, three projects that all carefully fuse new technology in the form of codes that must be scanned to release information to the reader. I begin with an analysis of Tina Escaja's poetry collection, *Código de barras* (2007), continue to Flavia Company's short stories in *Por mis muertos* (2014), and conclude with the city of Barcelona's extensive incorporation of QR codes throughout its cityscape. The codes in all three examples serve to expand the publication or the physical artifact within the city of Barcelona into the digital realm. Escaja's project uses the typical barcode that one may find on any product that needs to be scanned to make a purchase at a store. Company's project employs QR codes that can be scanned using a smartphone or tablet. These QR codes are the same type of codes

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<sup>59</sup> Transmedia storytelling (also transmedia narrative, multiplatform storytelling, cross-media seriality) is often mentioned and used to analyze texts that have various components, published and digital. However, transmedia storytelling is typically seen as a technique where a story is (re)told across multiple platforms and formats using current new media technologies. Typical transmedia projects will *re-tell* a story with a new medium in order to shed light on a new topic or to detail an element of a story that would not be easily told on-screen. See Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* and Tim Dwyer's *Media Convergence*. In Spain, Carlos Alberto Scolari has explained these concepts and has tried to apply them to Spanish projects in *Narrativas Transmedia*. I have shied away from this type of analysis for the time being since there is minimal overlap between the published and digital content in the main works analyzed in this chapter.

proliferating throughout the city of Barcelona and providing a digitized window of information on the social, historical, and cultural significance and formation of the city. I include the efforts by the city of Barcelona to highlight the cultural changes being experienced by the general public across Spain. The focus on Barcelona demonstrates how technology enhances the experience of tourists and citizens alike via the merging of QR codes along the city streets, monuments, businesses, and other areas throughout the city. Barcelona is a city fully immersed in new media technologies, which allow it to digitally connect with individuals by facilitating an updated 21st century experience to the city streets, the many cultures of the past and present, and the city's history. The fusion of digital and analogue becomes a unique venture in Spanish culture, one worthy of attention.

Understanding and interpreting these hybrid works requires that one incorporate the information harnessed within the code being utilized while one remains conscious of the effects these codes have on the entire work. The traditional process of picking up a book and reading it could not successfully interpret Escaja's poems or Company's short stories without the material found through the scanning of the various codes. Unlike one of hypertext literature's components, as seen in the previous chapter, where the information that the hypertext links to is optional and not of extreme importance, in Escaja and Company's work the codes that need to be scanned disclose information that is fundamental to interpreting the work. The visual and aural material that the barcodes or QR codes release is of great significance in transmitting emotions, ideas, and developing the themes of their respective collections. For Escaja the main theme is that of freedom and awareness of others while Company blurs the fine lines between both reality and fiction and the digital and the physical world.

## A Note on Hybridity

This chapter is less interested with identity and instead is focused on experiences and how individuals are experiencing the world with and through technology. Hybridity is a more common occurrence than is likely thought of, but is generally spurned in favor of more rigid categories and labels to organize society and the world at large. It is far more common to encounter texts, individuals, and social practices that are a result of the convergence of two or more elements, but wording of this fact can be evasive. In her well-known book, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera* (1987), activist, poet, and scholar Gloria Anzaldúa discusses another form of hybridity.<sup>60</sup> In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa theorizes and explains the hybrid identity caused by being from two different countries and by having to always live on the border, on the “intersticios” (42), and in a “constant state of transition” (25). Anzaldúa’s theorization and lived experiences as a *mestiza* point to an ideal experience materialized at the point where her identity and lived experiences meet, symbolically at the hyphen that connects the two main cultures she identifies with. Additionally, Anzaldúa notes that this hybridity is not always positive, but is divergent, a struggle, and a series of oppositions that must find a space to materialize through cultural collisions (100-01). I find Anzaldúa’s approach to a hybrid identity useful as a general framework that must negotiate multiple and competing forces, but this chapter is less interested with identity and instead focused on experiences and how individuals are experiencing the world in relation to technology.

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<sup>60</sup> More specifically, Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* is primarily concerned with identity politics as they relate to the socio-cultural and political border between the United States and Mexico, which in turn is materialized in those who identify with both countries and cultures.

In literary and cultural texts the convergence of rigid categories often yields to categories with modifiers as in an epic poem, a long short story, the short novel, a remixed ballad, or mixed media painting. These hybrid texts often produce innovation and advancements in ways of thinking. In the study of media, Marshall McLuhan affirms this positive union that results from hybridity:

[t]he hybrid or the meeting of two media is a moment of truth and revelation from which new form is born. For the parallel between two media holds us on the frontiers between forms that snap us out of the Narcissus-narcosis. The moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses. (McLuhan 55)

The union of different media allows us to better see which elements are affecting production especially for the earlier medium, in this case print, that had practically gone uncontested for centuries.

Hybrid forms have also infiltrated academic publications such as Katherine Hayles' *Writing Machines* (2002) and Christine Henseler's *Spanish Fiction in the Digital Age* (2011) where the format of their books mimics the experience of an electronic book and that of digital spaces. Hayles' book is mirroring the digital possibilities by, at times, enlarging some fonts and appearing to zoom into parts of her text as if she were zooming in to a part of a screen. Additionally, parts of *Writing Machines* contain sections written as if they were from late 1990s webpages. These are not screenshots, but portions of the book's content are also made to look in that manner. A few words throughout the book are also underlined or capitalized inviting the reader to almost click on the page to find a definition to the term or phrase. What stands out more is the book's page compilation. When one moves the flexible pages of *Writing Machines*

opposite the spine, the edge of the book reveals the word “writing.” When the pages are bent in the opposite direction the word “machines” is generated. Lastly, this book also has an online hypertext component that expands on the many examples that Hayles uses throughout this important volume. In Henseler’s book, there are a myriad of boxes throughout the chapters that expand on a specific topic, define important terms, or provide links to music, videos, and interviews as they relate to a chapter’s topic. The content of these boxes generally appears on the columns of the page and points to the current layout of most webpages that utilize the columns of a page for publicity purposes. This also invokes a memory of blogging sites where the right-hand column holds multiple functions of guiding the user, providing additional information, and highlighting texts that the blogger-author wants to present to the reader. These interventions from the digital in published texts show how technology has influenced the publishing culture by enhancing the appearance and disrupting the monotone characteristics of prose-only texts.

### **Hybrid Lives, Hybrid Experiences**

Tina Escaja and Flavia Company form the first parts to this chapter. Both are transplants and hybrids themselves. They are women who were born in a different country from the one they currently reside in. Escaja and Company both create works in multiple languages, incorporate various media, and both use multiple literary genres to express themselves. They are, as Anzaldúa puts, in a “constant state of transition” (25), where the various elements that have forged their identity and continue to play a role in their lived experiences are materialized through hybridity. Additionally, both authors have a strong presence online. Escaja’s personal webpage is constantly updated as she publishes new texts in print and online. Company is an

active social media user and heavily relies on these new modes of interaction to engage readers, critics, and scholars interested in her work. Hybridity is not only an element found in their work, but hybridity is also an adjective that describes various characteristics of who they are and what they have gone through. Their publications serve to showcase the many *intersticios* (Anzaldúa 42) they or those around them have experienced.

Tina Escaja, born in 1965 in Zamora, Spain, is a poet, digital artist, and a scholar at The University of Vermont. Her scholarly work focuses on poetry and, in particular, Latin American poetry. Escaja has a long history of creating and publishing electronic poetry by using Flash, hypertext, and various media. Escaja's digital art, video, and multimedia projects have been shown in Mexico, Spain, and the United States. In 2003 her poetry collection *Caida libre* was awarded the International Poetry Prize "Dulce María Loynaz." Other poetry collections include *Código de barras* (2007) and *13 lunas 13* (2011). Escaja's poetry, such as her recent hypertext poems, *Robopoem@s* (2016), along with a novel and a play can also be found online through her personal website.<sup>61</sup> Additional poetry collections can be found in the online publishing house badosa.com through her pseudonym Alm@ Pérez.<sup>62</sup> These titles include *Respiración mecánica* (2001), *VeloCity* (2000, 2002), *Negro en ovejas* (2008), and stand-alone poems not tied to a collection. Some of the recordings for the poetry collection that will be the focus of this chapter, *Código de barras* (2007), are also found in badosa.com. Escaja's poetry has been translated into more than 6 languages and she is considered a leading experimental cyber poet.

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<sup>61</sup> At the moment her website, [tinaescaja.com](http://www.tinaescaja.com), redirects the user to a webpage hosted by The University of Vermont, <<http://www.uvm.edu/~tescaja/home.htm>> (Escaja, "Home").

<sup>62</sup> Since early 2003, Escaja has published mainly under her legal name. Upon acceptance of the "Dulce María Loynaz" Prize she had to reveal that she was Alm@ Pérez.



Flavia Company was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1963, but at the age of ten and due to the political climate unfolding in Argentina she immigrated along with her parents and sister to Barcelona, where she has since resided. As a result, Company has grown up with a combination of cultures at her side: the familial Argentinian and the Catalan/Spanish culture that has characterized her environment. From an early age she also acquired the Catalan language and has translated some of her publications herself: short stories, poems, essays, and novels. After finishing a work in, for example, Spanish, Company will often translate it to Catalan and vice versa.<sup>63</sup> Company is a well-known author, journalist, translator, professor (she teaches writing), and an avid seafarer. She has published over a dozen novels; among her better-known novels are her first novel *Querida Nérida* published in 1988 followed by *Dame placer* (1999) and *Melalcor* (2000). Most recently, she published *Haru* (2016), a novel that has been well received by both Spanish and Catalan critics, and that has been among the most sold titles in Catalan in Spain in 2016 (Vila-Sanjuán). Her work also includes three short story collections: *Con la soga al cuello* (2009), *Trastornos literarios* (2016), and *Por mis muertos* (2014). Two poetry collections also stand out within Company's oeuvre: *Volver antes que ir* (2012) and *Libro de oraciones* (2015).<sup>64</sup> The latter of these collections is in collaboration with Jordi Gaspar for the accompanying music.<sup>65</sup> The CD-ROM that comes with their hybrid publication has a recording of the poems as recited by Company with Gaspar's music. Additionally, Company regularly publishes essays in newspapers and literary magazines. She currently collaborates with artist and author Susanna

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<sup>63</sup> Additionally, her work has been translated to Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, and Portuguese.

<sup>64</sup> Company's poetry has also been published in the literary section of the academic journal *Letras femeninas*.

<sup>65</sup> Anna Jordà also designed the layout of the publication.

Martín on a regularly occurring comic strip (more on Martín in chapter 4). Company also has a very active presence on social media and posts daily to her Facebook page and personal blog, [fcompany.blogspot.com](http://fcompany.blogspot.com). The focus of this chapter will be Company's 2014 short story collection, *Por mis muertos*.

Both of these authors are living in hybrid spaces, neither of which was their birth country. They straddle multiple spaces and identities that are marginal and, as a result, are hybrid individuals themselves. Both are immigrants, both have settled in another country; they are entities on the margins as women. They are both involved with academia while engaging the larger public through their literary and artistic projects via both published and digital avenues. Thus, their conscious use of a hybrid form and format for *Código de barras* and *Por mis muertos*, respectively, is not a mere coincidence, but a natural form for expressing themselves and the stories they wish to tell.

### **Scanning: In Search of Freedom, Creating Awareness**

Tina Escaja's *Código de barras* is a published collection of poems that went into print in 2007. The poems, varying in length and mostly in prose, touch on topics related to women, children, immigrants, and women's and human rights. There are self-portrait poems that discuss women who are struggling economically both in the United States and in Spain. Other poems focus on the difficulties that children and women face as immigrants in a country that ignores and continually marginalizes them. Topics in this collection range from awareness of domestic violence to offering a firm rebuke to the Iraq War (2003). All poems are introduced by a typical barcode, like the barcodes that can be found on any product for purchase. The intriguing element

here is that some of these barcodes, when scanned with a laser scanner and appropriate software, will release additional information in the form of a voice recording, music, or other sounds. Additionally, some poems will have verses within the barcodes that complement and develop the poem, as in the poem “Quiet Zone: Lugar del silencio,” which ends with three separate barcodes that when scanned release a female voice-recording of the phrase “Silence. Bleeds. Indifference” (*Código* 18). Other poems, which I will discuss in detail below, cannot be scanned from the published version and the reader must have the poster-size version of these poems or go online in order to then click on the barcodes and release the information originally stored within the published poem. This is a result of the compromised quality of the image in print or of the low quality of the image when published. Either way, these complications show the limitations of print in a world that oscillates between the publishing practices of the past and the innovations of the present, and of the future.

As noted above, this poetry collection was published in 2007 and while the author and other critics have mentioned the purposeful use of barcodes, the choice is a dubious one given that laser scanners are not easily accessible to the public, much less laser scanners that can reproduce the sound or voice recordings stored within the barcodes. While interviewing Escaja, Hispanist Salvador Oropesa notes that the feeling one gets from reading and experiencing *Código de barras* is that of the poems being a commodity (“Conversación” 101). Escaja agrees with this comment and adds that “[l]a idea principal es proporcionar al lector o lectora la experiencia y la posibilidad de usar un mecanismo habitual de control (los códigos de barras) como ‘arma’ de acción y cuestionamiento del poder” (“Conversación” 101). Thus, Escaja’s conscious use of barcodes – as oppose to QR codes, which would have been available – is directly intended to juxtapose the capitalistic problems that trap women, marginalized peoples,

and that lead to war. By using this opposing feature, Escaja is able to capture what McLuhan would refer to as a “moment of freedom” (55). The moment of freedom comes from subversion. Escaja turns a controlling and oppressive element from society into one that can liberate and create new spaces for those who are being kept at the margins. The same codes that are needed to continue the capitalistic and oppressive culture that is iconic of the United States, but that also applies to most of the world’s countries and economies, are used to contrast and more vividly portray the problems that some communities encounter.

The use of barcodes alone is a firm critique to the economic culture that is perpetuated by almost any purchase that individuals make. Additionally, a goal of *Código de barras* is to create a larger conscience of the power one holds with every purchase made. Nonetheless, the choice of a barcode creates many complications. In attempting to decode *Código de barras*, I unsuccessfully downloaded various applications on my smartphone hoping that one of those applications would work in lieu of a laser scanner.<sup>66</sup> After finding a laser scanner at the library and extrapolating some of the information found within the barcodes I was limited in two regards: 1) I could only decode the information to text and 2) many of the barcodes were not readable due to the print quality and the size modifications the images and digital photographs had undergone from the original art projects and exhibitions. The laser scanner I used was not appropriate or the software within the computer it was connected to was not compatible. Thus, the barcode itself becomes a hindrance to understanding parts of a poem. Where poems are completely within barcodes, the entire poem cannot be accessed. This limitation can be a signal of technology’s fast pace, but it can also be a cautionary tale on the reliance we, as a culture, have placed on technology for everyday tasks.

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<sup>66</sup> Escaja does warn in the opening page of *Código de barras* that a laser scanner is required: “[I]os códigos son susceptibles de ser revelados mediante un lector láser” (3).

The use of barcodes in this publication is a hybrid component in and of itself. The barcodes create a hybrid environment bridging the world of commodities and capitalism with the arts, humanity, and the digital. Scanning the barcodes throughout the poetry collection is the beginning of a new proximity between author, text, and reader. As readers, we are able to be in between the text and become enmeshed in its complications and propositions however temporal these may be. The act of scanning creates a time and space that pulls the reader-user into the text in an electronic form not quite as experienced before. The interactive characteristic of works like Escaja's creates new spaces, crevices within the text, which engage the reader in both literary and non-literary ways. It is these new possibilities that open up a text to experimentation and expansion, the latter of which Escaja rightfully employs by incorporating a collaborative exhibition to accompany her book and the artistic production of others.

One of the important components attached to the larger project that *Código de barras* encompasses is a multimedia exhibition that introduces this collection of poems. The exhibition titled "The Only Bush I Trust is My Own" opened in collaboration with artists Ione Sainar,<sup>67</sup> Ainize Txopitea,<sup>68</sup> and MJ Tobal.<sup>69</sup> This exhibition, first at the L/L Gallery at The University of Vermont, later appeared in Spain at the Museo Vostell Malpartida in Cáceres and then at the Centro Cultural Okendo/Kultur Etxea in San Sebastián. The part of the exhibition that relates to Escaja's book highlighted the poems "Luna morada," "Un plato de muerte cada día," and "Una,

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<sup>67</sup> Ione Saizar, born in 1965, is a photographer originally from Zarauz, Basque Country, but now resides in London. She has worked with various organizations like newspapers *El País*, *El Mundo* and magazines such as *Elle*, *Vogue*, *Vanidad*, and *AlterEgo*.

<sup>68</sup> Ainize Txopitea was born in San Sebastián in 1977 and is now based in London. She is a digital media artist and works as a Web designer.

<sup>69</sup> MJ Tobal, born in 1969, is an artist from Zamora, Spain. She works different media, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, digital photography, video and computing.

grande, libre.” These three poems required the use of a laser scanner in order to access the majority of the content and in order to fully capture the meaning being conveyed. Without a scanner an interpretation of the individual poems or of all three as a collection within the exhibition would be incomplete and inadequate. At each of the exhibitions there was a scanner alongside the poster-sized image of the poems for attendees to use and access the information that the barcodes have stored in them. This added another layer to Escaja’s work: interactivity. The exhibit required individuals to pick up a laser scanner, which was connected to a computer. This computer would either display or play the information contained within the barcode.

However, due to the already mentioned complications related to the lack of appropriate hardware, software, or print quality of the barcodes in publication, these poems and works have been made available online in Escaja’s website under the label “PROYECTO Código de barras /BAR CODES Project” (Escaja, “Home”). Consequently, the poems have undergone a few mutations from the original in that there is no need to scan the work. Instead, the user can click on the barcodes and the information, a recording, is automatically played. Additionally, for some projects and poems, one click will release the information that was originally contained by multiple barcodes. These modifications allow for a less truncated experience when experiencing the poems that were designated for the exhibit.

The first poem under the *Código de barras* project on Escaja’s website is “Luna morada,” a short poem composed of 19 irregular verses with two stanzas. The last stanza is a single stand-alone verse. In the published *Código de barras* this poem is accompanied by a black and white image of an eye with a barcode that has been placed inside the pupil (48-49). The pupil has also been made white to allow for easier reading/scanning of the barcode. Unfortunately, this barcode was one of the earlier mentioned problematic barcodes as I tried to scan the image. I was unable

to reveal any of the embedded sounds. However, on Escaja's site we can click on the barcode and reveal the audio fragment of "Dhrupad Dream" by Fátima Miranda Regojo from the album *Concierto en canto* (1994).<sup>70</sup> This barcode releases an audio recording that begins with a drastic striking sound of what can be assumed to be plates or dishes crashing to the floor in a forceful manner. What follows is an eerie, monotone sound for almost half a minute; this latter component is from Miranda's album. The recording is the ideal length to read the poem "Luna morada." The image, which is in full color form in Escaja's site, as was in the exhibit, is actually by MJ Tobal, one of the artists collaborating with Escaja on the exhibitions (Escaja, "Luna"; Tobal, "Luna"). This digital photograph, when in full color shows that the surrounding area to the eye is purple (Tobal, "Luna"). However, if the reader believed this to be made up from the black and white published image in the book, that is not the case on the website. The image is that of a battered eye with the surrounding areas depicting a purple bruised flesh. From the right side of the eye, and overall image, a few lines have been added in white and turquoise that appear to be escaping the eyeball in a scattered, electric reaction. The eye is wide open, as if trying to search for answers to the violence it has experienced, but as the last verse of the poem bluntly states "No hay razones" ("Luna morada" 19). The convergence of elements allows for a crude tone to emerge where as each verse is read, one continues to enter the thoughts of the poetic voice.

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<sup>70</sup> Fátima Miranda is a composer, singer, author, and researcher (voice, vocal music) from Salamanca, Spain born in 1952. From her homepage: "[h]uyendo de cómodos estereotipos, [Miranda] combina técnicas vocales orientales, occidentales y de su propia invención concibiendo la voz como instrumento de viento y de percusión instalado en el propio cuerpo" ("Sobre Fátima"). She regularly sings, does performances, and concert shows. Miranda has received awards from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, the Ministerio de Cultura, and from the VII Encuentros Internacionales de Arte y Género de Sevilla, among others, for her contributions to art, video art and women, and for her writing for her novel *La fonoteca* (1990).

“Luna morada,” like the accompanying project, is a strong declaration against the violence women face every day in society. The poem focuses on the physical violence with the descriptions of “sangre marchita,” the “ojo motriz sepultado,” and “del dolor / la tectónica geometría del miedo” (8, 8-9, 14-15). Similarly, the accompanying project to this poem, “Un plato de muerte cada día,” relates the abusive relationship between a couple and serves to display the psychological realm of domestic violence. Two individuals can be heard arguing with each other while various items (plates, dishes, other utensils) fall to the floor and break. A female voice can be heard repeatedly asking her male partner to listen to her. In return the male only calls the woman “estúpida” and the listener also hears various instances where the woman is shouted at with a single word command: “cállate” (Otxoa). This project, which Escaja has annotated as a visual poem, is by Julia Otxoa, but Escaja is listed as the person who put together the visual elements and the barcodes that appear. The image for this project is of a dinner plate with three barcodes with short phrases on each: *un plato*, *de muerte*, and *cada día*. In the middle of this dinner plate is an image of a skull in red and at the bottom of the plate is a black fork. The three barcodes slowly reveal the story that is developing. Additional music and lyrics accompany the dialogue in the background, but most noticeable are a teakettle slowly whistling in increasing strength and a heartbeat’s increasing palpitations as the cringe-worthy scene develops and the male voice utters “¿hasta cuándo? Hasta cuándo te voy a golpear” (Otxoa). This project’s elements were first not revealed through the scanning of the barcodes with the scanner that I acquired. The only information that scanning the barcodes on the image revealed were the words underneath the barcodes, which are identical to the project’s title. Again, this could be the result of having an improper scanner or a scanner without the proper software. It was only when I



accessed this poem through Escaja's *Código de barras* project webpage that the content revealed itself.

The sounds and recordings that accompany both "Luna morada" and the project "Un plato de muerte cada día" are perhaps the most important element of the poems. The sounds of the first poem allow for a moment of violence, the crashing of dishes preceded by an eerie monotone sound to accompany the violent aftermath of the verses attached to the poem. In the latter poem, the visual poem, the crude reality is augmented by the sound of the female who cannot separate herself from the male figure and the violence that is perpetuated on her. The visceral reaction that this fusion of multimedia elements creates is much stronger than if one were to read the poem or even hear it at a recital. What is most striking from the recording of the visual poem is that, just like the female cannot find a way out of the cycle of violence, the listener cannot help her, nor see her. The only visual the reader has is that of the image of the plate with those three ominous phrases. The sounds heighten the emotions of the poems' subjects, but only to make the subject and content of the poem more real, more tangible, and material. Without the barcodes and the contents within these barcodes, the poems would, respectively, lose partial meaning or be unrecognizable. The use of "diverse media texts" (Cornis-Pope 2) in and throughout *Código de barras* generates a unique experience that must piece by piece, or assemblage after assemblage, come together in order to fully experience the content and emotions being conveyed. This combination of elements and characteristics in Escaja's work extends to the rest of the poems and projects associated with *Código de barras*.

The second part of the project on Escaja's site is the poem "Una, grande, libre" and its accompanying multimedia work. This is a politically packed and activist poem combination that speaks directly to the policies of the 43rd President of the United States, George W. Bush, and

his decision to invade Iraq. Additionally, it is a critique of Spain's former dictator, Francisco Franco, whose motto for the country was the same as the title of the poem: one, great, and free. Thus the poem is able to fuse and then address the cultures that enveloped and continue to develop in both nations. Escaja's poem firmly attacks the idea that these countries are *one* coherent unit of a nation. She starts by stating, "UNA / mentira, una falsa identidad que une, una perversa asociación que entalla. / no existe, no es, somos muchos y dispersos" (1-3). Instead, Escaja implores the readers to "sean muchas. / seamos más" (6-7). These verses may also be referencing the resistance to Franco that had a very similar line. The 1995 film *Tierra y libertad*, by Ken Loach, which takes place at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, has a strong speech towards the end of the film by Blanca, one of the rebels. Here, she firmly states that "la batalla es larga y son muchos, pero nosotros somos muchos más, siempre seremos muchos más. ¡El mañana es nuestro compañeros!" (*Tierra y libertad*). Escaja could very well be thinking of this earlier period of resistance and, thus, dually addressing the audiences of Spain and the United States.

When questioning how *great* the nation says it is, Escaja turns to compare the instinctive reality "que aniquila y considera luego, / y al designar desgarrar" (11-12). She finishes the stanza highlighting a nation that is with flaws, "Grande el argumento y la farsa gigante, como lo es su ceguera propicia. / Grande la mentira y su caída de bruces en el cristal quebrado de las falsas quimeras" (19-20). Her final verses address the lie attached to the notion of being *free* within the current political apparatus. Escaja insists that no one is free and offers an example: "Pregunta al oprimido, al ocupado. / Todo es falso y al revés" (22-23). She ends with a single word in

command form: “Despierta” (24).<sup>71</sup> Missing from the poster at the exhibition and on her website are two additional barcodes included at the bottom of the page of the publication which reveal two corresponding phrases, “[y]ou are” and “not free” (“Una, grande, libre,” *Código de barras* 77). The social criticism being conveyed takes an additional form when the overall structure and format of the project is analyzed. This poem’s barcodes are arranged to imitate the image of the United States’ flag: the top left corner’s barcodes are in blue and the remainder of the image is an alternating black and red stripe pattern that substitutes the red and white stripes of the United States’ 13 stripes. The poem, as published in the poster size image, is reconfigured to be 13 verses in length. However, the version published on Escaja’s webpage and on pages 76-77 of *Código de barras*, which accompanies the image the user can click on, has a larger number of verses and is in a more traditional form with multiple stanzas.

An additional component to “Una, grande, libre” is an accompanying project: a series of barcodes with key words underneath each barcode, all within the shape of a star that has been designed by the aforementioned Tobal. This project is untitled and accompanied the earlier image throughout the exhibitions.<sup>72</sup> It also appears side by side in the published book, *Código de barras* (78-79). When the user scans one of the 40 barcodes a variety of sound recordings are made available. The theme of the previous poem continues, but with a sharper tone that clearly attacks the decision to invade Iraq. The series of barcodes include recordings of actual news reporters from when the Iraq invasion began, people crying, sounds of street bombs going off,

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<sup>71</sup> There is a discrepancy in the format between the published version and the digital version in Escaja’s website with the published version of this poem appearing to have one less verse than the electronic version likely due to a misprint or extra indentation in the poem. The content in the two versions is identical; it is a matter of how many verses the poem is meant to have.

<sup>72</sup> With poems that have no title, typically, the first verse is used as the title to refer to the poem. I will use “at this hour” since this is the phrase that corresponds to the first barcode.

and some recordings of what sounds like an individual reciting verses (Escaja, “at this hour”). This project, unlike the poem that precedes it, holds a lot more information and content within the barcodes than the simple recital of a poem as experienced with “Una, grande, libre.” Without having access to a proper scanner the sounds and the short recordings would not be accessible and the key words that accompany the barcodes would not generate the same experience. These key words would, at best, create a very abstract poem on their own. This untitled poem-project mutates to become a call to action; a call to fight for the rights that the poetic voice thinks may soon be lost. These sentiments would be lost without the recordings and would remain locked within the barcodes. The published book version is unable to capture the tone in voice of some recordings; it does not include the screams of children and people, or the elongated vowels in some of the verses. Sounds of shattering glass are not annotated within the project and, thus, are also exempt from any “textual” (read: physical) interpretation. More importantly, the published version found in *Código de barras* is unable to be adequately scanned and it is also difficult to read the key words under each barcode. It is only through the Web, unless the user has access to the poster size printing and a scanner with the proper software, that the full experience is released to the reader.

An element not thoroughly discussed so far, but nonetheless an added layer of importance is the prose component found within this poetry collection. Escaja has elected to convey the topics of *Código de barras* by writing some of her poems in prose. This is a component now normalized and fairly common, but prose poetry is inherently a hybrid form of art encompassing both lyrical and prose characteristics that have fused over time. Scholar Margueritte Murphy notes: “the prose poem is an inherently subversive genre as well as a historically subversive one. Because of marginality, its situation on the ‘borderline of prose’ (T.S. Eliot’s phrase), it must

continually subvert prosaic conventions in order to establish itself as authentically ‘other’” (Murphy 3). In this case, otherness is a hybrid formulation which Hispanist scholar, and expert in contemporary poetry, Ernesto Estrella Cózar notes “donde los rasgos formales del poema serán menos importantes que la capacidad de lo poético para recabar dentro de sí el mundo de los sentimientos, de la indagación emocional” (4). This shift in poetic perception fuses common characteristics of two genres in order to create a poetic expression with less lyrical restrictions and a combination of characteristics from differing writing styles.

While there are those poems and projects that must be accessed online for various reasons, such online components should still be contextualized through the collection of poems and the overall publication of *Código de barras*. The collection as a whole is able to lay the thematic foundation that is not, for instance, anti-war, but instead the issue of human rights, women’s rights, and the perils of those (women) who are often marginalized by capitalistic and politically driven practices. The larger picture found within the collection of poems is far stronger than the individual examples I just highlighted for this analysis, but what I wish to emphasize is the hybrid nature where both elements, those published and those found online, are needed to fully develop the ideas that Escaja is unable to present through one medium alone. In Escaja’s work, the hybrid nature is able to capture fear, anger, and hope through recordings and sounds, which a published poem or a recital of a poem would not be able to accomplish alone. The interactive environment on Escaja’s website for the *Código de barras* project further immerses the reader-user and additionally invites the reader to continue doing something that is done daily: clicking with a cursor to uncover the experiences of others. Authors like Flavia Company have also seen the potential in incorporating digital codes to published texts, but

Company has chosen an alternate type of digital code, one easier to decode and currently more widely accessible.

### **Scanning: When Borders Dissipate, What Is Real?**

Flavia Company's *Por mis muertos* (2014) is composed of fictional short stories that have an anecdotal and familial flavor to them: they are events that could occur to anyone or that seem very plausible in any town or city. This has allowed for the general public to connect with the stories and see themselves in the story or appear to know the protagonist of a number of the stories. Company has posted to her Facebook page how in two instances individuals felt their personal lives were being narrated in the fictional pages of *Por mis muertos*. In the post, Company notes how her book generated two particularly intense and interesting responses where one reader "se considera en deuda conmigo para siempre y otra de alguien que me comunica que no quiere volver a tener contacto conmigo nunca más" ("¿Cómo alguien va a creer"). Irony here is twofold by the fact that in 2002 Company wrote another book of short stories where each story was a response from readers reacting to how they knew of the character or a situation in other fictitious accounts – all of which had never happened. Company had not published the alleged initial accounts, but that was the premise to the collection of short stories. Company's book, *Género de punto* (2002), had caught up with her in full circle and Company, through *Por mis muertos*, was now experiencing the fictional accounts she had written about over a decade earlier. These anecdotes, which reach Company irregularly and are sometimes posted to Facebook, continue to show the familial characteristics of her writing style in this collection.

The stories in *Por mis muertos* are a combination of truth and fiction, but as the first story in prologue form details, “[l]a realidad es la ficción que cada cual elige [...] y por eso hay que elegir muy bien las mentiras que uno se cuenta y le cuenta a los demás y es importante que coincidan tanto como sea posible” (13). Truth and fiction are interwoven throughout the compilation of short stories as for example, when the narrator of the second story, “El destornillador de Texas,” shares many characteristics with *Company*. A key element here is that the story is told within a collection presumed to be fictional, but the reader will not know what elements are real and which ones the author has embellished or altogether fictionalized. One way in which the many short stories make it difficult for the reader to figure out which components are true and which are fiction is through the use of QR codes that have been carefully placed in certain stories throughout the collection. These QR codes incorporate information from the Web, a space that exists almost in its own reality.

QR codes, those black and white dot squares typically within square grids, which have been made popular over the past decade, are uniquely widespread in Spain. However, their origin can be traced to Japan in 1994 when Masahiro Hara invented them while working for Denso Wave Incorporated (“History of QR code”). Denso Wave wanted to speed the process of scanning barcodes and also wanted to be able to embed codes that could hold more characters and store more information. Their result was a two dimensional code that can be read by more machines than the standard barcode, which furthermore has a limitation of 20 characters (ibid.). What is more important of this development is that even though Denso Wave holds the copyright to this technology, the company quickly moved to not exercise its rights over the product and has

instead encouraged others to use and improve the QR code (ibid.).<sup>73</sup> These codes can store data or serve as extensions and bridges to various elements. In order to access the information contained within a QR code, the user must scan the square grid with a smartphone or tablet camera and appropriate software application. There are many applications, free of charge, readily available for smartphone and tablet users. The data is then extracted from the QR code and presented to the user via the application or, in the case of embedded URLs, the user is taken to the appropriate website.

These codes boast a high usage and popularity by Spanish government, marketing and tourism organizations, and by the general smartphone population (“Mobile Advertising”). QR code usage developed at a faster pace in Spain than other European countries like Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom (“Los códigos QR triunfan”). During the years 2011 and 2012 it was Spain that saw the largest rise in QR code usage (“España, el país”). It outpaced Southeast Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, and any other European nation. While this type of growth is no longer experienced, Spain’s QR code usage is comparable to the rest of the European nations. This is still impressive when one considers Spain’s size and population. One must also keep in mind that the strong foundational growth experienced nearly a decade ago by these codes is very transformative and lays a cultural foundation for its citizens that sees, expects, and knows how to use QR codes for multiple daily tasks. Nonetheless, the staggering jump in use during the early part of the second decade of this century has played an important role in Spanish QR culture by infiltrating the expected areas where QR codes are most readily used: travel, marketing, tourism, engineering, and business, but also medicine, prescription drugs, care for the elderly, and literature (“Los ancianos”; “Primer medicamento”).

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<sup>73</sup> As an example, “‘FrameQR’ was introduced in 2014. FrameQR can enhance the design of your code by freely combining illustrations and photos” (“History of QR code”).



Within literature, these QR codes can have a myriad of uses and functions ranging from engaging children at a young age to using QR codes to teach a language or any other subject matter (Monguillot et al. 177). The use of QR codes in Flavia Company's book, *Por mis muertos*, is more specific and interesting as it serves to develop the complicated blurring of fact and fiction while acting as a bridge between print and electronic; author and narrator; and Argentina, Spain, and the United States. However, not all of Company's short stories within the book contain QR codes. Only 5 of the short stories contain them: "Alrededor de un epitafio," "El cartero," "Piel de oveja," "Conexión argentina," and "Dos cuentos de amor." The last two of these short stories have two and three codes, respectively. Additionally, there is one more QR code on the back cover of the book, which transports the reader to the book's home page within the publisher's site, Páginas de espuma, where the book can also be purchased ("Por mis muertos"). This gives *Por mis muertos* a total of 9 QR codes throughout the book. Because only five out of the sixteen short stories that are included in the collection have QR codes, the placement of these codes gains importance. Accordingly, the codes should elicit a thoughtful response from the reader. These codes cross multiple planes: from the physical to the digital, the fictional to reality, and from those areas into cyberspace. The placement of these codes is also carefully embedded within the short story. There is a small gray square that mimics the functioning QR code within the text. That gray square is only a placeholder. The actual QR code that must then be scanned by the reader with a smartphone or adequate technology is at the bottom of the corresponding page. This allows for an uninterrupted reading of the short story and for a better quality QR code that would not cut across the plot and create a distraction for the reader-user. Additionally, Company has placed these QR codes following key words or clauses in the short story that will hint at the type of information embedded in the code. After a line

alluding to a blog, the QR code sends the user to the blog entry she published in her personal blog. In the story that pertains to a particular brand of markers, the QR code comes after the brand is referenced and the QR code yields an image of these particular markers. Other codes continue this logic so as to create a certain expectation as the user scans them through a mobile device.

The fact that Company's use of QR codes is limited when compared to Escaja's plentiful barcodes suggests a very thoughtful and precise placement that is meant to become a key element of the short story collection. The QR codes are adding to the blurring of lines between types of publications, lived reality and fiction, the physical world, and the digital. The QR codes are the agent that is facilitating the narration and the actant hybridizing. This coded square is the active element that is creating and turning the published text into a hybrid text both physically and in terms of its categorization or classification. It is through and because of QR codes that the work as a whole allows for a myriad of hybrid forms: a combination of literary genres, a mixing of time, a blurring of categories, the coexistence of time periods, etc. Scholar Meri Torras, who has studied Company's work at length, highlights these issues as a common characteristic of Company's oeuvre, which has often times forced readers to

buscar sus textos en distintas secciones de las librerías: narrativa catalana, narrativa castellana, narrativa traducida al castellano o, incluso, narrativa hispanoamericana. La propia Company se resiste a una clasificación pura y estable; como sus propios textos y muchos de sus personajes, participa de las categorías sin pertenecer totalmente a ninguna de ellas. (Torras 624)

Company's play on literary genres and with hybrid-digitized works can complicate the accessibility of her texts to both readers and scholars. Torras' assertion coupled with an

electronic hybrid publication like *Por mis muertos* becomes equally important as it also confirms Ludovico's insistence that hybrid products "face an uphill struggle to be accepted, let alone embraced" (Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print* 8). For the time being, Company's overall work boasts recognition and popularity and this factor may be ameliorating any uphill struggles that *Por mis muertos* could experience due to the fusion of QR codes with traditional text. Regardless of the issues surrounding the categorization of the work, the collection of short stories that Company presents succeeds in fusing digital and print in a seamless fashion where the QR codes enrich the overall reading experience.

The first QR code, which corresponds to the short story "Alrededor de un epitafio," transports the reader to a blog entry where Company organized a poll for her blog followers to vote on. The poll is found within a blog entry that explains, to varying degrees, the same events detailed in *Por mis muertos*. In the short story, and in some way in real life as well, one of Company's fans had contacted her with two of her favorite quotes from Company's publications and wanted to have Company's fans vote on which should go on her tombstone (Company, *Por mis muertos* 48, "Ser epitafio"). While the short story published in *Por mis muertos* is one of fiction, the reader is left without knowing which elements are real, partially real, a mix of real and fiction, or completely fiction. The blurring of what is real and not, part of the physical and of the digital begins to blur partly because of the content (it could happen to anyone), but also in part because of the Internet as a questionable medium. Furthermore, the QR code sends the reader-user to a blog entry and blog entries can be considered more real and less fictional than the average webpage. The electronic component acts as a shield, but it also provides for that moment which will allow us to snap out of the Narcissus-narcosis of everyday life, as McLuhan would say (McLuhan 55). Seeing the complicated and muddled mix of fiction and reality could

provide for a better or alternative way to approach a topic, an event, or society; an approach that is hopefully more critical. The effect from the short story and its digital components is an appearance of partial truth though there is no way of confirming all the details, and nor do I think one should. Perhaps the earlier part of the short story was real, but perhaps not. The author ends with a note at the bottom of the page where she mentions that these particular events may have influenced her then upcoming novel, *Que nadie te salve la vida* (2012).<sup>74</sup> This process of mixing elements from various compartmentalized categories in society will continue throughout the volume, but always led by the digital components in the form of QR codes.

The second instance of code use comes in the short story “El cartero” where the code takes the user to the author’s sister’s personal webpage (*Por mis muertos* 55). The short story alludes to Company’s sister’s initial interest in art and design: “[e]sas tarjetas espantosas, recuerda la escritora, las coleccionaba su hermana menor, la única hermana, que ya mostraba interés por el diseño” (ibid.). Marina Company Navau is an artist and graphics designer residing in Barcelona, Spain, but has also worked on extensive projects in Argentina (Company Navau). The use of a QR code in this instance, once again, questions the fictional divide and forces the reader to align the narrator of the short story with the writer, Company. At times, it is clearer that the narrator of the short stories is referring to Company’s personal life and experiences, but in other instances this cannot be confirmed. However, the third QR code partially breaks with this pattern. In “Piel de oveja” the QR code yields an image of a particular brand of markers; the markers are the subject of the short story. As a child, the narrator of this story had a set of markers given to her as a birthday present, but they were stolen soon after (*Por mis muertos* 58). Scanning the QR code materializes the subject of the short story and causes a break from the

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<sup>74</sup> There is an overlap of when Company was working on the first drafts of her collection of short stories and this novel.

already compromised fictional plane. This process of incorporating images to traditionally text-only publications without physically publishing the images creates an interactive and appealing feature for those readers already aware of and accustomed to scanning QR codes. This familial tone with the text gets an additional dimension with the second half of the codes where the role of QR codes becomes more personal between the author, narrator, text, and reader.

When looked at in a more complete and cohesive manner, the remaining QR codes assume a more personal tone and include details from Company's life that can be verified through various sources, including her personal blog. "Conexión argentina" has two QR codes and both appear on the same page and next to each other. Both codes follow the word blog in the following opening line: "Yo te había escrito al mail que figura en tu blog después de esa noche en que con Isabel descubrimos que habíamos estado vinculadas con tu familia" (*Por mis muertos* 77). The pair of QR codes lead to separate blogs and both entries relate to Company's mother. The first remembers Company's mother's life with a focus on her early death at the age of 49 (Company, "En recuerdo"). The second entry is from what would have been Company's mother's 71st birthday and discusses an old photograph and her mother's old diary from when she was a child (Company, "El diario"). Both entries serve to remember and celebrate her life. This homage to her mom is embedded within the short story "Conexión argentina" and further complicates the notions of author/narrator and reality/fiction. While reading the short story, the reader must remember that at the core of the text is a work of fiction and must also question which parts of the short story are fictitious or partially modified from the lived reality of the author. These deeply personal QR codes and blog entries continue in the last short story containing codes, "Dos cuentos de amor." In this story, the sixth code within the book sends the user to a blog entry that is no longer available (*Por mis muertos* 121). The QR code is preceded

by “Nos fuimos a Singapur de luna de miel” (ibid.). Even though the blog entry is no longer accessible – I suspect Company decided the content was too intimate or personal – the remaining content, the title, indicates that this entry was of Company sharing her feelings after marrying her long-time partner, Inma Ibáñez. Perhaps this QR code’s content will become available in the future and add a beautiful and intimate dimension to *Por mis muertos*.<sup>75</sup> Coincidentally, though unrelated, the QR code that follows also encounters some problems of its own.

This following code links to The Fullerton Hotel Singapore where Company and her partner spent part of their honeymoon (*Por mis muertos* 122). However, the URL has changed and an error message appears. Nonetheless, the hotel’s information remains and the reader could easily click through to the hotel’s main site and search for updated information and the link that was likely intended for the code.<sup>76</sup> The final code pertaining to the short stories is the only QR code found within the book’s footnotes. When accessed it transports the user to a map detailing the type of laws and rights that queer individuals have – or do not have – throughout the globe (“Legislación sobre derechos”). Company notes that, “nos dimos cuenta de que las guías con que nos habían obsequiado estaban obsoletas. Las leyes contra la homosexualidad femenina en Singapur no están vigentes” (*Por mis muertos* 122). The map is able to contextualize the short story and add a global panoramic on LGBT issues. This QR code, leading to an ever-changing webpage, and the previous code point to a problem when an author chooses to include external sites, which can change. The current URL for the hotel will likely continue to change as The Fullerton Hotel Singapore makes physical changes on site and cybernetic updates on the Web.

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<sup>75</sup> It is difficult to discern whether Company has consciously removed the blog post or made the post private. Only within the last few years has Company published on personal topics through her blog.

<sup>76</sup> The current site is <<https://www.fullertonhotels.com/en/singapore/the-fullerton-hotel>> (“The Fullerton”).

The LGBT rights map is a constantly evolving source based on legal changes throughout the globe. The QR codes are not photographs of a site and unless the author chooses to use an archived webpage this complication remains a possibility unless the author takes precautions to avoid such problems.

The use of QR codes within Company's collection of short stories shows a careful positioning of codes in order to break down social structures or conceptions of what may be deemed real or fiction. *Por mis muertos* is a well-conceptualized project that follows Ludovico's earlier definition and requirement for hybrid works of having a strategy guided by the software part and an analogue component that would frame and contextualize it ("Post-digital Publishing"). The QR codes in Company's text are able to inform and expand on the published text; the relationship between publication and technology is symbiotic. This is executed while the QR codes remain a focus within the project by acting as an accomplice to the play between fiction and reality. The shield these codes create is able to seal the permanent confusion of what may be real and what is fictional. Additionally, Company's particular use of technology within *Por mis muertos* allows the stories to have an added level of familiarity for those who use smartphones and scanning applications on a regular basis. This element is able to further connect with readers who are accustomed to scanning QR codes for leisure or other activities. Having this specific type of code expanding a publication can lead to more and better engagement with readers. The interactive component may be minimal in this collection (scanning, logging on to the Internet for blog entries, clicking on websites, etc.), but this level of interactivity may be the desired amount for texts where the majority of the work is found in hard copy and in prose. The fusion of physical and digital in published texts is a reality for the people in Spain, but more so for those living in Barcelona where QR codes can be found throughout the city. It is possible that

Company, who resides in Barcelona, encountered these codes as they became highly visible within the city limits. Various organizations and businesses have embedded these codes to their tourism literature and to the physical landscape of the city by adding a digital layer to the history and culture experienced throughout Barcelona.

### **Scanning: Through the City**

Consideration of QR codes should not be limited to the publications outlined above. Instead, they should be read as a reflection of society and, more specifically, the Spanish one. Literature is not the only area that is experimenting with actively using QR codes within their projects. Barcelona tourism organizations and historic quarters of the city have increasingly added these codes to not only their pamphlets and literature, but also to the physical spaces they wish to highlight. I began this chapter with my experience while in Barcelona, but that example in *Els 4 gats* should not be seen as an isolated occurrence. These codes are widely scattered throughout the city of Barcelona and allow for tourists and residents to learn about the city's important monuments. With a simple scan from a smartphone or tablet, the user can learn about a statue, one of the many quarters in the city, or of locales such as *Els 4 gats* whose patrons at one point included Rubén Darío, Antoni Gaudí, Pablo Picasso, and others (“Historia”). The immersion in QR codes by this Catalan city is impressive and as of late 2016 still shows signs of expansion.

Whether these codes have been set up by the local government, local tourism organizations, businesses, or non-profit organizations is something that cannot easily be distinguished, but what is true is that Barcelona has immersed itself in QR culture. This new



living environment is one that requires the citizens to be active participants by being aware of their surroundings. For example, in collaboration with the Museu D'Història de Barcelona (MUHBA) and the Associació de Comerciantes de Llibreteria y Bajada de Llibreteria, Josep Conesa Grosso enlisted the help of his friend Carolina Ganoa to develop an application for smartphones and tablets that could use QR codes to highlight the Jewish culture and history in Barcelona (“Nosotros”). The application’s name and similar online website is QR Gòtic.<sup>77</sup> This smartphone application allows the user to traverse the historic quarter with an emphasis on areas important to Jewish people. A series of historic streets, businesses, important monuments, and plazas make up the 35 codes that can be scanned because of this project (“Gothic Quarter”). QR Gòtic also provides a map detailing the old Jewish quarter and the expansion that it went through in the late 13th century. But this digital approach to increase tourism, disseminate culture, and inform the general public is something that other areas of Barcelona are taking part in.

A similar route and application have been developed for the Raval quarter (“A new route”). The Raval has been historically associated with being Barcelona’s Barri Xinès, or Chinatown; it had been linked with a series of cabarets, risky nightlife including prostitution, and higher levels of crime. This has changed over the last few decades and the QR code route developed has tried to increase tourism from the adjacent tourist destination, La Rambla, and the northern Plaça de Catalunya (ibid.) Barcelona’s official touristic bus company, Barcelona Bus Turístic, also added QR codes to all of their bus stops throughout the city (“Barcelona Bus”). This embedded technology enhances and facilitates the flow of information and the historical knowledge to individuals, both tourists and residents of the city alike. It is by no coincidence that Lev Manovich sees this city as a hybrid space that exudes

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<sup>77</sup> The page and project can be accessed through <<http://qrgotic.com/en/>>.

the desire to creatively place together old and new in various combinations. It is this logic, for instance, which in many ways made Barcelona where I am writing this right now, such a ‘hip’ and ‘in’ place today. All over the city, architectural styles of many past centuries co-exist with new ‘cool’ spaces of bars, hotels, museums, and so on. Medieval meets multinational, Gaudy meets Dolce and Gabana [sic], Mediterranean time meets Internet time. The result is the incredible sense of energy which one feels physically just walking along the street. It is this hybrid energy, which characterizes in my view the most successful cultural phenomena today. (“Introduction to Korean edition”)

Barcelona has successfully maneuvered through many fusions and combinations, as Manovich chooses to articulate, to become a hybrid environment, but one that is well connected to new technologies of the 21st century.

Barcelona, however, is not the only city to immerse itself in new technologies. In 2002 Zamora, Spain, a city in the region of Castilla y León, received the status of “hot city” when the city government allowed the Madrid-based company Wireless & Satellite Networks SA (WSN) to create multiple WiFi stations throughout the city. These actions led to the citizens of the city in 2003 to have “unlimited high speed access to the Internet from their PC, laptop, or other mobile device from anywhere in the city, including streets and parks, and at a quarter of the cost of monthly ADSL rates” (“Commission workshop”). Zamora, which is coincidentally Escaja’s hometown, became a city with the highest level of accessibility while dropping the cost of Internet access to its citizens. Spain’s capital, Madrid, has not fallen behind in this regard and has also incorporated QR codes for publicity and marketing purposes as well as in some museums.

Furthermore, Spain has incorporated the use of these codes into the field of medicine and some prescription drugs carry a QR code on their label to help inform patients, a practice that is becoming more common throughout the world (“Primer Medicamento”). While these practices have become accepted by cities around the globe, Spain’s quick actions are worth noting. This hybrid culture shows how technology has become integrated into an everyday life not fully digitized, but also not in analogue mode either. A simple walk through the streets of Barcelona will undoubtedly present a series of QR codes asking the user to scan the image. While the level of usage of this technology among people worldwide will vary, most smartphone users will be aware of what a QR code does once scanned. Encountering so many of these codes throughout the touristic and iconic areas of Barcelona will lead users to start scanning and experiencing Barcelona through a new way, one through technology and a screen. As part of an ongoing campaign, Catalunya set aside 900,000 euros in October of 2016 for publicity purposes of which part of that money will be destined exclusively for enhancing and increasing the QR codes across the city (“Barcelona destinará”). The convergence of technology and QR codes as guides will likely have drastic effects on how individuals are informed of various public objects. A digital agent will largely affect how the city of Barcelona is seen, experienced, and lived. Equally important, whatever is not easily accessible through new technology will be negatively affected. The QR code has transformed the city of Barcelona without invasively impacting the physical composition of the city.

### **A Hybrid Immediate Future**

A few common themes begin to emerge from the examples above. Among those themes are a destabilizing of categories and a flourishing expansion in literature because of technology, but also a questionable future with unanswered questions for readers, scholars, and authors. As evidenced from the above examples, technology is creating various forms of destabilization of traditional concepts, genres in particular. While QR codes can be said to be expanding on the limitations of published texts, the genres of the works are also being modified by this new technology as both poetry and short stories expand with visual, aural, and new multimedia elements. It is not to imply that what follows will be a collapse of a genre or of genres, but instead a reformulation that comes to reflect culture in the current digital age. This hybrid state points to pivotal changes that mark a period in history that is constantly accelerating in digital innovation and in overall social rhythm. This is due to the introduction of software and hardware that is influencing artists and creating mutations of existing categories and subcategories of genres. The innovation being experienced is leading to new story spaces where content will need to be told using a combination of media in order to appropriately and better convey meaning that reaches current and future audiences.

Hybrid texts and the existing publishing world also exemplify how the innovations in these two fields are affecting each other without causing one medium, print, to disappear. For those who feared the end of the publishing world we see that publications have not ceased to exist. Instead, and for the foreseeable future, we see the digital intervening in the print world and forging collaborations between old and new media. The same can be said of print and its influences on the digital or the interface on computers and smartphones. The death of paper has been discussed since the development of phone and radio, yet paper is still a desired form. Smartphones and current lightweight electronics such as tablets could pose a threat to print, but

as shown by the primary examples of this chapter, even then that may not come to fruition. Like Ludovico insists, “[t]he traditional role of print is unmistakably being threatened by the new digital world; but it also, paradoxically, is being revitalized” (*Post-Digital Print* 7). There was and still exists a fear of the digital taking over the publishing world and paper in particular.

What is more accurate in terms of this convergence between digital and analogue is that the electronic sphere is enhancing print with new innovative typography, new aesthetics, and new modes of marketing (Hayles, *Electronic Literature* 159). For instance, the last QR code on the back cover of *Por mis muertos* leads to the publisher’s webpage for the book. This is primarily a publicity-oriented use of the QR codes and is intended to increase sales and, by extension, awareness of other publications under the publishing house Páginas de espuma. Furthermore, Hayles sees the meeting points of digital and print in an optimistic manner: “print itself is capable of new tricks precisely because it has become an output form for electronic text. If the seductions made possible by digital technology are endangering print, the same technology can also be seen as print in the making: we have met the enemy and he is us” (Hayles, *Electronic Literature* 162). Print continues to be seen as a stable medium and is preferred by many. However, when electronic projects do get published, there are many elements that cannot be transposed onto the printed page. That is the case for the many sounds in Escaja’s poetry collection, which could be described, but never with the same effect. Ludovico assesses this period by treating print as “mutating profoundly as a result of its (final?) hybridization with digital technology – as the last of all traditional media to undergo this process (after music, radio, and TV). And we can assume that this mutation will be neither easy nor straightforward” (Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print* 53). Part of this mutation and hybrid process will rely on how capitalism enters the system of production. It is quite easy to copy files and reproduce materials,

but profits can easily evaporate with the copy-paste culture the Internet has ushered in. Experimental projects can be published without having to spend large sums of money and social media can insure that such products reach interested audiences that will purchase and engage with the material, but whether this is a sustainable and desired step is yet to be seen. Hybridity, as a process, will be key and will need to be embraced at many levels within the publishing world in order for texts to reach specific niche audiences and thrive as a viable form for writers and consumers.

The use of embedding technology to traditional genres and publications is having and will continue to see an expanding interest in literature and Spanish culture. In her conclusions to *Beyond the Page* (2014), Jill Kuhnheim highlights “how performance has been instrumental in revitalizing the genre [of poetry] and creating new audiences for poetic activity” (137). Tangentially agreeing with her conclusions, I have to add that the repercussions of the digital as shown above will have similar if not greater effects. New media technology within literature will begin to create new audiences across age groups, beyond physical boundaries around the globe, and from cybernetic fields from individuals who would not have been as interested in literature in the past. However, Kuhnheim’s book positions technology as a tool that facilitates performance within poetry. This, of course, is due to her book’s goal of tracing the performative nature of poetry, which tends to be forgotten, but has seen a resurgence over the last few decades of the 20th century and into the 21st century (3). Furthermore, Kuhnheim’s analysis, while it employs a variety of Latin American poets and sociocultural contexts, focuses on the use of CD-ROMs and a few video and sound recordings online (10). Due to this combination of elements, the technological components in Kuhnheim’s analysis serve to assist as a tool rather than actively create in an agential role. In Escaja’s poems technology is more than a tool that in turn allows a

performance to take place. The technology is also not present to facilitate a recording of a poem, but, instead, is an active component while the reader-user accesses a poem. Similarly, the QR codes and the digital elements within Company's short stories are not just a vehicle of sorts, but a way for the user to become part of the reality or fiction that Company is trying to represent. Looking at the technological components within the first two sections in this chapter as tools would fail to describe the overall work achieved in both Escaja and Company's respective books. Nonetheless, this symbiotic relationship will propel poetry and short stories in ways that will serve to connect literature with new readers and markets, much like performance acts are doing for poetry.

At the current junction of new media technology and traditional forms of publication there are many issues yet to be resolved, one of which is how to categorize and label the texts from Escaja and Company. In an interview and as the opening quote to this chapter indicates, Company has constantly noted that she fails to find a proper use for labels beyond the economic and hierarchical purposes that organize the world. She refuses to label her work, the work of others, and her and others' identity. This is, in a very direct manner, a queer way of looking at life and literature. We fall under a similar predicament when we come to Company's *Por mis muertos*, which is, as already stated throughout, a collection of short stories, but with elements of an oral tradition dispersed throughout the book and contains a very present and active multimedia component that further complicates the categorization of this work. Company prefers the rather uncomplicated term "book" ("Flavia Company, la alquimia"). The categorization of what is found within her books is then left to the critic, a critic who may not register the multiple assemblages that embody this work or the multiple environments required to navigate in order to accurately assess the entire text. Escaja's *Código de barras* becomes equally compromised when

assessing its contents. Though I have labeled the work a poetry collection, I have to agree that this term, like Company argues, is reductionist. This label, poetry collection, fails to note the important component that the three exhibitions contributed to the volume. Additionally, the digital photographs and the embedded aural components must still be assessed. The barcode feature would not fall under any specific category: not as a functional piece, an addition to the subject matter, nor a medium for other components to exist. Added layers of complications arise when the books are catalogued in a library. Such cataloging only addresses the content and the subject matter, but, for the time being, fails to address the manner in which this content is presented. Library and scholarly databases do not fully address the media that a work employs. While this technical difficulty fits well with the queer framing of this project, the complications of finding materials like Escaja's or Company's becomes quite troubling and in turn create a blind spot within the cultural production of a nation, a group of people, or the world as a whole.

Despite these complications, literary and cultural hybrid formulations will resonate across cultures due to their diverse use of established and avant-garde practices. These new literary and cultural artifacts may also usher in a new wave of critics, literary scholars, and, overall, new ways of approaching texts. Seeing these literary works through their many assemblages that come together to tell a story and convey new lived experiences enables hybrid works to disrupt realities, question arbitrary limits, and focus on topics that may have been difficult to tell and transmit when a writer did not have access to the technology we now possess. The hybridity being experienced and materialized through new media technologies is transforming and expanding; it is pointing at convergences in culture and signaling new frames of reference in our realities, literature, and culture – both in the physical and electronic realms.



“I think that, as our society changes, at the very moment when it is in the process of changing, the author function will disappear, and in such a manner that fiction and its polysemous texts will once again function according to another mode, but still with a system of constraint-one which will no longer be the author, but which will have to be determined or, perhaps, experienced.”  
-Michel Foucault

“... la figura autoral se anonada como autor de obras pero se autoafirma como ‘autor de autores.’”  
-Liliana Noemí Swiderski

## **Chapter 4: The Author Is Dead, Long Live the Author: How Technology Reconfigured Authorship**

When I come across texts from Isabel Franc, I have to confess that it is sometimes hard to discern whether it is Franc who authored the text or whether I am reading Lola Van Guardia or, even, Adelaida Duarte. In our physical reality, Franc is the human being commonly associated with a long list of novels, short stories, graphic novels, and scholarly texts. Van Guardia, the most popular of the three authors listed above, was originally a pseudonym developed by Franc and the publishing house EGALES. Franc has also described Van Guardia as one of her alter egos. Duarte, known as “la gran diva de las letras lésbicas” (Van Guardia, *Con pedigree* 7), is also one of Franc’s alter egos, but Duarte is most commonly identified as the main character in the Van Guardia trilogy. While there are a few terms that could be used to identify what Van Guardia is by itself or in relation to Franc, the words pseudonym, *nom de plume*, or heteronym, do not fully encompass the various facets that this writer has developed across her ongoing oeuvre.

The complexities I first encountered in Franc's Van Guardia are what have fueled my interest in authorship. Like the previous chapter, this one continues to delve into particular aspects and effects of the digital on literary and cultural production. However, this chapter's focus shifts to the author and authorship in the 21st century and how technology has come to actively engage with the production of texts. As a result, digital technology has reconfigured the author by first clearly proving earlier theorized concepts on authorship and, then, by inserting itself as a major actant in the production and development of texts. Technology from the 21st century: hardware, software, the Internet, social media, and other factors have become indispensable elements in the production of texts like short stories and novels. New technologies have also given rise to new authors and new forms of authoring. Below, I assess the state of the author in 21st century Spanish texts in relation to technology, an element that has come to take a vital role in cultural production. I do this by first engaging primarily with philosophers Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault and scholars Mark Rose, George Landow, Christine Henseler, and Katherine Hayles. Their ideas lay the foundation for the analysis of the authorial figures of Spanish writers Thais Morales, Isabel Franc, and Susanna Martín.

### **The New Dynamics**

In describing the processes that literature has gone through over the past few decades from its traditional printed forms to the current innovations in electronic literature, Katherine Hayles employs the concept of *intermediation* to make sense of the new forms of literary production. Hayles sees intermediation as "*dynamic heterarchies* and fluid analogies as embodied in *multiagent* computer programs, and the interpretive processes that give meaning to

information” (*Electronic Literature* 44; my emphasis). This definition echoes the non-hierarchical systems of agency presented earlier in the introduction from Alaimo and Bennett. Here, Hayles also perceives the importance of not prioritizing a particular form of agency and types of literature in order to better understand the mechanisms behind literary and non-literary production in the digital age. Hayles clarifies that her concept of intermediation borrows from anthropologist Nicholas Gessler’s understanding of this term, “whereby a first-level emergent pattern is captured in another medium and re-represented with the primitives of the new medium, which leads to an emergent result captured in turn by yet another medium, and so forth” (Hayles, *Electronic Literature* 45). In a sense, this is an ecological form of analysis where one element comes in contact to produce a reconfigured unique product in the digital world.<sup>78</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, I will borrow Hayles’ understanding of intermediation to propose that authorship in the 21st century requires this distinct process in its authorship: *dynamic authorship*. This form of authorship, which is facilitated through the digital revolution during the last decades of the 20th century and amplified with social media and the Internet during the 21st century, is a highly mediated form of authoring that relies on the use of new technology to produce and reproduce a text. Dynamic authorship, like intermediation, traverses different mediums and employs heterogeneous discourses in print and digital publications allowing for a polyphony of voices to emerge and consequently expand the reach of the author-individual. This new form of authorship also prioritizes collaboration in an implicit manner, where an author-individual relies on pre-existing templates (for blogs, tweeting, publishing webpages, etc.), and explicitly, where two or more individuals jointly work on a project.

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<sup>78</sup> For more on Gessler’s intermediation see, “Evolving Artificial Cultural Things-That-Think and Work by Dynamical Hierarchical Synthesis.”

Dynamic authorship of the 21st century should be seen as a plural form of the traditional author where technological components are equal to the human author(s). Hispanist scholar Christine Henseler has addressed authorship in her book *Spanish Fiction in the Digital Age*. While her main focus is to address issues related to the Spanish Generation X and *Mutantes*, portions of her book address the authorial digital component that permeates these literary generations. In relation to authorship, Henseler begins by saying, “[t]he writing and the study of narrative in Spain, then, must take place within this increasing web of organic and virally moving connections, the convergence of media technologies, and the hybridization of media and social cultural forms on a variety of platforms around the world” (*Spanish Fiction* 22). New media technologies are a pivotal element in the production of cultural texts that ought not be ignored or relegated to a supporting role in literary analysis. Furthermore, these new forms of technology and the easy access to individuals across short or long distances now facilitate collaborative authoring of texts. The use of technology to create blogs, podcasts, or, even, the incorporation of links, images, and other elements into a new text inherently give 21st century digital works a sense of co-production that was either largely absent in past works or minimal. With this technological understanding, dynamic authorship should not come as a complete surprise. In fact, various philosophers have theorized about the existence of multiple factors, actants, which influence the authorial process. Their focus, though, has been rather negative by arguing for a future collapse of the author figure and its death. Among those are Roland Barthes with his essay “The Death of the Author” (1967) and Michel Foucault’s lecture “What Is an Author?” (1969).

Still, outside of the theorization of the author and its functions, modern literary criticism has steered away from analyzing the author as an active element within a work. Instead, as

Foucault generalizes, “the task of criticism is not to bring out the work's relationships with the author, nor to reconstruct through the text a thought or experience, but rather to analyze the work through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the play of its internal relationships” (Foucault 110). Thus, criticism to a particular text has evaded the full incorporation of the author in a more complete literary or cultural studies analysis. This is a well-understood practice, but also a contradiction. While a text’s criticism and the author are rarely combined, there is still a need to know various authorial elements of a work: who wrote it, when did this author write it, where was the author (if “pertinent”), etc. With this in mind, the author must be seen as an important element in a text and, as I will show in this chapter, one of rising importance for 21st century literary and cultural studies. The author’s name, Foucault goes on to say, is important in narrative discourse and for classificatory functions since, “[s]uch a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others. In addition, it establishes a relationship among the texts” (Foucault 114). The name, here, is a rather practical element, but Foucault’s work delves deeper by constantly questioning whether it matters *who* writes. It appears that time and technology have answered that it *does* matter. Literary criticism, and in particular “New Criticism,”<sup>79</sup> has shyly pushed the author to the margins, but this authorial force has managed to stay in the background mutating into a dynamic entity that requires the attention of scholars.

### **The Modern Author**

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<sup>79</sup> New Criticism is a critical theory that focuses on a close analysis of texts and treats such texts as autonomous, independent of the historical or authorial context. Instead, New Criticism favors a central unity of a text and argues for the reader to interpret the text by explaining how the separate parts inform the central unity.

The rise of the modern author, what we may understand as an author, is a construction formed out of necessity. For Mark Rose, a scholar in English Literature with a keen interest in copyright issues as they relate to the literary world, the rise of the modern author can be traced to economic and legal developments (of copyright laws) to the early decades of the 18th century (3). Foucault also agrees with this timeline, but his studies will highlight the rise of an author out of a need to assign “transgressive” texts to individuals who should be disciplined for publishing forbidden material. Foucault, like Rose, will also associate the current notions of authorship to a strengthening capitalist environment that required ownership of works (Foucault 124). These major elements, together or in combination, have forced literary and other texts to require an author. They have also built the underlying ideas of what it is to be an author in modern times. However, as philosophers Foucault and Barthes have argued, the author or authorship is a more complex concept that should not rest upon an individual.

In, *Authors and Owners* (1993), Rose traces the first, mostly English, decades of laws that develop copyright law. There are also a few examples emanating from the United States. While this chapter’s focus does not center on copyright, I do find it important to note the role that copyright, property, and the capitalist economy played in developing our current concepts of the author-individual. Rose proposes that the distinguishing characteristic of the modern author comes from proprietorship, “the author is conceived as the originator and therefore the owner of a special kind of commodity, the work” (1). By extension, copyright is the combination of a unique individual who creates an original work and would thus be entitled to any profit from the work. Rose further details this when he explains,

copyright – the practice of securing marketable rights in texts that are treated as commodities – is a specifically modern institution, the creature of the printing press, the

individualization of authorship in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, and the development of the advanced marketplace society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (3)

This confluence of elements would mark the beginning of copyright authorship. However, as half of the chapters in his book detail, the rise of copyright laws was actually a struggle between booksellers and authors. The printing press would help augment the differences and problems between individual creators of works and booksellers seeking to capitalize on new technology through increased sales. It would not be until the mid 1700s that literary property would, in practice, start to be associated with the author-individual and not the bookseller or company publishing the work (58). Thus, copyright laws come to aid in the creation of the modern author by forging an individual's name to a work at a time when publishing's profits were on the rise and a new form of technology was opening new possibilities for writers, their works, and businesses.

The legal systems were trying to capture the advancements the printing press afforded the world while attempting to carve out protections of property and earnings for individuals and businesses. But, as Rose concludes in his book, the increasing levels of technology in the late 20th century, and now the 21st century, may question the copyright practices in the years to come. Rose writes, "copyright is not a transcendent moral idea, but a specifically modern formation produced by printing technology, marketplace economics, and the classical liberal culture of possessive individualism" (142). Additionally, Rose suggests that the notion of some extraordinary beings that are able to create texts and are labeled authors is essentially religious and helps to cloud the idea of originality (ibid.). Rose sees the same institutions that once required copyright laws in order to adjust to the above-mentioned factors as having recently

experienced a shaking of their technological foundation. These institutions will be in need of updated modes of publishing. According to Rose, “[c]opyright developed as a consequence of printing technology’s ability to produce large numbers of copies of a text quickly and cheaply. But present-day technology makes it virtually impossible to prevent people from making copies of almost any text – printed, musical, cinematic, computerized – rapidly and at a negligible cost” (142). It is clear that Rose sees new technology and rapidly moving modernization levels of the late 20th century as a concern for copyright laws and for the author-individual. Technology has affected existing practices in copyright law: any person with the proper hardware can access and copy works of art, literature, cinema, and computer software. With this in mind, what has technology done to the author? In order to answer this, Barthes and Foucault provide an important background as they theorize and deconstruct traditional concepts of authorship.

Both Barthes and Foucault, prominent philosophers of the 20th century have problematized the concept of the author and, at times, also questioned whether this entity exists. While side-stepping the legal and social positioning of the author as the unequivocal source of origin, Barthes in his essay, “The Death of the Author,” presents a stark image of the author as he begins by stating, “writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin” (142). For Barthes, the production of a work is in itself inscribing the death of the author. Barthes sees the author as a modern construct, a result of various elements, and, in particular, the culmination of positivism and capitalism (“The Death of the Author” 142-43). In a sense, it is not the author who speaks. Instead, the author is merely presenting writing or stories through language. Of particular interest is Barthes’ assertion that the text is “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres [sic] of culture” (“The Death of the Author” 146). In other



words, a work is already multi-authored or, at least, multi-influenced beyond the contemporary individualistic sense of author. Various components come into play when authoring a text and, in the late 20th to 21st century, the digital stands out as a major element that highlights and enhances the various other origins of authorship while playing a direct role in creating a work.

With regards to the role the author should play in the analysis of the work Barthes partially acknowledges that the author has helped criticism by placing a given work in context and imbuing the work with meaning (“The Death of the Author” 147), something that Foucault also referenced. However, Barthes stops at this brief comment and leaves the author at the standstill of only providing context without expanding on the type of meaning. The author, in different words, is seen as a medium, which can be productive when discussing technologically driven works by leveling the author-individual with the technology that also creates a given text. However, this too is limiting since I want to think of the author-individual as a person directly influencing the text not at the margins, but throughout the many layers of meaning within the text. Dynamic authorship involves a more active authorial power that can also be found throughout multiple points of the text. For now, Barthes has opened the possibility for the author to not exist as a single entity and has questioned the idea of a single individual agent creating a given work. This opening allows for multiple actors involved in a complex process of authoring that had been simplified for centuries.

Following Barthes, emerging technologies are uncovering and questioning this long-standing author since “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, [and] contestation” (“The Death of the Author” 148). Barthes’ solution to these contestations, though, is to instead focus on the reader as the entity where these multiple elements come to rest and, simultaneously, create meaning:

“there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not as was hitherto said, the author” (ibid.). For Barthes the reader is the ideal “space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination” (“The Death of the Author” 148). Barthes’ sudden shift at the end of his essay still leaves unanswered questions regarding the author; the process of authorship is also left somewhat unquestioned. Nonetheless, one could still accept part of his conclusions if the “destinations” Barthes mentions are understood in a broader sense and in current contexts to include technology (digital copies, online works, etc.). These destinations are also part of what is forming and transforming the meaning of texts and by extension authoring works as well. If a text is open and made up of multiplicities, surely, one of those multiplicities creating and influencing a work are new technologies.

According to Foucault, the rise of our current publishing culture required an author, but “historically, this type of ownership has always been subsequent to what one might call penal appropriation. Texts, books, and discourses really began to have authors (other than mythical, ‘sacralized’ and ‘sacralizing’ figures) to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive” (Foucault 108). This also coincides with works becoming objects of appropriation and forms of property (ibid). Accordingly, the rise of capitalism in conjunction with ownership and strict copyright rules paved the way for the need of an individual to be attached to a published work. Yet, Foucault is quick to note that authors have not always been needed and, at the same time, have not been required in a continuous manner through history. He goes on to cite the Middle Ages when scientific texts required an author while other literary works like stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies did not require one (109). This latter type of writing quickly reversed its practice and “literary discourses came to be

accepted only when endowed with the author function” (109). For my purposes, the more important aspect of Foucault’s essay is where he begins to deconstruct the notion of author when he writes, “[an author] does not develop spontaneously as the attribution of a discourse to an individual. It is, rather, the result of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being that we call ‘author’” (110). It is, in fact, the reader and society who create the author to better understand a work or text and, yet, paradoxically some literary criticism movements have maintained this figure at the fringe of the analysis.

One must also note that Foucault’s arguments come with a focus different from Barthes’ or even Rose’s; one that I hope to continue in this chapter. Foucault does not engage with *the author*, but instead, while explaining the discursive powers in narrative, theorizes over the *author-function*. Foucault’s essay focuses on four main characteristics of author-functions. He conveniently summarizes these four main functions:

(1) the author function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses; (2) it does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilization; (3) it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but rather by a series of specific and complex operations; (4) it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects-positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals. (113)

With these functions, Foucault establishes a contextual background for a malleable author that again problematizes the author as the sole individual behind a work. Instead, he posits a discursive mechanism that generates texts or works. Such discursive mechanism can be fueled by digital innovations that modify the already existing complex operations of the authorial

processes. Moreover, Foucault's last function leaves open the possibility of several selves from a given author to operate as authorial power. The immediate example given is that the "I" in a work would not refer to the writer, "but rather to an alter ego whose distance from the author varies" (112). This idea is promising, but one that is lacking specifics and requires further development. Also, the reference to alter ego appears to be too simplistic, particularly as one tries to envision how this function plays out with technology.

Though both Barthes and Foucault agree about some deterioration of the concept of author, Foucault insists in going beyond such statements by instead focusing on elements that surround the author, "we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings that this disappearance uncovers" (112). While I agree with Foucault in that we must understand the spaces that at one point may have held the concept of author together, I disagree with the idea that the author has disappeared. Yes, the author as a concept is comprised of more than the individual whose name appears next to a work despite the popular assumption that the author of a work is solely the individual(s) listed. The author is a combined social creation of multiple and varied agents that come together to form this creation and the work that flourishes from this process. A stronger assertion would be that there has not been a deteriorating author over the last few decades, but merely a clarifying force that has explained the many elements that construct and inform authorship. Among the most important of these factors is technological and, more specific, digital elements such as the Web. These new innovations have come to take an important role in both the author-function and the process of authorship. What Barthes and Foucault present appears to be a concept of the author in tandem with other elements: some more sociological as Barthes addresses and the other in more discursive matters, as Foucault posits. What may also be

telling is that both of these philosophers look at authorship in the past: Barthes through 18th century texts and Foucault through a 19th century lens, and both see the author as a dying concept, dead, or absent. What follows in this chapter is a focus on authorial elements from contemporary texts and examples from living authors who have experienced wide-ranging changes in technology, from radio and television to the Internet and social media.

### **Into the Digital**

In his chapter, “Reconfiguring the Author”, George Landow addresses the changing author in relation to hypertext, and, more broadly, in reaction to the new technologies of the late 20th and 21st century of Internet, hypermedia, social media, and other digital technologies. Landow argues that the author has been reconfigured by new technologies that have exposed some of Barthes and Foucault’s theorized concepts on the author. Furthermore, Landow suggests that technology itself has also come to almost merge with the reader: “[h]ypertext, which creates an active, even intrusive reader, carries this convergence of activities one step closer to completion; but in so doing, it infringes upon the power of the writer, removing some of it and granting that portion to the reader” (*Hypertext 2.0* 90). Through hypertext technologies, the reader can move through a text more freely and create a personalized narrative. Landow continues, “[i]n reducing the autonomy of the text, hypertext reduces the autonomy of the author” (*Hypertext 2.0* 90). Thus, hypertext and current technologies reconceive the figure of the author and the functions of authorship by allowing technology to be an actant heavily involved in the creation of a text. With this “unboundedness of the new textuality” (Landow, *Hypertext 2.0* 92), which digitally produced works embody, the common-held notion of author is further

dispersed, exposing the various elements that form it and, thus, agreeing with Barthes' "tissue of quotations." Accordingly, this unboundedness echoes Foucault's assertion that new elements or functions of authorship would come into existence in the future due to the empty space that the author had left, allowing – in the 21st century – for new nodes, or digital actants, to attach to the ongoing concept of authorship.

In his more assertive statements, Landow proposes that, "[o]ne can destroy (what we mean by) the author, which includes the notion of sole authorship, by removing the autonomy of text. One can also achieve the same end by decentering text or by transforming text into a network. Finally, one can remove limits on textuality, permitting it to expand" (93). By expanding the notion of author, text, and textuality, Landow is attempting to neutralize the very rigid definitions that problematize our conception of author, authorship, and text. Over the past decades, though, these notions have already been under heavy questioning as Barthes and Foucault have theorized. The "text" has also seen a questioning and expansion period within critics and academics with the introduction of cultural studies that seeks to include text as a more open field outside of written works into the study of literary studies. Where Landow does, however, continue to develop and expand Barthes and Foucault's ideas is when he positions the author as a dead or dying figure in the production of writing and texts. Landow sees technology as infringing and intruding on the author as an antagonistic force. I will argue that it is not. Landow is correct in arguing that the author has been modified and reconfigured in a way that has not been seen before, at least in 200 years since the current conception of the author-capitalist-figure became a reality and since the printing press came to be.

What should be a guiding principle in literary and cultural studies, and perhaps beyond, of the 21st century digital culture regarding the author is that authorship has been drastically

transformed, uncovered, and reconfigured by new media technologies. The transformation is a reaction to socio-cultural transformations over the last few decades due largely to a rise in technology that permeates the home, work, and leisure spaces of the Western world. This idea seems to still follow many of the statements from the previous scholars and philosophers, but what I wish to convey is that the author-individual to which these scholars appear to be ready to eliminate is a constant, among other factors, within a more equal plane. The author's position in production of texts has changed: at times this position has strengthened, in others it has multiplied, and, at times, the author-individual's voice has been diminished. These new combinations of authorship prove that the author is alive and well. However, in order to acknowledge the vitality of the author, past assumptions of authorship must be upgraded to meet the demands of 21st century hardware, software, and its culture. Additionally, new notions of what authorship entails will need to be included to understand where new texts are being produced and who or what is writing them.

### **The “Authors”**

The individual “authors” who will be the subject of this chapter are Thais Morales, Isabel Franc, and, to a lesser extent, Susanna Martín. The latter will be analyzed in relation to and because of her collaboration with Franc's graphic novels. These writers, while they do not fit easily under the fluid definition of the literary Generation X or *Mutantes* that Christine Henseler advocates for in *Spanish Fiction*, still embody many of the characteristics that Henseler presents. In her book, Henseler situates “‘Generation X’ as an age cohort *and* a worldview, a group with particular experience and conscience, as a term pertaining to a specific demographic and a label

that metamorphoses through space and time” (7). The changing or flexible nature of this literary group is key as Henseler later addresses the *Mutante* generation, a generation which she argues springs off of the Spanish Generation X foundation. Key elements of Generation X are the uses of a multiplicity of voices in their work. They are avid consumers of worldwide literatures and cultures and are rather active writers who grew up immersed in technology: radio, television, and, later, computers. Henseler loosely positions the Spanish Generation X writers as having been born between 1962 and 1977 with their publishing beginnings in the early 1990s. This detail becomes somewhat troublesome if we read her definition in strict terms. Two details stand out: Morales does not publish her first well-known literary text until the 2000s (though she did receive an award in 1989 for her short story “El mechero homosexual”) and Franc’s age pushes her outside of the years delimited by Henseler. However, the description that Henseler attributes to the generation following the Generation X, the *Mutante* generation, is a better description for the work of Morales and Franc. This latter generation is one that actively refuses to be labeled as Generation X. The *Mutante* generation is described as comprised of global citizens, who speak multiple languages, who live, travel, and work abroad, and who are highly educated. Henseler specifies,

Most importantly, their work disrupts conceptions of culture, space, time, and reality, presenting more *fluid mutations* in genres and character identities. Their implicit and explicit attention to *new models of authorship* and readership force the literary establishment to imagine new ways of portraying the narrative landscape in Spain in the twenty-first century. (*Spanish Fiction* 8; my emphasis)

The fluidity and mutations to which Henseler alludes to are key elements both to the definitions of the literary generation and to the new realities of literary production and authorship in a



technological and interconnected global society. This same fluidity will allow writers from this generation to at times fit the specifications defined by Henseler and at other times to partially agree with her.

Thais Morales, born in 1964, is a journalist, writer and activist living in Barcelona, Spain. Morales' work spans many genres and appears in a variety of sources. Her novels *Efecto retrovisor* (2005) and *Una aparición inesperada* (2009) are well known within the Spanish lesbian fiction genre. Additionally, she is a contributor to various magazines including *Nosotras*, *Dos punto dos*, and *Vanity Fair*. Poems, short stories, and critical essays can also be found as part of her repertoire.<sup>80</sup> Gemma Retamaro, the editor of *Ellas Editorial* where Morales published her first novel,<sup>81</sup> discusses Morales: “Thais es una de las voces que tiene mucho que decir. No solo se ha expresado en poesía – colectivo *Abecedaria* –, cuentos y relatos, también en medios de comunicación escritos e imagen, lo cual demuestra su versatilidad en la elaboración de mensajes en distintos registros” (13). Voluminous quantities of Morales' writings are articles published in newspapers, in print and online, primarily through *La vanguardia*, a leading newspaper in Spain.<sup>82</sup> Morales is also a very involved activist for women's, LGBT, and human rights and often speaks to these topics via podcasts through *InOutRadio*, entries on her social media accounts, and blog posts. This chapter will focus on Morales' first novel, *Efecto retrovisor*, the blog *La inquietud de Mara*, and her work with friend and collaborator, Isabel Franc.

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<sup>80</sup> Among the academic essays published are “Pulp lésbico: el género del deseo” and “La invisibilidad lesbiana en el franquismo.” Her literary work has been included in the anthology *Un deseo propio* (Bruguera, 2009) and her short story “El mechero homosexual” was a finalist in the “Bienal de Barcelona” in 1989.

<sup>81</sup> *Ellas Editorial* is no longer an active publishing house and stopped publishing in 2007.

<sup>82</sup> For a listing of her articles, editorials, and investigative reporting see *La vanguardia's* “Hemeroteca” search, <<http://hemeroteca.lavanguardia.com/search.html?q=Thais+Morales>>.

The second author and the main focus of the chapter due to her popularity and more established “literary” career is Isabel Franc. She was born in 1955 and is an author initially known for her lesbian and humor-filled thematic novels. Her inaugural novel *Entre todas las mujeres* (1992) was a finalist for the “Sonrisa Vertical” award in 1992 and brought her many accolades. What would follow would be a trilogy: *Con pedigree* (1997), *Plumas de doble filo* (1999), and *La mansión de las tribadas* (2002), penned through, what Franc labeled a pseudonym: Lola Van Guardia. This pseudonym would also act as a sort of alter ego for Franc. Other novels and a collection of short stories have been well received by the public and her latest collaboration with artist and author Susanna Martín has yielded two graphic novels.<sup>83</sup> These latter projects have taken her beyond writing with a LGBT focus as Franc has managed to garner an appeal beyond the specialized queer literature niche. Her graphic novels follow Alicia, another incarnation of her alter ego, through life-changing autobiographical situations. The first of these novels, *Alicia en un mundo real* (2010), saw Alicia diagnosed and surviving breast cancer while the second novel, *Sansamba* (2014), focuses on immigration in Spain and Alicia’s encounter with an immigrant from Senegal. The first of these graphic novels, as well as a few other novels by Franc, has been translated to many languages, while the latter was published in May of 2014 and has yet to be introduced to other languages. Her most recent novel, *Elogio del*

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<sup>83</sup> Isabel Franc’s published works include her inaugural novel, *Entre todas las mujeres* (1992). The widely popular trilogy penned under the Lola Van Guardia pseudonym follows: *Con pedigree* (1997), *Plumas de doble filo* (1999) and *La mansión de las tribadas* (2002). Her next project would be a joint collaboration between Franc and Van Guardia, *No me llames cariño* (2004). *Las razones de Jo* (2006) would follow and in 2008 Franc would collaborate with Van Guardia again with *Cuentos y fábulas de Lola Van Guardia*. In 2010 she co-authored her first graphic novel with Susanna Martín, *Alicia en un mundo real* (2010). She would later publish *Sansamba* with Martín, another graphic novel, in 2014. *Elogio del happy end* (2012) would become another award-winning novel.

*Happy End* (2012), received the “VII Premio Fundación Arena de Narrativa GLBTQ.”<sup>84</sup> This novel was submitted by Franc with another *nom de plume*, Sabba Druche, of which very little is known. Consequently, the academic realm has also taken notice of Franc’s work and scholars have published books and articles elevating her work to a much more critical level within academia (Collins, “This Town”, “(Un)natural Exposure”, “A World Beyond”; Robbins, *Crossing Through Chueca*; Vosburg, “Coming Out”; Vosburg and Collins, *Lesbian Realities/Lesbian Fictions*).<sup>85</sup> As can be seen, Franc’s vast literary repertoire covers a longer period of time and for the purposes of this chapter I have also omitted detailing the many articles in newspapers or magazines and her children’s short stories.<sup>86</sup> However, the works listed, along with her blog, *Una cómica de la pluma*, will suffice to show Franc’s dynamic authoring.

Susanna Martín, born in 1976, is the youngest of these three authors. She is also an artist primarily for graphic novels and newspaper comic strips. Her first published project was the previously mentioned *Alicia en un mundo real*, which has been followed by *Sonrisas de Bombay* (2012) and then *Sansamba*. Martín is also a collaborator with Franc and Flavia Company, separately, for various comic strips that appear in newspapers in Spain and Argentina. Martín’s published career is a young one, but the previous few years and her active participation with others is making headway and generating interest in her work.

These three authors, beyond their individual characteristics and their individual projects share friendships, and interest in social justice, and collaborate with one another in small and

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<sup>84</sup> Previously known as the “Premio Terenci Moix.”

<sup>85</sup> Others scholars who have taken note of her work by directly writing about Franc or alluding to her work include Inmaculada Pertusa, Elina Norandi, Ivonne Cuadra, and Silvia Rolle-Rissetto.

<sup>86</sup> Franc’s children’s stories have likely received little attention due to the genre and to the language of publication, Catalan.

major ways. They should be seen as part of a larger ecosystem of individuals that are in constant contact both physically and through digital and social media avenues. Previous literary circles of the early 20th century or, even, 19th century, required one to be in close proximity to attend social and literary functions. These women and the larger network of friends and authors whom they come in contact with are able to continue communicating not only through their published work, but through more instant mediums like email, blogs, and, of course, traditional in-person events. The digital element, though, becomes pivotal as, for example, Franc communicates with Martín on their comic strips or when they finalize the details to their graphic novels (*jartazald*). Furthermore, Morales and Franc both collaborate on *InOutRadio* on a regular basis and continue developing the style to some of their published and electronic work. While their work and the specific relationships and collaborations that will be detailed are important in exploring the dynamic authorship of 21st century writers in Spain, it is important to understand the importance of a much larger network of writers that exists in the physical world and that is complemented and even further developed within digital spaces.

### **Mara's Expanding Universe: A Character's Traverse Into Authorship**

Morales' *Efecto retrovisor* (2005) is a novel that follows Mara Palés' story as she enters into a new relationship with Carolina, an older woman, and tries to overcome the trauma caused on her by the death of her parents when she was a child. Mara, now in her 30s, has also had a few amorous relationships, one of which did not end well and that she must also fully overcome. Throughout the novel, Morales uses a third-person narrator to tell Mara's story with the occasional flashbacks incorporated to provide background information about the protagonist and

her friends. The narrator is someone unknown to the reader who can enter Mara's mind. The novel is mostly from Mara's perspective. When flashbacks are employed it is because Mara is remembering a particular event or is having a dream that takes her to the past. The novel ultimately sees Mara overcome her last break up in order to continue the relationship with Carolina. Mara also comes to terms with the death of her parents after a prolonged period of reflection and constant dialogue with therapists. More importantly, Mara discusses this with Camila, the woman who took care of her after her parents' accident. Critics received *Efecto retrovisor* warmly when it first appeared, but scholars have not delved into Morales' work with as much enthusiasm. While *Efecto retrovisor* will get mentioned in articles or anthologies related to lesbian or queer literature in Spain, the mentions do not go beyond that. Furthermore, the prologue in the novel also garners some attention since *Efecto retrovisor* was the inaugural novel of Ellas Editorial, a publishing house that would be dedicated to publishing lesbian literature.

*Efecto retrovisor*, however, is a rather intriguing and complex novel for its various literary registers and multiple voices that Morales incorporates into the text. While a third-person perspective is present for the majority of the novel, this is not always the case. From the opening page it is clear that the narrator has access to Mara's thoughts and grievances,

Mara apenas le prestaba atención. Acurrucada en el sofá e hipnotizada por su propio reflejo en el espejo, recordó que cuando llegó por primera vez sola a casa de Camila y vio aquella pieza, creyó que si lograba meterse dentro, haciendo fuerza con sus brazos delgados y empujando con todo su cuerpo sobre su superficie brillante y fría, iría al lugar donde estaban sus padres. (17)

This clear and direct prose continues for large portions of the novel providing a wealth of angst and psychological crises experienced by the protagonist. The style remains constant, not veering

away from Mara and her immediate surroundings or narrating out of chronological order. The few exceptions are in the form of dreams and nightmares or flashbacks that Mara experiences, but these are always clarified. For example when Carolina and Mara reach their destination during a short vacation, the bathroom in their hotel room reminds Mara of the last time she talked to her mother as she was finishing taking a bath. Mara had asked her mom why her father had been more absent as of late and Mara's youthful conclusion was that, "[a] papá ya no le gusto", dijo Mara. Y salió de la ducha sin que Paula [her mother] tuviera tiempo de consolarla. [...] Había hecho algo mal, seguro, pensó Mara, tratando de averiguar qué podía haber sido" (136). This flashback ends and we are then taken to the present where Mara, "[s]alió de la ducha con un pie a cada lado del espejo-presente/pasado-pensativa. Anotó: No me gusta que los recuerdos me asalten en la ducha" (137). This register goes away when a new narrator is introduced within the novel to complement Mara's story and to also explain some of her troubles.

This second narrator is Camila, one of the minor characters inside the novel. Camila was a good friend of Mara's parents and the woman who took care of Mara since the age of 6 when Mara's parents died in a car accident. Camila became the legal guardian and cared for Mara until she was a young adult, but then left to New York City to pursue her career as an artist and a professor at a college. The first time we are introduced to this new narrator is in chapter X of the first of four sections. Morales will use this second point of view multiple times; all of these instances throughout the novel are published in italics and only towards the end of the novel will the two narrators share a chapter. This warning gesture inscribed in the novel signals that the segment is different from the previous ones. Some of the chapters that use this narrator will also include dates to further explain and order the events from the past.

What stands out from these sections is that they are also written in the not as common form of second-person narration, a narrator that is you, the reader, at the same time. The first time the reader is exposed to this new writing within *Efecto retrovisor*, the italicized chapter comes with a stamped date, “6 de diciembre 1981,” marking a departure from the previous chapters. The scene takes the reader to the first time Mara asked Camila for details surrounding her parents’ death, “*Así que ahora te lo pregunta. Después de seis... no, siete años, mañana hace siete años. Directamente te mira y te lo dice: ‘¿Cómo ocurrió?’*” (64). The indirect object pronoun *te* in this paragraph is addressing the reader who is also Camila. This shift in style and addition of a second voice to the novel not only adds a new perspective to the events of the past and present, but also continues to develop the depth of the characters. The style, when in second person, shifts to a more sad and tense writing during the first instances as we are informed of the multiple deaths that surround Camila and Mara. Later instances become less sentimental, but more dramatic as we learn of a couple secrets Camila has been withholding from Mara. Camila was in love with Mara’s mother, but more importantly and not related, Mara’s parents were about to announce their separation and a divorce would follow (223). There is a new element of anticipation that builds throughout the novel. This information, when revealed to Mara, serves to quell her belief that she caused the accident that killed her parents. When Camila later shares this information with Mara, Mara understands that the tenseness of that last car ride was not her fault, something she believed since the death of her parents.

*Efecto retrovisor*, thus, incorporates a play on registers by utilizing multiple perspectives within the novel. This in turn serves to highlight the malleability of the dynamic authorship Morales employs. The various registers in the novel allow the author to complement the narration by embedding multiple sources within a text and within her authorship. This is a way in

which to visualize the many elements that come together to form the work of an author, or in Barthes' words the "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings [...] blend and clash" ("The Death of the Author" 146). What informs Morales, whose name is used in the publication, are a series of characters taking form in the authorial process and, in particular, Mara and Camila's voices. What Morales is doing, though, reaches beyond a simple voice or perspective. During the novel the two points of view are clearly different registers with differing styles. The author's use of multiple registers and two different narrator styles side by side within the novel lend Morales' work to be characteristic of dynamic authoring. Additionally, the novel fuses email communication and careful dialogue to complement the plot's storylines. The future steps that Morales would take with Mara's character will also exemplify a form of dynamic authorship.

During one of the many phone conversations that Mara has with Camila while the latter is living in New York City Mara casually mentions to Camila that she has finally created an email account, or, as she clarifies, the company she works for has created an email account for her (94). This event may appear to be insignificant and it is not a key moment that stands out in the novel's plot. However, this detail signals the changing electronic landscape surrounding Mara, whose first received email even surprises her, "[d]e repente, en la pantalla de su ordenador apareció un aviso de que le había llegado un correo electrónico. Como no se acordaba de que le habían puesto e-mail, se quedó parada unos instantes sin saber qué hacer [...] Era el primer mensaje que recibía en su vida y era, no podía ser de otra manera, de Camila" (153). This instance is later utilized by Morales as a way of expanding the registers within the novel as the author comes to embed email communication between Mara and Camila within some of the chapters. The embedded style continues to build on Camila's perspective and to foreshadow the



importance of technology in Mara's universe. Chapter IX in the novel's third part is exclusively email communication including the standard line entries of a typical email: from, to, subject, and a timestamp of when the email was sent. Coincidentally, Mara's first sent email is dated just after the start of the new millennium, "2 de enero 2000 09:09" (186). The 21st century ushered in new ways of communicating and here, symbolically, is one of the predominant forms of communication being explored by the protagonist. Retrospectively, this is a milestone for Mara given that with the novel's publication, Mara's literary and activist nature continues within the digital realms of the blogosphere. *La inquietud de Mara*, a blog authored by Mara herself sees a different Mara, one that is more mature, more comical, secure of her self, and who uses parody to highlight social justice issues in the physical world.

Morales and Mara's blog, *La inquietud de Mara* (2006), continues Mara's story with a few modifications and by focusing on Mara's socio-political interests. This blog is often published from a first-person perspective, that of Mara. However, Morales has broken from this pattern and, in a few instances, has published blog entries from her own point of view. Even so, it is assumed that Mara authors the vast majority of blog entries. In some posts, the author of the entry is a little harder to discern as in the post where the blog's text refers to Morales and Mara in third person, "Thais Morales ha decidido jugar al escondite detrás de Mara Palés, ¿un acto de cobardía? Bueno, no lo sé, después de discutirlo con ella, Mara se mostró encantada de poder adquirir una nueva dimensión en su existencia literaria. Así que, ¿quién soy yo para negarle esta nueva vida?" ("Antes que nada..."). A fellow blogger, Melina, was quick to comment "¡Qué fuerte un personaje de una novela escribiendo un blog! Como se te revele, verás ... pero los personajes, una vez se pone FIN... tienen vida propia. Te lo digo por experiencia. Te recomendaría cuidado. O no..." (Melina). Interestingly, this blog comment highlights the odd

positioning and existence of the character-turned-author. Mara is not a human entity; it is clear she is a fictional character only materialized, at best, through the publication of *Efecto retrovisor*. Through this blogging component a new configuration of the character develops where Mara is now in control.

With the play on authorship, some of the focus in the blog shifts to the message and the way in which content is delivered. Through the blog, Mara's first-person point of view adds humor and a touch of sarcasm generally enjoyed by the readers. This style is very distinct and one not seen in *Efecto retrovisor* or in other of Morales' work. The authoring style is a clear departure from the novel, which is the text that first created the character-turned-author that the reader experiences. Any traces of the troubled and somewhat traumatized thirty-something year old Mara are gone. It is also evident that Mara has fully overcome the troubles that haunted her: the bad break up with her ex-girlfriend, the death of her parents, and the trauma associated with those events no longer play a role in her writings. Mara appears to be more relaxed and less preoccupied by personal problems. *La inquietud de Mara* allows readers of *Efecto retrovisor* to see Mara after some time has passed, but from a new vantage point. This new register employed by Morales continues to expand her authorial repertoire by introducing a writing style that is absent in *Efecto retrovisor* and also in her second novel, *Una aparición inesperada* (2009).<sup>87</sup> Authoring a blog under Mara does not destroy the author like Barthes and Foucault would argue, or even as Landow has suggested. Instead, Morales' authorial reach expands through a new

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<sup>87</sup> Morales' second novel also delves into the psychological tribulations of a woman who cannot keep a relationship with other women for more than a few months. After a break up that Tarsila, the protagonist cannot explain to herself, Natalie Clifford Barney appears to her in ghost form. Barney was an American expatriate who lived and worked in Paris. She was a woman who encouraged and helped other women to write and who lived as an openly lesbian woman. It is Barney's ghost that helps Tarsila overcome her social and mental blocks that inhibit her from maintaining healthy relationships.

medium: the blog. Whereas her two published novels can be seen as having similar styles and psychological foci that delve into women's experiences in the physical world, the more humorous and critical style of writing that the blog exposes is separate from those publications. Technology, the blogosphere in this instance, has allowed for a richer form of authorship that complements the previous publication as a unique, but separate form not encountered in the published novel. Additionally, the distinct medium allows the author to freely create a work with few attachments to other works. Morales is free to experiment on the Web with a new register and Mara is not afraid to discuss any topic through her entries.

Mara's blog has a strong lesbian activist component providing quick and witty criticism of various topics as well as critical posts that highlight hypocritical stances against the LGBT community in Spain and abroad. Mara's interest in lesbian-related issues has led her to post about censorship in media. In 2013 Mara posted on Eurovision's festival telecasting of a same-sex kiss between the performer from Finland and one of her backup dancers ("Beso"). During the performance a quick and, relatively, innocent kiss between singer and a back-up singer graces the screen, but not all viewers saw this since it was subject to many anti-LGBT laws. Mara uses this post not only to criticize laws that had recently been approved by the Turkish government banning same-sex images from the media, but also notes the conservative and complicit nature of Spain's television network, TVE, who had earlier in the week recommended that viewers use prayer and candles to ameliorate unemployment woes ("Beso"). *La inquietud de Mara* goes beyond the national boundaries and Mara often discusses international events. When a group of collegiate Mormons from the United States made a YouTube video in support of LGBT people for the "It Gets Better" campaign, Mara noted the importance of the video. The "It Gets Better Project" campaign was started by Dan Savage and his husband Terry Miller, both from the

United States who wanted to let youth know that life for queer youth gets better with time. This was a campaign launched in reaction to a series of suicides by bullied teens in the United States during 2009-11. Since then a Spanish counterpart branch of the organization, “Todo mejora,” has also emerged in many Spanish-speaking countries enlisting the help of existing organizations (“¿Qué es TODO MEJORA?”). As Mara explains, those who appear in the short video can face excommunication from the Mormon Church, but “[el] vídeo podría ser un modelo para algunos jóvenes y muy homófobos católicos. Aaaamén [sic]” (“Un vídeo de lesbianas”). *La inquietud de Mara* also highlights artists from other countries who present positive LGBT images (“Un vídeo de regalo”).

At times Mara’s blog also stresses the few positive attitudes from the Catholic Church like when in 2011 Desmond Tutu, archbishop of South Africa, was interviewed and said, “La orientación sexual no se elige. La homofobia es también una forma de apartheid. Los negros no elegimos ser negros; los homosexuales, tampoco” (qtd. in “Wonderful Tutu”). These statements, that are, unfortunately, the exception to the Catholic Church’s dogma, do not escape Mara’s digital eye. Thus, Mara’s partnership with the digital world allowed *Efecto retrovisor* to continue living in and within digital realms, but without being an electronic copy of the printed version or a sequel of sorts. The lens that exclusively followed Mara is gone. Mara’s experiences are only related to the reader by extension: we know what Mara is going through because of what she posts and how she reacts to an event or individual. Mara’s blog is a clear departure from the setting and experiences expressed in Morales’ novel where Mara and her surroundings were the sole focus. This is largely due to the fact that different entities are authoring the two works.

For Morales, this blog serves a myriad of functions. While the print publication of *Efecto retrovisor* was received warmly and re-released in 2013, in digital format, *La inquietud de Mara*

allows her literary work to have a second life, a virtual one where Mara can continue living. When first conceptualized, Mara's blog was envisioned "para poder expresar la opinión de la llamada Liga de las Lesbianas Planetarias [...]"<sup>88</sup> La misión de la LLP es la de perseguir a los homófobos del planeta y denunciarlos. Así nació el blog, que lleva la agente de prensa de la LLP, Mara Palés" (Morales, "Entrevista a Thais Morales"). With time the blog quickly moved to include and focus on "temas de actualidad lésbica, cine, fiestas, lesbianas emprendedoras [...] y todo lo que se me ocurre" (ibid.). Additionally, through the blog, Morales is able to continue the activist work that has accompanied her life while championing women's and lesbian rights through whatever medium is at her disposal. The electronic format of the blog is able to reach many who would otherwise not know of her work or of Mara Palés, but who, with enough piqued interest, could purchase the novel in order to learn of Mara's origins. The blog here does not just amplify the voice of Mara Palés, but it also strengthens the work of Morales and, by extension, those whom she links in her blog and carries through her work. Having a personal blog that solely focuses on one topic without linking to others holds merit for inscribing one's self in the digital realm, but a connected Web source (through links, keyword tags, etc.) can also provide the openings to grow an author, a blog, and a reading public.

Thus, with Morales' work we see a dynamic authorship that shows a literary project with multiple literary registers and across different media. The creation of Mara as a digital entity and author of a blog further exemplifies the influence of technology and the possibilities within the literary realm as the author-individual joins with the digital to co-produce a new work within the confines of the social and digital boundaries of the 21st century. This type of coproduction

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<sup>88</sup> Morales has detailed that this league is comprised of many important real and fictional women like, Arale Norimaki, Virginia Woolf, Rose the Riveter, Catwoman, Wonder Woman, Sira, from *Planet of the Apes*; Aphrodite, and other women and, in particular, lesbian referents.

between an individual, a literary figure, and technology is also seen in Isabel Franc's work, but with a few mutations.

### **Lola Van Guardia: More than a Pseudonym and Not Quite a Heteronym**

Isabel Franc's Lola Van Guardia has also moved from print publications to the digital realm via the blogosphere. Van Guardia was initially conceived as a simple pseudonym, but became much more as Van Guardia continued her strong presence in Franc's publications. Franc had initially created Van Guardia to act as a pseudonym while she attempted to acquire a new writing register that departed from her first novel, *Entre todas las mujeres*. After discussions with EGALES, her publishing house, a plan emerged to create a novel that would be published in a similar style to the 19th century novel where small portions of the novel appeared in newspaper publications (Franc, "Introducción formal" 14). The plan was never executed as first envisioned, but through this process Van Guardia emerged. A series of novels were penned through Van Guardia's name known as the *Trilogía de Van Guardia*. A novel and a collection of short stories would emerge shortly after, but these bore Franc's name as well in the form of co-author. However, Franc has continued writing and using this pseudonym well after it was known whom the name belonged to. Franc insisted that the pseudonym was really in a glass closet of sorts ("Entrevista a Isabel Franc"). Then, Van Guardia expanded her authorial reach via online publications by making appearances in Franc's blog, *Una cómica de la pluma*. Van Guardia's first blog entry dates back to 2008. Since coming into being, Van Guardia has been more popular than Franc and, as Franc jokes, sells even more than her (Franc, "El final feliz"). One could also add that the Van Guardia we see on Franc's blog is sharper in her comments and more critical of

the world as it relates to double standards on women and attacks on LGBT peoples. This more acute style could be a consequence of the medium since the “Breves de Van Guardia” are, as the first word implies, short blog entries that serve to criticize the various individuals that antagonize and attack marginalized groups. The entries are not intended to be in-depth conversations on politics or society, but, instead, are quick to-the-point incisions on current events.

Both Franc and Van Guardia share some writing characteristics, but Van Guardia’s style is one that has captured audiences because of her unapologetic sense of humor and constant direct criticism of social norms that prevent women and, particularly, lesbians from being treated with equal dignity. Franc has expressed that Van Guardia and herself, “[s]on dos registros diferentes, dos voces distintas. [Lola Van Guardia] es la comicidad en estado puro, el gag en su primer estadio, sin pulir apenas. Es una voz casi infantil, muy cercana al clown. Franc tiene, podríamos decir, pretensiones literarias, una voz más adulta, un registro más formal y, claro, no tiene tanto éxito” (“El final feliz”). While Franc is the more serene and calculating author, Van Guardia is an author who manages to connect through intense doses of humor, which are intended to disarm potential critics. Van Guardia’s style is meant to deconstruct various types of social norms. Among these are governing rules on language. For example, Gina, one of Van Guardia’s characters in her trilogy, is an American woman living in Barcelona who does not have full command of the agreement rules that the Spanish language follows. These instances become quite comical as they are inserted throughout her novels to diffuse a situation or to further highlight linguistic norms that negatively affect women. In the following instance Gina is talking to Cecilia and Karina; the latter happens to be one of the only two heterosexual women in the trilogy (this would later change):

–...No es mal de ser como tú [Karina] eres, sólo es un desgracia [that you are heterosexual], pero ellos y ellas no van a entender éste.

– ¿Este qué? - preguntó Cecilia

– Este cosa que un mujer heterosexual está en una bar gay.

(Van Guardia, *Con pedigree* 164-65)

Gina's lack of comprehension of the Spanish language despite having lived for years in Spain leads Camila to exclaim "¡Ay, hija! No aciertas ni un artículo" (ibid. 165). The disarmament of the Spanish language continues with Van Guardia's selective use of the feminine for the generic form in Spanish. This element was still a concern to many critics in 2006 that did not approve of her writing style. In a footnote included in *Las razones de Jo*, Franc explained to readers that the novel would use the feminine for the generic forms instead of the traditional masculine form,

[s]e advierte a las lectoras que en este libro el genérico está usado en femenino. Tres milenios de androcentrismo y sexismo lingüístico han llevado a la autora a adoptar esta posición en sus textos con la intención de mostrar el caprichoso y arbitrario uso del masculino y el femenino. Así por ejemplo, donde diga «las»; entiéndase «las y los»; donde diga «lectoras» entiéndase «lectoras y lectores»; donde diga «la mujer» entiéndase a veces «mujer», a veces «hombre y mujer», a veces «toda la humanidad», según el contexto, más o menos, lo indique. Es decir, como en el uso estándar del genérico, pero al revés. Y entiéndase también que cuando un vocablo aparezca en masculino hará referencia única y exclusivamente a ese género. (22)

Note that it is Franc and not Van Guardia who provides the explanation. This is, again, the more restrained and kind Franc trying to help her readers avoid any type of confusion. Van Guardia is not one who would apologize for such style in writing. These two components are a rather



activist form of writing which is always attached to Franc's and Van Guardia's writing, but Franc's humor tends to be more refined and, almost, more methodical. Van Guardia is not afraid to go for the more direct puns, as when she narrates Tea de Santos' struggle with trying to come up with a catchy title for her new television show that must include a play on her first name. Van Guardia lists, TE Adoro TEA, AbreTE A la noche, AtreveTE A verlo, AtréveTE A participar (Van Guardia, *La mansión* 234). Franc is considered to be one of the more established LGBT figures in current literary circles and part of what continues to generate such notice is this digital presence that emanates from her blog. *Una cómica de la pluma* is a rather interactive blog where the reader can come across personal entries detailing Franc's personal life and adventures, entries on her literary projects and upcoming publications, but also a variety of other topics. Entries include posts from varying perspectives: some, as mentioned above, are written by Lola Van Guardia, others signed by Franc, and many also incorporate Nelo's voice, a dog she adopted and that has, at times, been very popular in her blog generating update requests from her fans and friends.

While Franc is an avid supporter of women's and LGBT rights in Spain and makes this known throughout her blog, Van Guardia's activist nature in her mini series, "Breves de Van Guardia," is where a more sarcastic, satirical, and unfiltered tone is used to note sexist or homophobic remarks. This in turn marks a further distinction between Franc and Van Guardia. Take for instance the time when in 2010 Evo Morales, the President of Bolivia, stated that the consumption of chicken that has been pumped with hormones is the cause of homosexuality. In a "Breves," Van Guardia took to the blog to discuss this by writing, "¡Ánimo chicas! Se acabaron los problemas para conquistar a esa hetero[sexual] que se os resiste. La invitáis a cenar, le ponéis un pollito en pepitoria y esa misma noche cae, fijo" ("Los poderes del pollo"). Van Guardia then

ends on a more comical note by writing, “Vegetarianas, qué [sic] mal lo tenéis!!!” (ibid.). The common humorous writing of Van Guardia found in novels and short stories is evident, but given the nature of the blog this entry shows a condensed style with a strong dose of humor, criticism, and parody. In another entry Van Guardia goes on to highlight the Catholic Church’s double standard on abortion when she shares, “Como de costumbre, la institución religiosa nos ofrece jugosos Breves de Van Guardia aunque no los queramos ni tengamos tiempo para redactarlos. Ahí va uno: El rey podrá seguir recibiendo hostias aunque firme la ley del aborto” (“Santa hostia para el rey”). This comment comes after the passage of laws in 2010 pertaining to the termination of a pregnancy, which the left-of-center government had modified in order to give women more control. Van Guardia exposes the double standard the Catholic Church chooses to employ at will on individuals creating a questionable and hypocritical doctrine.

These blog entries by Van Guardia show a sharper and more focused register of comic relief and sarcasm with criticism of politicians and clergymen for their stance on the queer community. More interestingly, we see the further development of the author Lola Van Guardia because of the digital e-scape. Van Guardia has become far more than a pseudonym. Within the Iberian literary tradition, one could point towards heteronyms, like Fernando Pessoa’s (1888-1935),<sup>89</sup> or Antonio Machado’s (1875-1939) *apócrifos* as a potential explanation to Franc’s famous Lola Van Guardia.<sup>90</sup> These two concepts, however, fail to fully comprise the reaches of Van Guardia within the digital landscape of the 21st century. In their introduction to *Embodying*

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<sup>89</sup> Pessoa is one of the most important poets of the Portuguese language, though he did write other forms of literature as well. He was a prolific writer who created various heteronyms; about 75 have been documented, which were described as having their own personalities.

<sup>90</sup> Machado is a Spanish poet and an important figure of the literary “Generación del ’98.” His poetry is one of the most celebrated in Spain. He died in Colliure, France, exiled from his country during the Spanish Civil War due to his criticism and opposition of General Francisco Franco.

*Pessoa: Corporeality, Gender, Sexuality*, Iberian scholars Anna Klobucka and Mark Savine define a heteronym by, in part, using Fernando Pessoa's explanations of his literary author-figures as a "fully developed *dramatis personae* who wrote poetry (and, to a lesser extent, prose) in their own highly distinct styles" (3). From this definition we can see that a heteronym, because of Pessoa's poetic works, is not commonly associated with prose even though it could be. Additionally, while there are differences between Franc's more mature and sophisticated writings as oppose to Van Guardia's more direct, sarcastic, and unapologetic style, there are still connections between the two by a rather comical and humor-infused style of writing. Franc has also not officially created other pen names nor developed their personalities and she does not need to. The previously mentioned Sabba Druche was used to ensure that Franc's name and her established literary background would not sway the Fundación Arena's award committee members. Outside of this specific usage for a new pen name, very little is known.<sup>91</sup> Thus, Franc's potential list of heteronyms remains at one.

In her book *Antonio Machado y Fernando Pessoa: El gesto ambiguo (Sobre apócrifos y heterónimos)*, Iberianist Liliana Noemí Swiderski includes an analysis of Antonio Machado, one of Spain's most celebrated poets of the 20th century. Her analysis, in relation to Machado highlights the various "Machados" that exist throughout his career noting,

[c]uando hablamos [...] de las etapas de Machado, estamos señalando que bajo el mismo nombre de autor se ocultan diferentes perspectivas: intentamos poner un calificativo al nombre para poder distinguirlo, en la conciencia de que ha perdido su unidad y ya no es representativo de la heterogeneidad de orientaciones asociadas con él. (28)

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<sup>91</sup> The publication of *Elogio del Happy End* only lists Isabel Franc as the author of the work and there is no mention of any pen name attached to the novel.

In the past, assigning block periods or adjectives to authors or painters (see Picasso) has seemed appropriate to explain the processes that authorship takes and, thus, acknowledging that there is more than the name which appears with a given work. More broadly, Swiderski argues that, “el autor con existencia empírica y socialmente reconocida asigna la propiedad del discurso a ‘autores de papel’ – construcciones puramente discursivas – con lo que se produce una duplicación de las voces en el corazón mismo de la figura autoral” (13). This idea of multiple authors is perhaps the more intriguing of her propositions as it helps to break apart the singular form of author while, at the same time, allows for the multiple creations we have seen from Morales and Franc over their respective literary careers. Unlike the philosophers previously discussed in this chapter, Swiderski does not propose a negative outlook on the author,

Pessoa y Machado no han roto el nombre de autor, no han roto **su** nombre de autor, al contrario, lo han exaltado y puesto de manifiesto: simplemente introdujeron en él instancias mediadoras, pero que cobran sentido en tanto nos remiten a él. Las personalidades literarias son claros signos de que el autor no se queda en la portada del texto, pues, si así fuera, la operatoria – basada en el doble estatuto de la figura autoral – no existiría. (30)

This is in part what drives Morales’ Mara Palés and Franc’s Lola Van Guardia. By writing through new literary personae their oeuvre continues to expand and multiply. Franc even distinguishes between the two by noting Van Guardia as the more popular and successful (in terms of sales). In Mara’s case, it was after her blogging that *Efecto retrovisor* was re-released as an e-book in 2013. This digital release helps solve some of the difficulties of having print publications from Spain reach other Spanish-speaking countries across the Atlantic Ocean and around the world.

Moreover, the dynamic authoring of these two writers questions the notion that the author is an individual who lies outside of the text. Mara and Van Guardia permeate the text and their authoring informs the work whether it be a novel, a short story, or a blog entry. The author is not some exterior element impartial to the text, but instead an active agent in the writer's oeuvre. Or, as Swiderski includes in her concluding remarks, "el punto más intenso de su exacerbación romántica: la figura autoral **se anonada como autor de obras pero se autoafirma como 'autor de autores'**" (193). Swiderski's work is trying to decipher two instances in literary history, Pessoa and Machado's, that shared this authorial element, but 21st century texts now fully incorporate this function of multiple authors. In the case of Morales and Franc, they have chosen to refer to this as a change in register or voice for a literary work. Technology has extended the life of the character turned author or that of the pseudonym that refuses to just be a pseudonym. However, Mara's time on her blog appears to be coming to an end as very few posts are made and Morales moves on to other projects, some of which are mentioned below. As for Lola Van Guardia, her last "Breves" coincides with Franc's last collaboration with Van Guardia in *Cuentos y fábulas de Lola Van Guardia* (2008). This collection of short stories and rewritten and new fables is a joint publication by the two authors. Whether pseudonyms or "new registers" for writing, as Morales and Franc have more consistently referenced their literary creations, the dynamic authorial process that they are experiencing has relied on the new technologies of the 21st century by allowing the expediency of new media and Internet technologies to transform the literary creation far beyond the possibilities of published texts.

### **Dynamic Collaboration to the Forefront**

Above, I mentioned the decreasing posts made by Mara Palés and, in fact, the same could be said of Franc's own blog, though the latter still posts consistently. Blog entries have decreased due to their authors' other responsibilities and ongoing projects. Morales has published a second novel and continues to publish articles through various newspapers and magazines. Franc has published a novel on her own and a pair of graphic novels. Additionally, Franc and Morales began collaborating on a project with multiple dimensions through the collaborative online radio station, *InOutRadio*. This radio station was originally launched as a digital space project for lesbian women, but over time, due to its reach and popularity, *InOutRadio* has broadened its scope and goals:

Somos muchas y somos una sola. **Somos nosotras y somos tú.** Somos una radio, hecha por mujeres y para mujeres. Somos periodistas, informadoras, informáticas, comunicadoras, capitaneadas por **las periodistas Carme Pollina y Ana Satchi.**

Respaldadas por **un montón de colaboradoras**, que hacen posible este proyecto. (“Sobre nosotras”)

*InOutRadio* was established in 2008 and has continued its digital expansion since then. This project, while it keeps the word “radio” in its name and does produce material in the form of live radio programming via the Web, is best described as a series of podcasts published online. A podcast can be thought of as a radio program that is made available through the Internet, but with the difference that it is a digital audio file available for download. Podcasts are typically a series of installments and users can sign up to receive them automatically through email or other software applications. The site where an individual podcast resides may also include a Web forum or a space for comments from its audience.

*InOutRadio* uses this type of technology for their programming, which includes “Artisteando,” “Mujeres en blog,” “Lesbihonest,” “Desconocidas & fascinantes,” and others. This latter digital series touches on the topic of lesbian visibility across the globe, though it does have an influence of Spanish and Latin American women. The title page for the podcast states, “[s]i hay un asunto en el que las lesbianas no podemos dejar de batallar es **el de la invisibilidad y la falta de referentes**. Bastante sabemos aquello de que ser mujer no es un dato indiferente y yo insisto en que todo lo que lleva la etiqueta gay-les es muy gay y un poquito les” (“Desconocidas & Fascinantes”). The podcast achieves this through a similar structure in all its entries with one main presenter and a second presenter who adds questions or comments to the first’s discussion, generating a more interesting dialogue. Thus, “Desconocidas & fascinantes” serves to remind its listeners of important queer women who have been made invisible by the passing of time or because of current social conventions. In 2011 The European Podcast Awards gave “Desconocidas & fascinantes” the award for “Best Professional Podcast.” The organization also ranked six different *InOutRadio* podcasts among the top 20. The podcasts are meant to be informative as they shed light on the many contributions of lesbian women to literature, the sciences, and present day society. These podcasts were initially a combined effort of Morales and Franc, but since then have included many of the other women collaborators of *InOutRadio* like Kika Fumero or the already mentioned leaders, Pollina and Satchi, who are journalists and activists as well.

The popularity and success of this program led Morales and Franc in 2013 to edit and publish a selection of biographies on some of the women featured in the podcasts. The book, with the same title as the program has added a published component to the friendship of these writer-collaborators and given the larger project of *InOutRadio* a new dimension within the

world of publications. This series of connected projects (podcasts, published books, and, even, online advertisement through digital mediums) is also a clear example of the type of dynamic authoring that works may require in the 21st century: a published component with an electronic one or vice versa. I do not mean to say these components will be as identical as are the two forms of “*Desconocidas & fascinantes*,” but a clear pattern emerges of 21st century projects having multiple mediums. The electronic medium can be similar to the published outcome, but the electronic component can also be a social media account (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.), which in turn can aid in publicity for the published form of a project. While the digital form can complement a published project, the published project could be complemented by digital sources.

In terms of the authorial element in this book, some complications arise as the editors, who also author multiple entries throughout the book, sign with the same name as they do for their fictional works. However, Franc and Morales are not signing as the same fictional persona and authorial power that signed their works of fiction. In fact, the style of writing here shifts drastically to each’s journalistic beginnings. The humor that accompanies some of their work is gone, though a tongue-in-cheek reading of some entries is palpable. In the publication of *Desconocidas & fascinantes* each entry is meant to give a short biography of the woman whom the authors and editors want to remind the reader of. Additionally, a formal and academic element is added in a brief section at the end of each entry where the reader can find more information on the woman discussed. This publication does not qualify as an academic text in that it did not go through the rigorous refereed element that academic articles and other publications usually undergo. Instead, this book sits at an in between state intended to pique the interest of someone on the individual women or the general subject of lesbian women forgotten



by society. With this collaborative project, the authorship of these two individuals, Franc and Morales, continues to expand and grow, and not disappear or die as Barthes, Foucault, and Landow propose. The different register that these individuals employ adds strength to their authorial repertoire. While a few readers or academics who follow these authors may be aware of their journalistic background or their publications in Spanish newspapers, most of these readers who could be focused on their fictional work now see an additional dimension to these writers.

Collaborations between two or more authors is not unique to 21st century texts, but these partnerships are being enhanced by a technology that allows for better communication between the two, or more, collaborators. Franc has detailed the back and forth dialogue that was essential to give *Alicia en un mundo real* a proper timeline to publication (Franc and Martín, “Entrevista a Isabel Franc y Susanna Martín” in *Guía del cómic*). *Alicia en un mundo real* is Franc and Susanna Martín’s first graphic novel and the first collaborative project between the two. Alicia, the protagonist, is one of Franc’s materialized alter egos, who shares many autobiographical elements with her. *Alicia* was Franc’s successful attempt at a new genre, the graphic novel. With this type of genre, Franc wanted the graphic element to not only help narrate the story she was going to tell, but she also sought to help the potential readers who could be going through the same situation as Alicia: going through the phases of chemotherapy and, then, surviving cancer. The protagonist is a journalist and author, who is diagnosed with breast cancer and has to undergo surgery and chemotherapy for a successful treatment. The novel follows Alicia through the many complications of going through the treatment and the social relationships and professional struggles of surviving breast cancer. Fully incorporated throughout the graphic novel are the humorous components that tend to characterize Franc and Van Guardia’s writing. There is the obvious addition of images that Martín’s collaboration adds to the novel. Franc is

not an artist; it was clear she would need someone to incorporate the graphic portion of the graphic novel. With their first graphic novel, *Alicia*, Franc notes that clear communication was a requirement especially when she began adding too many secondary characters to Alicia's story. She clarifies, "[e]n la realidad había tantas personas que llegó un punto en el que Susanna me pidió que no pusiera más personajes en la novela porque empezaba a parecer *La colmena*. De modo que tuvimos que concentrar un poco a los personajes" (Franc and Martín, "Kahlo entrevista"). The clearly collaborative effort is perhaps what makes these two projects have a wide-ranging appeal.

*Alicia* has since been translated to various languages and has become a very popular graphic novel in Spain and certain literary circles in France and Italy. In 2016 the graphic novel was incorporated into a Spanish textbook for future physicians as a work that can help teach young professionals what cancer patients could be going through (Martín, "Alicia"). The goal is to better understand some of the psychological and social implications of going through this life-altering experience. *Alicia*'s success has been followed by a second graphic novel with the same authorial collaboration, but with a different and, yet, equally informative topic to contemporary culture: immigration, and in particular from African nations to Barcelona, Spain. *Sansamba* (2014) continues Alicia's story some time after the previous graphic novel ended. One day a Senegalese immigrant knocks on Alicia's door and a new adventure takes form. In similar fashion to the previous one, this graphic novel is also autobiographical for Franc. When Baala, the immigrant from Sansamba, Senegal, comes to her doorstep a series of events lead Alicia to help him with finding employment and, later, through the process of becoming a legal resident of Spain. Furthermore, this leads Alicia (and Franc) to visit Sansamba, experience the country's culture, and gain a broader understanding of the difficulties experienced in parts of West Africa.

Following this trip, Franc established a non-governmental organization (NGO) named Latitud Zero, which she uses to send resources and advocate for the residents of Sansamba.

During interviews, Franc and Martín have noted their process for producing this second novel. Martín discussed how *Sansamba* became a little more complicated for her since she was unable to travel with Franc to Senegal, “[p]ara *Sansamba* Isabel me pasó un montón de fotos y videos que hizo en su viaje, pero yo lo complementé con imágenes que encontré en internet” (“Entrevista a Isabel Franc y Susanna Martín” in *dDMagazine*). Additionally, during the International Book Day celebration of 2014, *Sansamba* received some unexpected attention when the then President of the autonomous state of Catalunya, Artur Mas, picked up a copy of *Sansamba* and was photographed with it (Franc, “Las autoridades”). Politics, immigrant rights, and humor all combined at that moment and, hopefully, the sharing of knowledge. This graphic novel depicts the sacrifices many African men, women, and children make while attempting to forge better lives for themselves and their families. Media outlets did not confirm whether President Mas purchased Franc and Martín’s book.

The two graphic novels have been well received by the public; the latter novel has also been incorporated as part of the curriculum in some secondary schools in Barcelona. A complementary site was created with a few worksheets, additional information on the plight of African immigrants to Spain, and a brief excerpt from the novel.<sup>92</sup> Overall, the graphic novel has been a new incursion for Franc as she has sought to expand her literary reach. But, while most of the accolades from critics follow her name, it is important to continue to stress, as the cover of each novel indicates, that *Alicia* and *Sansamba* are collaborations with Martín. The creation of these two projects was a combined back and forth process where one individual was not solely in

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<sup>92</sup> The aforementioned materials can be found at <<http://www.normaeditorial.com/sansamba/>>.

charge of the text while the other was in charge of the drawings. Partially at fault, though, are the editorial houses that on the cover of the graphic novels separate the roles of who provided the text and the person who illustrated the work. This is an area that must still adapt to the dynamic authoring exhibited by these two women and by authors across Spain who embark on collaborative projects. These fissures between new combinations of writing styles and forms of authoring serve to visualize the many elements that come into play when a work comes to life. Authoring these novels are Baala's experiences, the trips that Franc took to Africa, and the individuals she encountered. The illustrations that accompany the novels are also highly important and these may have come from Martín, Franc's camera lens, or, even, television and Web technologies. Where philosophers of the past century theorized the multiplicities of the author or the many functions that the author embodies, the current century has materialized and visualized those theories, but without damaging the figure of the author.

### **An Opening Towards New Authorial Possibilities**

Authorship in the 21st century has seen a visible expansion of its resources and possibilities. These developments are clearly sustained by new media technology. A pivotal element is the authorship that has emerged as exemplified in Morales' Mara Palés and Franc's Lola Van Guardia. The presence of these authors, of Mara and Van Guardia, in their work shows how a text's author is not only a medium for language or the story being told, but is an active element of the story throughout its text. The presence of these authorial forms directly questions the notion of the sole author since the author-individual, Morales and Franc, has consistently distanced herself from Mara or Van Guardia, respectively. These writers' authorship reveals how

the author is part of the text itself. The author is not an extra-literary element, but an element that persists throughout the text and, by extension, should be included in literary analyses. Some contemporary literary criticism has avoided a focus on the author, but the examples above have shown the author as a pivotal element that creates and informs meaning.

A potential argument to dynamic authorship would be to return to the dying author and try to explain that as a last recourse, the author has appropriated the late 20th century technology to stay alive. However, as Christine Henseler adds to her conclusions, and I to mine: “it is not enough to say that authors are appropriating more media technologies to promote and create their work, but rather, that they are partaking in a cultural mind shift in which their positions have changed in relation to the world at large – from computer science to science, art, society psychology, advertising, news, and so on” (Henseler, *Spanish Fiction* 154-55). I would, however, like to go a step beyond this assertion and say that what is happening with dynamic authorship is more than a shift in positions. The author-individual has allowed for technology to join side-to-side as an invaluable actant in the authorial process. This fusion between the digital and the author is a collaboration not seen before, but developing a better understanding of this type of collaboration may prove difficult. Swiderski warns:

Uno de los inconvenientes [...] es la ausencia de una eficaz tipología de categorías autorales, pues aunque hay referencias dispersas a la cuestión, los hallazgos no se han sistematizado. Diferentes caracterizaciones del sujeto enunciativo (‘apócrifo’, ‘heterónimo’, ‘semiheterónimo’, *personae* poética’, ‘pseudónimo’, entre otros) suelen utilizarse indiscriminadamente: en ocasiones, por la radical hibridez que presentan los textos mismos; en otras, menos felices, por desconocimiento o ligereza de los especialistas. (Swiderski 34)

Additionally, Swiderski does not include the extra-textual element most authorial analyses include of a work. Instead, the key to understanding the reach of new authorial forms entails acknowledging the digital milieu. The electronic discourse, which both author-individuals, Franc and Morales, have intelligently incorporated permits them the flexibility to exist as the entity writing and the subject itself.

When Foucault asks if it matters who writes and then appears to end his essay in the negative, we come to 21st century digital texts with an answer that would contradict Foucault's conclusion. Technology is not only complicating and questioning authorship, it is also expanding and building a more comprehensive and expansive sense of what authorship entails. Dynamic authorship appears to not only question Foucault's assertion regarding the author, but it also signals to academics that the author and its functions may need to be revised with the digital in mind.

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'f1fac63e13994f7a4bac64f59030c925','1461636550','0','1','0')  
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## **Conclusion: Where to Click Next**

In the previous chapters I hope to have approached and analyzed electronic literature in new ways that can bring light to not only the electronic texts of Spain, but I also hope that these approaches will now be used to engage with other works, both digital and traditional publications. It is imperative to analyze electronic literature through its many assemblages that incorporates the environment in which they are situated. This is not only to get the “big picture,” or bigger picture, of the digital developments within cultural and literary spheres. This approach is needed in order to see the real digital and physical connections that these texts and their authors purposefully create by embedding links, including others’ digital material, incorporating new media components, and by choosing to partner with digital sources in order to give lasting life to their work. In the previous chapters I have presented analyses that best fit the different genres or subgenres of electronic literature so that a focus on the electronic component will help explain not only the culture that is creating these projects, but also so that one can fully understand what the digital does and what its capabilities can be. This is very different from previous analyses in that I have shown how the rhetoric found within a digital work is mutually

aided by the medium, the networking of individuals, and the electronic sources as a text is published online.

The content found in chapter 1's blogs alone would not explain the popularity of a blog, the significance of *Hartza*'s unmodified interface, or of *dosmanzanas*' newfound home in a stand-alone Web address. The entirety of the screen must then be read, analyzed, and contextualized. This environment paired with the inherent agency of blogging software has given voice to marginalized communities so that the goals and aspirations of those bloggers can materialize online and in the physical world. With regards to the hypertext projects in chapter 2, a complementary analysis that incorporates non-traditional elements into the criticism of a novel is key to understanding both the structural organization of the work and the development of the storyline. Without assessing the links, embedded media, structural components that piece together the hypertext novel, or the location of a given text, the larger literary and cultural significance of Checa's and Díez's respective works is left unfinished and in a state of limbo where the technical aspects do not enter the critical discussion and the plot details are overlooked.

The latter two chapters have closely analyzed convergences of the digital and physical worlds, a reflection of current Spanish and world culture. This convergence is approached not only from the traditional literary and authorial perspectives, but instead a dual approach is undertaken that centers on the immediate hybridization of published works and authorship. This inclusive approach portrays a more adequate yet complicated nature of electronic possibilities. The third chapter's analysis combined a traditional close reading with a digital understanding that the barcode or QR code is the base of any logical conclusion whether for the poetry and short story collections or the various street projects that bring the user to a more intimate level



with historical quarters, buildings, or other street objects like statues or monuments. The convergence seen in the last chapter presses upon the figure of the author and authorship as this person has joined with new media technologies to create new works, develop established characters and pseudonyms, and contrast the various elements that come into contact as authoring takes place in the 21st century. These interrogations of the last two chapters show both the physical and digital as they meet and dialogue with each other yielding a symbiotic culture that requires critical analysis at both levels.

Thus, this project's value comes manifold due to the approach I have presented, the exclusive focus on Spanish digital works, and the historical importance of electronic projects that often get ignored or relegated to a minor comment by literary critics and scholars alike. While the authors I include in earlier chapters continue to expand on the many examples and possibilities that Generation X and *Mutante* writers confer, the focus has been distinctly on the digital. In maintaining a focus on the electronic component of digital texts my approach clearly shows a dynamic and shifting digital-scape of literature that is being created through electronic means. Few analyses in this manner have been developed in relation to Spanish literary and cultural studies or to Spanish digital humanities. The framework espoused in the above pages is one that I hope is replicated to both digital and print publications so that a broader "picture" of Spanish literary and cultural projects is able to come together in a more complete analysis that connects to the wider digital culture deepens our understanding of technology, social media, and the culture we all partake in. Consequently, this kind of approach should be seen as a porous and malleable framework, much like the Internet and the media I have included in the last four chapters. A networked analysis that incorporates its digital and, at times, physical environment is ideal for current and past texts. Furthermore, having a focus strictly on Spanish electronic texts

signals to the broader academic community the importance of these works and of Spain's involvement with the digital. Few volumes have done this, as stated in the introduction, and I hope many more will come and at a faster rate. Lastly, the historical significance of some of the projects presented and analyzed in the previous chapters like *Hartza*, Edith Checa's *Como el cielo los ojos*, and *badosa.com*'s achievements need to be constantly reinforced by critics and scholars. Contextualizing these digital projects with Spain's history in relation to the Internet makes these works remarkable for their early avant-garde vision of what the Internet and new technologies could do. This information, though visible in scholarly work, is often left along a list of adjectives leaving the reader to comprehend and situate this information, but my work here has made it a point to inscribe these individuals' accomplishments into Spanish digital history. These practices show a part of Spanish culture that exists either outside of the physical world we inhabit or that is carefully embedded within our physical and digital environments to the point where it may go unnoticed. However, even as this project comes to a close many interrogatives still persist and others will likely arise. For example, what are the next steps to take as a collective scholarly body that research Spanish digital literature and culture? What are some of the concerns within Spain that limit the production or the dissemination of digital works?

As these last few pages come together, a stark warning still lingers as I am reminded of Ludovico's closing statements in his book *Post-Digital Print*: "there is still no long-term (or even medium-term) preservation technology for digital data that guarantees data integrity for even as little as 50 years in ideal conditions" (124). Ironically, the very feature that allows for innovation in the texts discussed in the previous chapters can and likely will become a restrictive force in electronic literature. The rapid rate at which technology seems to change and improve is itself a cautionary tale on digital works. A simple update to software, a new smartphone, or a website

malfunction can instantly create problems within the digital realm. In a worst-case scenario it can destroy content altogether. There are online archives seeking to ameliorate this possibility and many digital scholars regularly create their own copies and backups of the material they research. In 2013 Isabel Franc took down her blog, *Una cómica de la pluma*, in order to give it the current upgrade it embodies. At the time I had been utilizing the blog for a separate project and I entered into panic mode after I realized I did not have a copy of the entries that were of interest to me. It was through her Facebook account that I learned she was upgrading her blog and that in order to do so more freely, she had decided to take the entire blog offline. This was a quick reminder of the ephemeral possibilities of the content that lives online and a reminder that as a digital scholar, I had to upgrade my own practices. To give another example, other problems loom for those projects that currently use Flash technologies. Adobe, the company that produces and updates Flash player announced in 2015 that they would stop updating part of the software related to Flash (“Flash”). While this is not an immediate problem for any electronic text that uses Flash it is a perfect example of how our current technology will pose a few contradictions in the decades to come. For instance, will Flash poems still play regardless of whether Flash technology is updated?

The error message that opens these concluding thoughts is also an example of the instability of digital websites, but this example comes from a well-established organization that one would hope would not have the problems described above. While working on this project, and in particular with the *Hermeneia* database and its links, I stumbled upon the above error message, which I was not expecting. This message appeared a few times throughout a series of months in 2016. All pages to the site went offline and could not be accessed. This was surprising for a couple of reasons. *Hermeneia* is a reliable website funded by various institutions, mainly by

the Spanish government, the Generalitat de Catalunya, and the Universitat de Barcelona. Additionally, it is a site deemed stable and reliable for its wide array of digital content, but even so the website disappeared multiple times and there is no guarantee that it will not disappear again in the future as the organization has not addressed these random periods of blackouts to their homepage. The breakdown in accessibility to *Hermeneia* can be explained in at least two ways: 1) problems within the organization and their servers at the Universitat de Barcelona or 2) an intercontinental issue related to server availability in the United States. This latter explanation is increasingly a challenge as Internet providers constantly block videos, streaming events, and other content to places outside their immediate geography for copyright issues, but *Hermeneia* does not provide such type of content. Again, if this were a logical explanation, the main concern here would be that *Hermeneia*'s material is being stored in servers already marked for region-specific purposes. An additional conversation on reliability of websites and the archiving of this content by other organizations must also be included in order to sustain a healthy digital discourse on the achievements and innovative practices of Spanish digital culture. Regardless of the reasons to this mishap, Ludovico's warning continues to carry weight and digital scholars must anticipate some of these problems while a more comprehensive archive of the digital realm takes shape – if that is possible.

More specifically to Spain, concerns over the dialogue that the various electronic literature organizations and digital humanities centers are having, or not having, strongly persists well into this second decade of the 21st century. While there is an increasing amount of work groups and organizations throughout the country, some scholars suggest that more attention on how these organizations function is needed (Spence and González-Blanco). Digital organizations attached to universities are increasing in visibility and number, but Spain's continuous

underperformance in economic matters is impeding progress. The economic troubles, which affected Spain in 2008 and the rest of the world, have hindered the budgets of these institutions and that of universities nationwide, which have had to cut academic programs and resources destined for digital centers. This leaves many artists, critics, and scholars without the appropriate technology and resources to continue their respective work in relation to the digital arts. It may also be leading digital organizations and centers to focus their energies in supporting scholars at their institutions without necessarily connecting with the resources and scholarly work of others in similar institutions across Spain.

Having said this, the state of Spanish electronic literature and cultural texts proves to be strong. The wide array of electronic literature being produced in Spain shows a healthy and abundant production. At the moment, the task lies in attracting more readers and generating publicity for these texts that goes beyond the digital cultures of the present. Authors are able to reach audiences who are already aware of their work and an additional number of readers can be targeted through their online social media networks, but this may not be enough over an extended period of time. The problem of not generating attention from larger publics could likely diminish over time as knowledge of electronic works spreads through social media networks, classrooms that use digital texts, and with continued critical attention by scholars.

Lastly, this project has also attempted to show new ways of reading digital works with a goal of “[opening] up new ways to allow the matter of texts, art objects, and all art-iculations to matter” (A.R. Bennett 360).<sup>93</sup> Analyzing electronic literature on its own terms should include an analysis of the various factors assembled within it or for it. As an example, an analysis of a blog,

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<sup>93</sup> A.R. Bennett defines “art-iculations” as “human artifacts [...] that is, individual performances of human arts and utterances in concert with the materials that allow for their expression” (A.R. Bennett 358).

independently of whether they are deemed literary or not, requires acknowledging and including a critical lens on the interface the user must interact with. The structure provided by the medium here is a meaning-producing element where the indexing of blog entries, the links the author provides, and the suggestions that the user's Web browser will generate in the future due to the reader-user being in that page will, in aggregate form, be assemblages of meaning pivotal to electronic texts. Additionally, the hyperlink in hypertext novels or other works is also an individual element of electronic works that must be read independently from previous practices of published texts. An analysis of a hypertext work must incorporate a critical analysis of what the hyperlink connects to and how. Stated differently, Vicente Luis Mora used the following as a subheading to his literary criticism blog,<sup>94</sup> “[e]n este blog se intenta una lectura crítica de literatura – entre otras cosas – alternativa a la común: buscamos una crítica para el siglo 21 en tiempo real” (qtd. in Henseler, *Spanish Fiction* 152). A critical approach to digital works that considers their environment and the many assemblages that network meaning through and around e-texts confirms and underscores Spain's innovative and rich quantity and quality of digital works while revealing Spain as a connected nation to the wider digital culture of the modern world.

In the electronic cultural texts discussed above we see an engaged and productive force of individuals, software, and hardware meeting in various environments, digital and physical, rekindling the connection of the arts and the literary with the average digital cosmonaut. This is being achieved via mutations in established fields and categories, through new and long-standing connections online and in the physical world, and by engaging with new actants in an ever-changing digital culture that seeks new experiences. Spanish electronic literature *n(h)ace* at the

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<sup>94</sup> The subheading is no longer present; Mora's blog, *Diario de lecturas*, can be found at <<http://vicenteluis Mora.blogspot.com/>>.

heart of the World Wide Web and quickly spreads through a growing network of support found in human bodies, software, and hardware that allows it to flourish within its own space while demanding that other scapes pay heed of its vibrant, trans-corporeal potential.

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