

Turning the book into something more

An explorative approach to transmedia literary fiction

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Appendice 1, story board

This is a thesis aiming to conduct explorative research within transmedia literary fiction by expanding the manuscript Sand. It is conducted by setting up explorations, workshops and discussions and aims to discuss how to bridge the gaps between different media when creating a transmedial narrative.

Introduction

A book has always been a book. Something we sit down with and read in silence, contemplating the story world and diving into the language that describes it. A book is something highly immersive for the right reader. It will envelope you and your life for a certain amount of hours or maybe even weeks.

But something is changing. Nowadays the stories we read doesn't have to be bound to paper. They don't even have to stay within one medium. They don't even have to be textual the whole way through, they can change, develop and evolve while read. They can be something different with every read and reader. They can be built of images, photos, movie clips and might even contain elements most commonly associated with games. Literary fiction is expanding in every way possible, finding new forms to bring the reader even deeper into the story world. The transmedial literary fiction has entered the stage and is here to stay.

Putting a story out on more than one medium poses its difficulties. One of the most interesting ones is how to keep the reader and have them move from platform to platform.

Different mediums have different primary qualities and demands each one a different type of story.

This thesis aims to explore how to bridge these gaps between different media when expanding a narrative from pure literary fiction into a multiplatform narrative. This text searches to answer not only how to do it but also how this changes the story and its parameters.

Designer/Writer

I've chosen to use first person pronoun in much of my writing in this thesis to fully leave space to explore the double role I take on as a writer and designer. I am not only the person exploring how to bridge the gaps between different media, but I'm also the author of the narrative that will be expanded. The story I will be working on in this thesis is called *Sand*, which is an unpublished novel of mine. That I've created the story myself brings an extra level of discussion to many of the issues and to me it felt important to fully recognize these.

As an interaction designer my interest in transmedia practice comes from the idea of the narrative as a tool for creating immersion and easing interaction with different types of interfaces, be it paper book or computer screen. As technology gets more advanced it is no wonder if the users would need something that connects these different media back together. Every interface makes its own demands from the user, and without a context these demands often seem random. The overarching story would connect them together.

For us, as social creatures, stories are what keeps us evolving. As Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart suggests in their popular science/fiction book *The Science of Discworld II* that they co-wrote with Terry Pratchett (2002 p.42):

"We are not Homo sapiens, Wise Man. [...] We are Pan narrans, the storytelling ape."

We have learned how to handle this world by asking ourself the question *What if?* This is how we sorted out that bad business with the lions eating up the kids, how we learned how to hunt more effectively and maybe even how we discovered how to cook.

I keep coming back to that notion of the story as something that drives us. Cohen, Stewart and Pratchett (2002) pushes this notion as far as to say we should be named after it, and when looking at our history, it is hard not to agree. We have been pushed from telling the story of how to outwit the lion, into telling the story of how to outwit the juridical system, how to outwit the evil empires, how to create our own wealth and earn \$\$\$\$\$\$!!! In just one day!!!! Just like Monique De Haas says in her presentation on her website (crossmedia

communication by Monique de Haas, 2010); we are stories. We live through them and we create them all the time around us, to make sense of a world of mind-boggling proportions.

As a designer I'm used to create mini-narratives for participants in user testing or in the design process in the form of personas and scenarios and it felt intriguing to turn this on its head. I did not need the scenarios for creating the end product but the end product would rather be one big complex scenario and now instead I needed to create an environment that would lure in the user to be part of this scenario, to be part of my *What if the world was like this?*

As a writer this was an appealing project because it would challenge my own ideas of what my story was. It would take me down a path where I would have to take into consideration what my reader actually wanted, not only what my main character would most likely do. When writing a story as big as a novel, the characters quite often starts to turn on you after a while. My main character for example (*Cilia*) is a graphic designer and very cool, but she hates twitter. In this context I would have preferred if she liked twitter and tweeted away like a mad blackbird on a bright spring day, but no. She doesn't like it. And I can't just make her like it, because she needs to be her own person.

So, when pushing *Sand* further I needed to try to convince my characters to do what the readers would prefer, or at least have them to try it out and reject it vocally and tell the readers why, if they didn't want to continue. This might sound like madness to some of the designers out there, but when constructing this transmedia story it wasn't me the readers were supposed to see more of, but my story world. As an author, I needed to communicate this story in a convincing way, not only to keep the readers on track, but also to keep myself as a writer inside the same headspace. The authorship for me is very personal, and all writers work differently with their texts, so my reflections on this will be entirely from my own perspective as a writer. I would not aspire on any general truth in this area but I do hope to lend some insights into the mind of the author.

Keep the primaries - Loose the primaries - Do both!

One important aspect that had to be taken into account while doing this exploration was the primary qualities of reading. During a workshop/discussion I conducted in autumn 2010 we concluded that one of the most important aspects of reading was that the text is something you read when alone, even in a space filled with people, on a bus or bicycle (if you like me have a hard time letting go once inside the story, at the expense of your own security while in traffic). The text will immerse you in its story and separate you from your surroundings. This would be identified as one of the primary qualities of reading, and one that for the workshop participants was very important.

One other thing that came up was that you can put down the book at any time and go back and forth in and out of the narrative. A transmedia literary fiction does not contain these qualities as inherently as a book based one does, but uses a much different set of qualities. Therefore there needs to be enough to gain for the reader when jumping from one medium to the next to make it rewarding.

As a fiction writer the decision to discard some of the qualities of textual media in favor for new elements have been a step that was both intriguing as well as stressful. Will my reader stay even if I make use of events that takes place in real time? Is the reward for being part of one such event enough to create an appeal strong enough to move the participants to the textual parts? I do not claim to offer an answer to these questions, but I aim to at least discuss them to create a foundation for further research or explorations.

Aim

The aim of this thesis is to conduct an exploration on how to expand a set narrative into a transmedia fiction while taking into account and discussing how to bridge the gaps that occurs between medias. My aim is to within this body of work create additions to the main story, *Sand*, and with an explorative approach look at how to do this. The final aim is to through these experiments find a potential future development of the story *Sand* that will be part of it when published. A proposal for this final part will be made within the frame of this thesis.

Problem

I wanted to first and foremost explore how to transfer a reader from one environment to another, and how the evolving or in some cases disregarding of the primary qualities of reading as perceived by the reader would affect this jump between platforms, between or within a medium. For this I have chosen to use my own narrative to see how this would be done in that specific context.

Restrictions

Transmedia draws from many different fields of research. The phenomenon as such is quite old as I will talk more about in the section *Mapping of the current field*, but the research used in this thesis circulates mostly around digital media and the expressions of transmedia in such or with the help of such. This restriction comes from the setting I wanted this narrative to be placed in. The main character is developed with the help of different internet based platforms in the experiments, as well as the story line and its subplots, and therefore the narrowing down to digital media was natural to me.

I've restricted my explorations to my own written narrative *Sand* to stay within one environment and to be able to go further in my exploration than if I would have moved between different narratives. I've used the same audience for the different explorations to strengthen the bond between the characters and the audience and to set up for more elaborate experiments as time goes on.

I've also restricted my reading to those inside of or closely connected to the transmedia field, and have chosen not to look at literature research, more than for the very brief defining of dramaturgical curves in the section on *Expanding the narrative*, but rather to draw upon my own experience as a writer and teacher in creative writing.

Another important restriction is that I will not look at the technology behind my prototypes in my experiments, since this is not so much a thesis about how to create a webpage, a blog or similar, but rather on how these tools can be used to create an immersive setting. The technology used in this thesis is not uncommon either, and I have therefore left out explanations of the mechanics.

Terminology

Since I've chosen to view transmedia as an interdisciplinary field I have also chosen to use a mixed terminology rather than to restrict my wordlist to that of interaction design. Here I will shortly explain some of the terms used later in this paper. The list is in alphabetical order.

Cluebombing

The term cluebombing is first and foremost used by the gaming community, where it constitutes giving an unusually large amount of clues and tips to a novice or particularly slow gamer. I have chosen to tweek this word a little bit and use it to describe when, in a transmedia context, you bomb a potential audience with clues to create a start up event, and an entry point to the immersion into the narrative.

Metaphor

The word metaphor is in this paper used in a literature sense as well as other. I will discuss and explain how I use metaphors in the section *Metaphor* under *Storyline*. I use the word metaphor here mostly to explain the metaphorical landscape I work with, rather than talking about a specific metaphor. This is in contrast to the interaction designers common use of the word metaphor when it is more put in context of creating usable interfaces.

Narrative

A narrative is a story that follows some type of dramaturgical curve, basically that has a beginning, middle and end. There are many different types of dramaturgical curves and I will explain more about my choices in *Expanding the narrative*. The narrative also means the whole story and its world/universe, rather than as story line does (described below).

Pivot point

The term pivot point is used in several fields, and means the turning point. I use it in this thesis to talk about the turning points on a storyline.

Storyline

This is similar to narrative but differs in my usage that when I use the term I mean the line of events in the narrative rather than the whole universe that the text describes, plot line is also used in the same manner. I've also chosen to in this text make a hierarchal division between primary and secondary storylines, since I've started out with a set storyline in the manuscript *Sand* and thus the storylines created at a later date would be secondary to this one, even though a reader could enter the story from the secondary plots. The hierarchal difference is also dependent on that *Sand* as an entity is much larger than the secondary storylines created as a part of this thesis. As a last reason is the fact that *Sand* is very much a novel meant for book form still so I claim this to be the primary format, rather than other media.

Story world

This is the whole universe that is created by the story, much like narrative. This accommodates all characters, plots and subplots as well as back stories and similar that is created with the help of the main text.

User/reader

In interaction design the common term for the user of the interface would be user, but in this context I have chosen to use the word reader to define the one experiencing the primary storyline or subplots. Since the story has its base in textual media and also fleshes out in to other textual media (although not only), this seems more appropriate. I do however use these two words as synonyms in many places, but user is here a synonym for reader since the most prominent role for the person interacting with the work is to be a reader. This is off course related to the fact that the story *Sand* is primarily a story written for printed media, even though the expansion into a transmedial narrative does make it something that could be said to have users. I've chosen to still call all participants readers, since I see the whole of the story *Sand* as something that is to be interpreted as if it would be a literary fiction. I here would define a reader as someone who interprets a text into a story. The readers will however interact with the story, and in the proposed possible development of the prologue

they will even interact in a collaborative fashion that might be most like a game, but since the primary story world is delivered through printed textual media, reader will still hierarchically be more valid as a term for this thesis.

Structure

Just before this part of the thesis you found the *Terminology* section. This thesis draws from several different fields of research and therefore some of the terms might be new for a reader with a background in interaction design. Like interaction design is in some aspects, transmedia also is an interdisciplinary field out of necessity, and in this thesis there are words that usually are connected to literary fiction and dramaturgy.

Up next after this part will be the section *Research in transmedia* where I will go through the research to give an insight to what has been the foundation of my explorations. I will look more closely into Jill Walkers (2003) discussion about ontological fusion and how to use this to create accommodation for the readers shift from one medium to another. I will also in this section look at Christy Denas (2009) listing of the primary qualities of transmedia and look briefly at discussions about transmedia conducted by Henry Jenkins (2009) and David Bordwell through Jenkins blog, as well as taking a peek at the current discussion on the web about how to define transmedia.

Further, I will look at what works have inspired me in my own exploration, and look at the parallels these have to the work of *Sand*, in structural or artistic strives.

In the section *Method* I will go through what methods I've chosen to use and why.

In the section *Sand – the story*, I will give a brief synopsis of the story I'm working with, as well as describing the characters and plot. I will here also discuss pivot points in the existing textual body of work which consists of the manuscript for *Sand*.

As a fiction writer, creating this multiplatform environment for exploration for the reader forces me to let go of my text and characters to a new level. These different medias demands different narratives, I will discuss this in the section *Expanding the narrative*. I will also discuss my work in the context of metaphors and how I use them.

In this section I will also go through and explain my explorations and workshop as well as my proposed setting for a final transmedia expansion of *Sand*.

Under *Evaluation* I will talk about my result as well as discuss my findings, and problematize my double role as both creator of the original story as well as designer of the transmedia

narrative. I will also look into finalizing the novel and what these transmedia aspects will bring to that process from the perspective of the author.

Research in transmedia

The writing within the research field of transmedia has been focused in many ways around the bigger industries of film and games. Like interaction design transmedia is an interdisciplinary field, gaining knowledge from a range of different fields of research. As an example, for this thesis I've drawn upon blogs written by game designers, PhDs written within Media and Communication, and so on.

Transmedia in literature is still very new. Games and films have been working with transmedia fiction for a while now, and even if there exists literary or textual fiction that has either been remediated to be conveyed through different platforms or has been built for a multiplatform environment, it is still relatively uncommon on the commercial market, especially in Sweden. The development of the gaming industry for the last years as well as the film industry gives us an idea about how the world of literature will or could turn out.

What defines transmedia?

First of all, what is transmedia?

During the recent time, there has been a big discussion in the transmedia community of how to define transmedia, and if the term even is the right one. Andrea Phillips writes at her blog (2011) :

“Let's try this on for size: A transmedia story is one where fragmentation is a key characteristic, with the purpose of inducing the audience into actively seeking out multiple pieces of the story.”

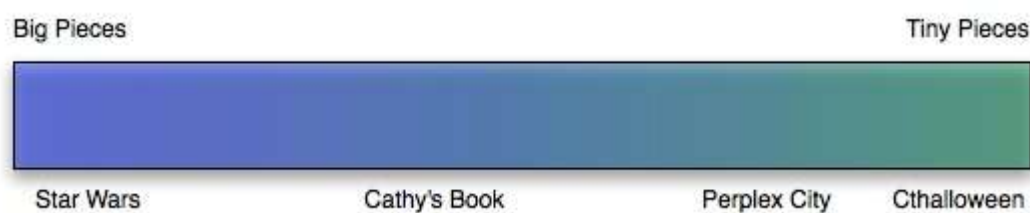


fig.1. Scale of level of fragmentation (Phillips, 2011)

Henry Jenkins also states that:

“In transmedia, elements of a story are dispersed systematically across multiple media platforms, each making their own unique contribution to the whole. Each medium does what it does best-- comics might provide back-story, games might allow you to explore the world, and the television series offers unfolding episodes.”

The transmedia narrative turns up first when you create different parts of the narrative explicitly for different platforms, so that the story flows through the media, rather than replicates itself. Jenkins emphasizes this as well , as discussed by Christy Dena (2009).

There is an enormous amount of examples of different types of transmedia projects, most involving some type of collaborative exploration of the narrative, either steering the primary story or collaboratively creating the side story or the primary storyline. Examples of this is Joseph Mathenys MediaKaos-project The Last book, from 1993 and all the way up to the Matrix-project and Conspiracy For Good, the latter an ARG, an alternate reality game, explored by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* (2006).

Dena puts up some primary qualities of transmedia in *Cross media Observations* (2004 p. 5):

- ☆ “ User activity to assemble the ‘work’; “
- ☆ “Activity is narrative-driven; “

☆ “Activity is between channels, and can be within a channel, and between modes;”

Dena defines some different versions of what she in that paper calls *cross media* narratives. They are multi-modal *or* over several channels *or* transmedial, or all of them in various combinations. But the importance is that the narrative occurs over several instances and that the narrative as a whole can only be overviewed with a full insight into all parts of it, although the parts in themselves can work as standalone bodies of work.

The important aspect here is that a transmedia narrative is a narrative that moves the reader between different media.

Transmedia literary fiction

There is maybe not heaps, but at least a small but growing pile of transmedia literary fictions. Books is by far one of the most conservative mediums for fiction (after the invention of the pop-up book I'd personally claim development more or less died). The literary fiction that is cross media/transmedia that does exist is foremost crime and adventure novels, or thrillers, possibly since these areas are the ones most obviously built on the presence of clues or maybe just because these are the areas of fiction that has the biggest audiences.

Literary fiction is a fiction best suited for the book, but a transmedia literary fiction will no longer be developed necessarily only for just a book. It might involve other media, it might involve film or game aspects. Can it still be said to be a book? That question is out of reach for this thesis, but I propose my own definition here. A literary fiction in a transmedia context is a fiction whose primary medium is textual and meant for print or the equivalent there of.

Transmedia today

Transmedia as a defined field is relatively new in one way and very old in another. As David Bordwell points out in his discussion with Henry Jenkins online (Jenkins, 2009) it can be seen as very old indeed. Jenkins cites Bordwell:

“Transmedia storytelling is very, very old. The Bible, the Homeric epics, the Bhagvad-gita, and many other classic stories have been rendered in plays and the visual arts across centuries. There are paintings portraying episodes in mythology and Shakespeare plays. More recently, film, radio, and television have created their own versions of literary or dramatic or operatic works. The whole area of what we now call adaptation is a matter of stories passed among media....”

But even though this has existed since the dawn of the need to involve and immerse others in a narrative, it is still important to put emphasis on what we have now in comparison to what existed before. Many of the renderings that Bordwell mentions have been remediated to reach a new audience. One commonly known example is the bible stories that would be painted on the glass windows of the church to reach out to the people attending church who did not understand Latin, which was the spoken language during Christian sermons for a long time. The storylines would sometimes be spiced up and changed to fit the new environment, but it doesn't become transmedia until the plot line is evolved to include the different rituals used to keep the evil eye at bay. It is easy to think that these stories and rituals that were sometimes part of the mysticism from before Christianity, made the biblical context more graspable for the common man or woman. It introduced elements of the known, of what was perceived to be reality for the reader, and thus firmly placed the Christian mythology in an accepted context.

Transmedia games and movies today often uses similar techniques, placing the storyline in the real world more firmly and blurring the edges of what is fantasy and not. Remember the famous tagline of ARG, that one of the creators of the game *The Beast* coined (Rose 2011 p.22):

“This is not a game”

Famously this term was coined to help the players of *The Beast* feel ok, even though they had invested so much in something that turned out not to be real.

Collaboration

There are examples of novelists including their audience in the shaping of the narrative, creating a collaborative story, throughout history. Rose (ibid. p. 89) writes for example about the serialized novel, popularized in the 1830s in England during the industrialization. Charles Dickens was one of the authors taking advantage of this style of writing, where books were published a few chapter at a time, conveniently creating space for the readers to communicate their wishes for the next section with the author. And conveniently for Dickens, letting him know what parts of the story the readers wanted to see more of, and therefore would be ready to pay for. Rose notes that with *Master Humphrey's Clock* as Dickens most popular serialized novel was called, the readers were so invested in the story that when the most loved character died, this “... was greeted with near hysteria” (ibid. p. 91).

The serialized novel was off course viewed with much suspicion by the polite society as Rose points out (ibid. p. 92) and the danger was lying in the power of immersion. A story that did not end properly, but came back maybe other week, had dangerous addictive powers,

just like the creators of TV-series would discover in the next coming century. That the readers could affect it was most likely viewed as even worse, engaging people even more in the story.

If we fast forward back to present times, we now as Rose says (p.98) live in a time where we have two types of media to indulge in, the passive mass media and the participatory deep media of the digital world. And when looking at what types of engagements that have turned up on their own, it seems clear that the digital has won this war and that thanks to its inherent qualities that are so seductive, like the accommodation of strong immersion.

But does immersion only come from accommodating for participation? The answer is most likely No. Even though the reader most certainly does get immersed with this type of tool it does also affect one of the qualities of reading. To be immersed like this requires for the reader to actively take part and this does not affect the so called *lurchers*, the readers who are only viewing the result or process rather than stepping in and starting up communication. As mentioned in the introduction, for many readers one of the main points of reading a book is that you do not have to engage or try to steer the narrative, as well as that it has its own temporality. When trying to communicate with the author, the two timespans (the one in the story and the one in reality) was perceived by my participants in one of the workshop as ending up clashing with each other. The reader became too aware that this was only a text. Lisa Grubb, one of the participants stated that "... [The story] has its own time. It's one of the things I like the most, that I can put the book away, and when I pick it up again, I'm back on that timeline". From the autumn workshop that will be described more in the chapter *Expanding the narrative*, I could therefore conclude that the hope for immersion through participation or collaboration between reader and writer might end up biting its own tail.

Technology changes everything

Today we have a completely different set of tools at our hands, in comparison to the olden days as described earlier. Not only are they new and shiny still as Frank Rose states in the introduction to *The Art of Immersion* (2011), but we are still exploring its potential and mastering the craft of using these instruments, while the book have had hundreds of years on figuring out how it would be read, how it wanted to be read even.

Not only that, but this also means that much of our experience of these new narratives goes through an unanimated object that is less connoted with emotional attachment than the book, the computer in its various forms. We need to interact with the user interface first, and the narrative secondly, handling the implication of a web-based interface at the same time as immersing ourselves in a story that might in itself be very tightly wound up into the idea of the physical book and it's linear approach to storytelling.

As Jill Walker writes in *Fiction and Interaction; how clicking a mouse can make you part of a fictional world* (2003, p 29):

“Fiction is what is generated by a certain setup, rather than the setup itself. It is not context but content that constitutes the fiction. The narrative is then constructed by the events that the fiction contains.”

When creating a certain type of fiction, we expect a book. The potential medium is also in a way decided by its content, we expect certain things from a book, and we don't expect others. (I rarely pick up a hard back from my shelves and hope that it's going to produce a café latte or an interactive gaming experience, just as I don't expect my coffee machine to give me much intellectual stimuli.) The story's construction is tightly interconnected with the expectations on what media are used to convey it. If there is an unexpected interface attached to a certain type of narrative, the risk is that this hinders the reader more than it intrigues.

Ontological fusion

Walker (2003) emphasizes the need for immersion into the narrative to fully take part of it. The immersion into the narrative is called ontological fusion. To create points of ontological fusion with the narrative, one needs to take into consideration the reader's fictional ego. Walker (2003 p.38) cites Pavel:

“We send our fictional egos as scouts into the territory, with orders to report back; they are moved, not us, they fear Godzilla and cry with Juliet, we only lend our bodies and emotions for a while to these fictional egos, just as in participatory rites the faithful lend their bodies to the possessing spirits. (Pavel 1986: 85)”

Ontological fusion is the point within a narrative a reader's fictional ego experiences immersion into the story world (be it narrative in the shape of art, music or literary fiction) (ibid. p 43). Reaching this point within interactive media works a little bit differently than in passive media or art, since the haptic action might not necessarily be represented by the same action on the interface. Still, the responsiveness does accommodate for the fictional ego to wander into this other world.

When using a computer (be it handheld device, laptop or other) we nowadays expect certain types of narratives, and many of them are participatory, since most devices are now connected to the internet. In reading a blog for example, we expect real time potentiality in our communication with the writer. We expect twitter.com to be messy, and we expect

google to function. We expect the computers interface to react to mouse clicks or taps with the fingertips on the touch pad, and we expect actions to occur immediately or simultaneously. Off course there are mechanics of book reading in the same sense, we have to flip the pages, hold the book down and so on, but the fact that our physical actions alters the physical book (the pages changes place) instead of as with computers (our finger tapping results in a signal inside the computer that changes the representation on the screen), does make a difference. It becomes an extra layer to penetrate to reach that fusion of the fictional ego with the story world.

Non-linearity

Since the artifacts we need to use to gain access to the narrative invite to non-linear type of use, we multitask and get distracted in a completely new way from a reader of book would be (Carr 2010). This not only makes possible but demands a new type of narrative to create the same immersion. With the reader jumping from one point to another, the tools we have and use today to create this new type of narrative also has the potential to not only recreate the same level of immersion but to create a different and maybe stronger immersion. As Carr (2010) worries, this also in many ways changes the way we think about stories and even our possibility to grasp certain types of narratives.

The non-linearity of the transmedial narrative opens up for new possibilities, like exploration from multiple entry points as I will explore further in the section *Expanding the Narrative*. When we break up the chronology of the story we have to be aware that we are now creating a new story all together. My exploration started out with a linear manuscript that creates one story, but the adding of secondary storylines as well as deepening of characters created something new, maybe not multiple stories, but something bigger. The story becomes rather more of a story world or umbrella, than just one story, if agreeing that a story is a non-fragmented line of events that share for example temporality, linguistic markers or other stylistic pointers.

Creating a cross platform storyline demands this of the story; that the reader should be able to choose not to ingest the whole story, but she should have the option of picking out pieces according to her own fancy. The different subplots in the transmedial universe should be functional on their own even though they should create a curiosity or need within the reader for the other parts as well. It is important to remember that the reader/viewer or user comes from multiple angles and most likely also has multiple other tasks rolling around screaming for attention.

It would be easier to be able to like Carr (2010) just say that this is utter wrong and that the brain will be destroyed, or like Andrew Keen (2008) explain that this will lead not only to the

ruin of our society but also by the ruin of our economy. But to dismiss this new way of creating narratives is too easily done, and to explore it and use it purposefully would be much more rewarding in the long run. And truly, no one can really see this new collaborative way of working with narrative structures go away. It is easy to see to correlation between this and when the television was introduced. In his introduction to *The Art of Immersion* (2011, p.4), Frank Rose tells the story of how the major Hollywood companies was on the verge of bankruptcy for lack of willing to adapt to the new world where no-one watched b-movies at the cinema anymore but rather watched TV at home, and maybe that is the way we are going with our view of literary fiction as something bound by the book.

Frank Rose also cites David Shields text *Reality Hunger, a Manifesto* in the same introduction (2011, p. 8) on what the key components are of the internet as a medium:

“... randomness, spontaneity and emotional urgency ... a blurring (to the point of invisibility) of any distinction between fiction and non-fiction: The lure and blur of the real.”

This is the strength of the medium, and this is what we have to use when creating cross platform storylines. The collaborative possibilities of the internet are so much part of the core of internet as we know it, that we cannot ignore it and its impact on storytelling.

This blurring also blurs the line between the traditional narrative and the game. To me, it seems that the most known or common transmedia fiction is the ARG, a popular shape for the bigger TV-series to expand into transmedia, and also a popular way of expanding for novels. The gaming becomes the catalyst for exploring the fictional world as with the ARG connected to the movie *A.I.; The Beast* and in some cases as with *The Beast*, the ARG is perceived as being better than the movie (Dena 2009 p. 41).

To begin with the expansion into other media would be considered commodities, but starting out with George Lucas and the Star Wars movie (ibid. p.26) this became something seen as profitable. Now when the transmedia practices has become part of the routine in the bigger studios a market in the middle is starting to take form and we can start imagining what possibilities this new shape of narratives will create.

But as the narratives we tell become non-linear and invites more to exploration, this blurring does not necessarily make everything into a game. As an author myself this is somewhat of an internalized fear of mine. But as we progress into a new type of storytelling this goes from a rational fear (I don't want to end up trying to write the novel equivalent of monopoly) to irrational phobia. It is important to keep in mind, that stories are not what gets swallowed up

by an all too eager gaming industry, but rather the explorative aspects of the narrative that gets bumped up to a higher status, encompassing games as well.

This is a cross contamination. As the ARGs develop they also put more emphasis on the story rather than the game. The gamers explore a narrative world and puzzle together a story, be it a back story or secondary storylines.

Monique de Haas writes in her bio on her old webpage:

“Some people think we are made of flesh and blood. Scientists say we are made of atoms. But I think we are made of stories!”

This is a notion that takes from the anthropologists. One of the things that creates a society is the ability to tell stories. Stories about the other beings around us and stories about the world that we live in. This goes all the way back to the ability to pose the one question that pushes us forward: *What if..?* as talked about in the *Introduction*.

The idea is that when we can ask that question, we can imagine an answer to it. It plays a crucial role in our development as human beings, and it now plays a crucial role in evolving our way of developing stories further. The mere question demands us to have a way of reasoning our way to an answer. First this simple question helped us to evolve into this *Pan Narras* (Cohen, Stewart and Pratchett 2002) and now we have switched it all around, and evolved it. Or rather our potential answers to it. And now we have the possibility to ask a new What if? What if there was more to this story.

This ability to create stories, to retell the world to ourselves and change it as we tell it is so inherently human that we forget it.

We have for a long time separated games and stories, much since they often use different media to reach us (there is off course hybrids), but now they are again melting together more and more, and the blurring Shields talk about (via Rose, 2011 p. 7) becomes more and more apparent.

Short notes on comparative works

To find projects moving within the same field or exploring similar things, I've looked at both mono-media narrative as well as transmedia narrative, since the exploration of this type of storytelling is not constricted to stories told in the same way, but also means stories enveloping a similar set of ideas.

Words

The first example is Shelley Jackson's work *Words*. Jackson lets the medium and message order set by McLuhan (1967) get turned on its head. Rettberg Walker (2004, through Dena, 2009, p. 62) cites

“From this time on, participants will be known as “words”. They are not understood as carriers or agents of the texts they bear, but as its embodiments. As a result, injuries to the printed texts, such as dermabrasion, laser surgery, tattoo cover work or the loss of body parts, will not be considered to alter the work. Only the death of words effaces them from the text. As words die the story will change; when the last word dies the story will also have died. The author will make every effort to attend the funerals of her words.”

Here Jackson creates a new story not only by continuously adding words – the work has been going on since 2003 (ibid.) –but also by incorporating the fall out (death by participants) into her narrative. The only thing considered altering the text would be the loss of life, the definite punctuation so to speak. By doing this Jackson is not only redefining the relationship between medium and content by as Dena (ibid.) says letting the medium be part of the meaning-making process but she is also redefining the narrative. Usually a narrative can be added to, but she makes it possible to detract as well without redefining the text. The text is at every instance whole, however many words that are part of it.

The PowerBook

Jeanette Winterson's novel *The PowerBook* is a multilayered story that creates a small universe filled with different approaches to the same story. It is a love story, a story about that story and a story about what happens when you rewrite the story about the love story. Its multilayered approach to telling its primary story (the love story) makes it interesting in this context. Especially since it asks the central question to this thesis: *What if there was more to this story?*

Winterson approaches an answer to this when writing “I am the story”. In her approach the teller of the story changes with it, and it is impossible to tell a story without that change.

To use Walker's (2003) terminology and apply it to this story, there is a moment of ontological fusion when the reader's fictional ego suddenly becomes confused about who is writing. Is it Winterson writing about how it is to tap out this story? Is it the main character, *Alix* who is telling us about how she changed? Isn't that in a way the same thing? This confusion creates interesting openings.

The story's main character writes short stories for a living, and people will e-mail her for stories that will create them anew, make them into someone else for a night. But who is this someone else, and when is it the real person? Which are the e-mails and who is the sender? This is a story that could well accommodate being moved into a transmedia environment, just as it works perfectly well as it is. One of the most intriguing parts of it might even be that it's posing as transmedia in a mono-media, with e-mails, icons, several sub-stories that are stand alone, as well as an overarching main storyline and characters that moves through the different stories.

Why so serious?

This is an ARG that was played out before the premiere of the movie *The Dark Knight* (Rose 2011 p.11). This game has served as inspiration for my own prologue to *Sand* in how it is to be conducted. In the part of the game described by Rose (ibid.) the players immerse themselves in treasure hunts to help the Joker, the antagonist.

Before the premiere of the movie the ARG would have people looking for things and finding physical objects that gave them clues about the movie as well as immersed them deeper into the Batman story world. The game was played out during a 14 month period of time before the movie premiere.

Online Caroline

Online Caroline as described by Walker (2003, p 65) is an online drama where the reader/player/gamer play the role of Caroline's friend. You sign up by a website and then starts a correspondence with Caroline. There is a similarity here between Cilia, my main character and Caroline, since they have a set number of ways to respond. The responses Caroline give are then changed to fit the information you feed the database behind Online Caroline.

The power of this is that it really starts an intimate relationship between you and Caroline. You are the only one watching, the only one seeing her. You are her only friend. It is a very seductive power, the feeling of being important.

Method

As Krippendorff points out (1989) designing can go two ways. The word in itself means as his title says: “Design is making sense of things.”

The designing thus take two paths, the making of things, and the making sense. To contribute valid knowledge to the design world we therefore have to take this into consideration, that the making of *new* things, might only make sense in the context of *use*.

As within this thesis, where my research methods are based on action based research and alike, one must also weigh in that the explorations have not been conducted in a vacuum, and the social factors of the group of users and other unavoidable temporal factors will always affect the results. The validation instead will be if the result makes that sense the user/s.

I've chosen to conduct my research in the shape of explorations, these explorations shaped from inspiration gained from the interdisciplinary field of transmedia. The exploration has been conducted with a double question base, even though one have been the most prominent, namely the questions about the readers experience. But, it has at the same time been an equal amount exploration for me, trying to figure out the design space.

The double role

That I have a double role as a designer and also author of the work being redesigned off course affects my ability to interpret the results. It would be easy to just disregard what doesn't fit my own wishes on how to push the narrative *Sand* further. I here risk to stand in the way of my own knowledge gain. This however is not a separate potentiality, but can occur in other situations as well. There is a natural need for the designer to be selfreflecting just as the participant in workshop or explorations must be, both parties needs insight in their own processes and also needs a certain amount of safety in their role. This safety however is affected by how the workshop or exploration is conducted, and also on how the designer positions herself in comparison to the participant. If we look at Schöns (1987) discussion around the reflecting practitioner, this is to me an important add and insight, that we cannot construct a functional participant persona if we cannot trust the conductor of the exploration.

Hierarchies

It is also worth noting Kress (2010) who writes in *Multimodality* about the changes of hierarchal structures in communication over the internet. It does affect how to collect data for me, and how to create a sense of obligation from the reader, so that she'll take the time answering surveys seriously. Open ended questions might emphasize the flat social structure too much and might end with the participants taking the role of an expert, rather than expecting me to be the expert and answering my questions.

Core readers and other participants

I conducted three explorations to accommodate for my own separation between my double roles, and also to create a stronger bond between my audience and the narrative. The readers have throughout the exploration been consisting of a few core readers (Lisa Grubb, Lina Arvidsson, Amanda Lindholm and Foad Arbabi) that are in line with my goal readers or so called intended audience for the finished book. The amount of participants has then grown for each exploration, going from a only two looking at the first exploration to around 40 readers for the last.

To then move it one step further I conducted a workshop where one of my core readers attended but where I also added participants with two other roles, one was the unknown

reader and one as the practitioner within the field. This was done to create space for new questions and angles, and to create a creative setting that would be more open to these angles. With this setting I found that there was more space for *Why*-questions than in the earlier explorations which was more firmly steered by my own actions and ideas as a conductor and author of the material that my readers had access to.

Real time creation

Since the explorations were narrative driven, there was a need for me to create this narrative continuously and providing my audience with material. This did restrain the readers space for using and taking advantage of their own imagination when it came to the narrative, but in the results I still found that the readers were willing to let go of the set parameters and look at potential future renderings by looking at the potentials of the media rather than the narrative in itself.

My core readers have themselves a history of writing, mostly for paper based media but also for stage. Their insight in the process of writing and creativity did render the answers both a bit biased towards critique, but it also moved the discussion forward. My intended audience is however people with quite advanced reading skills or experience in creative fields.

Lastly I used the results from the workshop and explorations to create a potential prologue for *Sand*, this was chosen not to be conducted but is a thought experiment. I base the shape of it on the insights from the explorations as well as the ideas that came up during the workshop. The thought experiment needs to be well based on earlier result to validate, and it also needs to be aware of its own limitations, namely that there is no readers anymore to keep me locked in my double roles.

Relationship between sender and receiver

It should also be pointed out that the result of the experiment is affected by the sender. I am the sender of this information, and I am known to my readers, as a writer and person, being a performance poet. To find readers that do not think of me as a person with certain personality traits is hard. I have to keep in mind when analyzing that my readers incorporate their idea of my creativity in looking at the content of both text and site. To create a completely anonymous sender might be possible but might not serve my purposes, since the intended audience for the end product is mainly from the same group as the testers. Still, I must also remember that when creating these experiments, I create it to the readers that I believe I have, but they are not the same people as the actual readers. Since I cannot know in every instance who is interacting with the narrative and since it is static, ergo I have no input from the reader and no way of knowing who my reader is. Also, even in the

participatory parts, *Cilia* (who in the end is a character I invented, which the reader is on one level aware of) is interacting with the fictional character that the readers actual ego is reinventing herself as, to create a possible space where he or she can interact with the story seamlessly without being restricted by reality's constrains (Walker 2003 discusses Pavel 1986 p.37).

Sand – The story

I've defined and clarified the storyline here to make it comprehensible to the reader of this thesis. I will shortly go through the main storyline and themes of the text as well as elaborate on the usage of metaphors and how I use metaphors in my work with the manuscript as well in my work with the expanded story world.

Synopsis

I've written a short synopsis for the storyline, so that it will be easier to grasp what type of novel it is that I'm trying to expand into a transmedia literary fiction. The synopsis focuses on the whole manuscript and will not be going into detail. The chapter I've chosen to work further in depth with will be outlined with more detail. The synopsis and description of characters is not limited to those making an appearance in this thesis, but rather to the characters participating in the expanded parts of the story.

Characters

Cilia Sandstad

26 yrs old

Lives in Malmö, travels to Stockholm and Paris

Works as a graphic designer/project leader at a bigger company, creating graphical profiles for companies.

Yellow shirt/Maria/Rajani

Relation to Cilia: friend/potential partner

Not constricted by geographical locations, but moves through the fourth dimension

Occurs in Paris/Malmö

Karin aka Field Surgeon

Relation to Cilia: Girlfriend/ex

Lives in Malmö

Jean/Papa legba

Relation to Cilia: friend/foe

Not constricted by geographical locations, but moves through the fourth dimension

Occurs in Paris

The couples, four unnamed people

Relation to Cilia: Friends of an ex, holds dinner parties

Lives in Malmö

Co-workers, four unnamed people

Relation to Cilia: Co-workers

Lives in Malmö/occurs in Paris

Sam/Baron Samedi

Relation to Cilia: friend/foe

Not constricted by geographical locations, but moves through the fourth dimension

Occurs in Paris/Malmö

The plot

The story revolves around the exploration of the subconscious. We follow Cilia as she moves through her life through one year, reflecting over events and positioning herself in relation to what is around her with a sharp tongue and cynical attitude. Cilia works as a graphic designer and project leader, a work that positions her between the serious nine to five-world and the art world. Although according to herself, she is always positioned on the opposite side of everything.

The different aspects of her reflections turns into manifestations in the real world, soon taking on a life of their own. As we go deeper into the everyday reflections and metaphors, we also wander into a potentially different world. It escalates into a crescendo on a trip with work to Paris where the anthropomorphic manifestations of the hindu and voodoo-pantheons starts turning up and weaving Cilia into their ideas on how the world should be. And according to them, they should be in the center of it, not her.

These manifestations are left behind in Paris, but are not satisfied with this. They start turning up taking the shape of people around her to lure her back into their preferred storyline and timeline, breaking apart the weave of time to create the perfect event for their own purposes.

Expanding the narrative

My setting has been to explore and develop possible expansions for the story *Sand*, the manuscript for an unpublished novel I've written. I've chosen to expand a set narrative (*Sand*) rather than creating a completely new narrative and make it transmedial from the beginning to have a narrative body as rich as possible to draw upon while doing my explorations, instead of having to develop a full story world while writing this thesis.

I have looked at metaphors and pivot points as well as pivotal characters or themes to choose what points in the story I should use as entry points for the reader. By this I mean not only entry points into the narrative but also points of entry into the sub-plots or other parts that are placed in other media than the intended primary medium, the book.

Primary qualities

For each medium used there is a set of primary qualities just like there is a set of qualities that defines a transmedia fiction. The primary qualities I have taken note of is the ones that have occurred during discussions around or in the explorations and the workshop as well as in the workshop conducted in the autumn 2010.

Books

As earlier stated, books have primary qualities that are hard to ignore. For many people they have an emotional value. They represent knowledge and development for us as humans, and in societies largely illiterate one can easily imagine the power a person who can read holds.

The primary qualities that became most apparent during the work with this thesis was the book's strength as a mono-medium. It does only one thing, it conveys the text within. Also the book requires no interaction except for page flipping. There are no buttons to press, and the interface is so well known to us that there is no conscious learning curve when it comes to handling the book itself since it is something most people get acquainted with at a very early age.

The book also conveys its text or narrative in a linear fashion. There are books that doesn't do this, but has the reader going back and forth constructing their own chronology within the narrative framework posed by the text, but the idea of the book is the idea of a linear narrative. This is applicable even to narratives that in themselves have a broken timeline, since this is then part of the narratives original structure.

Internet based channels

For internet based channels there is a different set of qualities. The usage of internet based platforms for narratives does not necessarily have linearity to it, but can be intuitively non-linear. They can appear random or ordered depending on the readers own approach to the material.

As Gunther Kress (2010 p.21) writes the power structure is also shifted to a horizontal approach, it is not necessarily the author of the finalized text that has the last say. The internet based channels for conveying narratives are many of them open to the possibility to participation as well as collaboration, and this is to be seen as a primary quality of the medium.

Another important aspect is also the inherent distracting structure. Not only do we at any given point on the computer do have the possibility to do something completely different

(watch a kitten ride a vacuum cleaner, read our e-mails...) but it is ever occurring that we have multiple channels for communication as well as other activities open. To immerse a reader in a story that take place on a single channel in a world full of clickable links, does require me as a designer to keep this in mind.

Dramaturgical curves

When telling a story, by written or oral word, we tell it with the help of building up tension to keep the reader or listener. The models for building up this type of tension is called dramaturgical curves.

The classic dramaturgical curve is constantly heightening the tension for the reader, until the solution is presented and the end of the story is reached. As Mats Ödeen writes in *Dramatiskt berättande (dramatical storytelling)* (2005 p. 178), the way the tension is heightened is by giving the protagonist less and less possible ways to get through her hardships. This is the most common way to tell stories and popularized by Hollywood.

However, in an environment like internet based storytelling where the chronology is broken up from the traditional narrative structures, there are possibilities to use other styles of writing or conveying of the story. Since of the non-linearity and multiple entry points a transmedial narrative has, it is possible for the reader to for example begin reading when the protagonist is finally done with all the tension and finally is having a drink on the balcony, or maybe the reader enters in the middle of a mad crescendo, where all characters turn into ghostly monsters and starts dancing on the tables.

To make space for free elaboration I have chosen to not specify any dramaturgical curve, but rather let it re-invent itself in what shape might fit the story.

Choosing pivot points

A pivot point is as explained in the terminology section earlier in this paper, a place in the story where the story twists and the reader is thrown deeper into the story. I have defined some pivot points with common denominators in *Sand*.

- ☆ Supernatural: Points in the story where things happen that defy common sense, even if not explicitly pointing this out to the reader.
- ☆ Moves the reader further into the pantheon: Points in the story where the metaphors from the different pantheons either is elaborated on or become more apparent.
- ☆ Important geographical location for the overarching metaphors: Points in the story where the characters are situated at locations that are important, as well as travelling

between such points. This might be places like parks or hotels, all depending on what metaphors are to be strengthened.

These three denominators have then been used for inspiration when shaping my explorations I chose them not only because they are dominant traits for the text but also because they create pathways between the primary storyline and the secondary storylines.

A reader familiar with the main themes and traits of the text would not be surprised to stumble upon supernatural elements or geographical pointers in the sub-stories, and if the reader would enter the story world from the secondary plot lines she would not be surprised when seeing them continued in the primary story.

To move the reader further into the local pantheon to the specific narrative of *Sand* has been the plan for the whole time for the manuscript. In *Sand* itself I did not want to give too many clues on who the characters actually were, so to have the possibility to give this information through other channels was a treat. As a writer there is always the longing to tell, not do, even if it is something at least I had to learn early in creative writing classes to avoid, as much of a story is told by what is not said but just shown. As an author I want my reader to be able to understand everything about the text, but this would of course not be possible. To push some of the explaining into subplots expanded in different media gives me the opportunity to further evolve characters and create a stronger bond between the fictional ego of the reader and my characters.

Metaphors

Central to *Sand* is the usage of metaphors to create a deeper story world. The reader has the option to interpret the story as something more than what is just on the page. I will here elaborate on what a metaphor is as well as explain how I've used them.

We create metaphors in our daily lives and move inside of them without ever thinking of it. Our languages are littered with sayings and dead metaphors (for example: table-leg, arrowhead or computer mouse), constructing our reality. Just take a look at your computer screen. There you have the desktop, the folders and tidbits of this and that. Maybe a document somewhere, or a photograph. But all is just descriptive metaphors made for us to make it easier to comprehend what we are looking at.

When writing fiction, for me the usage of metaphors are there both as a tool to create a richer language but also as a way to enrich the story in itself. The metaphors can be held within a specific frame, to construct an overarching metaphor-sphere, giving new depth to the text as well as adding levels of interpretation for the reader to explore.

In this specific story the overarching metaphors are the way home, the body, and growth. For the transmedia part the overarching metaphor is the map, since the storyline moves around a lot in both space and time, and the additional storylines or plots work as placeholders on that map.

As a writer I work with metaphors on several levels. If I would describe how, I would use the image of soil. The topmost level where the story that reader is looking at grows is the metaphors invoked by the voice of the characters, since *Sand* is written in first person perspective this means that in this context, the top layer is the thoughts of the “I”. Just under that comes one layer of nurturing soil, filled with maggots and insects, this creating the environment where the “I” gets her thoughts from, which is the story world. Underneath that healthy rich layer is another one, which are the more diffuse overarching metaphors used to create a framework for the plot. In *Sand* I’m using the way home as a metaphor, but also I feed in the pantheons from Norse mythology as well as voodoo, these then contain another set of metaphor that the text inherits, for example *Cilia* symbolizes the tree of life *Yggdrasil* in some aspects and the tree of life symbolizes something in its turn. The next layer of the soil or dirt, even further down is the metaphors of creating a text, my own work process.

When expanding this narrative into transmedia I have chosen to use the metaphors from the second lowest level and upwards, to firmly plant the new plotlines and stories in the same universe and keeping them inside the same framework, but since I chose to dig almost all the way down I’ve still allowed their roots to find nurture in a more flexible environment than if I would have placed them in the same garden, but in a pot.

As you can see, the metaphor here stretches all the way into this text to capture and create a graspable framework on what I try to convey to my reader, in this case the thesis reader.

I use these metaphors to simplify the work progress and as a way to create handholds for the reader, and in a transmedia context this is what creates a path from one medium to another. For the purpose of making *Sand* transmedia I wanted the reader to be able to recognize herself on the next platform to make it easier for the reader to feel at home and relaxed and ready to explore.

Exploring a design space

The experiments I’ve done moves both me and my reader deeper into the story *Sand*, and are not only made to pose questions but also as pure explorations leading me as the designer onwards into the possibilities on what to do, and me as an author inwards the more central pivot points of *Sand*. I’ve outlined in this section both how I did the experiments as well as my results from them and how I moved from one to another. My explorations were

created in one sense as a way of exploring the design space, but also for me as an author to explore the space of *Sand* as a narrative. It is important for me in my double role to always keep in mind what the story and its characters will allow, and not only what I want as a designer for them to do.

The exploration moved through three phases before the final prototype or exploration was to be set. I started out like a reader would do, on the back of the book looking for ways in. The second experiment ventured inside the story and led the reader into a non-chronological platform containing story elements. In the third experiment I pushed one of my characters forward and out into the real world, to draw the readers in a little bit more. Lastly I did a workshop to summarize the knowledge gained and see where this could lead further before creating the final though experiment.

Before all this started however, I held a discussion/workshop on the theme of reading, as described below.

Autumn workshop

I will here briefly talk about a workshop I held at an earlier point in time. This workshop was a starting point to me for my research in reading and its primary qualities and has therefore relevancy to this thesis.

In the autumn of 2010 during the course *Interaction Design: Advanced Themes* (Malmö University College, 2010, Interaction Design Master Course (1 year)) I had the opportunity to start exploring how we read and what the primary qualities of reading was. This workshop was conducted as part of an exploration on how to evolve the literary world and move it forward.

In this context I gathered three people with background in writing, who also became what I call my core readers for this thesis. We discussed reading as such and reading experiences.

Reading as a ritual

A lot of the discussion focused the sacral function of reading in the everyday ritual. Lisa Grubb states(fig.1.):

“I usually fix a cup of tea, I have a specific sort I drink when I’m reading. Then I find the cleanest corner of the apartment, and sit down. It needs to be calm. I have to feel right.”



Fig. 1. Lisa Grubb finds reading almost sacral.

The readers all had their very own idea of the perfect book, but what emerged from the workshop that was more interesting was the conflict with the text as an important factor. It was not as much the joy of the reading that was important, but the fight to get through the text.

During this workshop/discussion it became apparent that the book had very specific connotations for all of the participants. Amanda Lindholm, a young poet and musician stated that she read best in a busy kitchen, preferably filled with people she didn't like much. The book became the escape route.

There was also a brief discussion comparing reading a book to other media. Just like Carr (2010) says, the other media demanded too much attention to its interface or to other possibilities. To read from a screen was to this group something that was seen as almost painful. There was no emotional attachment to the digital interfaces. Lina Arvidsson points out "... it just gets blurry, my eyes hurt and I can't focus" with a shrug. There seemed to be a lack of wanting to use the computer for reading stories with a structure usually connoted to books.

First Exploration - interfaces

The first conducted exploration focused mainly on interfaces, both of the book and the device used for exploring the narrative. This exploration did not in itself create a transmedia narrative, in the sense that it did only use two media. The idea was to set up a usable creative space for the coming explorations.

Detailed Structure

The first experiment circled around the back of the book cover and how that could be used to make the reader understand that there was more to explore except for what was in the physical book.

The experiment was set as a discussion together with the reader who would explore the interface within the given framework and discuss what occurred as well as how she reacted to the interface and what she perceived it would imply.

Since there is no physical book for sand I created a simple mock up book with a placeholder image in the back and a web address. The reader would then go to the webpage, and there use the image to start an augmented reality application with a map controlled via the web camera. The map contained excerpts from the book, relevant quotations involving characters in the book that would be pivotal to the transmedia story parts. The quotes were placed on addresses relevant to the characters and actions they contained.

What if..

This was a quick and dirty experiment based solely on the *What if...*, trying to jump start the explorative process for the reader. The *What if..* would create a starting point as much for the reader as it is for me as a designer. I needed to create an environment where the road ahead had as many forks as possible to go deeper into the process.

Back of the book

The back of a book normally consists of a teaser, much like the teasers for a film. It doesn't necessarily have the same style of writing as the actual book and does not even always outline the plotline too well, being written for selling the book more than anything else. Here I chose to use excerpts, and using the framing more as the teaser than the text.

I tried to simulate this back with the tools at hand, to see if I could create a deeper immersion already at this point. The first tester, Mimmi Ohlsson, expressed being intrigued by the idea but also noted that she wanted there to be more development before she could actually grasp what was happening or why it looked like it did. Both testers also agreed that they would need a consistency in layout to understand the connection between the the book(fig.4 and 5) and the web application (fig.2.) presented. Because of the lack of this, there was seemingly to the readers no bridge between the book and the application.



fig.2. The interface of the web application. The purple star marks the point on the map where the user “is”.



Fig. 3. Front of book



Fig.4. Back of book.

Non-linearity

The chronology of the narrative was broken up by the reader depending on what texts the reader hit first while exploring the interface. Since the actual story has a very loose linearity except for the fact that the text is placed in a specific order, the idea was that this would fit into the structure of the book and be part of enforcing that non-linearity as a fixed frame. No one quote was needed to understand the others and the user was free to explore in her own way. The thought here was to create a similar narrative as what was contained inside the book, to put the expectations of the reader right in correlation to *Sand*.

The reader creates and should be allowed to create her/his own chronology, that the different texts were disconnected did not stop the reader from reading them as if they were connected. Min did for example not ask or wonder if the pieces of text were put in the right

order or if she had misunderstood the order but assumed that her reading was correct. As Kress(2010 p.22) notes this is one of the main traits of internet based channels, that the user creates her own text according to her own interests.

Immersion and interface issues

The interface was built so that the reader would use her hands as navigational tool to move through the interface as well as the narrative (fig.2.), as if the user was conducting an orchestra or re-enacting the actions of a god. One of the testers pointed out that this might put a potential future reader in a situation of "... small screen, big gestures..." where the resulting changes in the interface would feel inadequate as a reward in comparison to the physical actions performed.

The immersion in this experiment was more hindered than helped by the structure or style of the interface. The readers experienced it as if they were being pushed away from the narrative when forced to learn a new set of controls first before accessing the relevant information to understand and be immersed into the story.

Since of the setting of this experiment, there was no way for the reader to reach any point of ontological fusion with the narrative, and thus they stayed separated from the story throughout their exploration, the story did not ask of anything from the reader except for learning the controls, so there was nothing that could have an immersive effect, since the level of exploration stayed at the exploration of the interface, rather than the story.

Co-creating a narrative

The breaking up and then involving the reader in the patching together a story changes and challenges the amount of control I as a writer would like to have over the finished narrative. It puts strains on my role as well as it opens up for the role of the reader, asking them to actively participate. To me as a writer it is also important to keep the role of the author more or less intact. The co-creating here stayed at the level of creating the readers own chronology, and the details of the story was set from the beginning. According to Ohlsson, her experience of exploration did give her an idea that these strands were all part of different stories, pointing in different directions.

Bridging

Even if this was a quick and dirty experiment some graphical elements that would set the tone for the user would have been good, my reader would ask throughout the experiment what the connection between the different parts was. Even if curiosity is a good thing, confusion is not. The setup also needs a "lead back", something that leads the reader back to the actual textual part of the fiction, in this case the book, so that the reader doesn't

wander off too much and gets stuck on the internet looking for more information where none is. When creating this type of smaller transmedia narrative a frame that keeps the user inside of it is one thing that I feel is necessary. My chosen setup for this experiment did not really accommodate this travelling between mediums, and left the reader at a loss when she tried to figure out what next. The situation did not create enough of a bridge between the physical book and the interface, partly because of the lacking graphical similarities and partly because as I see it, there was too much of a difference in primary qualities between how a user or reader would engage with a book and an augmented reality application.

For the next stage...

As a writer I needed to make the decision on what parts I was ready to let go off and how these part would then fit into the rest of the narrative and at the same time keeping my integrity as creator. It became apparent to me that I needed to put more of the story into the next exploration, to create an actual explorative aspect and give my readers a possibility to go further and get a grasp on what this could become.

I also needed as an author to decide on what to emphasize on and choose texts accordingly. Would I want to put emphasis on characters, places or specific stylistic markers? In this round the focus for the readers was much more centered on the interface and very little on the story in itself.

Everybody is on facebook

In the second experiment, I've created a hub (webpage) on the internet for exploring possible extra storylines as well as a pdf-file containing parts of the manuscript to set the frame for the readers. I was curious to see how the readers would move between the different points and how this movement was connected to their expectations of how and where the story would be played out. The second experiment was more carefully constructed. Rather than an environment for discussion and exploration of concept, this was a possibility for the reader to explore actual parts of the narrative and create their own story, and a way for me to analyze their exploration.

In this experiment I focused on characters rather than places, I also to put the timeline outside of the frame of the primary narrative, to be able to more easily let the reader create their own experience. I also decided to use linguist markers to create the sense of different voices. Both characters used in this experiment also referenced back into the main timeline to secure them as a part of that universe. The focus was to create more life-like characters with the help of the sub-plots rather than to create story lines.

I disregarded the extra layer of interaction that the augmented reality application from the first exploration added, and used well known tools for the user to explore, so that they would not be hindered by the notion of lacking knowledge when faced with an unknown set of parameters to steer the interface with as my reader was during the first round of exploration.

I worked more with the graphical elements to create a recognizable world to accommodate the reader. The pdf-file and the webpage had a consistent layout, and typography. I used the background from the webpage as the first page in the pdf, as well as using the same font in the text in both places. The background consisted of a rough rusty surface to convey the feeling of something a little strange and a little broken.

There was also a fourth part of the webpage which was the questionnaire the readers was asked to fill out upon completion, or as it were, when they felt they were finished exploring the story. This link had a different style than the rest of the page, to mark out that it was not part of the exploration of *Sand*.

I created one storyline for each of my chosen main themes. One focuses on the geographical movement on the main character *Cilia*, where it is her talking in first person pronoun about moving home and one focuses on the actual character making her more real by a facebook page, letting her speak for herself and the third is a small story of another character, *Sam*, looking for *Cilia* and talking about *Cilia*'s placement in space as well as time, this part was also written in first person pronoun from *Sams* perspective.

I created a facebook page for the main character and there urged people to add her, to be part of the experiment. I then sent her friends two different links from my own facebook page, one to the pdf containing excerpts from the text, and one to the hub.

I then created a facebook event from my own page and also asked people to add the user *Cilia Sandstad*, not telling what it all was about. On the facebook event I explained more closely what it was about and asked people to explore and comment.

The different parts of this exploration created in themselves a sort of local narrative. This narrative was constricted by the different parts that I put online (pdf, hub, facebook persona), and works as a standalone even though still part of the same story world as *Sand*. The timeline inherently non-linear since the different parts did not exist in any particular order as well as not "happening" in close relation to eachother on the imagined timeline.

The three parts

Here I will give a more detailed description of the different parts of the digital world created for this exploration. After this section I will go more into the analyzing of the exploration.

Cilia



Fig. 5. Cilias facebook-page

I constructed the facebook persona for the main character (fig. 5): *Cilia Sandstad* (in English: *Cilia Sandcity*, Her name is in the primary narrative only mentioned as Cilia, and the narratives name is Sand. The add of stad (city) was a nod to the multitude of sandcastles a narratives could be based on. I also chose her last name to be connected to the title of the narrative to create a bridge from one medium to the other via an associative chain for the reader.) and filled it up with sparse information but still enough to make her pass as slightly real. She had a photo, a workplace and religion as well as political awareness.

Cilia was then online from time to time, “liking” things on other peoples pages as well as putting up status messages talking about life and work.

Hub

The hub was created to make multiple entry points into the storyline for the readers, so that the user could start at this point just as well as from the pdf-file(fig.6). The webpage contained a link to the facebook page, a link to a page called “the way home” (fig.7.) as well as a page called “pitit tig se tig” (such father, such son) (fig.8.). These three parts of the web phenomenon would represent three parts that the user or reader would be able to explore during the experiment.



Fig.6. The main page of the hub



Fig.7. Short story and movie sequence

At the page about the way home there was a youtube-clip where it was anonymously filmed someone walking and moving around in the city at different times of day and night, to super Mario-music, together with a text written from first person perspective where Cilia would talk about how she had enough of this madness, and that she reached the end of the road. In the text there was links to both the pdf-file and to the facebook page (*"come reveal my reality, come sweep me away"*).



Fig.8. Sams page at the hub

At the other page there was a music clip, Charles Mingus “Haitian fight song” and text in Haitian Creole as well as Swedish. The narrator on this page is Baron Samedi, a character whose identity is never fully revealed in the primary narrative, he is called Sam throughout the whole manuscript. He is however revealed to be wearing a black top hat and has other visible traits that would lead the reader to guess who he really is (in the voodoo-mythology, Baron Samedi is the guardian of the crossing between life and death and he wears a top hat). Linked in to the page was notes on a paper, written by hand that could be deciphered to reveal a sort of map over Cilia's place in time, rather than space, connecting back to parts of the narrative when he seeks her out by moving in time to get her back into his idea of what should have happened. The map contained signs for time of day, month and also longitude and latitude for corresponding geographical place (Paris: Pigalle, rue de la Martyr, Malmö: Västra Hamnen, Malmö: Bergsgatan). The reader could then go to google maps (it was linked in through the text) and find where Baron Samedi was looking for her. This page also referenced to his father the whole way through, a character that isn't mentioned in the book and would here open up for further development and involvement in the secondary storylines.

PDF

The added 11-page pdf-file contained cut and pasted relevant parts of the storyline, not necessary connected to the information on the webpage, but rather to give the reader a notion of this being part of a bigger puzzle and narrative. This was to create a setting that would assemble the work in its entirety if it would be finished, so that the reader could be more immersed in the narrative even though this was a test with a limited time span. The

amount of pages was limited to eleven so that the reader would be able to get through and grasp the text within that time span.

The pdf contains text from the end and the beginning of the book and a piece from the middle, separated with **** to mark out where there was pages “missing”, creating more of a collection of short stories within a story world than fragmented manuscript.

Timeframe

The readers weren't asked to complete this exploration within a timeframe, but rather take their own time. This to simulate the reading of a book, you can pick it up and put it down at any point. The exploration is not constricted by time limits in the real world. The one thing that isn't static in the fictional world is Cilia Sandstads existence; she is commenting and acting on facebook. There is a secret time limit of one week to the experiment though, enough time to see how the users who took longer time depict things in comparison to the quicker ones. The time stamping in the comments-section helped to keep track of when people finished.

In the end of the week I got one more comment, also focusing on the narrative as something that could be explored.

The questionnaire

I created a form for the readers to fill out with questions around how they moved through the story, what captured them and why.

“I'm curious about some things, write as much as you can!

- ☆ Do you want to know more? If yes, why? If no, why?
- ☆ How do you understand your experience? Part of something bigger or separate? What makes you think like this?
- ☆ For you that started your journey here [online].
 - What medium do you expect this to continue in
- For you who started out through reality/pdf
 - How did you experience the transition from paper/pdf to web? “

This was done so that I could collect knowledge about how they experienced exploring this sub-narrative. I wanted to let the readers experience this on their own, with as little connection to me and the physical world as possible, and hence put the survey online.

Five readers answered the questionnaire, from around 17 possible readers. This is also the hardest part about staying so far from the reader, that there might be fall out between the

number of people experiencing the narrative and the number of people willing to answer questions about it.

The readers that answered claimed that the exploration did make them curious for further developments. They all seemed to feel that this was just a teaser (which, accidentally is correct, but maybe not what the testing should reveal). The reader Gustaf Gustafsson talked for example about how the characters "existence" on facebook makes her feel made of flesh and blood as cited later in this text. Lisa Grubb talked about how it feels like "... being lost in a time loop". The chronology of a traditional narrative became broken for her. Grubb pointed out that this seems to be a complete story, but without an ending. This was interesting to me, since the actual ending of the primary narrative is part of the pdf-file and in the end of that text.

Breaking the linearity

The comments did reveal that the linearity was now broken in the narrative even for the reader, but the eery feeling of the webpage and text combined makes the story addictive even if it at some points still was perceived as fragmented. The commenters pointed out that they wanted to know more, understand more. As one comment said, it had been a rather frustrating experience. The format also seemed to invite for possibilities do develop this experiment further in other media. The situation that the reader was already in, with this mixed media approach told them that "anything could happen next", a podcast, a blog, letters or even street art. They did not know what to expect, or rather felt that their expectations were not framed by a specific type of medium. The non-linearity and the mixed media approach to telling this story seemed to have changed the users expectations of the narrative.

When conducting that workshop about reading last semester we talked a lot about the effect a good book has on the reader, the reader gets swallowed up by the main character and vice versa. It's easy to incorporate the characters language into your own, since it is a language you become intensely familiar with (hearing it in your own head while reading for hours on end). When using transmedia, it hopefully is possible to make this feeling even more prevalent.

It's easy to get stuck in the land of hypertext, but since I've chosen to expand the narrative and use the voice of fictional characters to tell the secondary stories, hopefully I won't end up there. There is always a risk, but I imagine that the feeling of this being something told by a real person should overshadow the clicking around or sense of exploring a place on the web. As Walker talks about (p. 38?), when we do these actions that are part of an interactive

transmedia narrative, we are performing double actions, we are both clicking, as well as fictionally looking through Baron Samedi's notes.

Consequently I did get the reaction that does who did take their time to answer the questionnaire did find this narrative interesting. This is to be expected in an environment where there is no force to answer the questions and no actual gain from it. For the next round I needed to be more talkative and tell my audience that I would like to know why not as well as why.

It also seems like all my readers this time came from the webpage and then to the text, so the exploration became only from one side. This might possibly be because of the loading time of the pdf-file but I did not get an answer to this question. I also realized that I needed to use less open ended questions if I wanted to get certain answers, otherwise it seemed the answers would dwindle into musings over the experience rather than answers to my questions. I believe myself that this might be from the way we use internet platforms for communication, like Kress says (2010) the lack of obvious hierchal structures changes the way people respond and think of response in relation to an author.

One more thing that I would say ended up negative with the experiment is that the audience in this case was consisting mostly of people that works a lot with text. Some of them ended up critiquing more than giving their answers, not being used to working with this type of textual platforms but rather being the bookish sorts. In a third exploration the group of readers will however be more used to the idea of this transmedial narrative, and will hopefully be more ready to work on its premises. To simply use a more techsavvy group wouldn't change anything since the core readers are as mentioned, also my intended audience. I could still be more open with the purpose of the platforms, to stop people from trying to give helpful tips and rather just tell me about their experience.

ARG or story?

One thing that came up in the comments was also the feeling of this being a possible game rather than a novel, I interpret this as a sign that disregarding the primary qualities of a book changes the epithet we give a story. The medium might be the message, but the content might also in a way define the medium just like with Jackson's installation *Words* that I mention in the comparative works section of the introduction. We see literary fiction as linear narratives and the breaking apart of this creates a sense that this is no longer a book, even though one commenter points out that this narrative could easily step back to the "real" world and become a book again. The operating word here is *again*, I believe. The commenter did herself there make a separation between the book bound narrative and the narrative that expanded to envelope the digital parts.

Reader roles

There is a similarity between Online Caroline (Walker 2003 p.64) and Cilia Sandstad, in that it is possible to interact with Cilia to gain access to parts of the storyline. The difference lies in that Online Caroline contains prerecorded sequences, while Cilia can respond in real time. She is as close to a real person as she can be, acting from constraints of her character in the primary storyline, but adding to it by nuancing it. She could even become someone's friend, just like the user takes the role of Online Caroline's best friend, someone could emerge as the best friend of Cilia. But this would happen because of the reader, not because of the set storyline. This then becomes participatory without changing the actual storyline, only changing the way the reader would perceive it. In Online Caroline the participant is the enabler for the main storyline, but with Sand, the real time communication is the enabler for the reader to explore the secondary stories rather than the reader enabling the primary.

The different roles of the reader and also the need of these roles is something emerging more and more in this round of the experiments and something that I need to take into consideration for the next round.

Time as a factor

The restriction in time was another thing I found I needed to ponder. To have the experiment set in one week was a good time limit, but with the types of media I used I would need a much richer content to keep the readers busy. Also the hidden aspect of the time limit might possibly have gotten people to drop the experiment before answering the questionnaire.

That I used Facebook's event-page also had some aspects that became obvious to me during the experiment. First of all that I as the creator could e-mail the participants to keep them in the loop and create a sense of obligation towards the experiment, but also that the experiment became part of the general chatter and noise and therefore lost some of its visibility to the potential readers.

"Fleshing up" the characters

One of the main parts of this experiment was trying to push *Cilia* into being. Since the timeline of the narrative space was fragmented, *Cilia* could be called into existence by real-time communication with the readers. I informed my readers that they were welcome to start up conversations with her if they wanted. The reader Lina Arvidsson who communicated with *Cilia* there phrased it like this:

"The Facebook profile is where it becomes truly obvious for me as a reader that I see the character [*Cilia*] as her own person. It's cool to be able to talk to a main character! With enormous potential for

developments also. Links that can be posted to show her personality more, picture galleries that could be developed. Am struck by just how real Cilia is perceived, even before I talked to her, just because the profile exists”

Own translation from Swedish.

The reader Gustaf Gustafsson says about *Cilia*:

“It becomes a completely different (reading)experience than it would have been if the text ”only” would have existed in the traditional form. And the possibility to communicate with Cilia (on Facebook) contributes to a broadened notion of her as a being of flesh and blood, it gives the character an extra dimension.”

Own translation from Swedish.

The notion of *Cilia* as more real in the context of having a sort of virtual existence draws parallels to *Online Caroline* (Walker 2003 p. 64), and how *Caroline* was treated as a real person by the users of the website even though the interaction was limited to pre-written e-mails. The potential dialogue to be had with the fictional character here creates a space where it is easier to believe this person does after all exist.

Except for Lina, one more person talked to *Cilia* and interacted with her. Lina communicated with *Cilia* both through the chat-function and through the picture viewer interface (fig.9). The other person, Stefan, only used the chat function. The communication centered around questions about clues. And the approach the readers had to this seemed to be that this was a puzzle in need of solving.

The text circles around leaving and going home, the two chat incidents contained questions like:

“Do you want to leave already?”

“Wont they miss you?”

“What are you doing, do you miss Paris? When did you get home?”



Fig.9. Lina Arvidsson interacting with Cilia Sandstad about the image Cilia's profile picture.

Fictional ego

The readers did assume roles towards *Cilia* as she became more real. When communicating with her they took the role of someone who already knew her, or was just getting to know her. In this part they did emerge themselves in what the narrative asked of them, so that they would be able to rewarded, in this case by gaining additional knowledge to what this actually was.

They were themselves vague in their communication, assuming roles of someone who already knew her.

The readers who did chose to communicate with *Cilia* was writers themselves which most likely affected how they placed themselves in this context of a narrative.

Cilia was greatly helped in coming alive through the usage of social media. The notion of her communicating back, and thus eliminating the notion of the story as a fixed thing, created a much more likely event of ontological fusion for the reader, and also created an actual interaction between reader and story.

Building bridges

In this experiment the movement between different channels or media did not seem to disturb the readers. As mentioned most of them came from the web to the PDF, and this moving from a dynamical platform to a static text seems to have accommodated for bridging

the gaps. The question is if it would be the same the other way around? In the next exploration I will move the story out to the physical world, to see what happens then.

Pushing it out into reality

At the third experiment I decided to create even more of an elaborate setting for the reader, further penetrating the fabrics of reality and trying to create more of a solid ground for them to stand on while going into this narrative universette (this is not yet a fullblown universe, but a rather smaller one, a universette). This experiment was constructed with more attention paid to temporality. As earlier mentioned in this thesis, during the autumn workshop my core readers had problem with the clashes of temporalities that occurred when communication was conducted in real time but the narrative was on its own timeline. In this experiment I wanted to focus on and see how I could use the different timelines to create bridges and points of fusion. I also wanted to see how I could make the user go to the factual world and all the way to the fictional, instead of as they did the last time, move from the digital to the physical.

This experiment was set in three stages. The first was a poetry reading where *Cilia* would participate and the second was a blog where *Cilia* would be said to be the author and the last step was a survey about the participants reactions and actions.

The intended audience for this experiment was the regular audience for the Poetry Slam-competitions, as well as other people connected to the group Ord på Scen (Words on Stage) in Malmö. This group has on facebook a bit over a hundred followers and the usual audience on a Slam is usually around 60 people.

The idea was that this audience, although with a knowledge of who I am as an author, does view me as my stage persona rather than as a person.

Part one

I moved my main character *Cilia* from her virtual existence to the real world with a help of an actress, Nicole Eklund. She made a live performance reading as the sacrificial poet at a local *Poetry Slam* (a Spoken Word/poetry-competition. The sacrificial poet is the first on stage that the jury at the Slam tries out their judging skills on, before the actual competition starts. Since this poet is outside the competition it felt ok to let a *cameo* appear, so that if the audience would realize that this was a performance, she wouldn't have disturbed the actual competition.

I played with the idea to let her compete, but since the only Poetry Slam competitions at this time of year (spring) is try-outs for the Swedish Championship it would risk too much badwill

towards the project if it was discovered. Just as well that it wasn't feasible that I would be able to ghost write someone else's material and also eventually possibly send her to the Swedish Championship, without risking the project...)

I let Nicole/Cilia read a poem containing quite a lot of possible clues for the upcoming exploration. She talked at length about bookmarks and what she wanted from life, the *sturm und drang* she was looking for. The poem was built from a part of the novel, but extended and changed to carry her voice more thoroughly and to facilitate clues for a narrative with a couple of pivot point. I did this to create a cluebombing and start building that solid ground for the audience as earlier mentioned. Nicole was also instructed to leave a bowl with sand and small bookmarks (fig. 11) in the shape of horses in it on the counter by the café (fig. 10), so that people could grab one if buying coffee or coming to talk to us that were managing the café. On the back of each mark there was a date, 31/3 (fig. 12), and on some a short sentence, *Pitit tig se tig*, to create a connection back to the already available parts of the story from the last experiment.



Fig.10. Nicole Eklund portraying Cilia with the bowl of sand, by the counter.



Fig. 11. Bookmark left by Nicole.

Fig. 12. The back of the bookmark with the date 31/3 written on it.

I filmed the poetry reading and put it on Youtube together with some other clips from other poets the same night. These clips were then put at the webpage for the Poetry Slam (<http://ordpascen.wordpress.com>) without anything separating them or pointing out that one of the performances was a cameo performance. I also linked the performance in to the facebook page of *Cilia* and let her comment on the whole thing as well as on Ord på Scen's facebook page where I linked in the different performances. It was important to make it seem like she was one of the poets and nothing else, to accommodate better for that possible point of ontological fusion (Walker, p32 1999) between this story and the audience. The idea here is that the blurring of the real and the fiction makes immersion into the narrative more likely and therefore makes it easier to reach ontological fusion.

Second part

On the 31/3 I started up a new blog (<http://sandstad.wordpress.com/>) where *Cilia* would blog for one week. I sent a facebook mail to the Ord på Scen-group informing them about the blog and asking them to participate by reading and if they felt like it, commenting on things they wanted to know more about, to steer the narrative.

I explained that this was part of my thesis in interaction design and that it was an experiment. I kept a light tone in the e-mail, to keep myself and my voice inside of my stage persona, which is how these people know me. I did this to try to keep it from becoming something they did in relationship to my stage persona, rather than to my work. This was to create a light sense of obligation towards me, the hope being that this would make them more positive towards participating.

I also created an event called *Sand 2 – experiment*, where I invited people from Ord på Scen as well as peripheral acquaintances to me who had an interest in social media and narratives.

The blog was written entirely in real time, so I had to construct a sort of mini-novel for every blog post. At first the blog was just filled with a couple of entries that contained basic information about the past story line, covered up as *Cilia* talking and telling her new audience about her, so that they would be able to follow her line of thoughts. The fourth day I added an entry that was abruptly turning the story on its head. Instead of only *Cilia* chatting away about her life and what she did, she woke up with her guts cut open, and started wandering around in her apartment trying to figure out what happened.

Here something interesting happened. I received an e-mail from a friend who asked me what was going on and if this was some sort of sick joke or what had happened to *Cilia*, and who was she? I had been very clear in my initial e-mails that this was a fictional story and part of my thesis, but since this person had skipped reading those, all she got was a complete shock of violence. That the fact that someone would walk around with that kind of injury was fairly impossible was probably obscured by the usage of the blog, a place that still has an air of diary over it.

I continued the story line with asking what really happened to her, and wanted participation, this time only using the blogs comment field and the e-mail as possible interaction points but I didn't get any reply. Since no one "knew" what happened, neither did *Cilia*. This sort of anti-interaction was also interesting since it still did spark an action on the blog: The non-explaining. As long as I did not get any hints from the readers on where they thought this would go, *Cilia* could not know what happened and therefore not explain what did. As a writer this sort of play with the audience and their willingness to interact or not was an interesting part, it did make it a lot clearer that I was in a way in a dialogue with the readers.

After another day I let her meet up with a strange old man in the store and asked my readers to answer a poll with three alternatives, what happens now? Three out of around 30 readers answered and I followed their lead starting to explain what happened.

After this initial explaining I only had one last entry to make, and this time I did a survey, both survey and poll was announced through e-mails to the facebook event Sand – second experiment. The survey included a few questions themed on "I want to know more about X" and ending with a question "is there anything else you want to add? A Llama, three musqueteers, a tall dark stranger?". This time there was a few more answers and I followed and let *Cilia* take the path they had chosen for her.

Survey

To end the whole experiment I sent out another simple survey asking participants to answer it whether or not they actively engaged in the blog. From this I got 11 answers, fairly representing the age groups from the experiment if looking at the facebook event. I asked specifically for answers from participants who did not engage in the blog by interacting with it or the poll and survey attached to it, wanting to know more about what hindered people, was it free will that turned them into lurchers, or was it something else?

Hindering the engagement

From the answers I could draw the conclusion that time constrains hindered engagement as well as an unwillingness to engage if not knowing the result. Some claimed to rather just read

it and see what happened, maybe wanting to be surprised. The different types of interactions with the blog was understood by all responding participants, so the element of being faced with a unknown or maybe incomprehensible tool as with the first exploration had been eliminated.

Blogging and blurring the line between fiction and non-fiction

The blog form did rather well accommodate the voice of *Cilia* and conveyed it to the reader. It seemed to place it well inside the blurry line between fiction and nonfiction, mainly since a blog is depicted rather like the novel was in its early days, as a representation of life.

The participants of the survey found the blog format interesting and wanted to see further development even if not engaging in it themselves. The blog had about 100 readers all in all, and the amount of lurchers in comparison to participants in the survey would be easy to view as a pointer in this way.

For the next elaboration on the subject at this point it feels like I need to move away from my readers a little bit. They are now engaged, involved and aware of this and what is going on. I need to separate us a little bit, me and my audience to create space so that they won't feel that they have obligations towards me, but can engage freely at will instead. The earlier try to connect the readers to me specifically has now played out its role, since I now have an audience in place.

Workshop:

I chose to conduct a workshop to investigate further after the third and final experiment. How to develop this onwards? My participants were Bobbi, a game designer engaged in Transmedia projects, Lisa Grubb, one of my core readers as well as a local artist with a love for the written word and Tor, who would play the role of the anonymous reader.

Titel: This Is War

We are about to spread the story world, but how do we win over the public? Using the metaphor of war I wrote up some different weapons, tactics and persons involved on post-its so that we could move them around and discuss how to. One important part was that it was allowed to discuss what could hinder the progress or dampen the success just like what would work. Many workshops I've been to has been focused only on the positive, but This Is War as a theme demanded that we didn't back down from seeing our own weaknesses.

I had decided from the beginning to shift focus away from *Cilia* as the protagonist, and instead put the focus on *Baron Samedi*, a character that had been placed firmly in the transmedial story world with the help of the blog from the last exploration. I wanted to create

a setting where the reader would be able to connect to *Cilia* with the help of a common enemy instead of by reading what was said with her voice.

Setting:

We started out with talking generally about my thesis project and I informed Tor about it more in detail, both Bobbi and Lisa has followed the earlier experiments online as well as discussed my process with me from before.

I had created a simple gameboard (fig. 13) and put down some war-related words on post-its together with a name tag-post-it for everyone containing “General [name]” so that they would be positioned in a role of power towards this gameboard, to better accommodate for the participants to take an active part in the workshop. I explained to them that this would be played out like if they were in front of the war board inside an officer’s room. We would then proceed into discussing tactics and strategy, with the help of words from the world of war. A gun would be a clue with a fixed target/person in mind; a spy would infiltrate a group of people to analyze their behavior so that appropriate clues could be planted.

The initial discussion was at the beginning kept from a bird’s eye view and started out with a simple “machine guns is in this context a blog, a form of push media where you have the possibility to reach many at once”, and then everyone was free to take post-its that were readymade or create their own. I chose to create a number of notes from the beginning so that the participants would have a starting point.

The workshop proceeded after a while to a more case specific scenario. I told the participants that I wanted to make Baron Samedi/Sam more real, and asked how this could be done using the post-it propaganda as one possible way. We discussed this for about twenty minutes before wrapping up.

During the workshops there was no restriction on what types of ideas that could be said and no restrictions on critiquing the ideas either. This is a rather uncommon part of workshops as far as the ones I myself has attended, but since we now where all high ranking military and had a pressing goal of winning this war of information, it was a necessary part to create a realistic setting, as well as it fitted the shorter time span of one hour that I set.

I chose a short time span and simple setting to press the participants to really dive into it. I feel that the risk with longer workshops is that there is a risk that people rely on time as a factor to give them ideas, rather than actively exploring and coming up with them themselves.

Choosing theme

I chose the theme of warfare to describe this since it contains a vast landscape of possible metaphors as well as it feels quite like a diametric opposite to what it is I want to do. I wanted to use a theme that would allow the participants to elaborate and talk freely about how they thought, and in other workshops I have attended or created one problem has often been that the used theme or overarching metaphor has been too close to the everyday life of the participants. Also the language around war is not in the same way common to this context of storytelling, and the risk for contextual homonyms is therefore minimized.

One reason was also to create a setting that would entice the participants and drag them into a sort of narrative for the workshop as well. "If this was a war, how would you fight it?"

Goal

The goal with the workshop was to explore possible new experiments and forms that the final prototype for Sand could take on.

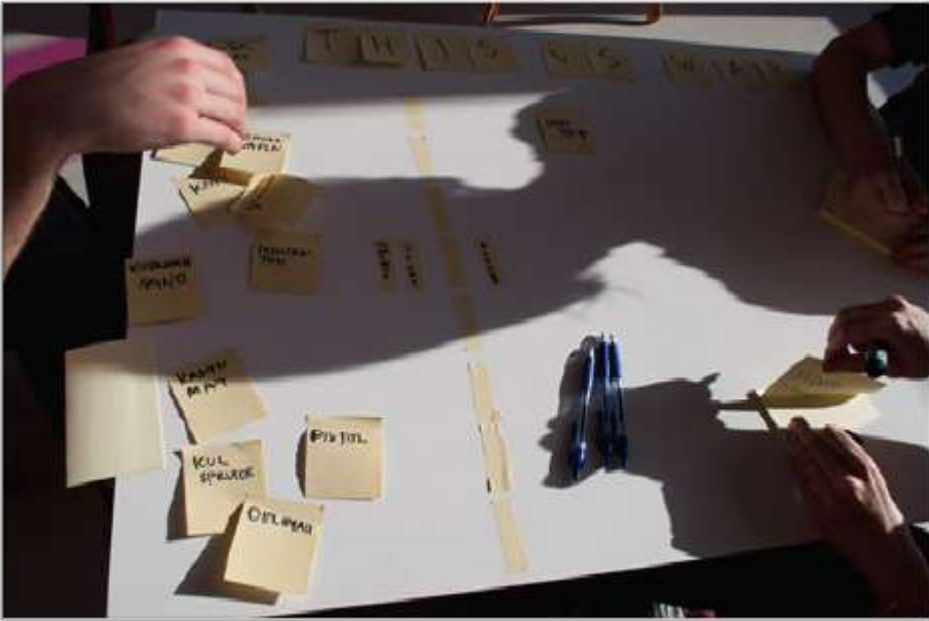


Fig.13. The workshop.

Outcome

The outcome of the workshop was first and foremost the inspiration for the possible next prototype. During the discussion we reach a few interesting conclusions about reward as a

motivator as well as about the social structures around participating in these types of transmedia narrative.

Reward

When discussing reward as a motivator we defined a couple of different types of rewards, first the factual reward, where the reader would gain some type of token, either a real life artifact that would be collectable or an abstract reward, like a score system. This would move the whole thing even further down the slippery slope towards making an ARG instead of a transmedia literary fiction narrative, but since this is only within a contained part of the narrative it might prove interesting to combine gaming elements with the more classical story telling.

Obligations and fear of commitments

At length we also discussed and talked about what holds the reader back, like fear of commitment as well as the fear of being engaged in something not fully comprehensible. We talked about the notion about being chosen for something and how to make more than one person feeling this way, in the second part of the workshop focusing on how to engage a group in a small hive mind, but at the same time having someone act out an opposite role.

Bringing life to Sam

To make Sam more realistic the idea formed to have him following someone, online or in real life, with the help of for example hacking a persons' facebook account and retouching some of their pictures, adding Baron Samedi to them. This to create an eerie feeling of something being wrong, but to not make it go to far, we concluded that it needed to be someone familiar with the story of Sand, maybe a participant from the earlier experiment.

Prolouge

The blog made in the last exploration was turned into an epilogue since it appeared outside *Sands* timeline and placed itself as happening afterwards. The idea to create an ARG-like story experience for the prologue, to kick some readers into the digital environment got stuck on us during the discussion. The hope is that the readers would move from one medium from the other, since the different shapes the story takes accommodates for the other developments. Keeping a consistency in behavior in the characters of *Sand* makes it easier to believe that someone is stalked by *Sam* just as *Cilia* feels like someone who would blog.

That the prologue consists of characters and story parts that are interconnected to later parts of the story is accommodated by the fact that the story is inherently non-linear in its approach to time.

For the suggestion for the prologue I have chosen to work with a part of the text near the end of the primary storyline. This part is meant to be used as inspiration when elaborating on how to create the prologue.

From text to possibilities

When choosing what part of the text to use, the decision fell on using a part which accommodates several characters as well as multiple geographical locations, to create a setting that invites for further elaboration on the possibilities of the storyline.

In the text at this point the storyline is very obviously non-linear. It moves the characters from one set to another. Starting out in Malmö, by a rip in the time space continuum the characters are then moved back in time to Paris, to a night that occurs earlier in the book, but is not talked explicitly about in the text when it does play out on the timeline. This part of the text does also work as an entry point to the narrative, since it is consistent in style with the rest of the text, and does not demand any knowledge of the story world. This is one of the strength with *Sand* in this context, that the manuscript in itself does not have a tightly constructed timeline for the story.

“[...]A something, anything to hold on to. The plants snaking their way through my mouth towards the sky, my spine broken bit by bit. How I merge into my surroundings, taking over. Dancing little fellows with their cymbals hitting hard against eachother. There is really not much more going on now. [...]

The world implodes and people around me are turned inside out. I want to take my bike and go home. It is not as exciting the second time as the last. The blood on Rajanis cheeks splatter to the ground, Sam’s hat is growing larger; into almost an infinite size. Paris rips my insides. Twist, turns and bends.

The leaves hanging over me bursts and fills the air. We are outside the entrance to le Divan du Monde, looking around us. Malmö hangs in shreds, ripped and torn like skin after teeth too eager. Sam stands hanging by the wall with a cigarette in his hand and an appreciative smile playing on his lips. I guess this is how it should look, according

to him, somewhere between city and flesh. The squirrel is still here, running back and forth, some paces away. [...] ”

The how and why this rip appears is never laid clear in the primary storyline, it just happens and has to be accepted as that. The reader does not get a proper explanation about it, and does not know why Sam wants this to appear, or how he makes it so, for that matter. Even if the further development of the story shows to some extent what his plan is, the reader only learns what he wants, but is not told why he wants it at this point.

Rajanes role

The character of *Rajane* is not clear at this stage either – just like *Sam* - , even though it is obvious that she is not bound by a human body, using different people in the text as hosts or *Iwas* (from the voodoo religion, a human that is possessed with a spirit of sorts from the voodoo pantheon). There is space for elaboration and further dwelling on her too, although she has been pushed forward in the epilogue/blog from the third exploration. She is during the exploration only talked about in third person, and can therefore at this stage act as a cluebomber within the framework of the prologue.

Cilias role

The main character is in this part of the story slowly reaching her breaking point, getting (rightly so) tired of being bossed around both by her own needs and wants as well as her surroundings. In her almost laconic response to what happens she still can't help being dragged along and wanting it to continue. Curiosity might not kill the cat, but definitely looks like it could harm or hurt some other animals.

Sams role

Sam is not bound by time and space in the same way as the actual human characters of the story. This accommodates well for him when taking the role as clue bomber to the helpers. He is not omnipotent but does have traits of it, since his ability to move through time as space. He can unhindered find out things about the victim or *Cilia* in many cases. He does however need to be able to get what he want with a certain amount of free will from the victims side, and this is the reason he needs his helpers. Since he suspects *Cilia* is quite tired of him and his plans, he therefore try to stay in the shadows. He also tests his helpers by having them figure out at least some parts for themselves, to know they are eager enough

Time is now broken

Since *Cilia* exists both on the primary storylines timeframe and through her appearance on facebook and poetry readings in the actual timeline (reality), her reflections are not deemed to be inside the same framework as other transmedial appearances from the book but she can comment from another viewpoint, at this last stage I can make use of this to make it more apparent to the reader that what happens in the prologue does not necessarily happen before the beginning of the books storyline.

My idea is to create a branching out based on the text but set in its own temporality and outside of the main timeline. Since the timeline is so obviously broken in the text, there is space to make things happen at an earlier stage but depicted as still happening at the same time. This idea of the multiple timelines that feed into each other does fit into the primary narrative and story line without changing the feel of it.

Set up

The prologue will be set up as a type of ARG, where the players either take the role as Sams “helpers” or as the “victim”. One person will be stalked and tracked down by *Sam* and his helpers, and that person will be helped out by *Cilia* to escape in the end. The idea is to create what I would call a WTF-moment for the readers engaged, and create a need for them to go deeper into the narrative. The ARG is set up to be played out in a set time span, so that the obligations for the players won’t feel like they have infinite obligations towards the story. The ARG will be played out mostly online through e-mails and message boards, but it will also need the participants to pick up things and clues in physical space.

For the players, *Sam* or *Cilia* will act as a cicerones, tell them what and when to do things, and dropping clues.

Timespan

The time span of the prologue will be the two months, starting up three months before release of the finalized manuscript. This is so to make time for a richer body of story.

The explorations have all been done in around a week, which has been suitable for that type of more controlled experiments. During them however many of the participants felt ready for expansions. Like Lisa Grubb said, cited above in the second exploration *Everybody is on facebook*, there was a frustration and a want for knowing more.

Course of events

The prologue will start out with the spreading of a website address. Here the participants will have the possibility to enter their e-mail address. Out of the ones who do, one will be singled out as a victim, and the others will be connected to *Sam* as helpers. The helpers will then

receive a confirmation e-mail formulated asking for help, giving them an additional web address to second page containing a movie clip with *Sam* telling them how angry he is, and how he needs help getting things done, once and for all. The victim will at the same time receive an anonymous e-mail with an image of herself, stolen from her facebook page or similar, with a tall man in a hat edited into the background. The comment "I thought you should know/*Cilia*" will be all the e-mail says.

Another e-mail arrives to the victim's inbox from *Cilia*, containing a couple of questions. Upon answering, a conversation is started. *Cilia* tells some back story, at the same time as starting to hint that they know each other, asking about a party, a common acquaintance. *Sam* e-mails his followers with backstory at the same time. At the website for *Sam*'s helpers, a forum is set up, so that they can keep contact.

The victim also here receives an e-mail of an image of her and *Cilia* from another unknown sender, the e-mail only saying that they know you know each other. The helpers receive an e-mail telling them to pick something up for *Sam*, at a shop down in the city. Upon asking for *Maria* (Rajane) they will be given a tooth, each of them with a small letter printed on the side of it. The letters form an address that goes to *Cilia*'s blog, the epilogue of the story.

The conversation with *Cilia* has been broken shortly, after a message ending with "I can't talk anymore". No answer to responding e-mails will be given for over two weeks. In the meantime the victim will see pictures pop up on facebook where she is tagged, images of her with *Sam* in the background.

Some of the helpers have at this point been sent private e-mails from *Sam*, containing pointers towards the victim. They are encouraged to share their knowledge on the forum with each other and discuss how to help *Sam*.

The victim will now receive an e-mail from *Cilia*, asking to meet up. At the same time one of the helpers is sent to the same address where they will meet, to spy. *Cilia* will during the meeting keep asking about the man in the hat, if the victim has seen him anywhere. After a short time, *Cilia* will leave a note on the table and leave without saying anything. The note will say "They are watching, had to go."

The helpers are after this incident to begin pretending to want to protect the victim. They are to try to lure her to drink a decoction of ginger and lime. The decoction is said to create a better environment for the growth of maggots inside of the body. The maggots are already placed within the mythology from *Cilia*'s blog, as being what *Sam* and *Maria* were after.

After this incident an escalation must take place, as here begins the part where the story can fork depending on how the victim or helpers respond.

The victim will be lured to go to a specific place, where she is told that *Cilia* is captured. If she chooses not to go, she will receive a series of e-mails containing images of *Cilia* being tortured in a similar way as in the book and the epilogue (having her entrails cut out, and so on). The final one will be an image of *Cilia* dead, with the note “happy now?”

If the victim goes here, she will have to help *Cilia* to escape, while *Sam* is trying to talk her into staying. Eventually they will manage to escape. On the way out, *Cilia* explains what *Sam* was after.

The helpers will receive photos of the event, posted on the forum. When the event is finished, the information gathered should be left on the internet, and the address to the forum and other important instances will be scribbled in the physical book *Sand*, on one of the first pages. (See appendice 1 for overview)

Roles

The different roles the participants will have during this staged event will help them relate to the narrative at large and form a personal bond to either each other or the cicerone. For the helpers I've tried to construct a situation where they will gain social status by sharing information.

For the victim, the bond with *Cilia* will accommodate for the same thing. The possibility of taking on the role of the hero in the end of the prologue is set to start up an inner discussion about ethics within the victim, to again, tie her more closely to the character.

Lurchers

The lurchers will have the possibility to join the forum and enter the discussions with the helpers. Some threads could have password protection to keep them out, but most information should be viewable to anyone. Off course the password can be shared by anyone at any time.

It will be hard to lurch around the victim's part of the story. There will however be no restriction for the victim to talk about what happens. The strange images that will turn up on facebook will also be viewable by everyone.

Bridges

The forum and the photographic images will act as bridges between the different media, as well as the live events in the physical world. To understand what happens in real life, you need to take part on the internet and vice versa.

Every instance of the prologue can be seen as a short story, but to grasp the context one needs to participate or lurch around the forum. The whole event is a build up towards the book, but it isn't needed to understand the book. The reader will however gain access to deeper levels of the story if participating in both.

It's important to keep the instances of the transmedia story functioning on their own, if not else, so not to put all eggs in one basket. A reader shouldn't be confused by any of the instances more than necessary, so that all readers can choose their own entry points and levels of engagements in the story. For the readers of the book only, there will still be a possibility to go online and read what it says on the forum and see the images, that will then function as clues to what really happened in the book.

Conclusions

The field of digital transmedial literary fiction is still very young and with upcoming tools for collecting data and creating hubs to accommodate these types of at times vast story worlds, there are many possible developments or evolutionary paths that this type of fiction could take.

When trying to bridge the gap between narratives it turned out that it was imperative to keep close watch of the tools used for navigating various interfaces, so that they wouldn't become more complex and put too many layers of interaction between the reader and the story. Finding points that would accommodate the ontological fusion between the reader's fictional ego and the story of the book seemed to be depending on this. It became apparent to me through my workshop as well as earlier discussions as mentioned in this paper that when discarding the primary qualities of reading like comparative temporality (that the timeline of the narrative is independent from the timeline of reality) and the space that textual fiction creates in the mind of the reader, it was best to do the classic and Keep It Simple, Silly.

One affecting parameters that cannot be excluded from this discussion is that my core readers were not “tech savvy”, and an audience with more insight in how to use different communication platforms might have reacted differently to the explorations. To change the audience would however not be too good, since the intended audience is a reader of literary fiction.

This thesis has aimed to explore how to expand a narrative and keep the readers with you, even when leaving one medium for another, and to do so I've let my manuscript *Sand* go transmedial. In doing so I've changed the story, but I also changed my readers. They did not come to this with any preexisting knowledge of transmedia, and when exploring they changed their behavioral patterns, from the first to the third exploration.

By constructing a proposal to a possible prologue as a thought experiment rather than playing it out, I had no possibility to test if this would work without the build up as with the earlier experiments. From what knowledge I've gained however, to me it seems constructed to work well with either audience.

Discussion

*“- What happened to the omniscient author?
- Gone interactive.”*

Jeanette Winterson, The powerbook.

Textual media does keep space for the readers own inventions and interpretations in a very unique way. For me, the difference from for example film are obvious. But to use film or medias alike to set up and strengthen a narrative whose primary form is textual can still in it's own ways accommodate this, if used as mood setters rather than to play out and reveal storylines in a concrete way.

Both the epilogue and prologue spoken about in this thesis does create new storylines but the first does this by text and the second does it partly as an ARG. These are however outside of the primary storyline and would therefore work more as strengtheners of this setting rather than fixating the framework for the reader. They are deliberately confusing, both to fit my style of writing and to keep an open backdoor for the reader whose mind needs to escape into own creations and musings to keep itself interested.

Writer and Designer

Since I've had a double role throughout this work, I've also had a very split stance towards this. For me as a writer when I began playing with the idea of creating transmedia narratives I

was at the start very much a skeptic when it came to the whole collaborative part. Much of the transmedia world as it looks today is based on hive minds and communal efforts, but I wanted my text to live on it's own. I wasn't too keen on letting just anyone rewrite and change my story world.

Writing a manuscript for a book in literary fiction takes time, and this time does make it into a very dear document, something quite hard to let go of. This is a world where the writer is omnipotent, if I want to discard a character I can do so, if I want to add something I can.

As a designer I wanted to create something enticing for the user. Even if I've chosen to refer to her as a reader at most times it is inevitably a user that will explore and use the parameters of *Sand* and the interfaces connected to *Sand* to create her own experience.

I also knew as a designer that tapping into the hive mind or create collaborative parts would be a good way to create a social structure that would enable reward, even though the storyworld in itself would not be so large that it in itself would be able to accommodate enough rewards to keep the user occupied.

This presented a conflict for the two roles that at the beginning I decided to approach through stepping slowly into the narrative and breaking of the same, myself. By starting outside the narrative with the back of the book, I could ease the writer in me slowly into the idea of starting to rip up the walls around my need of being in charge. Also by using the epilogue and prologue to accommodate the parts inspired by ARGs and other collaborative forms of exploration I could also create an environment that would let the users or readers explore and change the subplots presented in these, without it affecting the main narrative, outside of my control.

I made the decision to listen both to my designer side and my writing side since it felt imperative to the text that I would not disregard my experience as an author. When creating transmedia projects for other manuscripts than my own, to me it feels important that this will be in collaboration with the author and that it is made with great respect for the work of such an author. The work and emotional engagement that goes into writing longer manuscripts cannot be pressed upon enough.

Finalizing the novel in its entirety

As *Sand* is a multilayered story and non-linear in it's construction, there was multiple possible points where I could place the transmedia structures, and choosing also had the element on what part of sand I as a writer wanted to push into being, in other word publish, before the actual publishing of the manuscript. My intention is to use the transmedia sections and their

result from both my writing and the collaborative efforts as in experiment three with the blog when publishing the whole story as one entity.

For a final publishing I would add several more transmedia pivot points and use these developed ones as precursors but also to weave into the final rendering of the book.

As discussed in the section *Choosing pivot points* I chose to develop transmedia additions to *Sand* in a section of the actual text where there was possibilities for several different storylines since this is where the reader will understand fully that there is no linearity to the events in the book. My hope is that this insight will enable further merging of the reader into the story world, creating a possible point of ontological fusion, by using the confusion and then insight within the readers both fictional and real ego.

Future Work

This work has been focused on exploring the possibilities of creating a transmedia fiction around an already set literary fiction, where the creator of both are the same. It is therefore not part of this study to at any length look into how to do this on a more general level. How would this work if I was the designer and say for example, *you* would be the author of the novel I design the story world for. Some of my findings might be applicable in a more general context, but it is intentionally not formulated as such. A future contribution to this type of studies would possibly be looking into the relationship between the designer and the author when they are two separate and possibly compare this to how the result would be when being like this and both are the same person.

Literature studies has neither been touch upon in this thesis, nor has the studies of reading. To fuse this into it would certainly bring another layer to the text, although it is a restriction I've chose to make because of the nature of the positioning this paper has.

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