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> EDITORIAL

Given the contemporary fascination with and, indeed, addiction to real-time media dispatch and commentary, what does it mean to speak of “slow media”? Is this to invoke the memory of “old” media, of legacy media, the media and technologies that are now thoroughly mediated and remediated into newer, faster, digital forms (Bolter & Grusin)? Or is it to speak of the possibility of experiencing our media more slowly, of taking time out or time off from the email, releasing some of the pressure that has built up in our systems? And dare we even think such a thing when everything around us screams of increased processing speed, increased bandwidth, and increased convergence? We are 24-7, we are always-on, we are connected; we are locatable, we are geotagged, we are Cartesian-coordinated; we are status updated, we are tweet-fed; we are real-time media junkies and everything about our mediascape exists to remind us that we don’t have time to slow down.

Indeed, “slow media” may seem entirely inimical to the age of social media and 24-hour news channels, where we live immersed in a mediascape dedicated to that magical moment “when the interval between the triggering of an event and its processing/reception falls beneath the threshold of sensible perception” (Mackenzie 168). In such a scenario, “slow media” appears either heretical or retrogressive, a wanton disregarding of the patent necessity of instant information dissemination and rampant friending, or just another Luddite reaction-formation.

And yet the term, and concept, has a resonance that is not so easily elided by the familiar narratives of progress and development, and it has taken root in a number of quarters. The slowness of the “slow” movement, typified by the notion of “slow food,” has taken hold to the degree that there are now numerous manifestos online and in print proclaiming the virtues of a “slow media” diet (see Rauch, this issue) or a “slow communication” ethic (Freeman). New Media artists such as Vicky Isley and Paul Smith of boredomresearch, have interrogated the Internet’s bias towards speed and efficiency, with their “Real Snail Mail” project which makes the Internet work against itself by using actual snails equipped with RFID chips to deliver email messages (boredomresearch).

Slow media operates, then, as a concept around which numerous different interrogations and critiques of media, speed and technology can crystallize. In this issue of *Transformations*,

we present a collection of papers that explore the notion of slow media across a number of domains and technologies. Each paper in this issue charts media use and production practices that take a resistive stand against the apparent speed of contemporary media, the upgrade cycle of new technologies and the throwaway attitude to consumer electronics. In the opening paper of the issue, "The Origin of Slow Media," Jennifer Rauch, a journalism professor and blogger, explores the origins of slow media as an online discourse, describing her own "digital disenchantment" and the research that led her to undertake a 6-month period of offline existence, the Slow Media Project. Rauch charts the gradual growth of a movement dedicated to

> *using media in a more attentive and deliberative mode, doing more by doing less, strengthening local communities, stressing quality over quantity, promoting artisanal products, reducing time spent producing and consuming digital communiqués, and re-appraising heirloom forms of media such as books, newspapers, postcards and film. (Rauch)*

Tero Karppi, in "Digital Suicide and the Biopolitics of Leaving Facebook" charts one possible apotheosis of such an approach to media, exploring two art projects – "Seppukoo.com" and the "Web 2.0 Suicidemachine" – which automate the process of deleting users' social media accounts; while concretely these projects exist to provide a "service" of a sort, they do so within the context of a critique of the omnipotence and omnipresence of social media technologies, and their impacts on social and individual subjectivity. In this paper, Karppi argues that these projects work not so much *against* social media technologies but *beyond* them, accelerating their function and opening up new uses, models and networks based not on the endless cycle of "friending" and "liking" but on, in Guattari's phrase, "mutant singularities and new minorities."

Shifting tack from social media to video games, in "Slow Play Strategies: Digital Games Walkthroughs and the Perpetual Upgrade Economy," Daniel Ashton and James Newman explore the creation of digital game walkthroughs as an example of disruptive or resistive practices dedicated to a "slow" game-play ethic. Beyond the simple creation of walkthroughs as processual description, therefore, Ashton and Newman explore the phenomenon of "glitch hunting," a practice where game-players refuse the teleology of seeking to "win" the game and instead seek those points where the universe of the game breaks down, where bugs unfold, where undocumented or impossible game spaces emerge. Glitch hunting, then, and walkthroughs more generally, stand as a kind of play that refuses the upgrade economy and the race to the *next* game, instead celebrating extended and slow play, a play that recalls Rauch's definition of the slow media ethic, playing digital games "in a more attentive and deliberative mode, doing more by doing less."

Slow media strategies can emerge not only through a slow approach to new or "fast" media, but through the examination of "slow" technologies. In "Slow and fast music media: comparing values of cassettes and playlists," Jörgen Skågeby discusses two uses of the cassette tape – tape trading and the mix-tape – in terms of the social bonding values that surround these practices. His argument is that while these cassette tape practices have largely been superseded by the "faster" mechanisms of streaming media, digital playlists and peer-to-peer services, the ongoing development of these services and practices can still learn from the forms of sociality that surrounded prior media forms.

Finally, Kit MacFarlane, in "Unplugging the Affective Domain: Can 'Slow Spaces' Really Improve the Value of Cultural Literacy?", questions the emergence of the unplugging trend in pedagogical spaces, asking whether calls for a return to pre-electronic literacy will result in anything other than momentary or Carnivalesque inversions of the status quo. MacFarlane employs the notion of the Affective Domain to argue that the either/or nature of the fast/slow, online/offline debate, obscures the more pressing and abiding concern with affective engagement and the development of personal world views. Most interestingly, MacFarlane takes his analysis out of the classroom and into the modern university at large, arguing that "the basic corporate hegemony of the university structure may be as disruptive to affective engagement with cultural literary values as any individual technological element." That is, that the great danger to effective and affective university education today, is not at all a question of the "speed" of technology or the rise of social and mobile media; it is rather a question of the values and cultures under which contemporary universities operate.

Works Cited

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