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ABOUT THE INTERNET IMAGINARY AND ITS EVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT: In this article, «About the Internet Imaginary and its evolution», which short version was first published in December 2006 on the Contemporaneous Art International Center (CIAC) Electronic Magazine of Montréal, <http://www.ciac.ca/magazine/sommaire.htm>, I put the focus on the Internet Imaginary evolution, in a historical and philosophical way. Since more than 150 years, writers, poets, philosophers have imagined that some day, the networks will allow man to be near to anyone, near to the artworks, near to the books etc... So, after having clarify in what meaning I use the term «imaginary», I try to look at some art works, some social behaviours, that shows us something as an Internet Imaginary, and the evolution of this imaginary. First, I notice how the networks have been the scene of contact and travel, since Marcel Proust «Telephone Ladies» to the novel Neromancer. Secondly, I search how men have conquered Internet to make him a place to stay, and to accumulate immateriel goods - which will correspond to the web 2.0. And last, I show , how Internet has act as a substitute scene of religion, and how the evil has taken its place on it. My article has the aim to analyse the distorsions between the real social network that Internet is and how the imaginary as depict it - so that we can see it how it is realy.

KEYWORDS: Internet Imaginary. Evolution.

INTRODUCTION

Whereas the Internet, in 2007, arrived at a stage of maturity in the majority of the developed countries, it is advisable to wonder about the premonitory texts and the works of fiction which preceded it and accompanied it, on the imaginary that it feeds, and on the nightmares which it continues to generate. Its

imaginary is neither timeless nor universal, it has a history, that we must analyse without any exaggerate enthousiasm or pessimism. The Internet, more than majority of the inventions of the XX° century, is a machine to make dream, to imagine.

Even before as it exists in the form we know since about thirty years, even quite before, it had been imagined by the most clear-sighted spirits of the XX° century, and even of the XIX° century. Current source of the imaginary, it is itself resulting from an aggregation of scientific and humanistic Utopias, prophecies and daydreams on which not a few people would have bet. Its darkest face has been imagined, quite before as it has been revealed by the facts.

JULES VERNE

Among the writers having imagined the future best more, the French novelist Jules Verne, in his novel going back to 1860, Paris au XX° siècle¹, described the organization of Paris in year 1960 in this way: "the telegraph network then covered the whole surface of the continents and the sea-bed... photographic telegraphy, invented at last century by professor Giovanni Caselli of Florence allowed to send to far the facsimile from any writing, autograph or drawing and to sign bill of exchanges or contracts 5000 away miles".

Paul Otlet², Belgian documentalist, far before writing its famous "Treaty of documentation, the book on the book", wrote at the end of the XIX° century "One can imagine the electric telescope, allowing to read at home books exposed in the room teleg of the large libraries, in the pages requested in advance. It will be the telepicture book".

And the French poet Paul Valéry himself, who in a famous text, The conquest of ubiquity³, published in 1928, expects that « works will acquire a kind of ubiquity. Their immediate presence or their restitution at any time will obey our call. They will

¹ VERNE Jules, *Paris au XX° siècle*, Le Livre de Poche, 2002

² OTLET, Paul, *Traité de Documentation: Le livre sur le livre*

³ VALERY Paul, "La conquête de l'ubiquité", in *De la musique avant toute chose* (textes de Paul Valéry, Henri Massis, Camille Bellaigue, etc.), Editions du Tambourinaire, Paris, 1928. Reproduit in Paul VALERY, *Oeuvres*, vol.II, Coll. "La Pléiade", Gallimard, Paris, 1960, pp.1284-1287.

not be only any more in themselves, but all where somebody will be, and some apparatus. They will be nothing any more but kinds of sources or origins, and their benefits will be or be found whole where one will want. Like water, like gas, as the electrical current come by far in our residences to meet our needs with the help of an effort quasi no one, thus will be fed to us from visual or auditive images, being born and disappearing with the least gesture, almost with a sign. »

TED NELSON

Closer to us, in 1960, the inventor of the hypertext, Ted Nelson have carried its invention in the form of a daydream with the baroque name of Xanadu⁴, polysemous word between all, since it indicated in turn the capital of the empire of Kublai Khan' S, the mythical house of the tycoon of Citizen Kane, the fictitious state in which Mandrake the magician lived, a great number of video games, entertainment parks, animated drawings, without forgetting the allegory of opulence in the famous poem of Coleridge, Kublai Khan, etc...

Today, whereas the zealoes of Web 2.0 speak loudly, whereas the media multinationals largely invested in the field of the Internet, it would be perhaps time to make a focus on the vertiginous gap which grew between the current, certainly out of complex practices of consultation, and hopes, daydreams, Utopias which accompanied since more than one century the establishment of the networks known under the name of Internet.

Before coming from there to treat abyss between the real use and the imaginary of the networks, perhaps it would be necessary to specify in which meaning the word "imaginary" will be used, what will avoid us many confusions.

The imaginary, in the meaning where we will employ it is not the construction of archetypal, collective representations, coming from the bottom of the ages, as Carl Gustav Jung understood it.

The concept of the German psychoanalyst, highly estimable, would be quite difficult to use in this case, and source of inaccuracies, since we will at the same time analyze literary

texts, social behaviors, works of art, all demonstrations which did not arise from the same register, and that it would be delicate to place under the prism of the depths psychology.

DEFINITION OF THE WORD IMAGINARY

The contribution of the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty will be to us on the other hand of a better help, who defines the imaginary as the "...lining of reality, the invisible, carnal other side of visible...". The imaginary is not, clearly, out of reality, nor atemporel. It is, beside the symbolic system, the face of reality revealed by the artist, or by whoever lingering to request the thought, it is "[...] power of restitution of an arising vision on the things and ourselves".

The imaginary, in this meaning, is beside reality. It circulates in parallel, and re-appears constantly, in a work of art which reveals it, in a word, in a behavior. The imaginary can also precede reality, as the science fiction writers do not deprive themselves any to do it. It can be, for reality, also its drag, as the collective memory ends up transfiguring it.

In any case, therefore, the imaginary, in the meaning where we will employ it, will not be comparable with the dream, with the fortuitous, with the non-intentional, nor with the powers of beyond. The imaginary is a deliberate construction of man, to allow him to better live the world. But it can also exceed this will, and take its autonomy, to return by where one does not await it. See how the imaginary can be transferred in reality will be one of the stakes of this article.

There is thus a real use of the Net. And then there is what artists, writers, philosophers, imagined, thought, and continue to think, to imagine.

Concerning the real use of the Net, one could find in the statistics of sites like *Le Journal du Net*⁵, or *Internet World Stats*⁶, a general survey of the practices of connection in the

⁴ <http://xanadu.com/>

⁵ <http://www.journaldunet.com>

⁶ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

world. If one were to stick to these data, the Net would be a synthesis of the telephone, postal mail, telegraph, newspaper, television, marriage bureau, trader, casino and of a whole heap of useful and useless services.

If one were to be satisfied to observe the planetary cartographies, showing an over-concentration of the networks in the developed world, and quasi an absence in Africa, in Latin America, in certain countries of Asia, one could think that the Net is just one transfer of observable commercial flows throughout the world.

But if one were to confine oneself with the only field of the quantifiable, how could be explained all the metaphors related to the voyage to speak about the Net, as if it were about another country, another world? How to understand the high number of terms borrowed from the field of the magic, religion, supernatural, such as "magic", "wizzard", "evil", to point out very simple software, without forgetting our famous Xanadu?

Isn't the Net a little more than a networks fusion? Does its perception not exceed the social and economic fact manifestly, in the imaginary? Artists, finally, writers, experimenters of all kinds, who dreamed the Internet before it exists, then who followed its invention, and who today still continues to question the profound changes that the network will have brought to our lives, did they influenced the history of its creation, through their own conceptual constructions, or did they do nothing but envisage and accompany what was to arrive?

DIGITAL IMAGE

As to answer these questions, we should initially question us about the digital image itself.

Today where power of the computers, and subsidiarily that of the networks, us allows to have a graphic image of high quality, we can forget as the image perceived on our screen is only the result of a succession of calculations and instructions given via the main memory of the computer. Each perceived pixel is the result of an addition of algorithms.

It is the main difference with the analogical image, that one develops at the revealing bath, after shouting it with a camera. The analogical image is the proof of a state of the proven world. As Roland Barthes in the Clambre Claire wrote "that was"⁷. For little that the shouten character is close for us, photography can cause in us this "satori where the words weaken, rare obviousness, perhaps unique of "Thus, yes, thus, and nothing more"⁸.

The digital image, even if it reproduces an analogical image, will be never of this kind. It does not tear off a material share of the past, that we can almost seize between our hands, like a tangible proof. It is never likely to install this temporal hiatus which we can feel with the vision of old films whose actors charm us and are all died for a long time. The digital image does not put to us in contact with "that was".

It put in, on the contrary, above the da-sein. What we see on our screen hardly come to the surface, and will disappear soon. The calculation which gave birth to this pixel, how can we be sure that it will be reproduced accurately, in an orthographical way?

The digital image, it is this infinitesimal moment where we perceive forms, colors, movements, where we read texts, without the least insurance of being able to put back us above. An asymptotic tension of visible towards the image, who never manages completely to convince us, to allow us to register in the duration what we are seeing. This is why the term of « numerical image » itself could be called into question. It is only by preoccupation with a clearness that we will preserve the common use of this term.

The part of the digital image in the construction of imaginary of the networks, because it is unstable, because it walks in the interstice between the reality and the image of reality, will have thus never to be underestimated.

⁷ BARTHES Roland, *La Chambre Claire*, 1980, éditions Cahiers du Cinéma Gallimard Seuil.

⁸ BARTHES Roland, *La Chambre Claire*, 1980, p.168, éditions Cahiers du Cinéma Gallimard Seuil

This ahead perception of the world which is inherent in the digital image, certainly try we to mitigate it, by mental projections

By weaving networks, who end up renewing the concept of communities, by testing by very many means to build a numerical inheritance, by seeking to recreate what the religious link had tied, or by transgressing the law, the habit and until the typographical use, the users of the network build a new cultural object, imperceptible, who would be incomprehensible if we didn't agree to hear what the imaginary says to us about it.

COULD THE REAL BODY RISE?

«[...] Danaïdes of the invisible who unceasingly empty, fill, transmit each other the urn of the sounds; ironic Furies who, at the moment that we murmur a confidence with a friend, with the hope that nobody heard us, us shout cruelly: "I listen"; always irritated maidservants of the mystery, easily offended priestesses of the invisible, telephone ladies! And at once that our call resounded, in the full with appearances night on which our ears only open, a light noise - an abstract noise - that of the removed distance - and the cherish voice is addressed to us. It is her, it's her voice which speaks to us, which is there. But as she is far! How many times I could not listen to it without anguish, like if in front of this impossibility of seeing, before long hours of voyage, that whose voice was so close to my ear, I smelled better what there is the disappointing one in the appearance of the softest bringing together, and at which distance we can be from loved people at the time when it seems that we would have only to extend the hand to retain them. Real presence that this so close voice - in effective

separation! But anticipation also of an eternal separation.»⁹

PROUST, Marcel, *Le côté des Guermantes*, tome 1

In volume I of the Côté des Guermantes, published in 1920, Marcel Proust could be still filled with wonder at the remote presence that the telephone dialogue inaugurated. In this rising XX^o century, it was not yet interdict to compare the operators of the telephone with Parques, Danaïdes, Furies, like he does on several occasions in the Recherche du temps perdu.

In his way, he inaugurated a rich intellectual and artistic production based on the concept of remote presence. He also foresaw that the immaterial network woven by two voices speaking remotely created a bridge between the beings, above one blurred, alarming, incognita terra, which evokes for him the "eternal separation" but which will be turn in a metaphoric way, otherwise, very differently.

Since, works being pressed on this device followed one another. To take only the example of the Hole in the space¹⁰ installation (1980) during which a cathode ray tube was installed in a street of New York, while an other was it in a street of Los Angeles, both connected by camera and microphone in real time, one can notice that what emerges from a network, it is not only the meeting, the woven link, but also the vacuum drawn around.

HOLE IN THE SPACE

The network put the focus as much on the presence in the absence, that on the absence in the presence. The title of the work of Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz indicates it rather clearly to us, who proposes a concept of lack, this "hole" in the space which became, the time of the installation, an attraction and a place of appointment for the walkers of the East coast and the West coast of the United States. It is thus a paradox, underlined all

⁹ PROUST Marcel, *Le Côté des Guermantes*, tome 1. Paris, Editions Gallimard. Page 65/158 dans l'édition en ligne de la Bibliotheca Augustana, http://www.fh-augsburg.de/~harsch/gallica/Chronologie/20siecle/Proust/pro_t300.html

¹⁰ « Hole in the space » Kit Galloway et Sherrie Rabinowitz, 1980, see on <http://www.ecafe.com/getty/HIS/index.html>

at the same time by Marcel Proust and the American artists: the network creates link by underlining the distance.

The distance brings closer the men, and leads them to change their ways of meeting, knowing, loving each other. The role of the artists, in one like the other case, will have been to underline what the technique implied. The technique made it possible to carry out the thing, like speaking on the telephone, or to set up a telematic network between two coasts of the United States, but one will have needed the will of an artistic gesture to make readable what the technique modified in the human psyché.

To still quote Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "science makes the world available, art makes it livable¹¹". But what the history of the networks setting-up and the Internet birth show us, it is that the traditional dichotomy between art and technique cannot be held any more for certain, for obvious. The power of imaginary of the networks scrambles the borders most firmly established. An experiment, like that reported by Allucquere Rosanne Stone, in her article " Could the real body rise?»¹², us shows how the first networks telematics constituted themselves, at the end of the Seventies, in this so favourable environment with the scientific and humanistic Utopias, north California.

The first members of telematics networks were adventurers, often student or professors in the many universities around Palo Alto, who had the first micro-computers, and who pay one's contribution to buy a telematic server. It was them who first gave a reality to the concept of electronic network. They who started to foresee what could be the Internet.

COMMUNYTREE

One of these first communities, connected by a telematic server, was called "Communitree" - because discussions, laid out in the form of tree structure on the screen, each new discussion in the form of a new branch materialized - and had as an aim the study of the new religions, forming this nebula called the new age. The

¹¹ *ibid*

profession of faith of this community did not certainly make in modesty, who affirmed "We are like gods, as much not scamp work!"¹³ But, as opposed to what the over-sensitiveness of Marcel Proust could blow to him, the members of this community did not see the distance between them, and immateriality of their network, like the preamble with eternal separation. Quite to the contrary.

What Alucquere Rosanne Stone underlines in her article, it is precisely the quasi instantaneous and unanimous transposition between this immaterial network and an experiment of proven social life. Those who belonged to this network had the impression to take part in a "new form of social experimentation".¹⁴ Why? The answer to this question is known, given by William Gibson with this famous formula: "The Net is a consensual hallucination"

Thus, members of Communitree, connecting themselves to the server which connected them to this first network, and discovering the tree structure of the messages, in graphic poverty that one can imagine, did not see simple lines of figures, then words aligning themselves on their tern screen, but saw human beings, full of spirituality, carrying a transformation project for humanity. No matter what one can think of a certain inherent naivety of this time, it is the power of networks imaginary which must be underlined.

One must remember about this experiment, told by Rosanne Stone, the way in which the small initial group of the participants in Communitree was quickly exceeded by young students, set on data processing, who wanted to hustle the beautiful unanimism of the network initiators, by communicating scatologic and sexual contents messages, all that one easily imagines.

It is however thanks to this "disorder" that the technique of the networks had to evolve, that the safety measures were born, and that obligation to have a "pseudonym + password", to exist on a network was established. The creation of a « password +

¹² STONE Alucquere Rosanne. *Le corps réel pourrait-il se lever ?* First publication : Cyberspace : First Steps, sous le direction de Michael Benedikt (Cambridge : MIT Press, 1991, pp81-118). Traduction française dans Connexions, Art, réseau, média, sous la direction de Annick Bureau et Natalie Magnan, Editions ENSBA, 2002

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*

pseudonym », it is the beginning of the concept of avatar and virtual life, such as they so well nowadays are known.

Of a jamming of the network creators's initial intention by young hackers, who wanted to prove their know-how, the establishment rose from a standard which appeared the most fertile one for the imaginary: The creation of a Pseudonym + Password, it is the first step towards this construction of oneself like another, who is the mark of the « addic-tionnel » lives on the network.

What it is necessary to retain of the experiment reported by Rosanne Stone, it is the way in which the network organization itself, in the form of tree structure will have transmuted a technical act into a social object. The symbolic system of the tree moreover will have more strongly marked imaginary of the network like social sculpture, like new way of being-together.

It is however again in the shape of a novel that fresh impulse, and in another direction, will be given to networks imaginary.

NEUROMANCER

In its novel "Neuromancer"¹⁵, published in 1984, William Gibson describes a universe of hackers, smugglers, performers, who fight in an existential fog, to find new ways of living their body in a saturated with informational technique universe.

The subject of Neuromancer, it is exactly that: how to live the - irrefutable - presence of the body, whereas techniques increasingly more effective make it possible to project it remotely. If Case, the hero of Neuromancer, always a body has, he does not regard it any more but as "meat", support of the spirit which, he, wants to travel on the data-processing networks, and lives its true life. The following step will be the decorporisation.

What Case and the other characters of Neuromancer indicate exceeds by far the framework of a science-fiction novel, and this is why this work will have such a posterity. Its popularity, overflow ensured by the mediums of the counter-culture, and by

the amateurs of science fiction, little by little the whole of the social body will gain, owing to the Matrix film, which will popularize his topics, until infiltrating the universe of publicity, drawing, fashion.

One of the more striking representations of Matrix, these long curtains of greenish figures oozing top to the bottom, and which materializes flows of information, became a gimmick to indicate the modernity of all that is in connection with networks technologies, such as telephone, Web, PDA, and for finally symbolizing the passage in another world.

MATRIX

But what remains from William Gibson intention apart from these some graphic signs ?

It is a question which one could ask by putting it in parallel with a novel having exceeded his framework much, like Don Quichotte. The novel of Cervantes remained by its character who became what is called a literary myth. Novel itself, and of its complexity, it does not remain more near general public this myth. But it is already much. In the same way, with Neuromancer, one holds an example among more striking way in which the literature of science fiction, on a set of themes related to the networks, will have been able to infiltrate the whole of the social body.

Belief in a plot theory, pushed until its extreme in Matrix, so much so that it's the apparent world itself which is the plot, here something which will have passed today in the popular beliefs of some owing to Neromancer. One can say in a very clear way that the fiction was introduced into reality and that the imagination of a novelist will have modified general public imaginary.

Just like a considerable fraction of the American people, with the question of knowing what is their religious belief, answers "The force", in reference to the Star Wars films, the social body reacted to the vision carried by William Gibson, and certainly far beyond the intentions of the author!

¹⁵ GIBSON William, *Neuromancien, J'ai Lu*, 1985, pour la première édition française.

MARSHALL MAC LUHAN

These fruitful Eighties, during which the technique of the networks telematics started to touch a first circle of users, set on data processing and mainly resulting from the academic world, are so strongly marked by the influence of work of Marshall Mac Luhan¹⁶, that one cannot overlook them.

With his famous mantra "the message is the medium", he directs the thought of his time, by the very fact that he carries the attention of the public towards the wide-area networks of information like television and the radio. What work of Mac Luhan changes, it is that one can start to regard the networks as a matter, and not only like the means of transport contents. Consequently, the tyranny of the contents, the tyranny of meant, can be evacuated, with the profit of the interest for the support of the contents themselves, that one can charge of meaning, that one can include in the factory of the imaginary.

Neuromancer was necessary to dare to imagine that the networks can become more than a transfer means of the numerical data, more still transport means for the spirit, a romantic matter. The following stage will be reached by certain theorists of the post-modernism and the gender studies as Donna Haraway in its famous Cyborg Manifesto¹⁷ which will make mix between body and technology the means of a rather fantasmatic emancipation... to tell the truth.

CYBORD MANIFESTO

However, one will measure how imaginary networks will have been able to evolve, since Marcel Proust and his telephone ladies to the Cyborg Manifesto, who postulates the introduction of the technique into the body. The technique is not external any more with the body, and support of the daydream, the technique returns in the body to increase the capacities and to release it by them.

¹⁶ MC LUHAN Marshall, *Understanding Media : The Extension of Man*. New York, McGraw Hill, 1964. Edition française : *Pour comprendre les média : les prolongements technologiques de l'homme*, Paris, Seuil, 1977.

¹⁷ HARAWAY Dona, Première publication : « *Manifesto for Cyborgs : Science, technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980's* », *Socialist Review* 80 (1985).

But what us proposes today, really, technique? The infiltration of chips in the human body to ensure the traceability of it, whatever the called upon reasons; prostheses of all kinds, visual for example, who mitigate deficiencies today, which will increase the capacities tomorrow to manufacture supermen; the remote control without the use of the hands nor of the feet, only thanks to the collecting of the nerve impulses?, etc... Nothing which is not, in germ, in the Cyborg Manifesto.

Thus can one observe how the imaginary could seize the networks of remote presence, with this first example given by the Telephone ladies, of Marcel Proust, where the technique is support of daydream, where the technique becomes the springboard to reinvest fantasmatic love reports.

A NEW ONTOLOGY

Did a new ontology was borned from this founder story, in which the lover learns that the body can be present in the absence, and symmetrically absent in the presence? The literary treatment that Marcel Proust gives to the analysis of this technical fact us makes it receive like a new chance for the literature, which consequently can release itself from the alternative presence/absence: in the presence, the characters are obliged to interact over the moment, in the spontaneousness of the dialogue, or in the fever of the bodies, and in fact are subjected to the risk of awkwardness, failure, incomprehension; in the absence, it is either the letter, or the thought addressed to the other, who makes him exist, apart from the truth of the body, and which sometimes disguises the other, with the risk of disappointment. The literary kind of the epistolary novel will be for a long time the way in which the literature will take party of the absence.

One will notice however with attention the dichotomy described by Proust, between on the one hand the comfort to hear the other, and to be able to take part his alive being in the moment - this network with two which is called quite simply the love - and in the other hand impression of tearing which cannot be removed of such a situation, for the simple reason that the other is not there, in reality, and that the writer transfigures like preamble with "eternal separation". This duality, consequently, will not

cease existing, in all the installations of remote presence, in all the experiments of social networks.

LOSS OF THE HUMAN BEING UNICITY

What is known as in it, it is this loss of the human being unicity, this human being that the Renaissance wanted "measurement of any thing", who becomes, because or thanks to the technique, a variable subjected to the risks of the networks. Either there is tearing, because human being is quartered between its real presence, in the moment, and its remote transfer, in the form of first his voice, then visual signal - this duet Login + password, who will transform himself into avatar, then in filmed image of the body, in the networks of visual telephony; either there is fusion, constitution of a network, in which the disappearance of the identity melts in a larger social being, more enveloping, where the questionings of the one disappear in the answers from all.

Then, with the technological changes that we knew during these last thirty years, this dream comes from a multi-connected man, who initially loses himself, seeks itself, sometimes finds himself, in a long drift, a voyage, on the wire of the networks, for finally arriving at this last stage, where one seizes networks to install them inside his own body, and makes of his body this giant, open chart, place of all the phantasms, utopian center of the wedding of technology and biology.

What the Cyborg Manifesto says to us, it is that this human being unicity, « measure of all things », who has been lost in the techniques of remote presence, can be found again, by connecting the networks inside his own body.

Such blockbusters as "Matrix", "Johnny Mnemonic", "Total Recall" can be seen like the result of this utopian current, inspired partly by Mac-Luhan, who began in the Sixties, then was based on technical progress to form a deposit.

This dichotomy, between on the one hand tearing, aggressiveness, who are translated in a visual way by dark, cold decorations, a pessimistic tone, such as one can see it in the sequences of

Matrix where the transfer is programmed, and in the other hand fusion inside the networks, like the scenes of collective fright, inside Zion, always in the Matrix series, part II, us shows, this dichotomy, therefore, remains - one being marked with negative sign of the first steps of the Web, and the other beginning again of the enthusiastic accents, that one believed arranged in the ray of antiquities.

WEB 2.0

In an article on Web 2.0, published at the end of the year 2006, Newsweek journalists, Steven Levy and Brad Stone, can conclude "the Cyberspace was a faraway place. The Net is our home¹⁸."» Like a way of drawing a line on a Cyberpunk imaginary, strongly dependent on the stammerings of the technique and all that imagination required to supplement, the report made by these two journalists takes note of what the networks are today: a coloured, practical, fluid interface, who entered the life of the every day like an obviousness.

¹⁸ Courrier International n°826, Steven Levy et Brad Stone, « Quand les internautes tissent eux-mêmes leur toile ».

Redoubled life?

However, would the Web have become like the corner of the street? Intense social life, promised by sites like Youtube¹⁹, Flickr²⁰, and other Myspace²¹ and Wikipedia²² could let it think. The Net would be thus this simple meeting of networks, who would allow to exchange contents, knowledge, to live an alternative sociability, in a kind of dreamed world, unconstrained, without the hideous capacity of the money.

NEW SOCIAL NETWORKS

An ideal world? The eagerness of the heralds of this Eden of shoddy goods to make it us believe would be enough to introduce the doubt...

If one examines a game like "Second Life²³", one will be able initially to consider that it carries out the hopes and the visions which always accompanied the network - the cyberspace like place favourable with the most extreme experiments, superlative Utopia.

As in Matrix, the network becomes more than a link woven between hosts, the network draws a new world. To paraphrase MacLuhan, "the media is the medium". What was in germ in these experimental Eighties, this rather cloudy "virtual reality" concept became the banality of the beginning XXI^o century.

SECOND LIFE

In Second Life, however, one will notice like the Utopia strongly divert toward consumerism: if the remote loading of the play is free, the player is very quickly conscious that without spending at least the price of the Premium chart, that is to say 9.9 euros per month, it could hardly be other thing than a walker.

¹⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/>

²⁰ <http://www.flickr.com/>

²¹ <http://www.flickr.com/>

²² <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accueil>

²³ <http://secondlife.com/>

This second life promised by the game, who would take place in a second world, is not reduced of the pecuniary contingencies - invoiced in Linden dollars - !

The only held promise, it is that to transgress nicely the interdict to be his own parent, by arranging his avatar, of which first steps, the binomial "pseudonym + key word" are developed here until in least the vestimentary and real estate details.

This second world, who tends more and more to resemble the first, since Second Life from now on is equipped with law firms, concerts, political movements - and why not, one day, of a Messiah! let us take the bet - does not hold a long time with the analysis, when one reads the official blog²⁴ of it, where a form of trickery bursts.

What a game as Second Life however leads us to note, it is the evolution of this imaginary related to the network: whereas Internet was perceived, in the novels, in the installations, like an experimentation and crossing point, it became an immaterial territory where the accumulation of immaterial goods is from now on possible.

MIXING REALITY, SYMBOLIC SYSTEM AND IMAGINARY

Accumulation and all that is dependent: the sale, the dissimulation, the robbery. The being-in-the-network would not be only any more this moment above the vacuum where two beings connect themselves, without their body being put in presence, it would be also data exchange, dialogue with an external storage, construction of a numerical inheritance, enacment of a real life.

One will note however as it is difficult to regard Second Life as raising only of the mode of the imaginary.

The money sums that some gain there are indeed one cannot more real, and land on compte courant of the player.

In addition, accumulation to which certain inhabitants of Second Life deliver themselves would not arise well more of the mode of

the symbolic system ? By requesting powerful collective imaginary creation around the networks, we evoked some aspects already, by mixing reality, symbolic system and the imaginary one, wouldn't a game as Second Life end up cancelling the potential of imaginary related to the networks?

To reformulate these questions under another angle, could not one wonder whether the effective realization of a mind construction, like the constitution of avatars, could end up killing the need for imagination which was dependent for him?

These are questions that one can put.

If the Net is another world, sure and tangible, where one could accumulate immaterial goods, it is necessary to consider there, in a symmetrical way that the disappearance of the human beings could have also a meaning in it. The example of the many sites intended to keep a trace of our dear disappeared shows it well to us. This one, for example, Christian memorials²⁵ seems organized like a material memorial.

THE NET AS A FAMILY MEMORY

The families can deposit there a photograph of their dear deceased, a short biography, testimonys of the close relations, what could bring closer this memorial a traditional funerary installation, tomb stone in a cemetery or epigraph in a columbarium. But one notes on this site that a music is associated to the space dedicated to death, as well as prayers and a certain number of signs coming under the field of the intimacy, as if commemorative space was not apart from the family circle, in a public place, but inside the house, like the ancestors altars of certain Asian families.

This commemorative space on the Net also makes it possible to the visitor to let durable traces, candle, flower, text, who will be preserved as long time as the site will exist, with the difference in their real equivalent, deposited in a cemetery and carried very quickly by the wind. A meter will record the number of flowers, the number of visits received by the dead one, and

²⁴ <http://blog.secondlife.com/>

²⁵ <http://www.christianmemorials.com/>

will allow to measure the index of popularity of him. Thus presented under his best day, the defunct can be visited there by all, but one supposes especially by his close relations.

However, by traversing one or the other of these testimonial sites, one will surprise oneself to visit the "numerical steles", with curiosity, quite conscious of traversing new territories.

What will certainly strike us, it is this disturbing feeling to take part of so close with the intimacy of the families of disappeared, well more than when we traverse the alleys of a traditional cemetery. The feeling which can traverse us, when we saunter in the alleys of a public cemetery, it is that to approach the mystery of death, in a rather external way, pondered. When these cemeteries on line are traversed, when one penetrates in this space which is halfway of the public sphere and private space, we have the feeling to approach more intimately this same mystery.

It is not no more « the death" that we approach, but such or such dead one. Disappeared are there, often fixed in their beautiful adolescence, a music, certainly their preferred piece, us restores their tastes, us redraws them such as they were to be.

If one thinks to the abundant literary production, especially in the XIX° century in Europe, but also in the traditional Japanese and Chinese literatures, around the dead ones who come back, and one will think of the potential of such sites for the romantic fiction! The commemorative web sites, who start from a real will for the families to build a new relation with dead thanks to the data-processing tools, contain in germ a complete renewal of imaginary which generated so many musical works, filmic, arts persons.

DONALD RODNEY

The most extreme case would however be that of this english artist, Donald Rodney, deceased in march 1998, who created a web site²⁶ charged to survive to him, and to maintain the fiction of his life. Whereas he felt his end to come, he indeed decided to

create a site which would be maintained by a group friends artists, site which continues to evolve in 2007, just like if his author was always there to occupy himself some. Isn't said that an artist remains always alive through his works! If his works continue to evolve, it is thus that he is always in life. In the rich history of the negotiation that the human beings always tried with death, the implacable death, the internet brings its outstanding contribution!

This capacity of the networks to keep in memory a trace of the alive ones, to even keep the illusion of the life, of course was the source of works of Net-art, like the Book of the Dead²⁷.

CEMETERY OF THE DISAPPEARED DATA

Like an ironic opposite course to numerical technologies brittleness, one will be able to consult the work of the French Net-artist Blue Screen, the Cemetery of the disappeared data²⁸ which preserves a trace of the lost data-processing files. The principle is simple, which asks each Net surfer wishing it to entrust to the Cemetery of the disappeared data the trace from a complete hard disk, or of a part only of this one: mail, photographs, videos, works in progress...

What such a net art work shows us, it is the capacity of the Net to become a space of retention, of accumulation, where the immaterial goods can bet on a certain perennality. But contrary to Second Life, who bets on the accumulation of immaterial goods in the game, contrary to the numerical cemeteries, who draw a new commemorative space, the Cemetery of the disappeared data bets on the conservation of a sign. Not any dear friend face to exhibit, nor brightly shining house, only perfectly neutral files, similar to all the other files, who keep the trace of professional or artistic work, mails, all kind of files, which never again will exist.

In the literature or painting history, there are famous cases of works having disappeared for always, which remain in the spirit

²⁶ <http://www.iniva.org/autoicon/info.html>

²⁷ <http://www.livresdesmorts.com>

²⁸ <http://www.b-l-u-e-s-c-r-e-e-n.net/>

of their author like lost members, they will never find the use. These forever disappeared works go on occupying a place in their history, just like a lost member occupies a place in the life of a disabled person. In the same way for each one among us, the loss of part of our data, mail, images, texts, can appear irrevocable, but also founder for new works.

Thus, the Cemetery of the disappeared data would be like the exhibition to everyone sight of one process that each one knows: maturation of the feelings, evolution of the human relations, construction of a spirit work. That the intellectual and emotional life is built as much on accumulation that on the loss, whether this loss is accepted or that is it never, here is a truth which was for a long time updated by the artists, but that each one among us, closely, knows. To cross the files of the disappeared data from the ones and others, it would be like traversing the interior of our own brain, and more still interior of the perfectly unknown ones brains. We know always rather early how the brain empties itself unrelentingly, day after day, but how the spirit, him, also builds itself in the lapse of memory!

If it were really necessary to find a specificity undeniable with the Net, it would be this one, to be able to become a palliative of the human memory, and much more, the collective memory. The Net can certainly shelter very personal spaces of memory, but it finds its most relevant use when it becomes this supplement with the collective memory, we can hardly measure today the implications in the construction of the history.

TELL ME YOUR SECRECIES

The Cemetery of the disappeared data, through testimonys of those who take part in it, updates the data-processing accidents of the every day, but also, the users of computer know it well, parapraxes. What a site and an experiment like the work of Nicolas Frespech, Tell me your secrecies²⁹, show, it is the capacity of the Net to reveal the workings of the unconscious. Briefly let us point out the principle of this participative work, who saw the Net surfers requested to entrust on line, on a host,

²⁹ <http://www.20six.fr/lessecrets/>

their secrecies - which consequently would not be it any more. Following the deposit of a secrecy which could have been contestable in justice, work, bought by the FRAC Languedoc³⁰ had quickly been put off line by this one. Today, the author seeks to find original work.

Tell me your secrecies incited the Net surfers to entrust their secrecies - certainly behind the barrier of anonymity - as one could entrust to a third person. Consequently, the word of the participants in this work could be released, since related to the public place. A released word, but which underwent a coding, on a common meaning, when it passed through all the languages of interpretation which work in background of the screen. The word posted on a screen on line is never the word called by his speaker. It is, because of the media, a word which was initially absorbed in a data-processing code, before re-appearing.

It's an original word since, mediatized, it means differently, not being nor spontaneous word of the dialogue, nor that of the psychoanalytical cure, who addresses himself by the means of the transfer to, precisely, one human being, but that which seeks a way between publicity and intimacy, between data-processing code dedicated to interpretation, and natural language.

The fact that the intimate word on Internet does not have a true statute - nor private word, nor public word - and that the place where it is deposited is not completely circumscribed - whether they are the numerical cemeteries, or the various numerical works of art that we could evoke here, constitute the leaven for a work of imaginary in renewed directions.

Because whoever, by accident of a hypertext link, can fall on an intimate word, on the trace of a disappeared human being or work, us indeed brings to reconsider the discrepancy between interior and outside, deprived and public: it is from the moment when we must call into question the most established categories, that the imaginary is started again, to negotiate with reality and the symbolic system the new systems of representations which enable us to exist.

³⁰ Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain de la région Languedoc, France.

The article of the two journalists of Newsweek, celebrating the new social networks born with Web 2.0, us partly allows to understand how this renegotiation functions.

The web 1.0, in the continuity of the problems related to the remote presence, showed work being concerned much with games around the identity. Let us point out those of David Still³¹, for example, who made it possible to each one to take the identity of the artist David Still. It was an humorous, ironic way, to use the faults of the email, while proposing to each one to play "I is another", according to the famous formula of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud.

DAVID STILL

Today, a new ontology would be substituted, in which "I" would not be another, but would be a superposition of several layers, like the images calques of Photoshop, which superimpose themselves to form a final image. Those who use these new social networks, like MySpace, Second Life, DailyMotion, etc... are often present on several interfaces, maintain several blogs, which recut themselves between them, which maintain between them several links. The incredible increase in the mass of the numerical data required the creation of new tools for localization, RSS, Tags, etc...

The dilemma enters the loss of its identity in the remote networks, and fusion in a chosen network, a network which would escape the social and geographical determinisms, would be thus solved, in the imagination of those who take part in this explosion of the mass of the numerical data accompanying Web 2.0. It would be the addition of all the presences on the Net, in several social networks, who would draw the new identity this multiplug being, who would draw a new ontology. More the numerical mass would be important, more the identity would be certain.

More jamming between reality, symbolic system and imaginary would be strong, as Second Life shows it to us with the most glare and

³¹ <http://davidstill.org/>

more the disturbing questions, around the loss of the unicity, would be evacuated.

The work of Jean-Pierre Balpe³², highly skilled professor and French artist, who multiplies the cross blogs³³, us the ironic translation of this reticular proliferation of the identity gives, under the beautiful name of "The disappearance of the general Proust"!

RELATION SCENE, TRANSGRESSION SCENE

Word, on the Net, released certainly itself from the frameworks which categorized it since the Renaissance. But to which is addressed it?

A story always supposes an addressee. A narrator writes for a reader. The million blogs, forums, always do not have this precaution: most of the time, they are not addressed to anybody in particular, and seem only intended for their narrators. Thus the soliloquy, which at the classical era, could pass for a sign of alienation, when the solitary word was not addressed to God, is on the Net reconsidered.

Each one, on the Net, can soliloquize, can emit a public word, without its good mental health being called in question. The structure of the network itself ensures that least word, one day, can find a receiver. The word of the soliloquy is not addressed any more to divine Providence, but to the random attention of the Net surfers.

The Net, in fact, is what connects. The creation of a collective intelligence was often proposed by thinkers observing the grid of the territory by the communication networks of any kind.

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Let us point out what was often regarded as a premonition of the Net, in the writings of Teilhard de Chardin³⁴ concerning the "Noosphère", "thinking envelope of the earth" which would join

³² <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeanpierreb/>

³³ <http://generalproust.oldiblog.com/?page=lastnews&id=111711>

³⁴ TEILHARD DE CHARDIN Pierre, L'avenir de l'homme, Paris, Le Seuil, 1959 (vol5, note 2, page 203)

together the spirits for "the blossoming of a really collective conscience". Let us quote also Peter Russel³⁵ who announces "a coherence in the total brain" thanks to the multiplication of the communications. Or the German philosopher, specialist in the media, Norbert Bolz³⁶, who sees with work in Wikipédia a process of self-organization allowing not-experts to compete with the authorized word of the professionals.

This belief, whether it is the fact of the million bloggers, or of intellectuals of reputation, in the capacity of the Net to connect the beings and the consciences, could be compared with a form of religious feeling. Etymologically, the religion is what connects. And concerning the promotion of a world beyond the materiality, the religions showed the way for a long time! In fact, the religions were not long being installed on the networks and in exempting their message there, in all its forms.

More commonplace, like the purchase of luxury³⁷ chasubles, or supply of creative kits related to the Cabal³⁸, with most astonishing like the confession on line³⁹, or the papal homelie on line⁴⁰, the religious currents most traditional were for the time being satisfied to adopt a tool enabling them to better communicate, until some proposing a numerical church, "Notre Dame of the Web⁴¹". They however did not modify their message. The Net is a complement with the church, even a church out the church, as in the example of Notre Dame of the Web.

RELIGION CONNECTS

On the other hand, churches known as "evangelic", coming from the USA, manifestly adapted their message to the Net, and have a policy of communication of most aggressive, to convert new followers on line. Thus, the evangelic church of Pasteur Ray Comfort, propose on a site called "the evangelization⁴²" a certain number of paying kits ready with employment for

³⁵ RUSSELL Peter, *The Awakening Earth*, Routledge, Londres, 1982, p.9.

³⁶ *Courrier International* n°826, Norbert Bolz, « Le nouveau royaume des idiots »

³⁷ <http://www.chagalldesign.com/>

³⁸ <http://www.kabsoft.com/>

³⁹ <http://www.sciencepresse.qc.ca/kiosquerel/foienligne.html>

⁴⁰ <http://www.branchez-vous.com/actu/00-03/04-175504.html>

⁴¹ <http://www.ndweb.org/>

⁴² <http://www.levangelisation.com/>

evangelizing the Net surfer, and to transform him into evangelist. Certain Moslem sites⁴³ try in the same way to convert the remote Net surfer: it is enough to register its name in a field of request and to click, one becomes Moslem!

At last, one find the way to entirely transfer the spirituality toward his personal computer, thanks to a web site⁴⁴ which proposes to make our hard disk repeat mantras, then send them to the server. We just have to connect to this net art work, whose aim is to grow the universal consciousness, then to choose our own mantra, and let our computer work. After 100000 times repeating « OM mani padme hum », the server will record our spiritual progress!

This new link created by the Internet is thus not superimposed exactly with the religious link. In addition in certain cases, for the many churches which make use of it like new vector of communication; for the new churches, known as evangelic, the Net will be a vector of conversion, and for any statement of viral conversion, since the leaders of these churches of course count these new media to convert gradually new convert; finally, for those, many in occident, who lost the traditional christian faith, the sui generis capacity of the Net to link can bring to regard it as a belief of substitution.

TECHNOLOGICAL MESSIANISM

Technological messianism, who had seen cyber-culture fans betting on the overtaking of several centuries of history, the overtaking of customs, and until the overtaking of the body - for the reason that the techniques of information would provide cognitive prostheses to the human body and that progress would allow one day the man to free from his body, to invest himself completely in his prostheses - this technological messianism, therefore, is it always of topical subject?

When one reads, on the blog of Second Life, the message "Peace in our time"⁴⁵, which claims that the new practices of sociability

⁴³ <http://www.islam.ru/>

⁴⁴ <http://www.meditation-for-avatars.net/home.htm>

⁴⁵ <http://blog.secondlife.com/2006/09/21/peace-in-our-time/#more-532>

born with the game could contribute to restore peace in the world, one could indeed think it. Unless the commercial cynicism of the employees of Second Life pushed them to write this message intentionally, to attract and retain the customer...

More still, when we read on Google Corporate ⁴⁶, that « Our mission is to organize all the information of the world », we can be sure that this technological messianism is always living ! And one of the others commandments of Google, « Don't be evil » goes on the way of a so strange religiosity for an european mind. « Mission », « evil », Google uses religious words and, most of all, refers to this so important faith in its own destiny that is the leading point of USA in general, and Google, there, precisely. Here, we can say that the technological messianism is related to the USA founders feeling, to be an elected people, which have received in heritage a ground favourable with the renewal of the faith, and with the birth of a new man. So, we must not forget this so particular context which is that of the north America. The first times of the Web, until the year 1995, were so filled by the USA web sites, the USA tools, and so on, that it's not amazing that we find this religious spirit so present on the web - and until nowadays.

At all events, it is perhaps the only thing which share the historical theorists of new technologies like Roy Ascott and new supporters of Web 2.0: an immovable faith in the saving capacity of technology. The difference between the first and the others, it is certainly that Roy Ascott ⁴⁷ imagined a collective redemption, while the contractors of Web 2.0 think more particularly of themselves!

FAKES, SATANISM, GOTHICISM, TRANSGRESSION

An apocryphal text as "The prophecy of Jean of Jerusalem" ⁴⁸ finishes digging the seam of a network favourable with all trickeries in the field of the religious feeling. This text,

⁴⁶ <http://www.google.com/corporate/>

⁴⁷ ASCOTT Roy, « *Is there love in the telematic embrace ?* », published in Art Journal, Autumn 1990 : « The telematic process, as the technology which incarnates it, is the product of a deep human desire of transcendence: to leave its body and its spirit, to go beyond the language. Virtual and data space constitute the field, formerly provided by the myth and the religion, where imagination, the desire and the will can reintroduce the forces of space, time and matter in a combat for a new reality. »

obviously a fake, who claims itself written in X° century, appeared exclusively on the Net, and in first on a site dedicated to the wild imaginings of any nature, Syti.Net⁴⁹. It pretends that the beginning of the second millenary would be the worst period for men, but that after a lot of desasters, such as civil and religious wars, will appear a time of peace and reconciliation. Because it 's written in an allegedly religious style, perhaps that gullible people have believed it - and have followed the counterfeiter in his wanderings. In fact, we see very fastly what the man who wrote this text wanted to : after having feared the reader with dark predictions, being something as a new prophet for the peace and the living together, thanks to the Net!

One will notice the very particular esthetics of page-setting, black background, blue writing, with the limit of legibility. Other sites, dedicated to the gothism as "I am Gothic"⁵⁰, adopt same page-setting, black background clear writing. Majority of the sites devoted to the satanism, of which this one, heading simply Satanism⁵¹, also use a black background, with red characters for the illustrated example.

This esthetics, who runs the counter to several centuries of tradition of writing, intends to mean, before even as the contents is crossed by the reader, that we will be in the field of the inversion, transgression.

The performer Jean-Louis Costes⁵², well-known for his spectacles based on the provocation, pornography and the scatophily, also use in its sites this page-setting: sombre background, clear writing.

The transgression, the non-observance of the usual rules of the life in society which made say Net was a space of non-law, are initially meant by the aspect of the screen. Dark Fund, clear writing, sometimes illegible characters and one announces from the beginning the rebellious character of his page, one sends the

⁴⁸ <http://www.syti.net/Prophetie.html>

⁴⁹ <http://www.syti.net/index.php>

⁵⁰ <http://jesuisgothique.free.fr/index/index.htm>

⁵¹ <http://www.geocities.com/MotorCity/Shop/8593/Satanisme.htm>

⁵² <http://costes.org/>

signal towards the hyperlector that one will not yield with the rule of use. White or clear background, dark writing, print most readable possible and the rules of printing works are respected, who aimed to the broadest diffusion of the writing, like the Gutenberg bible, first manuscript printed in great series, white pages, black characters.

TRANSGRESSION BEGINS WITH APPARENCE

Hackers web sites, sites related in a way or another to the theories of the plot, Gothic and stanic sites, sites of artists playing of the provocation and the transgression, would run the counter to this requirement of legibility which initially prevailed to propagate the divine message. According to a tradition that printed and coded manuscripts - watch the example of the Voynich Manuscript⁵³ - already largely sat, these sites require of the hyperlector a decoding effort, which can go until claiming a data-processing expertise on most accurate. The transgression starts with appearance. One will note like Chaos Computer Club⁵⁴, historical hacker site, which became the carry-flag about it, shows from now on an appearance one cannot more traditional.

But it would be necessary to take care not to be satisfied with this taxonomy, who would place on a side an official Net, seeking best legibility, and on another side a protestor or criminal Net, playing of all the artifices of the revolt!

Certain sites having allowed the realization of the evil were absolutely official. Thus, this site of meetings in love, used by one former soldier who published an advertisement asking a man to be given to him in order to be eaten and who had actually devoured it⁵⁵. Or the very official site of auction sales Yahoo Auctions on which Nazis relics had been sold.

Other sites, like the paedophiles sites hosted in Russia, the many revisionists sites, are, them, intentionally carrying the evil.

⁵³ <http://www.voynich.nu/roadmap.html>

⁵⁴ <http://www.ccc.de/>

⁵⁵ <http://www.atoutcoeur.com/Articles/canibalisme-rencontre.php>

THE PRESENCE OF EVIL

The presence of the evil, on Internet, cannot be denied.

It takes new forms, and asks that one define precisely where is the evil: at that who has the intention to do it or that who gives him the means of making it. Vinton Cerf, one of the "fathers" of the Internet, was opposed firmly to French justice, in 2000, because it wanted to prohibit the auction sale of these Nazis relics.

The French state wanted that Yahoo Auction would be closed at least with the French Net surfers, to respect the French law. With the reason which the filtering of the Net surfers was impossible, because the Net surfers could lie on their nationality, and that to block accesses would have amounted blocking the whole of the Web and would have gone against its philosophy, Vinton Cerf was opposed to the French decision.

Today, in 2007, this problem was solved for the sites hosted in France by several decisions of French court, who framed some cyber criminality thanks to the "Law of Confidence in the Numerical Economy (LCEN)".

Thus the revisionist association site, furthermore racist and anti-semitic, Unité Radicale, was closed, by intimating the order to the hosts to close their channels with this bunch⁵⁶.

The problem of the presence of the evil on Internet remains absolute, maybe that it advances in a way with a mask on official sites, either that it is not fought in time, by ignorance or negligence, either that it is not fought, because of a permissive ideology, as in Russia, or because of a libertarianism that the first theorists of the Web did not have any problem to defend, but which today could not any more be it.

To define the specificity of the evil, on Internet, it is seen, is certainly not easy matter to achieve. With the problems which philosophy has encountered for more than 2500 years to

circumscribe it, those of today are added, completely specific to the media, and which is due to what precisely made all its success, namely dispersion of the servers in a decentralized distribution of information. The concept resulting from the second world war, of banality of the evil, proposed by Hannah Arendt, seems completely operative there and could be applied to the hosts who release themselves from any responsibility, with the reason that they would constitute only one simple technical interface, would be only neutral agents, and could not be held for person in charge for the diffused object.

The hosts, however are, in fact, diffusers: without their mediation, the contents could not never be accessible to the Net surfers. As well as a newspaper, as well as an emission of television, they have the responsibility for what they lodge and which is diffused.

Evil, consequently, could be regarded as depending, classically, of the person who achieves it intentionally, and of the person who gives him the means of achieving it. For this reason, states, like Russia, would be joint originator evil? Undoubtedly.

REMOTE HUNTING

More still, the presence of the evil on Internet exceeds the few too obvious cases which were given here. All those who, ensured of impunity, benefit from anonymity to make what they would never have dared apart from the network, in the form of vexatious remarks, anti-semites, sexists, racists, are carrying, them, not of a banality of the evil, but of an inclination to the ordinary evil, that each one carries in germ. The network, in their guaranteeing impunity, would give to some the means of passing to the act. If they are not liable to the law, they are not less responsible for what they make - to have benefitted from a technology which connects them to the whole of humanity.

The most outrageous case, of loss of the feeling of responsibility, would be still that of this businessman⁵⁷ who proposes remote hunting, thanks to the network. The principle is

⁵⁶ <http://www.presence-pc.com/actualite/Site-negationniste-censure-10307/>

⁵⁷ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/4022147.stm>

simple, who allows whoever discharging a sum of about 10000 dollars, to be able to shoot a real ball at a real animal, while having quietly sat in front of his computer.

If we immediately feel this proposal like shocking, and concerning the evil, it is because it encourages no matter whom to kill without being present, to kill without endorsing the responsibility for it.

Evil, on Internet, wouldn't it be then the rupture of the thin link which connects all the Net surfers between them? The Net being what connects, the evil would consist of the rupture of this link, who would be also the negation of an ideal living-together. By reading the first ideologist-utopians of the Net, such as Vinton Cerf, Roy Ascott, Rosanne Stone, one can be surprised not to detect any reference to the evil, as if this one had never existed. The connected world that they describe is a world of before the fault. Their request for an absolute freedom for the circulation of the ideas always seems to be unaware of that all the ideas are not good, far from there.

In the same way the installations of remote presence always insist, except perhaps those of Stelarc⁵⁸, on the friendly enrichment of the personal sphere that new technologies could get to us. The remote presence, one sees it with the example of this remote hunting, can perfectly become the hell of the deresponsabilisation and the murder - even if they are yet « only » animals - without bad conscience. The fault would be unobtrusive because of the distance, as if the physical non-attendance made it possible to be freed from any moral rule.

LINK RUPTURE

Contrary to this irenicism of the Net old or new utopians, first criminal lawsuits having clarified all the party which the evil could draw from the anonymity guaranteed by the Net, the network seemed the kingdom of a new evil, crawling, without face, an evil which would not have any more a source, but only targets.

⁵⁸ <http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/>

It would be, in the imaginary of the defenders of the order, the entire network which would be the vector of the evil, which would be the incarnated evil.

A philosopher like Bernard Stiegler, in " La technique et le temps "⁵⁹, and in particular in the third volume of his work, in the network itself the possibility of penetrating for a new inhumanity sees, because any hierarchy would have disappeared in the data computing economy. Ideas, art works, being located on the same level as commercial flows, arms dealers using the same numerical tools as the philosophers and the poets, there would be a contagion of the evil on the good.

In the imaginary born with the first utopians of the network, imaginary that one finds practically unchanged on the blog of Second Life, or on Google Corporate, the network would be, for the only reason of its existence and in a consubstantial way, the vector of the good.

It would be its structure itself which would guarantee a Messianic role to it - because it would give to each one the same place in a decentralized economy of information, what would attach the Utopias of the network to the Utopias of a communion in the equality, a communist Utopia. All on the other hand, in the imaginary that a certain gutter press conveyed, and that continues to convey of the sites like Atout Cœur⁶⁰, dedicated to the multiple mishaps of the meetings in love on the network, the anonymity of the network would make the reserve of a multiform evil, undoubted, because advancing with a mask.

Islamist sites showing decapitations, sites organizing the draft of human beings, finished the mother of all networks to make like a devil.

At the very least exaggerated ways in which all and sundry make network the vector of a goodness being achieved on earth, for one or another transformation of humanity, or on the contrary the vector of the absolute evil must ask us questions about the

⁵⁹ STIEGLER, Bernard, *La Technique et le temps*, tome 3 : *Le temps du cinéma et la question du mal-être*. Editions Galilée. 1986

⁶⁰ <http://www.atoutcoeur.com/Articles/boom-des-rencontres-sur-internet.php>

intrinsic nature of the network. All the men are not ignoramuses of the history, all did not forget the philosophy or religion lessons, and more still they did not forget all than the simple common sense dictates to them.

How to explain whereas ones, and not only first ideologists of the Net, seem to have forgotten that the evil exists, and what it awaits only the means of being carried out? How to explain diametrically, that the others want to prohibit the Net, that is to say to restrict it so considerably that it would lose all its interest, while pretexting that the Net would be the evil incarnation itself?

AS A CONCLUSION

We saw that since more than one century and half, the mother of all networks was imagined, dreamed, envisaged and that the advent of an information flow and works of the spirit, without borders and limits, had been hoped like the paddle of a new golden age of humanity.

The fact that the data-processing documents are dependent between them, by HTML link places all works of the spirit in a report of universal continuity, who had never been carried out in the past. In theory, no obstacle cannot prevent to me from passing from the work of Marcel Proust⁶¹ on line to the catalogue of an arm dealer as Smith and Wesson⁶².

The imaginary is this reformulation of the reality which enables us to discover it under a new angle. It shorts-circuit the traditional cognitive diagrams, and shows to us sometimes better a form while speaking to us about his odor, us makes sometimes better feel an idea by lending feelings to him.

The transversality permitted by the Net cannot it be brought closer to the structure even of the imaginary, who traverses all the zones of the human brain, and is based in turn on perception, reason, memory? And all insane, incomprehensible hopes which

⁶¹ <http://jydupuis.apinc.org/Proust/index.htm>

⁶² <http://www.smith-wesson.com>

could be projected on the network, they for origin do not have this strange proximity between the dreams of all the utopians having preceded then carried out the network and imaginary itself, who transfigures reality.

The imaginary causes transformation, metamorphoses, tropes. Like a metaphor, it brings closer what appeared distant, and makes spout out an unsuspected truth, about the poetic one rather than of the conceptual one. This circulation of the spirit between the forms and the ideas, this proximity between the opposites, isn't this what the first dreamers of the Net had imagined?

When the first remote communication networks made it possible to bring closer the distance, the imaginary of the poets seized some for pleading a new way of living the human relations: what stimulated their imagination, it was the way in which the spirit could be freed from temporal and spatial reality. When the servers made it possible to consider the externalisation of the brain and the conquest of new memory fields, it is all imaginary which was set up, to dream of new spaces, which would not be subjected to biological realities. When finally the networks made it possible to negotiate differently with the philosophical and metaphysical categories, it is the dream, or the nightmare, to be able to free itself from moral imperatives which could be born.

The distortions which we could note in the intelligibility of the techniques of information and communication explain certainly better, if we do not lose sight of the fact its proximity with the field of the imaginary. On the other side of reality, who must be bordered by the law, to allow all to live without the constraint of the strongest, the imaginary does not have such concerns.

Its field par excellence is transversality. Between the forms, colors, words, feelings, the imaginary transfigures reality - and this is why the poets, writers, artists, are the workmen of the imaginary, and why people can lose the common sense when they speak about Internet, when they use it. Internet is not out of reality, because the imaginary isn't either.

It is however with reality that it is always necessary to return, so that the imaginary can exist.

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