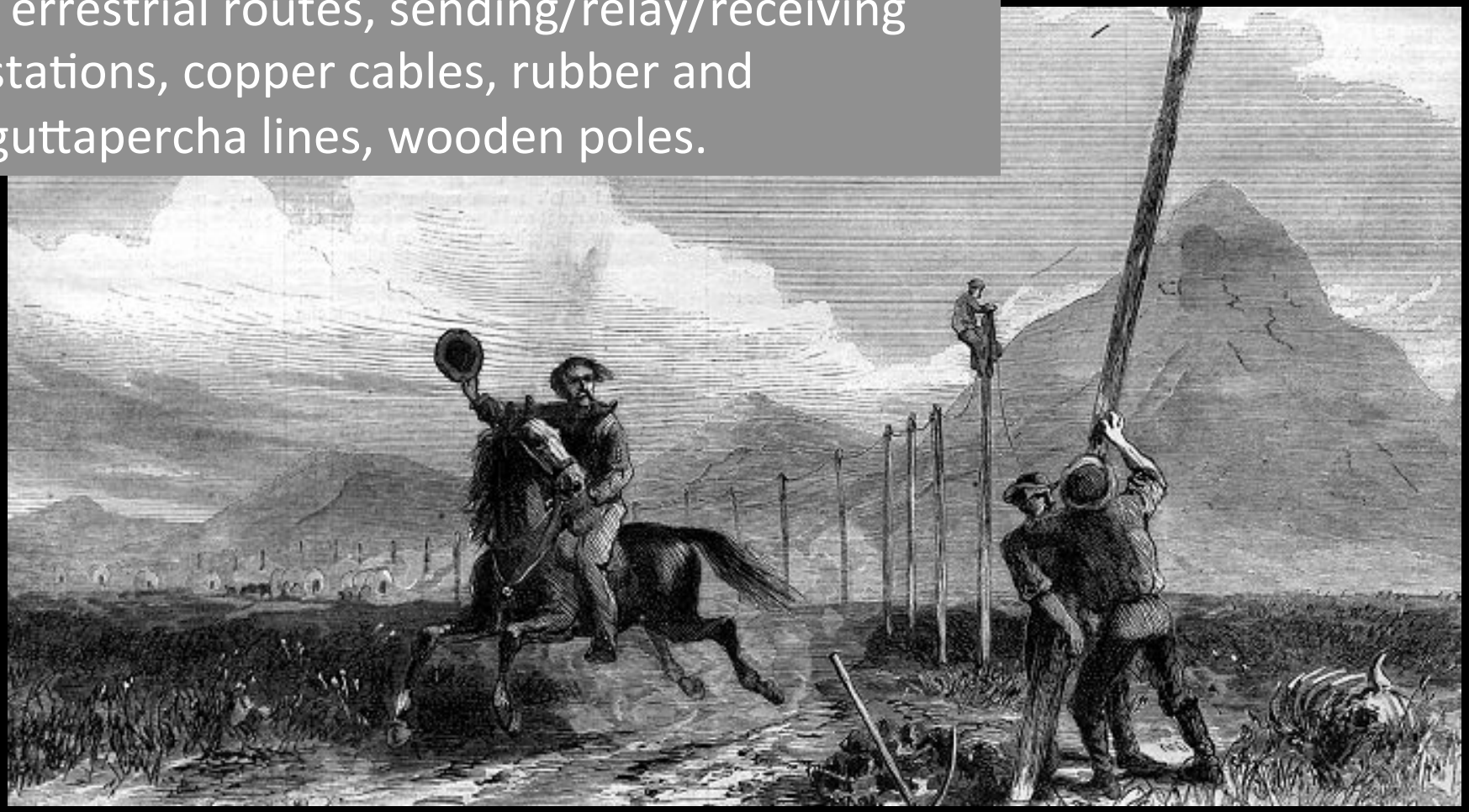
Towards a phenomenology of mobile communicative practices

Marco Jacquemet

Materiality: mobility relies on fixed infrastructure

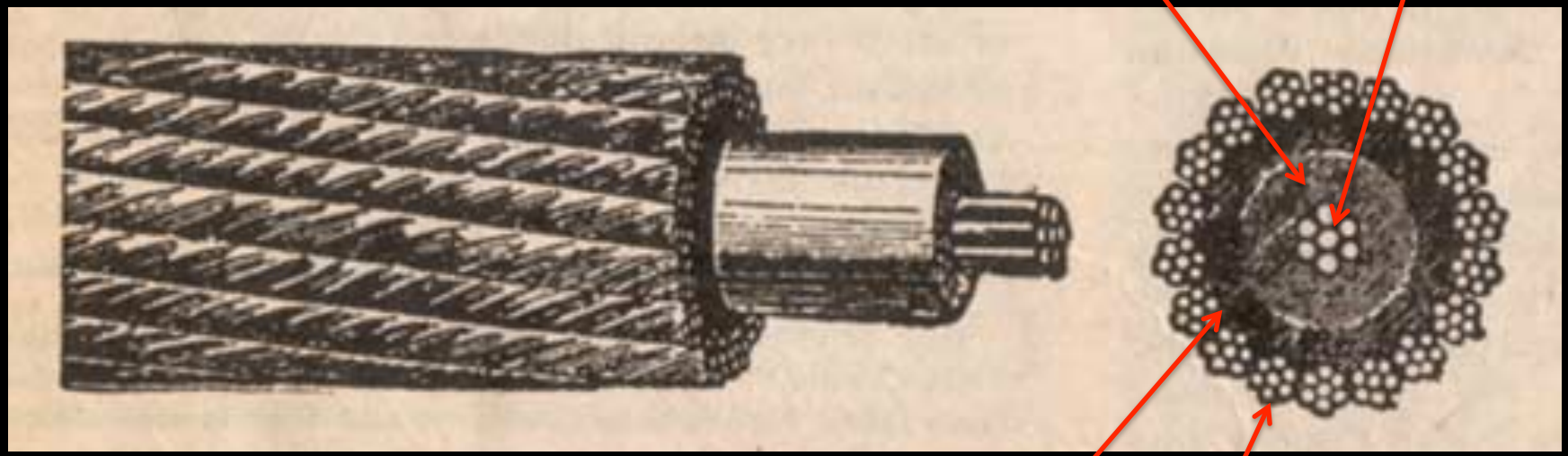
Terrestrial routes, sending/relay/receiving stations, copper cables, rubber and guttapercha lines, wooden poles.



Electrical modes of communication

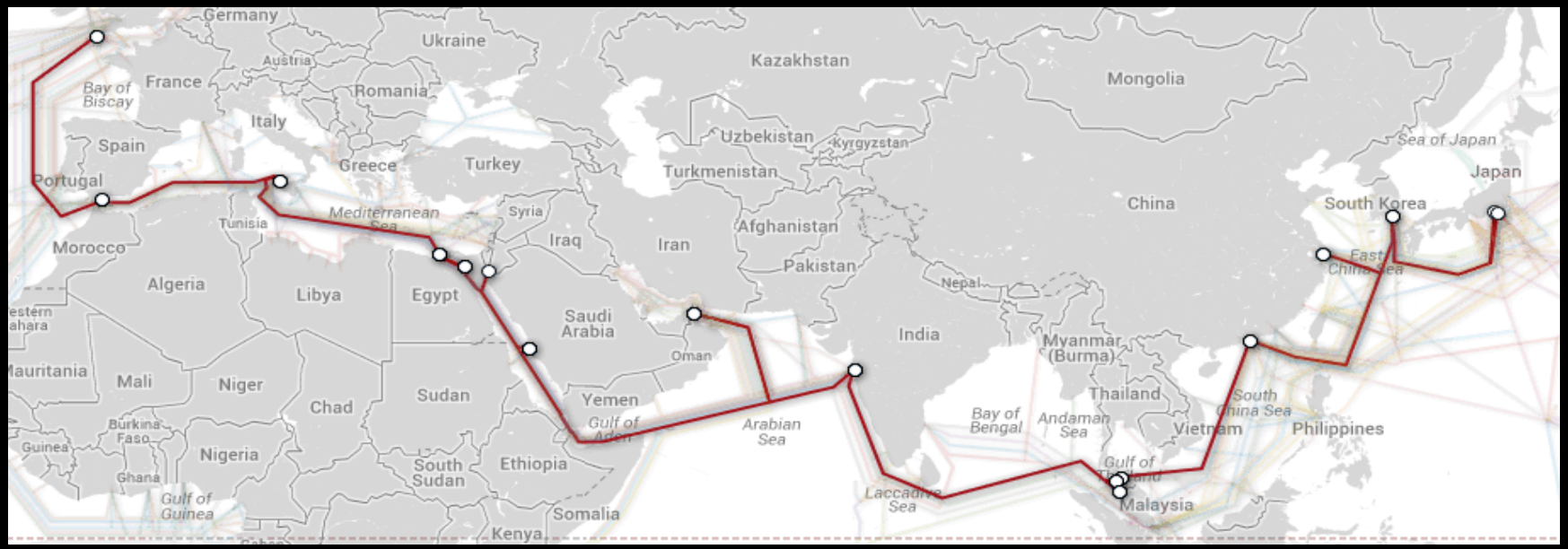
"Electricity has made angels of us all -- not angels in the Sunday school sense of being good or having wings, but spirit freed from flesh, capable of instant transportation anywhere". Carpenter 1972

Transatlantic telegraph, technology, and colonialism



Late-modern technological developments

Laser / digital transmission / fiber optics



Major disadvantage of cell phones

→ reliance on battery power

Mobility and Cellular Communication

Cellular phone affordances (Ling 2004):

1) help organize and coordinate activities "on the fly;"
2) refine an activity through repeated calls;
3) soften one's commitment to a schedule, deadline, or meeting point

→ freeing up coordination for social activities from temporal and spatial imperatives;

Mobile phone etiquette (Cameron 1999)

1) Social obligation to strangers in shared public spaces may be subordinated to the norm of prioritizing phone interlocutors.
2) "Civil inattention" (Goffman) is tested by two forces:

   a) mobile calls cause people to mentally try to fill in the blanks (of the distant party);

   b) callers behave as if they are not in public.
3) Mobile phone privitizes comm in public spaces, isolating the user socially from the public world and exempting him/her from engaging in phatic communication

   → although when people in a dyad engage with their phone they need to attend to the face of the proximal recipient ("dual front interaction")

Mutual co-presence mobile f2f (Di Domenico & Boase 2014)

Mutual co-presence mobile f2f (Di Domenico & Boase 2014)

Mobile texting/sms affordances (tech provides opportunities and constraints on comm practices):

- time (asynchronous, response delay)
- space (distant, not available to 3rd party)
- ID (website)

Primary/secondary involvement (Goffman)

- "dual front interaction" on mobile-f2f copresence
- → texting blurrs the boundary

Transformed knowledge infrastructure

For mobile people:

1) use satellite / GPS technology to provide orientation;
2) store valuable and carriable information (phone numbers of course, but also contact names, addresses, maps, particular meeting points).

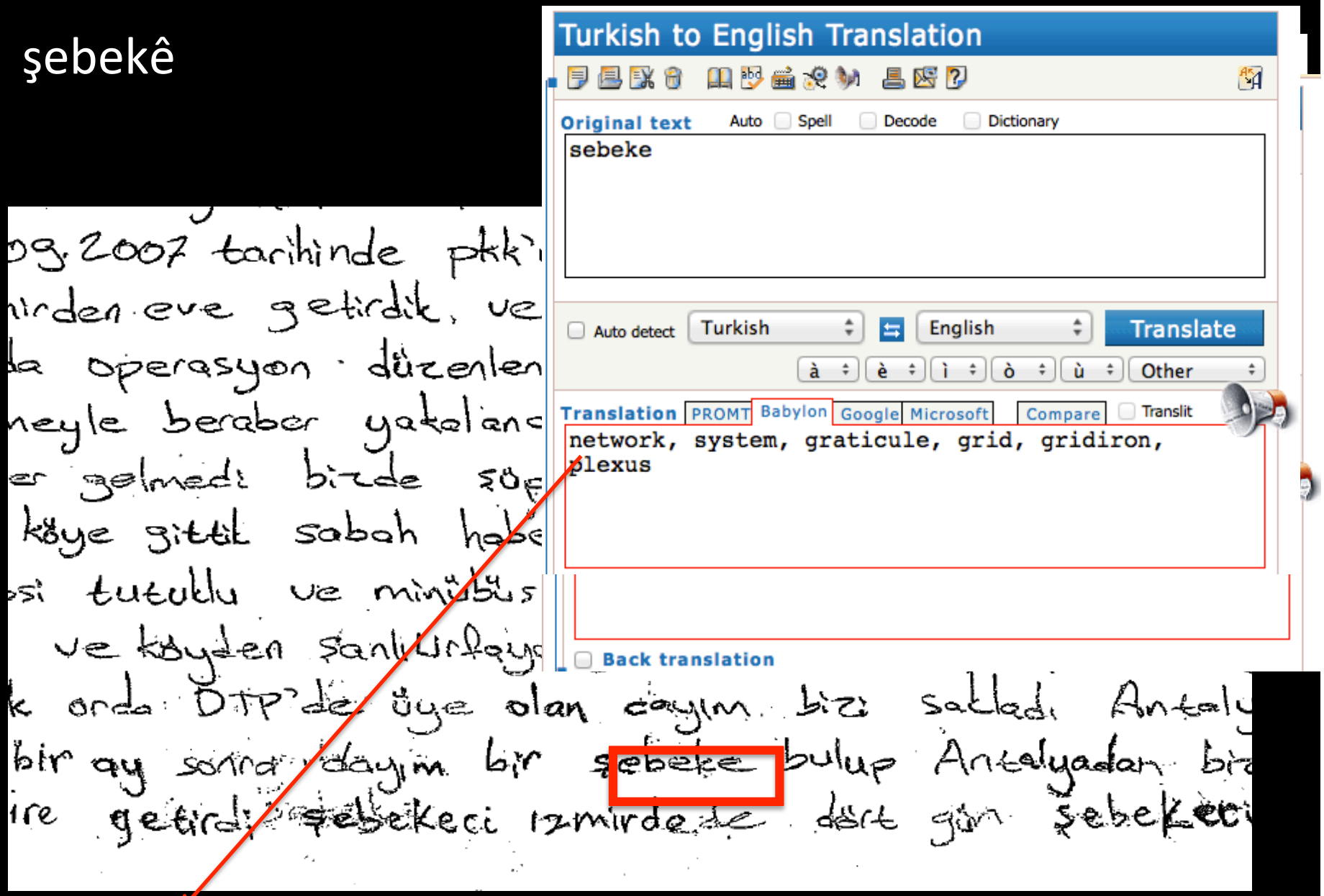
Transformed knowledge infrastructure

Case Nebez: speaking of the devil

Melek Taus the Peacock-Angel, whorshipped by the Yazidis of Iraq

Mobile knowledge infrastructure: MT 1

şebekê



Şebekê = networker

Transformed knowledge infrastructure: MT 2

Paolo Dove andate domani?

(Where are you going tomorrow?)

Giovanna, Lucia and Leide like this.

Paolo Anche se qui abbiamo gia` fatto
(even if here we already voted)

Saturday at 10:24am · Like Unlike ·1 person likes this

Lucia quattro ore di aliscafo,un bel mare incazzato e altrettanto bella levataccia...ma ho votato!
(four hours on the boat, a quite angry sea and also super early rise… but I voted!)

Sunday at 9:06am · Like Unlike ·1 person like this

Gabriella Paolo purtroppo i vostri voti non sono validi...
(Paolo unfortunately your votes won't count…)

Sunday at 9:34am · Like Unlike

Giovanna Un bel batticuore oggi....sono le 18.35 ed ancora i dati di affluenza delle 18 non ci sono
(I am very nervous today… it's 6:35 pm and we don't have yet the 6 pm report on the number of voters)

Sunday at 9:36am · Like Unlike

Paolo Gabriella, pero` magari riusciamo a far scendere il quorum!
(Gabriella, but maybe we'll cause a lower quorum)

Sunday at 5:36pm · Like Unlike

Fermin che cosa è tutto questo il circa?
(lit. "what is all this the approximative?")

"what's this all about?"

Sunday at 5:56pm · Like Unlike

Paolo Fermin: In Italia questa domenica e lunedi` si votano 4 referendum (contro il nucleare, per l'acqua pubblica, e perche` la legge sia uguale per tutti).
(Fermin: In Italy this Sunday and Monday people vote for 4 popular initiatives (against nuclear energy, against water privatization, and against ad personam legislature)

Sunday at 6:20pm · Like Unlike

Ige I see. A votar = to vote. Ho capito!
(I see. A votar = to vote. I understand!)

Sunday at 7:20pm · Like Unlike

Textspeak (Blommaert 2008)

1) Texts in the global circulation and scales:

"Texts may travel easily, but the system of use, value, and function in which they were produced usually does not travel with them" (Blommaert 2008: 6)

2) Emergence of *vernacular language:*

graphic replicas of spoken forms, including code switching, colloquialisms, or other "impurities."

graphic replicas of speech

Tchawe Joulya.je suis arrive` a Catania.
je sais pas ci en desson
la` ou en pass a Napoli.je vais te
parle` ci il a de nouveau. Tchawe
bella. :-*

non-standard spelling

visual signs

Ciao Joulya.i arrived in Catania
I don't know if we get down
here or we go to Naples. i'm going to
tell you if there's something new. Ciao
*bella.:-**

6:55 04/04/2011

[*from Harraguantanamo*, by giulia bondi and ilyess ben chouikha, 2011]

Senuit 21personnes on feui
La police ouvrire le feu sur1
01:21 10/04/2011

Tonight 21 people escaped
The police opened fire against one of them
01:21 10/04/2011

Hay ma belle, ler personnes
qui'ils ont fewi ils ont rontres
aujourdhui.me la police rufise
ses rentres o sontre. Ah ((je te
monque.et oui))
10:14 10/04/2011

Hey my beautiful, the people
who escaped came back
today. But the police is refusing
to let them in or out. Ah ((I'm
teasing you. oh yes))
10:14 10/04/2011

[*from Harraguantanamo*, by giulia bondi and ilyess ben chouikha, 2011]

Bonjour (salemme) ici. Les
responsables dits quell es
permessos ont preu Me en
attendes les aurrdes de ROME
;)
13:41 13/04/2011

Good morning (peace) here. The
officers say that the
permits are ready. But we
wait the orders from ROME
;)
13:41 13/04/2011

[*from Harraguantanamo*, by giulia bondi and ilyess ben chouikha, 2011]

Bonjour.je suis devan la castoura.
tu pai menvaye de credi maintenen
10:07 17/04/2011

Good morning. I am in front of the Questura.
you can send me some cash now
10:07 17/04/2011

[*from Harraguantanamo*, by giulia bondi and ilyess ben chouikha, 2011]

→ Towards a grassroot literacy: the spontaneous emergence of written vernaculars not in conformity with nationally-recognized standards.

Tech affordances: instagram

Instagram has the ability to influence comm practices through its software:

→Filter function as "instant nostalgia"

→Collection of personal history 24/7 based on accumulation not selection

→ the commodification of moments ("kodak moment")

→ taking selfies to control time, but in doing so we surrender our temporal identity

Tech affordances: hashtag

Hashtag as a 'self-amplifying' sign:

→sense of ID defined by the location of the aggregation (#iphoneonly) and the frequency with which posts are produced

→with the introduction of the #hashtag language is accelerating to keep up with the images

(vs. mechanical photography / cinematography: "the photograph can now keep up with speech" Walter Benjamin)

Tech affordances:
selfies

a narcissistic practice?

Echo/Narcissus

"We are drawn to our images and receive relief when viewing them" (Mc Luhan 1964)

Narcissus fascinated with this image outside of himself

The boy you love. The vision is only shadow,
Only reflection, lacking any substance.

but could not recognized the image of himself remaining "numb to himself:"

Why try to catch an always fleeing image,

Two effects of media:

→ Numbness (narcissism): encouraging people to look at surface images of themselves instead of self-reflection and introspection

http://selfiesatfunerals.tumblr.com/

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/04/selfie-etiquette_n_4181925.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular

→ Amplification/repetition of the self (echolalia)

Echo (2)

Amplification/repetition of the self (Echo)

Up to this time Echo still had a body,
She was not merely voice. She liked to chatter,
But had no power of speech except the power
To answer in the words she last had heard.
Juno had done this: when she went out looking
For Jove on top of some nymph among the mountains,
Echo would stall the goddess off by talking
Until the nymphs had fled.

Juno discovered this and said to Echo:
"The tongue that made a fool of me will shortly
Have shorter use, the voice be brief hereafter."
Those were not idle words; now Echo always
Says the last thing she hears, and nothing further.

Echo 3

Speech vs. image

dries and shrivels till voice only
remain, and then she is voice o
nes are turned to stone. She hid
e sees her now along the mount
hear her, for her voice is living

The screen/the mirrow

To make it worse, no sea, no road, no mountain,
No city-wall, no gate, no barrier, parts us
But a thin film of water. He is eager
For me to hold him. When my lips go down
To kiss the pool, his rise, he reaches toward me.

"We build images of ourselves purely within screens, establishing identities and marking distinction." (McLuhan)

Narcissus as a 'servo-mechanism' for his own reflection

Bodily practices

How to position the body for a selfie:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbqIQcKNE7E&index=35&list=PL8FD2E06CDABDD274

For portrait photography the smile as the removal of the last individual trait (Freud), equivalent in selfies?

→ the duck face

Both are now *clichés* (der. from the metal plates used for printing)

The unwilling body:

. shielding itself from photo taking

. untagging itself

Technological affordances: autocorrect

THANK YOU!