



CREATIVE PROCESSES IN A CYBRID COMMUNITY

Jorge Luiz ANTONIO

Instituto de Estudos da Linguagem, Unicamp, Campinas, Brasil

Abstract: *The development of communications technologies created a straight relationship between men and communication machines like collective computer which makes part of mostly people's life, as if we became a kind of interface between the real and the virtual reality. As it does exist and influences our lives, it is important to think of the intercultural cybrid context in the creative processes (arts and literature, for example). Do we really live in a cybrid community, that is, a time in real world and another in virtual world? How frequently are we real or virtual participant? Does the convergence of new media really exist? Are we going to become avatars, like the characters of the film with the same title? This paper intends to study hybridism in cyberculture under the viewpoint of the cybrid community in arts and literature, using commented examples of collaborative and collective works made from an announcement in emails or sites, with participations of many people from many countries.*

Keywords: *cyberculture, cyberliterature, cybercommunity, cybrid community, creative processes, literature, poetry, arts, design and technologies, techno-art-poetry*

1. FIRST CONCEPTS

The theme of this international conference – redefining community in intercultural context – is very opportune for us to think about the way we nowadays live in our countries and in relationship with other countries by many means of communication technologies which help us to pay attention to other viewpoints. That is what we could really appreciate in the first edition annuals and what we do hope to find in this second edition of the event.

The focus of my speech is some creative processes in this redefined community, or in the community which definition is in progress and in process, especially the relationship between virtual and real community, that is, what we call as cybrid community.

It is important first to explain the word “cybrid” as a word composed by the prefix “cy” from “cybernetics” plus the “suffix” “brid” from the word “hybrid”. The most interesting and possible pioneer in using the concept of the cybrids, according to my researches is Peter Anders (1997). Based on

the concept of the cognitive use of space, Anders considers cyberspace as an extension of our mental space. Referring to the field of cyberspace design, he treats about the artists, designers and engineers who work at the boundaries of their professions. This is what he denominates as anthropic cyberspace (Anders, 2001), a human-based relationship between space and information, space and cyberspace. This concept is called as cybrids (Anders, 1997) and it was extended by other theoreticians to the culture, art and poetry.

For the purpose of this lecture we can focus on the concept of cybrid community in its relationships with arts, design and technologies in general, and with poetry in particular, that is, the techno-art-poetry.

The creative processes involved in the techno-art-poetry is made in the anthropic space or as cybrids, according to Anders (1997, 2001), for it is marked by a progressive oscillation of thought between materiality and abstraction. And it is not confined in the realm of one discipline, similarly to the printed poetry linked only to the verbal sign that expresses visuality, movement, intertextuality,

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interactivity, and so on. It is made of verbal and non verbal signs and takes into account the creative processes of arts, design and makes a poetic use of the technologies as well.

The concept of a cybrid community was foreseen by McLuhan and Fiore, when they said that “the new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village” (McLuhan; Fiore, 1969, p. 41). The image included in that page was very clear to understand the notion:



Fig.1 The notion of global village (McLuhan; Fiore, 1969:41)

The Global Village can be understood as a kind of cybrid community for it is real, or begins with a real situation, and it is simultaneously a mental space, similarly to the concept of cybrids made by Anders. We are linked to and are part of it.

We are in a digital community, but we also live in a real community where we establish relationships with other citizens of our country. So we are member of a cybrid community. It is more than two worlds, but another one: the cybrid world where we live, between digital media and the real world, has had its beginning when we started using all kind of communication technology, like, for example, the correspondence services that post offices do.

Communication technology can be understood as several types of machines with which we establish mediation among persons:

one-to-one (letters, telegraph, telephone, e-mail), one-to-many (newspaper, movie, radio, television, the reading of on line newspaper) e many-to-many (chats, newsgroups), according to the communication theoreticians; the internet gathers the three types of communication.

Among these communication technologies, we have a machine, which produces language and simulates worlds by numbers, that is, creates virtual realities, redefines our community much better than other communication technologies as telephone, radio, fac-simile or fax, newspaper, etc. For Johnson (1997) the interface culture is the new technology which transforms the way we create and communicate and he studies under some elements: bitmapping, desktop, windows, links, text, and agents. The computer and its essential and additional components offer this interface culture which makes us to become a sort of cybrid human beings, for we become part of the cybrid world, and starts living in two communities at the same time and sometimes timeless, we are linked with many countries by the computer, but we are, at the same time, a real three-dimensional person who lives in a city, has a family, a work, etc.

Theoretically many authors name this phenomenon as intercultural digital context (that is my point of view from the theme of this conference), anthropic cyberspace (Anders, 2001), cybrids (Anders, 1997), interface culture (Johnson, 1997), linked world (Barabási, 2009), brave cybrid world (Beiguelamn, 2004), visual technology (Kromm; Bakewell, 2010), technological culture (Moles, 1973), technopoly (Postman, 1994), etc. Books like *Linked* (Barabási, 2009), *The Twitter Book* (O'Reilly; Milstein, 2009), *Web semantic* (Koogan, 2005) and *YouTube* (Burgess; Green, 2009), among others, emphasized the importance of one community which exists between tridimensional and digital space: a cybrid community. That is, for the main purpose of this paper, a cybrid community where we live, in which also circulates creative processes like digital art and techno-art-poetry. This is what we can denominate as cybrid community or

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the art of creating everywhere, as a space of creative processes.

The three paragraphs by McLuhan are opportune for our focus:

Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication (McLuhan; Fiore, 1969:8).

All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the message. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments (McLuhan; Fiore, 1969:26).

Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us unique ratios of sense perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act – the way we perceive the world (McLuhan; Fiore, 1969: 41).

The medium is not only the message or the message, as said McLuhan (1969), but also the place of art nowadays, therefore a community, since the beginning of the symbolic space of interconnected computers, and, to a great extent, become a virtual community of artists. We can establish that this virtual activity started with Mail Art in 1960, but we need to take into account that the written correspondence between persons and institutions had been other predecessors of virtual community as well, when the computers didn't exist, because the communications were mostly made by letters, messages and notes.

Nowadays when we are alone we perform as if a crowd were with us in the silence of our room, especially when we are connected in a PC, notebook, netbook, or tablet. It is better to say we don't live alone anymore, even being away from everybody, though we also need to be with other persons. Wired or wireless equipment can put us in contact with the world. There is no physical presence with us, but an intermediation can supply this absence.

The WWW represents this world and it is formed by engineers of worlds, the artists of the future, as stated Pierre Levy in *Cyberculture*. To be connected is not only to be linked in a network, but has the sensation of being part of any kind of connection. Besides being in the WWW we should be part of our physical society in all meanings.

2. COMMENTED EXAMPLES

Some examples should be commented for they have been the motivation of this paper.

In the Mail Art (1960-nowadays) movement the medium (the post office technologies which intermediates the sending and the receiving documents and messages) receives a creative intervention of artists, writers and poets and the technology itself became a medium of arts and their messages also. And all the terms and ways of work have changed into art processes.

Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes, by Raymond Queneau (French), a work of 1961, is from the OuLiPo group (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle) (Workshop for Potential Literature), is the most famous examples of a potential poem, for "each line of a sequence of ten sonnets can be interchanged with the corresponding line of another of the sonnets. This configuration of lines and text enables the reader to manipulate ten pages of text into one hundred trillion different poems (Funkhouser, 2007, p. 34). In order to read all these sonnets it would be necessary many persons who would become a community of readers, under a good planning for being possible to read all possible combinations. A person alone, reading 8 hours a day, would take more than 100 years to complete his task. The same happens with the use of computational programs which make this reading possible by means of a special, as did Tybor Papp (Hungary) in 1994 (only available on a CD-ROM); Florian Cramer (Germany) in 1996: <<http://permutations.pleintekst.nl/queneau/poemes/poemes.cgi#blocked>>; Magnus Bodin (Sweden) in 1997: <<http://x42.com/active/queneau.html>>; among others. The computational version would become, then, a

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cybrid community of readers and this group would bring interesting results of this kind of research (or perhaps a deception, in the case of not all of one hundred trillion poems is good enough).



Fig.2 Raymond Queneau- *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes*

During the 1980's, the multimedia artist and digital-visual poet Silvestre Pestana (Portugal) included the digital media (projections, television screen, light) as part of his performances.



Fig.3 Silvestre Pestana (Portugal) (Poet's courtesy)

Newsgroups like *Webartery* (Canada) – www.webartery.com – (1996-nowadays), coordinated by Jim Andrews (Canada) for

many years, is certainly one cybrid community of digital arts, poets and theoreticians of new media arts and literature.

Baila is a site created by Loss Pequeño Glazier, Kellie James, Sadie Reid and Carrie Syckelmoore (USA), in 2005 - <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/glazier/e-poetry/london> - which participated of dance spectacle.

Noisgrande, coordinated by Fabio Oliveira Nunes (Brazil), of 2006, is another interesting cybrid art community and a magazine object. The title needs to be explained: “nóis” is a popular expression of “nós” (we) in Portuguese and “grande” is “great”. The important relationship is of “Noisgrande” (we are great) with “Noigrandes”, the Concrete Poetry Group from Sao Paulo, Brazil, of 1950's (Haroldo de Campos, Augusto de Campos, Decio Pignatari, Ronaldo Azeredo and others). The plastic nut refers to “nós”, which also means “nut” in Portuguese. Then we have a plastic nut, a tridimensional object, which is a magazine object, but, at the same time, is a digital magazine object, because the mini-CD-ROM offers us the possibility of accessing its contents and appreciate a tribute to Ezra Pound.



Fig.4 *Noisgrande* – Fabio Oliveira Nunes and others - 2006

Chris Funkhouser (USA) make a cybrid performance in Sao Paulo at PUC SP (Pontifical Catholic University of Sao Paulo, Brazil) in 2007, using three multimedia projectors.

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Fig.5 Chris Funkhouser – Cybrid Performance 2007

Circuito Aberto de Performance em Rede (Open Circuit of Net Performance), coordinated by Daniel Lima Santiago (Brazil) and performed by all participants on December, 15th, 2008, is a signifying example for our purpose. It is indeed a genuine cybrid artist community. The title needs to be clarified: “em rede” means “in net” or “in network”, but “rede”, in Portuguese, has the meaning of “hammock” or “woven fabrics”. In North and Northeastern Brazil people sleeps in their hammocks.

The main proposal of the project was to make any kind of performance in any place using a hammock at the same day, that is, on December, 15th, 2008. Many persons from many places (Brazil and outside) participated and sent their performance to Daniel Lima Santiago at the same day. The presentation of this individual performance became a cybrid artist community when Daniel presented each participant in a kind of digital panel by means of software (Powerpoint).

Any digital or non digital technology can receive the intervention of an artist and/or a poet and have its pragmatic transformed by creative processes, being cybrid or not. The webcam device, for example, would make us to perform with other artist in other country at the same time or not. Though the webcam is not much used by artists, we have some examples of cybrid artistic community: José Roberto Sechi (Brazil) made two videoperformances using a webcam in 2009,

that is “ação com tabaco” (action with tobacco) and BarriGA (Belly), using a performance recorded in a webcam with an artist in Chile in 2008. Cell phones offer two kinds of messages: SMS (Send Message Service) and MMS (Multimedia Message Service); the first one has already a poetic intervention, which is the SMS Poetry, which started with a promotion made by the poets Peter Sanson and U. A. Fanthorpe (UK) in 2001 with a context in the newspaper *The Guardian* - www.guardian.co.uk (7500 inscriptions of 4700 cell phones).

Many other examples should be listed and commented, in order to indicate that digital communication technologies would permit us to widen our artistic experience.

3. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

According to the concepts we have listed in this paper, it is important to pay attention to what happens around us, especially to take into account that new creative processes are being constructed in the community we live.

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