# Folklore in the Digital Age

Violetta Krawczyk-Wasilewska

# Folklore in the Digital Age:
## Collected Essays

**Foreword by Andy Ross**

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# Foreword

Folkloristics is the study of folklore using approaches and insights from science and the humanities. Folklore expresses a people's culture and heritage, and so helps define our ethnic and cultural identities.

Professor Violetta Krawczyk-Wasilewska, the author of the essays in this book, has enjoyed a long and successful career as a folklorist. She has worked with various folklore resources, most of them narrative genres, transmitted orally and locally, but also in printed and pictorial form. More recently she has expanded her resource base to include online folklore.

Online and digital cultures are both driving and following a process of globalisation. Global multimedia culture not only endangers traditional folklore but also creates new folklore, often in surprising ways. The miscellany of themes that the author touches upon in this book amply illustrate the range of modern folklore studies. My brief remarks here merely hint at that range.

Serendipity can play a role in such studies, as it did when the author discovered by chance, while browsing the web, a folkloristic painting known as *The Netherlandish Proverbs* painted in 1559 by Pieter Bruegel The Elder (chapter I). This fascinating work of art illustrates perhaps a hundred Flemish proverbs and sayings, most of them still in use in many European languages.

Today anyone at home with a tablet or a smart phone can read and write gossip, rumours, jokes, hoaxes, urban legends, chain letters, and fact and fiction of all kinds, and publish it worldwide in seconds. Much of the outpouring that results is highly ephemeral, but such ephemera are prolific breeders of new ephemera in an exploding profusion of what author calls e-folklore (chapter II).

New media are used both for serious business and for entertainment as well as for sharing personal opinions and emotions. The web has become a global folklore encyclopaedia, not only through Wikipedia but also as a platform for creating and publishing content of all kinds. This activity feeds the world

of digital folklore, which now forms a major part of our collective human culture and heritage (chapter III).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has the mission to protect the world cultural and natural heritage, while promotion and protection of the European cultural heritage is regulated by the Council of the European Union. So UNESCO and the EU are now guardians of our folklore.

Digital technology has political consequences too, as the Arab Spring showed. In chapter IV the author recalls that after the 9/11 attacks the world of online folklore produced some nasty memes. These at least reminded us that verbal and visual folklore humour regarding terrorism has three roles: as information, as warning, and as therapy. Even the bad memes are good food for a folklorist.

Items in the news also trigger folklore explosions online, as the author records in chapter V. On January 12, 2010, an earthquake struck the small island nation of Haiti. It affected millions of inhabitants, leaving hundreds of thousands of dead and injured as well as about a million very poor people homeless.

Disaster brought not only sympathy and support but also hostility rooted in the moral or magical ways of the past. The day after the Haiti earthquake, the US televangelist Pat Robertson suggested that Haiti's history of natural disasters and political turmoil stemmed from a deal with the devil made by the leaders of its 1791 revolution against French rule.

Haiti also appears in the folklore of AIDS. In the early years of the epidemic, many said the spread of HIV was due to a group called 4H: homosexuals, heroin users, haemophiliacs, and Haitian voodoo cultists. All this is part of a long tradition of plague legends citing the sacred and the profane. Even modern US televangelists can regard a plague as the wrath of God. Folklore texts stemming from the Middle Ages and from today's news treat plagues as arising from people breaking taboos.

The new world of digital devices and social media is changing many aspects of modern life. Powerful online applications and attractive social media running on handy mobile devices are encouraging people to move into the new space to do things previously only possible in person.

Online dating is now a part of everyday life for millions of people. This trend seems to reflect an increase of human loneliness in many developed countries. Even relationships have become commodities, and online dating sites provide them with a marketplace and a currency.

We see a correlation with globalised lifestyles, increased mobility, and the breakdown of traditional family structures.

In the United Kingdom, the number of people living alone has increased by more than four times in four decades, and now is over a quarter of the population. British online dating services have a large number of users compared to other European dating sites. The author explored British attitudes to online dating in action research conducted during 2008 and reported in chapter VI.

For many centuries, personal identity was inseparable from group identity, and a person who tried to live as an outsider faced social exclusion. Today people can overcome their isolation by creating new online identities. The author explored this philosophical theme with my help in an essay on dating through avatars (chapter VII).

An assumed personal identity is often accompanied by an animated graphical image called an avatar. Online dating through avatars can allow people to explore each other more freely than they could by dating in the physical world. Much as airline pilots today spend most of their training hours in simulators, so future married couples might spend much of their time getting to know each other on avatar dates.

Finally, in chapter VIII, the author discusses food culture. Modern discourses about food, especially on social media, affect the dietary choices of many people on a daily basis all over the world. The Internet is a global cookbook, and global food culture reveals a wide range of attitudes toward food and eating. All of this is revealed in the narrative representation of food by modern food tribes.

Professor Krawczyk-Wasilewska is to be commended on bringing all this material together for future folklorists to ponder from the comfort of an armchair. The book is a fascinating and fruitful exercise in the creative use of modern resources to enrich and extend an established discipline.

*Andy Ross*
Formerly at Oxford University, UK
June 2016

# Chapter I

## The Art of Bruegel and the Folklorist

During my long career as a folklorist, I have dealt with various folklore resources. Among these were predominantly narrative genres, transmitted orally and locally, but also printed and visual versions circulated throughout Poland and Europe.

Towards the end of the 1990's and the beginning of 2000's, globally transmitted variants of electronic genres and forms began to arise, and an increasing number of primary and secondary sources became available through the Internet. The most fascinating aspect of the Internet as a database has been the possibility of studying oral and intangible heritage in a diachronic, and not merely a synchronic, way.

One day whilst browsing an Internet site, by chance, I found a 'folkloristic' painting known as *The Netherlandish Proverbs*, painted in 1559 by the Dutch Renaissance master Pieter Bruegel The Elder. Though the picture was unknown to me (perhaps because proverb is a non-narrative genre), I was familiar with a few samples of the artist's enormous iconographic heritage, especially those works called 'peasant' or genre paintings of ethnographic character.[1] Remembering that his 1564 painting *The Procession to Calvary* inspired the 2011 Polish-Swedish co-produced drama film *The Mill and the Cross*,[2] and that another of his works, *Two Monkeys* inspired a 1957 poem by Polish poet Wisława Szymborska,[3] and because „needs must"[4], I decided to start browsing the web in search of more information about this Netherlandish painting.

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1 E.g. *The Battle between Lent and Carnival* (1559), *Children's Games* (1559–1560), *Peasant Wedding* (c. 1568).

2 The film made in digital technology CGI and 3D was directed by Lech Majewski and based on Michael Francis Gibson's book: *The Mill and the Cross. Peter Bruegel's Way to Calvary*. Acatos: Lausanne 2001. The film focuses on a dozen of 500 characters depicted in the painting. Everyday peasant life scenes are interwined with monologues from main characters, including Bruegel interpreting his painting symbolism. In the film a religious persecution in Flanders (1564) is contrasted to Christ's suffering.

3 W. Szymborska, *View With a Grain of Sand*: *Selected Poems*, translated by Stanisław Barańczak, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston 1995, p. 3. Szymborska was awarded the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature.

4 A proverbial expression derived from the old English proverb *Needs must when the evil drives* quoted in the poem *Assembly of Gods* (c. 1500), and in Shakespeare's plays, http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/needs-must, retrieved 16.05.2016.

Pieter Bruegel's paremiographic and iconographic masterpiece, titled *Die niederlandischen Sprichwörter*, has been stored at the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin since 1913. This oil-on-oak-panel painting, 117 x 163 cm in size (Fig. 1), contains illustrations of over 80 Flemish proverbs, proverbial phrases and idiomatic sayings, the majority of which are still in use in many European languages (Fig. 2). Wikipedia's entry *Netherlandish Proverbs* has been translated into 24 (*sic!*) languages, each offering varying degrees of information about the painting.[5] Fortunately, the Polish entry also includes a list of all the proverbs and idioms featured in the work, together with explanations of their meanings and where they are located (thumbnail sized fragments (Fig. 3.a, b). We should add that quite a large number of enlisted northern Brabant proverbs and proverbial expressions are historically well documented in the Polish paremiological catalogue;[6] some of them are still in use today in a direct or indirect form, and many have been quoted early enough to appear in Polish-Language Renaissance literature as well as Latin versions.[7]

While studying Internet resources associated with the subject, I discovered that both the artist[8] and his son, Pieter Brueg[h]el, made several copies and variants of the *Netherlandish Proverbs*, also known as *Flemish Proverbs*, *The Topsy Turvy World*, *The Folly of the World*, or *The Blue Cloak* (probably originally named – *De Blauwe Huyck*), but not all versions depict exactly the same sayings that were documented within the website. All the above mentioned works indicate that Bruegel was not only an illustrator of proverbs, but also a wise man and a collector, cataloguing human shortcomings and folly. In the latter aspect I am convinced he followed

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5   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlandish_Proverbs, retrieved 12.05.2015.

6   J. Krzyżanowski et al. (eds.), *Nowa księga przysłów i wyrażeń przysłowiowych polskich [New Book* of the Polish Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions], Vols. I–IV, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1969–1978.

7   E.g.: G.Cnapius [Grzegorz Knapski], *Thesaurus Polono-Latino-Graecus seu promptuarium linguae Latinae et Graece*, Vols. I–II; F. Caesario, *Cracovia* [Kraków] 1621, Vol. III (*Adagia Polonica…* [Polish Proverbs…] was edited in 1632 and counted 1400 pages of size A4.

8   Bruegel himself had painted several minor paintings on the subject of proverbs including *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* (1556) and *Twelve Proverbs* (1558), but the *Netherlandish Proverbs* is thought to have been his first large-scale painting on the theme. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlandish_Proverbs, retrieved 12.05.2015.

**Fig. 1.** Pieter Bruegel, the Elder, *The Netherlandish Proverbs* (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/7e/Pieter_Brueghel_the_Elder_-_The_Dutch_Proverbs_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg/)



**Fig. 2.** *The Netherlandish Proverbs* (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/c9/Bruegel6.jpg/500px-Bruegel6.jpg)

Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Adagia* (1500) and *In Praise of Folly*,[9] a genial satirical essay on folk superstitions, bigotry and other traditional faults of the European society of those times.

| to bang one's head against a brick wall | To try to achieve the impossible | |
|---|---|---|
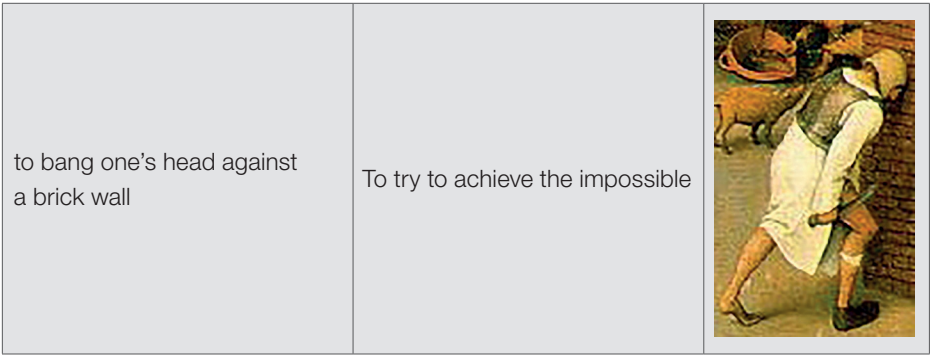
**Fig. 3a.** Thumbnail sized fragment (issue No. 4)

| ever believe someone who carries fire in one hand and water in the other | To up trouble | |
|---|---|---|
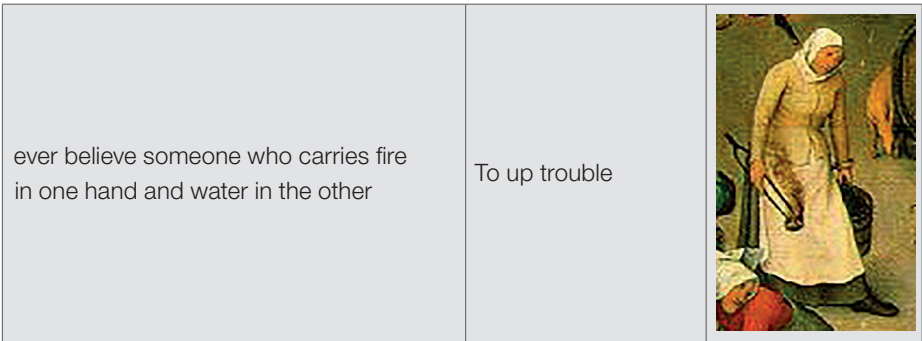
**Fig. 3b.** Thumbnail sized fragment (issue No. 3)

Browsing further, I found that there already existed a great interest among folklorists' in the *Netherlandish Proverbs*,[10] but it sadly became apparent through the Polish libraries' online catalogues that at the time these resources were not available in my country. Then started to investigate academic online

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9   Written in Latin as *Stultitiae Laus* [a.k.a. *Moriae encomium*], first published 1511. See: D. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, translated by J. Wilson, London 1668. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/9371/9371-h/9371-h.htm, retrieved 17.05.2016.

10  W. Mieder (ed.), *"The Netherlandish Proverbs": An International Symposium on the Pieter Brueg[h]els*, [in:] *Proverbium*, 2004, Supplement series, vol. 16 (Univ. of Vermont: Burlington).

directories and shared digital libraries (JSTOR,[11] EBSCOhost,[12] the British Library[13] catalogue), and discovered that the most interesting interpretive materials were published as early as the beginning of the 1980's by the great American scholar Alan Dundes, whose few innovative folkloristic publications I have read, and whom I knew in person, in spite of the fact that I was based behind the iron curtain. Alas, I did not know he also dealt with Bruegel's masterpiece. But it is "better late than never",[14] and eventually I became acquainted with Dundes' outstanding research. The study was made in co-operation with his Dutch undergraduate student Claudia A. Stibbe and their monograph entitled *Mixing Metaphors: A Folkloristic Interpretation of the "Netherlandish Proverbs" by Pieter Bruegel The Elder* was published in Finland in 1981 as a volume of the famous Folklore Fellows Communications series.[15]

The work starts with an outline of the characteristics of the painting and copies stored at Belgian and Dutch museums, followed by a concise survey of the current state of research. There was also information about a 'technical' method of depicting proverbial items in order to facilitate their identification.[16] Special attention has been put to fact that the corpus of painted 'proverbs' are in majority not proverbs in the meaning of folklore genre theory, but "Rather the genre represented is folk metaphors or what are sometimes called proverbial phrases. A proverb is a fixed phrase sentence in which neither

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11  JSTOR [Journal Storage] is a non-profit US organisation created in 1995 as a licensed system to over 10,000 academic intitutions worldwide. Since 2012 JSTOR enlarged offer to individuals who may register free of charge. JSTOR currently includes 2,300 academic journals (dating back to the first volume ever published) and thousands of books and other academic materials. http://www.jstor.org/, retrieved 15.05.2016.

12  EBSCOhost is a fee-based service working as a part of EBSCO Information Services (a branch of EBSCO Inc. founded in 1944 by **E**lton **B**ryson **S**tephens **Co.**), that currently includes 375 full-text databases, 600,000 e-books, subject indexes, digital archives, etc. https://www.ebscohost.com, retrieved 15.05.2016.

13  The British Library collection contains c. 56 million items. https://www.bl.uk/, retrieved 15.05.2016.

14  Old English proverb quoted by Geoffery Chaucer in his *The Yeoman's Prologue and Tale, Canterbury Tales* (c. 1386). http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/better-late-then-never.html, retrieved 15.05.2016.

15  A. Dundes, C.A. Stibbe, "Mixing Metaphors: A Folkloristic Interpretation of the "Netherlandish Proverbs" by Pieter Bruegel The Elder", Folklore Fellows Communications, No. 230, Vol. XCVII, Suomalaisen Tiedakatemia, Helsinki 1981.

16  *Ibidem*, p. 11.

subject nor predicate varies, e.g. 'When the house is burning, one can warm himself from the coals' (# 13). In contrast, a folk metaphor, normally reported in infinitive form, may vary with respect to either subject or predicate or both. Thus the folk metaphor 'to look through one's fingers' (# 3) might occur in speech as 'He looks through his fingers'".[17]

It is interesting that the number of northern Brabant proverbial expressions claimed to be represented in the painting varies from a few dozen up to more than one hundred items depending on the copy or interpretation. For Dundes and Stibbe the painting consists of "over one hundred mini-pictures, a kind of proverb-filled landscape, but in larger sense, all the little pictures are interrelated and they combine to produce one overall scene portraying an image of man".[18] Authors analysed the Bruegel's play with binary oppositions, two-in-one structures (e.g. 'killing two flies at one blow'), ritual reversal of reality (folly is wisdom and *vice versa*), and other witty combinations with paradoxes and conundrums mixed with the obscene and erotic traditions. It portrays the artist as a genial master of "making sense of nonsense": "By rendering metaphors, folk metaphors, literally, and cleverly combining them, Bruegel succeeded in constructing a rationale for the seemingly irrational behaviour of man. The successful translation of verbal foibles into visual fables will undoubtedly stand for centuries to come as an endearing monument to the artistic genius of Bruegel".[19]

The whole study is in essence a brilliant folkloristic analysis and identification of 115 proverbial saying items supported and enriched by illustrations and paremiological bibliography. They themselves are monographical minatures offering linguistic and etymological explanations, as well as cultural and psychological *versus* psychoanalytical interpretations.

Returning to the beginning of the story, I would like to underline that the day I met the *Nederlandish Proverbs* in the digital world of the Internet, I discovered the power of how modern technology can be used for inter-cultural and comparative folklore studies. This was a recognition of the ontological impact of the digital revolution on my own discipline: from an analogue folkloristics towards a digital one and *vice versa*. I am sure my young colleagues who were born in the digital era will be astonished by my delight and sensation.

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17  *Ibidem*.
18  *Ibidem*, p. 67.
19  *Ibidem*, p. 69.

# Chapter II

## e-Folklore as a Part of Digital Culture

The origins of interpersonal communication can be traced back more than 35,000 years to the Paleolithic age. Since that time forms of oral, aural and visual communication have developed in many ways; landmarks being the emergence of chirographic forms of language (invented 5,000 years ago) and, of course, the epochal Johann Gutenberg's invention of printing processes in the 15th century Europe. But even until the middle of the 19th century communication amongst populations generally was primarily based upon face-to-face oral practices – the use of printed media being largely the preserve of educated and literate social minorities.

The second half of the 19th century, however, saw the rapid development of European democratisation, education, literacy and technological inventions. In the sphere of communication telegraphic, telephonic, gramophonic and photographic technologies were developed. These were revolutionary milestones in two ways. The first two, telegraphic and telephonic communication, enabled synchronous exchanges between parties who were distanced from one another (using, in the case of telephones, purely oral practices, with no requirement for literacy). The second two, gramophonic and photographic technologies opened the door to mass consumption of a single phonic or visual message by much larger populations – again with no requirement for literacy. These were the beginnings of a shift in human communication from small scale local practice to an age of mass media communication.

In the 20th century the arrival of radio and film media built further on these changes and by the middle of the last century developments in cybernetics and electronics, and the invention of computers, satellite technology and mobile phones added further to the explosion of a global information society. This revolution reached its apogee in the 1990s with the emergence of the Internet idea initiated by Tim Berners-Lee in 1989, and the World Wide Web (www), that in 1992 connected 1 million computers all over the world. By the end of 2015 there was the widespread availability of computers (3 billion users) and mobile phones (5 billion users) at high street prices in many parts of the world. It was further enhanced by the move towards integrated multi-media digital technologies (Integrated Services Digital Networks) and interactive electronic services (iPads, iPhones, tablets). Communication without wires *via* mobile phones soon was transformed into further phone functions: photo and video camera and mini-computers. Nowadays we are surrounded by new information

and communication technology in the sphere of office monitoring, control and reports, banking, marketing, production, business, education, employment, transport, tourism services, and many more.

However we must remember that this new world is still as yet open to less than 20% of the world's population as electronic devices users. A paradoxical example is a huge IT hub (the second in the world after Silicon Valley) located in the metropolitan Indian town of Bangalore inhabited by an 8.5 million population of which the majority has no access even to electric light. On the other hand there are countries with limited access to the global Internet like Cuba or North Korea. In the latter only a small number of authorized persons are allowed to use the global Internet, and the national Intranet called Kwangmyong is the only computer network available to common people. Kwangmyong is only accessible locally, and access is available within big Korean cities and counties, as well as universities and major industrial and commercial organisations.

In the postmodern world revolutionary technological changes opened up a new civilisation sphere based upon information exchange at a global level in an almost infinite cyberspace of virtual reality, together with applications in cloud computing. The modern trend is the growing development of virtual economies that influence real national gross product. At the beginning of the 21st century most forms of mass media, publishing, film, television, video games and recorded music are produced and distributed digitally. Additionally, the digital milieu is used for advertising, spreading propaganda, social manipulation, criminal and other nefarious activities, and many other spurious purposes.[1]

That is why the post modern culture is often termed a 'cyberculture',[2] 'Internet culture',[3] and 'digital' one. For cultural anthropologist the concept of digital culture[4] seems more essential because a method of extracting and transferring meanings of nature always was achieved by encoding (or rather categorisation) of concepts that today are digitised. On the one

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[1]  E. Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, PublicAffairs, New York 2011; N. Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York 2011.

[2]  D.J. Bell, B.D. Loader, N. Pleace, D. Schuler, *Cyberculture: The Key Concepts*, Routledge, London 2004.

[3]  D. Porter (ed.), *Internet Culture*, Routledge, New York–London 1996.

[4]  C. Gere, *Digital Culture*, Reaktion, London 2002; D. Trend (ed.), *Reading Digital Culture*, Wiley–Blackwell, Oxford 2001; V. Miller, *Understanding Digital Culture*, Sage, London 2011.

hand the sensation of moving the fingers across the keyboard or the touch screen enable the body to experience speech as writing. On the other hand computer technology exploits computers' abilities to store digital information, e.g. numerical data of the digital file, the material fact of code as digits (0,1), numerical values, binary data, etc.

This new digital culture can be seen as a central feature of continuing globalisation understood as "the process of increasing interconnectedness between societies such that in one part of the world more and more have effects on peoples and societies far away".[5] The overarching phenomenon of globalisation includes, of course, the development of transnational and transcontinental structures accompanied by the spread of technology, market economies, consumerism, ideas and values, etc. However, the digital culture that we describe above has led to new styles of communication between people themselves and between people and institutions, agencies, governments, commercial organizations and so on. Its usage for interpersonal communication provides the possibility of immediate and spontaneous widespread reaction and response to news and information. It has got political consequences as well. The best example is the 'Egyptian revival' (also called as 'Arab awakening'), a democratic movement in 2006 inspired and propagated by the best-known Egyptian blogger and democratic activist Wael Abbas. Another example is the funny SMS disseminated among the young electorate during the Polish parliament election campaign in October 2007. Let us quote it in open interpretation:

*Putting on shoes – 30 seconds. Walking to polling station – 600 sec. Voting act – 120 sec. Seeing Kaczyński's unhappy face after failed elections – PRICELESS;-)*

By the way these were a few years ago and in both the above cases the local political situation has been changed drastically.

The development of communication technologies is but one aspect. It can also be viewed as a new avenue for spending leisure time and creativity. Today's online activities are not merely for information exchange, but also for the purposes of vast entertainment, social contacts, and sharing views as well as very personal opinions – including the expression of emotions.

The main field of the above mentioned activity is the Internet regarded as an encyclopaedia of global folk. On the other hand the Internet may

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5   J. Bayliss, S. Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997, p. 7.

be perceived as a zone of 'folkless' or 'non-folk' netizens, however "there is an inborn 'folk' presence in the cyberspace by virtue of the fact that people are behind nearly every symbolic interaction that takes place online and through new media technology".[6] Moreover, thanks to the technical tools' possibilities the creative people can easily co-edit not only Wikipedia, but also edit and publish online their own novels, own music and lyrics or pictures. They also are able to modify and update those already existing (e.g. institutional film/video clip mixed with own text, music, illustration, avatar, etc.) and share these own hybrid media creations with others. Without doubt in this aspect that is a kind of remix and participatory culture.[7]

We are now living in a global laboratory containing digitised technologies in almost every aspect of modern living. Our new multi-media epoch is spawning a global phenomenon called as the *secondary orality*,[8] *literate orality*[9] or *teleliteracy*[10] that is difficult to be analysed within the frame of any well known methodological approach. But perhaps the semiotic notion of *hypertext*[11] might be useful as it means a text displayed on electronic devices with references (links and hyperlinks) to other text which the reader can immediately access, or where text can be navigated to reveal progressively the sublevels of detail.

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6  T. Blank (ed.), *Folk Culture in the Digital Age. The Emergent Dynamic of Human Interaction*, University Press of Colorado, Boulder 2012, p. 2.

7  H. Jenkins, I. Mizuko, D. Boyd, *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era: A Conversation on Youth, Learning, Commerce, and Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2016; L. Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*, Penguin Books 2009.

8  **Secondary orality** is dependent on literate culture and the existence of writing. It also exists in sound and image (radio, TV), because it presumes and rests upon literate thought and expression. Thus, secondary orality is usually not as repetitive, redundant, agonistic, etc. the way primary orality is, and cultures that have a lot of secondary orality are not necessarily similar to primarily oral cultures. Secondary orality is a phenomenon of post-literacy era, whereas oral residue is a stage in the transition from pre-literate to literate. W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Routledge, New York 2002 (2nd ed.).

9  B. Gronbeck, T.J. Farrel (eds.), *Media, Consciousness, and Culture Explorations on Walter Ong's Thought*, London 1991, p. 197.

10  S.E. Mizrach, *From Orality to Teleliteracy*, www:2.fiu.edu/-mizrachs, retrieved 9.04.2016.

11  T.H. Nelson, *Opening Hypertext. A Memoir*, [in:] M.C. Tuman (ed.), *Literacy Online. The Promise (and Peril) of Reading and Writing with Computers*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh 1992.

The Internet's nature is a sort of hypertext based on the World Wide Web (www) structure with pages written in the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). Actually it is the reader who creates full text through his own online activity (e.g Wikipedia's hyperlinks). The reader (like a traditional folklore bearer) is able to correct, reinterprate and modify a nonlinear, and never ending hypertext (like a folklore text) that reminds us of Eco's open work theory.[12]

Turning to our current theme we have also seen the emergence and development of new forms of written, oral, aural and visual folkloric phenomena of a global character that have become known as "e-folklore" (electronically transmitted folklore). While the term "e-folklore" that – during the 14th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) in Tartu, 2005[13] – I suggested (after long discussion with Professor Rolf W. Brednich) be used met acceptance and popularity amongst many folklorists and outgrew its short history in research and university teaching, the new media researchers have started to use the term "digital folklore" quite recently. In our opinion folklorists perceive e-folklore as a function and substitute for traditional folklore genres based on speech and its next stage – literacy, while media experts are more interested in the technical aspects and artistic possibilities of media folklore forms. The last approach was well illustrated on the first Digital Folklore exhibition organized in 2015, Dortmund, Germany by the HMKV (Hartware MedienKunstVerein).[14] The exhibition focused on the first Geocities homepages made by 'enthusiastic amateurs' and the curators were two net-artists and folklorists: Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied from Merz Akademie. According to their earlier published book[15] they understand "digital folklore" as customs, traditions and elements of visual, textual, and audio new media culture that emerged from the user's engagement with personal computers applications.

Let us recall that the term 'folklore'[16] was coined by William Thoms in the middle of the 19th century. During the 20th century the folklore notion

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12  U. Eco, *Opera aperta* (1962, rev. 1976 – English translation: *The Open Work*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1989.

13  The paper delivered in Tartu has been published a year later. See: V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, "e-Folklore in the Age of Globalization", *Fabula*, 2006, Vol. 47, No. 3/4, pp. 248–254.

14  www.kmkv.de/en/programm/programmpunkte/2015/.../, retrieved 10.04.2016.

15  O. Lialina, D. Espenschied (eds.), *Digital Folklore. To Computers Users with Love and Respect*, designed by M. Buerger, Merz & Solitude, Stuttgart 2009.

16  Ambrose Merton [William Thoms], "Folk-Lore", *Athenaeum*, 1846, No. 982 (August 22).

was thought of as a cultural artefact[17] and behaviour expressing group identity.[18] Folklore was the product of centuries of face-to-face communication and everyday practice passed down from generation to generation amongst local groups of people in times when illiteracy was the norm and other means of communication were unavailable or rare. Traditionally folklore is characterised by direct communication amongst small groups[19] – often augmented by the role (as active carriers) of local or travelling storytellers, singers, jesters, father figures, wise men, or just clever performers of tradition.[20]

The natural way of communication and folklore[21] transmission was formerly as follows:

R (S)

⇕

R (S)  ⟺  R (S)  ⟺  R (S)

⇕

R (S)  ⟺  R (S)
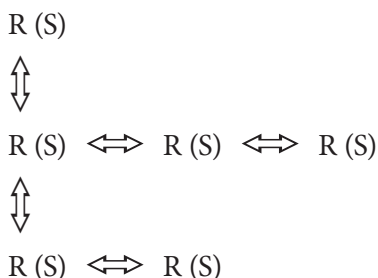
**R** = receiver/addressee (listener, spectator, reader)
**S** = subject/sender (singer, storyteller, performer)

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17  In broad sense there are distinctive traditions transmitted orally, or visually, and by imitation. Folklore includes literature, music, dance, visual arts, folk beliefs, customs, and traditional technology. In restricted sense means ethnopoetry and oral literature.

18  20th century notion of "folk" can refer not only to former peasants' communities or primitive tribes, but to "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is – it could be a common occupation, language, or religion – but what is important is that a group... have some traditions that it calls its own". A. Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1965, p. 2.

19  D. Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context", *Journal of American Folklore*, 1971, Vol. 84, p. 13. On aesthetic and syncretic aspects of folklore verbal creativity see: W. Gusiew, *Estetyka folkloru* [Esthetics of Folklore], Ossolineum, Wrocław 1974 [Polish translation].

20  C. von Sydow, *On the Spread of Tradition*, [in:] L. Bødker (ed.), *C.W. von Sydow: Selected Papers on Folklore. Published on His 70 Anniversary*, Rosenkilde & Bagger, Copenhagen 1948, pp. 11–43.

21  Cf.: R. Jakobson, *Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics*, [in:] T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style In Language*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1960, pp. 350–377.

However, in the new world of e-folklore, all of the players can perform the roles of originator, transmitter or moderator, and communication of messages between them is of a technical character:

$$
\begin{array}{ccc}
 & & R \\
 & & \Uparrow \\
S \Rightarrow & M & \Rightarrow \\
 & & \Downarrow \\
 & & R
\end{array}
$$
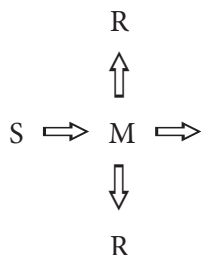
**M** = medium (manuscript, print, video, audio)

For orthodox folklorists, folklore as an oral and intangible heritage of humanity is a cultural phenomenon that reflects genuine systems of informal, everyday knowledge, values, norms, traditions, and stereotypes accepted by a given social group or local milieu. It is evidenced by rites, beliefs, customs, foodways, folk songs, folk narratives (tales, stories) and non-narratives (e.g. riddles, proverbs, children's counting-out formulas and rhymes),[22] and many more transitory forms of genres (e.g. rumours, gossip and jokes). For cultural anthropologists, folklore – being part of a symbolic culture – reveals the collective attitudes and everyday world views of people, including their fears and prejudices about alien or risky phenomena.[23] We should underline that folklore always was a 'living' category; it 'lived' in repeated and modified variants and versions transmitted anonymously and synchronically (amongst given social group) and diachronically (from generation to generation). Thus folklore has a continuously evolving and organic nature.

Today e-folklore forms are still disseminated as anonymous messages, but the "folk" is enormously big and growing. At a first glance a global folk (called sometimes as a cyber society of 'netizens') might be perceived as a community without community, while the 'target' groups or online 'tribes' play a similar role to former folk groups. Modern digital ways of integrating

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22  R.A. Georges, M. Owen Jones, *Folkloristics: An Introduction*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1995.

23  V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, *Współczesna wiedza o folklorze* [Contemporary Studies on Folklore], Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1986, pp. 40–41; *eadem*, *Folklor AIDS*, [in:] *eadem*, *AIDS. Studium antropologiczne* [AIDS: An Anthropological Study], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2000, pp. 94–100.

storytelling and role-playing, and of creating identities[24] have developed through the use of interpersonal mobile phoning and e-mailing, online social networking services (Facebook, Twitter, dating websites), role-playing (World of Warcraft) and social games (IMVU, Second Life), instant messaging services (e.g. MSN) and blogging or chatting online.

MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service) and SMS (Short Messaging Service) texting, discussion forums, a video-sharing YouTube website, a photo and video-sharing Instagram are the biggest backgrounds for e-folklore's creativity and circulation. A PhotoShop-lore and the digital animations of images together with modification of sounds provides a further dimension. The vast variety of digital humour with funny movies, jokes, and cartoon animations, and so called memes[25] gives further evidence that modern man is a *homo ludens* as ever.[26] Among old, but modified folklore genres (e.g. chain letters known from mediaeval times) there are new ones like fraud or scam emails. Among them are so called Nigerian scams;[27] fake, dead-fake and bogus offers as well as requests for help and phishing for data emails, e.g. the investment – related scams I received quite recently:

> *I just want to let you know that your funds are now in safer place, to secure a clearance, I will advice you write me back quickly to get information's of the diplomatic person to contact. The total funds US $ 1.5 Mil and 27 Kg of Gold respectively, will be delivered at your door step in your country accordingly by precised instructions only…*
>
> *I hope this mail meet you enjoying the best of health. I am Fatima Z… & Co. attorney at law from Johor-MALAYSIA and I wish to bring to your*

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[24] V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, T. Meder, A. Ross (eds.), *Online Identities, Representations, and Conducts*, Łódź University Press, Łódź 2012.

[25] R. Dawkins, *"Memes", Brief Candle in the Dark: My Life in Science*, Bantam Press, London 2015, pp. 404–408; Á. Veszelszki, *Promiscuity of Images. Memes from an English-Hungarian Contrastive Perspective*, [in:] A. Benedek, K. Nyíri (eds.), *How To Do Things With Pictures: Skill, Practice, Performance (series Visual Learning, vol. 3)*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2013, pp. 115–127; L. Shifman, *Memes in Digital Culture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2013; O. Solon, "Richard Dawkins on the internet's hijacking of the word 'meme'", Wired UK, 2013, 20 June.

[26] R.W. Brednich, *www.worldwidewitz.com.Humor im Cyberspace*, Herder, Freiburg 2005; E. Oring, *Engaging Humor*, Urbana, Chicago 2003.

[27] See funny cartoon about the so-called Nigerian Scam by Nitrozac & Snaggy in their *The Joy of Tech…* series (http://www.geekculture.com/joyoftech/ joyarchives/898.html, retrieved 12.06.2016).

*notice an investment overture with full financial benefit for both of us. I shall give you a comprehensive detail of what I propose as soon as I get a word from you.*

*If we can be of one accord, send your reply to my private Email: (…..@aol.com) to enable us commence this line of discussion.*

*Regards,*
*Fatima Z… & Co*

The new genres are blogs, virus warnings, replicated "tweets" – pearls of wisdom spread from Twitter, "success stories" (published by the dating online services), and many more (e.g. e-card texts, online funeral eulogies, messages, SMS funny rhymes and wishes as well as SMS rumours) that are being constantly invented.

This means that gossip, rumours, jokes, hoaxes, urban legends, chain letters and many other folklore genres of fact and fiction can encircle the world within minutes or even seconds. It has got political consequences as well. The most active players in these exchanges of folklore messages are often thought of as young people.

The quantity of e-folklore is vast. Furthermore the number of outlets is enormous, with source addresses changing constantly. Much of this outpouring is highly ephemeral in nature, but on the other hand it is clear that such ephemera are prolific breeders of new ephemerides on an almost exponential scale. Research in this area is often exasperating as even the best of Internet search engines fail to reveal stories just a month or so old – and even solemn prayers to the Internet patron saint St. Isidore of Seville (Isidorus Hispanensis, 560–636 A.D.) seem to fall on deaf ears!

A characteristic of e-folklore in its various manifestations is the use of specific language forms. Probably, partly by virtue of its status as the language of technologists, English has become the basis of many new 'e-languages', for example *Cyberspeak*, *Netlish*, *Weblish*, *Internet Language*, etc. Many natural languages have also absorbed or adapted English words or acronyms to create specific 'e-dialects' or 'e-jargons'. The multilingual term "blog", for instance, derived from the English "weblog", has assumed an international meaning and is used world-wide. Sub-jargons have also emerged for mobile phone and Internet users, often merged with elements of secret languages or special codes for the exclusive use of certain groups such as children and prisoners. An example is "A-leet", also known as "leetspeak" or just "1337", a strange slang based upon the transliteration of words into

a mixture of figures, letters and graphic symbols (e.g. d00d = *dude*; 1337/ l33t = *elite*; I< 3U = *I love you*). "A-leet" (derived from the word 'élite') is used by so called script kiddies, hackers, programme crackers and 'nerds' versus newcomers called 'newbs' or 'noobs'.[28] Often there is a phonetic basis to such jargons, but their usage is also popular because they provide powerful and expressive shorthands with which to communicate emotions or semantic nuances. Such jargons are also significant in the demarcation of special interest groups that can in effect be considered as postmodern "tribes" – from stamp collectors to online games' players.

It is also clear that e-language development is constantly evolving as a mixture based upon written and oral natural languages. This language often feeds back into natural language itself. Significant aspects of the construction of such 'e-languages' are contempt for conventional orthography, rush, fun and the use of defined codes, such as pictograms called 'emoticons', 'smileys' or 'emoji'. These are pictorial representations of a facial expression using punctuation marks, numbers and letters of the keyboard, usually written to express a person's feelings or mood,[29] especially on the position of the ending formulas in e-correspondence.

A very popular x-mark (or three x-marks) at the end of email or SMS text means *kiss(es)* or *love*. In electronic mediated communication is often followed by the name of a sender, while sometimes the name is omitted completely. And long ago, after the second world war when illiteracy still happened in Europe, the "x" mark at the bottom of document was quite popular in lieu of a signature. That is interesting, that x-mark goes back to an old tradition when a cross mark was the same as a sworn oath. But the oldest cross meaning as a sign of death or negation referred to the first letter of the ancient Greek word for Christ, Χριστός (*Christós*), and to the subsequent custom of kissing crucifix.

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28  E.R. Raymond, R. Eric, G.L. Steele jr., *The New Hacker's Dictionary*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.–London 1996.

29  Scott E. Fahlman, a computer scientist at Carnegie Mellon University proposed in 1982 to use the first smiley emoticons as the symbols to distinguish jokes from serious posts. J.B. Walther, K.P. D'Addario, "The impacts of emoticons on message interpretation in computer-mediated communication", *Social Science Computer Review*, 2001, No. 19, pp. 324–347; Á.Veszelszki, *Emoticons vs. Reaction-Gifs. Non-Verbal Communication on the Internet from the Aspects of Visuality, Verbality and Time*, [in:] A. Benedek, K. Nyíri (eds.), *Beyond Words. Pictures, Parables, Paradoxes* (series Visual Learning, vol. 5), Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2015, pp. 131–145.

A majority of emoticons in so called Western style should be read sideways; they have the eyes on the left, followed by the nose (also popular without) and the mouth, e.g.:

–:) equals *smile*      -: (equals *sad*        -: ((equals *very sad*        -;) equals *wink*

There were also popular emoticons derived from the Japanese style that arose on the ASCII NET of Japan in 1986, e.g.: (*_*) (^.^) .

The popularity of emoticons' usage within social media communication caused many electronic devices to have provided animated faces and stylized pictures instead of punctuation, e.g.:



**Fig. 4.** Emoticons' examples
(https://www.google.pl/search?q=emotikony+do+skopiowania&espv=2&biw=1600&bih=799&tbm=isch&
tbo=u&source)

Another example is *The Economist*'s an animated, tongue-in-cheek infographic in which Europeans' opinions of each other are written all over their emoticon faces (Fig. 5).
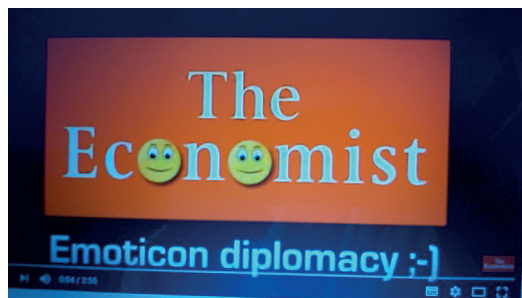


**Fig. 5.** Videographic: How do Europeans really feel about each other. Emoticon diplomacy
(https://www.youtube.com/watch2v=cltWJIEDEUME)

**Fig. 6.** Moscow Olympic Games 1980, Polish poster (author: Łukasz Katlewa), emoticons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1980_Moscow_Olympic_Games_Polish_poster.jpg, retrieved 12.06.2016)

As we see the above indicated ideogrammes as well as other graphic symbols' dictionaries represent concepts, ideas and objects that are independent of any given language, and its specific words or particular phrases. Apart from globally used emoticons and pictogrammes as well as typo-nihilism, e-language communication is based on the usage of acronyms, abbreviations and truncated or modified words or phrases (for instance omitting vowels – as in 'pls' = meaning 'please'), often based on phonetics and a combination of letters and numbers. Let us quote a few of the oldest and most popular:

AOLer = *America Online member*;

ASAP [a.s.a.p.] = *as soon as possible*;

BFN = *bye for now;*

Btw = *by the way*;

CYA = *see ya*;

4U = *for you*;

F2F = *face to face*;

HTH = *hope this helps*;

IMHO = *in my humble opinion*;

LOL = *laughing of loud*;

OMG = *Oh, My God*;

SOL = *sooner or later.*

Neologisms abound – often linked to the lexicons of natural languages (for instance, in Polish: *blogować* = to write blog; *emailować* = to write e-message). Many English words in common usage in electronic communication have also been assimilated by many natural languages – for instance the word "chat". We suspect that significant influences come from the Microsoft corporation and other transnational computer hardware and software corporations. Their programming and translation departments have infected natural languages around the world with such words as "logon", "macro", "FAQs", "notebook", "laptop", "spam", and so on, that now have a universal meaning.

The use of 'e-languages' is also accompanied by codes of practice, the most well known being *Netiquette* (a new joint word: *net* and *etiquette*).[30] This *savoir-vivre* Internet rule means respecting other users' views and displaying courtesy when posting to online discussion groups. Typical conventions are that messages should be brief and that answers should be without too much delay; users should read FAQs before posing questions; multiple postings are frowned upon and obscene, inflammatory or defamatory words are disallowed. Also writing in capital letters is viewed as an expression of anger or shouting. Alas, on many not properly monitored and moderated forums the so called haters and vulgar users operate.

For those studying e-folklore there are numerous problems connected with verification, legal issues (such as intellectual property rights), the translation or comprehension of codes, jargons and ethnic languages, and the identities of originators and transmitters hidden by their 'nicknames', 'handles' and avatars. Many problems arise from visual e-folklore such as *PhotoShop-lore* (which was preceded by so called *XeroxCopy-lore*) that is disseminated amongst cyber-groups to which the researcher has limited access. This specific form of *ars electronica* is a substitute for the previous jokes transmitted orally (as well as folk poetry and folk narratives), and reflects the same desires, needs, responses, frustrations, prejudices, cultural taboos and fantasies, etc.

We should add that the visualisation of folklore texts, especially puzzles, riddles and jokes can also be seen in short films (e.g. Quicktime), animations (Macromedia) and through PowerPoint presentations, and HTML/HTTP. If we add to this musical elements and funny sounds we realise that this type

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[30] V. Shea, *Netiquette*, Albion Books, San Francisco 1994. See also: www.rfc1855.net, retrieved 10.06.2015.

of e-folklore has a very complex character; it is far from naïve; it is – thanks to technical possibilities a consciously created and recreated form of art (e.g. www.bitstrips.com):



**Fig. 7a.** Philosophy: I did it my way. Courtesy of Andy Ross (http://www.andyross.net/blog2014q2.htm) – Bitstrips



**Fig. 7b.** Andy ponders the wonder of words. Courtesy of Andy Ross (http://www.andyross.net/blog2013q4.htm) – Bitstrips

In this technology mediated artistic culture zone (e.g. www.deviantart.com, www. digitalartsonline.co.uk) there are very clever and unique artistic experiments on the one hand, while on the other hand there is an omnipresent kitsch that for high culture experts means the end of culture itself . In contrast those who admire DIY electronics and amateur online culture see kitsch as a form of digital folklore: "In fact this evolving vernacular, created by users for users, is the most important, beautiful and misunderstood language of new media".[31]

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31  http://digital-folklore.org/, retrieved 10.04.2016.

# Digital**Arts**

INSPIRATION FOR DIGITAL CREATIVES

*HOME – NEWS – TUTORIALS – REVIEWS – FEATURES – PORTFOLIOS – GUIDES*

Fig. 8. The online magazine *Digital Arts* (http://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk)

In the foregoing discussion we have described some of the origins, media and forms, and some of the determinants, of a new – and still growing – universe of interpersonal communication. We have used the terms 'e-folklore' and 'e-language' to describe what we consider to be manifestations of a new genre of global culture. But some questions still hang in the air.

The proposal that this is a global phenomenon seems beyond doubt; although, as we say, not all the peoples of the world are yet participants. Computer networks, cell phones and satellite systems span the world. People in the Americas, Europe, China, India, Australasia, Russia and far flung islands routinely and frequently exchange ideas, opinions and feelings in huge variety. The languages in use have globally accepted meanings – albeit not always intelligible to all.

We have also alluded to the phenomena of postmodern "tribes" or online communities – groups who in effect, though dispersed, share bonds cemented by language and shared values, beliefs and interests.[32] Thus e-folklore is the informally shared common and everyday knowledge they perceive as connecting each other. However, classifying and codifying e-folklore presents new problems. Questions of originality and authenticity arise, and political, ethical and property rights issues must all be addressed.

One question concerns the extent to which this phenomenon contributes to 'globalisation'. Referring to our earlier mentioned definition, globalisation should result in *effects* between peoples and societies. So one question is – what are the effects that global interpersonal communications have upon peoples and societies? To what extent are values, beliefs, desires and the routines of everyday life changing or becoming globally homogenised?

Also, the claim that a part, or all, of this constitutes a new form of folklore bears some scrutiny. Traditional folklore is generally thought of as the product

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32  E.g. R.G. Howard, *Digital Jesus. The Making of a New Christian Fundamentalist Community on the Internet*, New York University Press, New York 2011.

of long evolutionary processes of repetition confined within small groups of people. Moreover, traditional folklore tends to be long-lived, and repeated often over generations. Is it true that our new digital global village – rich with short lived ephemera – is really a new subsoil of a global culture? Do the electronically spread messages really constitute a new genre of e-folklore?

# Chapter III

**Towards a Digital Folklore Heritage**

# Folklore and folkloristics

In many dictionaries and handbooks the *folklore* phenomenon has been described as traditional art, literature, everyday knowledge, and practices that are passed from generation to generation through oral communication, example and imitation.[1] Folklore was transmitted diachronically (through centuries) and synchronically (within group milieux) and the information thus passed on expressed the shared ideas and values of a particular ethnic or social group.[2]

The formal academic discipline devoted to the study of folklore is known as *folkloristics*, although it is sometimes also termed as folklife research and folklore studies. Because of its interdisciplinary character, folkloristics shares methodological approaches and insights with anthropology and ethnography, history and art, literature and linguistics, semiotics, musicology, etc. But unchangeably since its beginings the discipline of folkloristics has been always focused on collecting different kinds of folklore forms as evidence of everyday cultural knowledge and the collective memory of the group ('folk'). The aim of 'lore' items collection is their preservation,[3] because folklore is – *ex definitione* – a vanishing subject, and then its

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1 On the 25th General UNESCO Conference (Paris, 15.11.1989) the following vast definition of folklore has been accepted: "**Folklore** (or traditional and popular culture) is the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts". http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php, retrieved 12.04.2016.

2 V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, *Wprowadzenie do folklorystyki* [Introduction to Folkloristics], Uniwersytet Łódzki, Łódź 1979; R.F. Bendix, G. Hasan-Rokem, *Introduction*, [in:] R.F. Bendix, G. Hasan-Rokem, *A Companion to Folklore*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, Mass. 2012, pp. 1–6.

3 See: Elliott Oring's opinion that folklore is that part of culture that "lives happily ever after". B. Toelken, *The Anguish of Snails. Native American Folklore in the West*, Utah State University Press, Logan 2003, p. 18.

classification and systematisation (archives, inventories, repositories). The next stage is dealing with folklore items: its their interpretation, and presentation of research results.

Thus folkloristics contains studies on folklore as an historical artefact in the aspect of continuity (survival, revival); as ethnopoetry (folk genres, types, motifs), as well as research on folklore as a behaviour and a text of culture.[4] In spite of folklore's lack of substance,[5] the folklore itself – as an expression of culture and group identity – belongs to the cultural heritage of humanity. Looking back to folklorists' achievements, they constantly participate in the process of identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of cultural heritage.

## A definition of folklore and cultural heritage

Having in mind the definition of oral and intangible heritage,[6] folklore masterpieces should be preserved, protected and safeguarded. The concept of cultural heritage safeguarding is linked to the notion of ethnic and cultural identity,[7] and its modern connotations give rise to interesting issues surrounding the problem of identity and multiplied identities created by global multi-media. On the one hand lie considerations of human rights and acceptance of individual and collective identity. On the other, there are the social, political, and economic issues connected with progressive globalisation and the omnipotential cultural power of electronic devices.

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4   R.A. Georges, M. Owen Jones, *Folkloristics. An Introduction*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1995.

5   "As we argue over what folklore is, we preserve the intrinsic value structure that has nurtured our discipline for a long time". H. Glassie, "The Moral Lore of Folklore", *Folklore Forum*, 1983, No. 16(2), p. 138.

6   The definition is worded as follows: "people's learned processes along with the knowledge, skills and creativity that inform and are developed by them, the products they create and the resources, spaces and other aspects of social and natural context necessary to their sustainability; these processes provide living communities with sense of continuity with previous generations and are important to cultural identity,as well as to the safeguarding of cultural diversity and creativity of humanity". *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, Intangible Heritage Section, Division of Cultural Heritage, UNESCO, Paris 2001, p. 5.

7   A.P. Cohen, *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity,* Routledge, London 1994.

In Europe the cultural heritage[8] promotion and activity is regulated by the Council of the European Union. It should be mentioned that the milestone in European socio-cultural policy turned out to be Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, Faro 2005. The Faro convention defined the concept of a 'heritage community'[9] and the postulate was of the opinion that society itself was the beneficiary then it assigned cultural heritage as moral and economic value, for the benefit of individual local communities, as well as fostering the development of trans-border communities. It was also underlined that tangible and intangible resources provide a basis for sustainable model of the progress of humanity.

The holistic approach to cultural heritage is the subject of UNESCO governance on a global level. The definiton of cultural heritage is vast, mainly because the concept contains an expression of human knowledge and creativity, and the ways of life developed by communities and passed on from generation to generation. These include customs, practices, places, artefacts, artistic expressions and values. It originates out of the interactions between people and places over time, and influences contemporary life in all aspects; social, economic and technological. From architecture to transport, technology, museology, ethnic studies, folklore and oral culture, language, education, and audiovisual heritage amongst many others. These resources are obviously non-renewable and unique and as such are of great importance for its sustainability and benefit to future generations. Furthermore the definition of cultural heritage is subject to a constant evolution. What one generation considers 'cultural heritage', may be rejected by the next generation, only to be revived by a subsequent generation. In summary, the cultural heritage of any world region consists of all the resources that are inherited from its past in all

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8  "**Cultural heritage** is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time" (Article 2). See: https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680083746, retrieved 14.04.2016.

9  "A **heritage community** consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations" (Article 2). See: https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680083746, retrieved 14.04.2016.

forms including tangible, intangible and – in the postmodern world – a digital heritage as well. That is why digital heritage[10] safeguarding is a matter not only of the past but more so of the future.

This approach was undertaken by the European Commission, and in 2011 the Recommendation on the Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Material and Digital Preservation was announced.[11] The main aim was to treat digital cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe and to encourage member states to intensify the process of bringing European culture online, because online access will make it possible to use cultural material for leisure, studies or work. Moreover, „the digitised material can be reused – for both commercial and non-commercial purposes – for uses such as developing learning and educational content, documentaries, tourism applications, games, animations and design tools".[12] In this mentioned document it was emphasised that digitising and providing wider access to cultural resources also offers enormous economic opportunities.[13]

According to the above, 'digital heritage' is the use of digital media in the service of preserving cultural heritage.[14] The best example of such activity is – supported by the European Commission – an Internet portal governed by Dutch foundation Europeana[15] that acts as an interface to a multilingual *online collection* of millions of *digitised items* from *European museums*, *libraries*, *archives* and *multi-media collections*.

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10  As for **digital heritage** UNESCO defines it as embracing "cultural, educational, scientific and administrative resources, as well as technical, legal, medical and other kinds of information created digitally, or converted into digital form from existing analogue resources". See: Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage. https://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17721&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTI N=201.html, retrieved 29.04.2016.

11  Full text: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:28 3:0039:0045:EN:PDF, retrieved 29.04.2016.

12  Paragraphs 6 & 7.

13  "This will give an important input to the creative industries, which account for 3.3% of EU GDP and 3% of employment. These industries are faced with a digital transition that is shaking up traditional models, transforming value chains and calling for new business models" (Paragraph 7).

14  Y. Kalay, T. Kvan, J. Affleck (eds.), New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage, Routledge, London–New York 2007; F. Cameron, S. Kenderdine (eds.), Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2007.

15  www.europeana.eu; www. pro.europeana.eu, both retrieved 30.04.2016.

The beta prototype of the project was launched at the end of 2008, and in February 2009, the website www.Europeana.eu (version 1.0) started. During three months this portal offered an accesss to 10 million digital objects from across Europe.[16] At the moment of writing this text, computer users[17] are able to explore over 53 million of artworks, artefacts, books, video and sound recordings from 2,000 contributing institutions (and counting) that give access to their collections of cultural and scientific heritage from prehistory to the modern day.

The heritage digital movement includes not only digitisation of libraries and archives, but also archiving of digitally created sources such as graphics, design, digital storytelling, etc. Here we should mention the project called DIHE (Digital Intangible Heritage of Europe) that has been Swedish reply to DIHA (Digital Intangible Heritage of Asia).[18] DIHE was founded in 2012 as a joint venture between The Interactive Institute and the Digital Heritage Center in Sweden as "a truly unique initiative, which focuses on esthetics and creativity by combining artistic development with research in design and technology. In addition, it is a real-life experiment in the organisation of cross-discipline research combining art, design, anthropology, computer science, interaction design, ethnography and many other disciplines".[19] DIHE develops the interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral methodological approach that spans across visitor and museum studies, interaction design, human computer interaction, cultural studies and ethnography. Special attention is put

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16  "The digital objects that users can find in Europeana are not stored on a central computer, but remain with the cultural institution and are hosted on their networks. Europeana collects contextual information – or metadata – about the items, including a small picture. Users search this contextual information. Once they find what they are looking for, if they want to access the full content of the item, they can click through to the original site that holds the content". See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europeana, retrieved 30.04.2016.

17  As for the audience geography, the most active www.europeana.eu visitors represent United States (11.0%), Spain (10.5%), Poland (6.5%), Germany (5.1%), and Netherlands (4.9%). Ranking according to: www.alexa.com/siteinfo/europeana.eu, retrieved 30.04.2016.

18  Research cluster and Archive of Indigeneous Languages and Cultures of Asia (AILC) located at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, supported initially by a Seed Grant from the Institute for Media Innovation (2009–2010), from 2011 funded by the New Silk Road Grant.

19  https://www.tii.se/about-us/history; https://www.swedishict.se/, retrieved 1.05.2016.

to related fields such as cognitive and affective disciplines, or cognitive semiotics helping to understand the meaning making processes within the framework of communication channels and modalities.

# Folklore cultural heritage and the information society

The value of the existing heritage is very important and should not prejudice its conservation and preservation by means of modern digital tools. Having in mind that folklorists' representation in scholar world is much smaller than for instance archeologists' milieu, the development of folklore digital repositories is not yet so well developed. Nevertheless folklorists together with IT experts undertake efforts to develop the use of digital technology to enhance access to cultural heritage and the benefits which derive from it by the implementation of international digitising standards. The adjustment of old catalogues and traditional inventories and repositories into new digital folklore archives is not easy, and also rather expensive. That is why not many folklore institutions are able to make it soon, but there are few successful initiatives that have been already taken in Europe. We would like to mention them.

The first example is the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre (HFRC) of the Academy of Athens. The institution was established in 1918 by the father of Greek folkloristics, professor Nikolaos Politis. At the beginning of the 2000s the HFRC developed a National Centre for the Documentation of Traditional and Contemporary Greek Culture as a part of the European Commission's Operational Programme called Information Society (2004–2008). It enabled them to install two digi book scanners (i2S) as well as the application – System Center Configuration Manager (SCCM©). The latter is compatible with international metadata standards and has distinct subsystem documentation of digitisation that offers support for different file types (picture, sound, video, photo, print, manuscript, etc.) Owing to the above modernisation there were transferred into digital form: 400,000 pages from the Manuscript Archive; c. 150,000 pages of entries from the Archive of Indexed and Classified Folklore Material (songs – 120,000, riddles – 10,200, distichs – 15,300, etc.); 11,500 photographs; 1,500 hours of archive film ¼" 7,5 ips, 3 ips and 1 7/8 ips; and 110 hours of archive 78 rpm records.[20] During the next years further

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[20]  A. Polymerou-Kamilaki, *Archive Digitization at the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre of the Academy of Athens*, [in:] M. Tsipopoulou (ed.), *Digital Heritage*

digitisation plans have been undertaken, but not yet finished, i.e. digitisation of 29 volumes of *Annales* of HFRC, digital multimedia atlas of traditional Greek culture (project: *Laografikos Atlas tis Elladhos – Folklore Atlas of Greece*), educational application (link: "Treasury of folk culture"), and a creation of the portal on Greek Folklore.[21]

Next successful inititiative was undertaken in late 90s by the Estonian Folklore Archives,[22] established as the central folklore archives of Estonia in 1927. Today it holds 1,5 million manuscript pages, photographs, video and audio recordings, and the core material is gathered from 1,400 informants by Estonian folklore collector Jakob Hurt (1839–1907) that has been digitised quite recently (2011–2012). Since 1997, more than 20 folklore databases of different folklore genres,[23] primarily based on the Estonian Folklore Archives' collections have been compiled and listed on the website of the Estonian Literary Museum.[24] In 2012 there was created a new file repository and archival infosystem called Kivike,[25] a monumental digital project supported by the European Regional Development Fund. The file repository Kivike stores two types of information: first, existing archive materials in a digital form, manuscripts, and photographs (with the plan to include audio and video recordings) as well the digital material sent to the archives, and second: metadata including data about the materials that have not yet been stored (as files) in the repository.

Another Baltic State's repository belongs to the Digital Archives of Latvian Folklore[26] at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia, Riga. The archives founded in 1924, now is one of the biggest European

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*in the New Knowledge Environment: Shared spaces & Open Paths to Cultural Content* (*Proceedings of the International Conference held in Athens 31.10.08–02.11.0*8), Athens 2008, pp. 25–28.

21  http://www.kentrolaografias.gr/default.asp?V_LANG_ID=5; www.academyof athens.gr/en/HFR C, both retrieved 14.04.2016.

22  R. Järv, "Estonian Folklore Archives", *Oral Tradition*, 2013, No. 28/2, pp. 291–298.

23  Special attention should be paid to database of runic songs (75,000) as well as web jokes, place-lore, folktales, droodles, and ethnobotany.

24  www.folklore.ee/ebaas, retrieved 1.05.2016.

25  Kivike (available at http://kivike.kirmus.ee) is an acronym of the phrase Kirjandusmuuseumi Virtuaalne Kelder ("the virtual cellar of the Literary Museum"). K. Kulasalu, "Estonian Folklore, Cultural History and Literature in a Digital Form: The File Repository and Archival Information System Kivike", *Folklore (Electronic Journal of Folklore)*, 2015, Vol. 60, No. 4, p. 141.

26  www.garamantas.lv/e, retrieved 1.05.2016.

collection, keeping more than 3 million folklore items. There is the big folk songs collection (17,000), enlarged in 2002 by so called Dainu Skapis[27] – folksong texts and manuscript images. Also audio and video recordings (5,000) are digitally available, as well as databases of genres, names, places, and illustrations to be searched. There are also five remarkable folklore collections of Latvian minorities: Germans (incorporated from the folklore collection of the Herder Institute in Riga), Jews, Russians, Roma, Belarussians. They are available online in native languages and in Latvian as well.

Let us also mention the Danish Folklore Archives, a branch of the Royal Library in Copenhagen, which is the national library of Denmark.[28] The Folklore Archives hold a rich collection of manuscripts; the largest collection of mediaeval ballads across the Nordic countries, images and sound recordings of intangible culture, such as songs and stories, primarily from Denmark but also from other parts of the world. Digitisation process began in 2010 in order to create preservation copies of non-digitally borne folklore video items, images and audio recordings. The digital audio collection currently consists of approximately 7,710 files (in wav format), the image collection contains 400 images (in .jpg and .tiff formats), and the video collection so far only holds approximately100. Digitisation allows the user to click on a file and listen to one or many recordings at once. Because most not yet digitised audio items on tape are only available on site, therefore staff have to go to the storage area, find the appropriate tape, put it in the machine and play it for the user. It is very likely that in future more files will also be accessible via the Folklore Archives' website.[29]

Another Nordic achievement is a national repository of cultural and historical sources – the Norwegian Folklore Archives (NFS), founded

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27  Krišjānis Barons, great Latvian folk songs collector, of the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century. His famous Cabinet of Folksongs (Dainu skapis) contained 150,000 song texts written on the tiny paper slips. As a documentary heritage included to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2001. More info: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/, retrieved 1.05.2016.

28  The Royal Library is a partner in Planets, a European joint-venture project for research and development in the field of digital preservation, which has produced a framework and set of practical tools and services to enable institutions to manage and access digital collections for the long-term. http://www.planets-project.eu/docs/casestudies/PlanetsCasestudy_DigitalFolklore.pdf, retrieved 1.05.2016.

29  Samples of images, sound and text are available on the Danish Folklore Archives website at http://www.dafos.dk, retrieved 21.04.2016.

in 1914, now located at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages at the University of Oslo. Like many other archives in the Nordic countries, the NFA is experimenting with digital collection via the Internet.[30] The digital collection of prose narratives contains 700 folktale items gathered by great Norwegian collectors,[31] and a selection of 1,300 legend records systematised in accordance with Reidar Th. Christiansen's 1958 catalogue of orally transmitted Norwegian legends,[32] as well as collection of life stories carried out in 1964,1981, and 1995–1996. The NFA is also proud of its digital Magic department that comprises three types of sources: grimoires, witchcraft trial records, and magic legends.

Digital folklore databases on the selected 19th century (old Finnish folk poetry especially) and ongoing contemporary collections are also accessible from the website of the big (more than 2 million items) folklore archives and library based in Helsinki. It is a part of well known Finnish Literary Society (Suomen Kirjallisuuden Seura) that has been operating actively since 1831. The SKS Archives have been developing An Open Science and Open Cultural Heritage programme that offers: "Finnish culture and cultural heritage materials in digital format. We make information packs[33] and databases on the Internet. In addition, SKS's archives and library produce content for the services of many oral history organizations".[34]

Modernisation via digitalisation of former folklore collections also took place in Germany. The newest achievement is the Wossidlo[35] Archives (of 2,5 million items) in Rostock transferred successfully (2010–2014) into the digital archive WossiDiA, which has been available online since 2015.[36] The project is a joint

30  http://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/services/norwegian-folklore/, retrieved 21.04.2016.

31  Peter Christen Asbjørnsen (1812–1885); Jørgen Engebretsen Moe (1813–1882); Moltke Moe (1859–1913); *Sophus Bugge* (1833–1907).

32  R.Th. Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends. A Proposed List of Types with a Systematic Catalogue of the Norwegian Variants*, FF Communications, No. 175, Helsinki 1958.

33  E.g. *Kalevala* information pack: full text of *Kalevala* (1849) and all the information on this national epic's origin,impact, etc. available in Finnish, English, Dutch, Estonian, French, German, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish.

34  http://www.finlit.fi/en, retrieved 22.04.2016.

35  Richard Wossidlo (1885–1939) was the founder of Mecklenburgian folkloristics (Volkskunde), and one of the most important field researchers of German-speaking and European ethnology.

36  http://www.wossidia.de. See also: H. Meyer, A.-Ch. Schering, Ch. Schmitt, WossiDiA: The Digital Wossidlo Archive, [in:] H. Meyer et al. (eds.), *Corpora*

venture between the Institute of European Ethnology and the Institute of Computer Science, at the University of Rostock.[37]

The digitalisation of the biggest folklore archives is still in process. The example is the National Folklore Collection (NFC) at the University College Dublin (UCD). It is a unique collection of Ireland's folklore heritage and one of the largest folklore archives in the world. In 1970 the National Folklore Collection was inherited from the Irish Folklore Commission (established in 1935) and today the collection contains 3 million pages in manuscript form, 100,000 voices of contributors, including 10,000 hours of audio recordings, 70,000 photographs, 1,000 hours of moving images and a specialist library.

A digitisation project called the Irish Virtual Research Library and Archive was launched in 2005, and today the Digital Library of University College Dublin provides online access to some of the bigger NFC repositories,[38] as follows: collection of ballads, urban folklore, photographs, folk music, schools, school games, and Irish famine research data. The project was conceived as a means to increase and facilitate access to UCD's cultural heritage repositories through the adoption of digitisation technologies. In 2012 the project called dùchas.ie[39] was started in order to initiate the digitisation of all materials of the National Folklore Collection, and to provide by the end of 2016 a data management system for the NFC, to which further material can be added in the future. At this stage, digitisation is making a digital copy (scanned or re-recorded) of the index cards and pages, as well as audio and video files and photographs. It means that neither rewriting handwritten material nor the use of optical character recognition is involved at this point. We also should mention a technological advisory role of the national Digital Repository of Ireland[40] that preserves humanities, social sciences and cultural heritage data

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*ethnographica online: Strategien der Digitalisierung kultureller Archive und ihrer Präsentation im Internet*, Vol. 5 of Rostocker Beiträge zur Volkskunde und Kulturgeschichte, Waxmann, Münster–New York 2014, pp. 61–84.

37  The project was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK).

38  www.digital.ucd.ie/?q=dc.type:Collection&fq[]=repository_facet:National%20 Folklore%20Collection%20UCD, retrieved 21.04.2016.

39  Project's funding is from Dublin City University, University College Dublin, National Lottery and the Irish Folklore Foundation. See: www.duchas.ie, retrieved 21.04.2016.

40  http://www.dri.ie/demonstrator-projects/irish-lifetimes, retrieved 21.04.2016.

from research institutions. It conducts interesting projects, e.g. "Lifetimes" built on oral and audio life histories deposited in the Irish Qualitative Data Archive. This project is planned as a cross-searchable, thematic digital resource that will comprise a comprehensive record of changing lives and times in Ireland from the foundation of the state.

The last, but not the least example is the Meertens Institute,[41] established in Amsterdam in 1926, and a part of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences since 1952. The Institute deals with Dutch language and culture, and is well known for its many folklore research initiatives on a European and global level.[42] Currently the Institute's library contains ca 70,000 publications and 4,000 journals, and the archives has more than 450 collections consisting of electronically processed research data, digitised material, archival collections, printed material, handwritten questionnaires, maps and pictures, as well as 5,000 audio collections (digitised in 85%). Special attention should be paid to the Dutch Folktale Database, enabling one to search for historical and contemporary fairy tales, legends, saints' lives, jokes, riddles and urban legends. The new initiative, enlarging the above is a project called FACT (Folktales as Classifiable Texts) aimed at developing software for the Dutch Folktales Database, and enriching them with online metadata such as catalogue numbers in accordance with international folktale types, language, keywords, genres, and summaries.[43]

In Poland The Oskar Kolberg Institute started in 2015 to digitise 80 volumes of 19th century folklore materials collected by Oskar Kolberg. The initiative was possible owing to Polona portal, a 2.0 interface of the digital National Library.[44]

The above enumeration of the most developed electronic folklore archives shows that in great numbers their achievements were possible thanks to the European Union policy towards the European information society and its cultural heritage. We are not well acquainted with the state of digitalisation of folklore collections on other continents. But as far as we are informed via

41  http://www.meertens.knaw.nl, retrieved 21.04.2016.

42  The secretariat of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF) is located at the Meertens Institute. See: www.siefhome.org, retrieved 23.04.2016.

43  http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/cms/en/research/projects, retrieved 23.04.2016. The project leader Prof. Theo Meder is also a chair of the Committee for "Folktales and the Internet", International Society for Folk-Narrative Research. See: http://www.isfnr.org, retrieved 23.04.2016.

44  https://polona.pl, retrieved 17.06.2016.

American Folklore Society (AFS) website,[45] the National Folklife Archives Initiative (NFAI), a long-term project of the AFS was undertaken in 2011.[46]

During the first stage of the project the national online survey of folklore archival collections and repositories has been developed by its research team with the hope „it will grow over the years, as we – and folklore archivists across the country – add information on more repositories and collections".[47] We also should mention the Ethnographic Thesaurus project (developed by AFS in cooperation with the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress[48]) that is an online available vocabulary (version 2.2) containing folklore, ethnomusicology, ethnology, and related fields information.[49]

## Digital media and the new cultural heritage

The ongoing digitisation of the former cultural heritage archives and collections is but one aspect of the folklore documentary system. As was pointed out in this book chapters, today's folklore studies are more and more involved in the postmodern forms of digital culture. That is why the extension of folklore fieldwork towards the virtual realm is easily observed and the current research is often the combination of offline and online analysis.

While studying online e-folklore issues we face the same offline patterns, performances and structures of old genres in new settings, as well as we meet passive and active 'new tradition' bearers. We also encounter what folklorists love the most: political humour and ephemeral jokes on elections through memes, rhymes, and visual animations; urban legends and supranatural beliefs as well as vernacular personal narratives and life histories recognised via photos, comments, and tags of Facebook's files, having in mind that often local goes global and *vice versa*. And during online field-work on the social

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45  http://www.afsnet.org/, retrieved 24.04.2016. See also: https://openfolklore.org, retrieved 29.04.2016.

46  Thanks to the financial support from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Division of Preservation and Access (Programme: The Humanities Collections and Reference Resources).

47  http://www.folklorecollections.org/, retrieved 24.04.2016.

48  The Library of Congress has made digitised versions of collection materials available online since 1994, concentrating on its most rare collections and those unavailable anywhere else. Among digitised photographs, manuscripts, maps, sound recordings, video clips, animation pictures, and books, there are also "born digital" materials such as web sites.

49  http://id.loc.gov/vocabulary/ethnographicTerms.html, retrieved 23.04.2016.

networking websites and fora, folklorists meet online folk 'tribes' and net communities represented by both common people and celebrities, fans and haters, as well as re-imagined people living their virtual lives.[50]

There is also quite influential group called Anonymous originated in 2003 on the imageboard 4chan (www.4chan.org) representing the concept of many online and offline community users simultaneously existing as an anarchic, digitised "global brain". Anonymous members (a.k.a. "Anons") can be distinguished in public by the wearing of Guy Fawkes masks[51] in the style portrayed in the graphic novel and film, *V for Vendetta*, a 2006 dystopian political thriller directed by James McTeigue and written by The Wachowski Brothers, based on the 1988 Vertigo Comics limited series of the same name by Alan Moore and David Lloyd. The film has been seen by many political groups as an allegory of oppression by government. The libertarian and anarchic circles have used it to promote their beliefs.



**Fig. 9a–b.** An emblem commonly associated with Anonymous wearing masks. The "man without a head" represents leaderless organization and anonymity (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_(group))

Internet is also a home for the completely new creative practices of a performative character like so called demotivators,[52] memes, small cartoons

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50  V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, T. Meder, A. Ross (eds.), *Shaping Virtual Lives. Online Identities, Representations and Conducts*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2012.

51  Original mask of Guy Fawkes from the film *V for Vendetta* at the Musée des miniatures et décors de cinéma in Lyon, France.

52  E.g. www.despair.com; www.demotivation.us; www.demotywatory.pl; www.demo tivators.es, etc. Demotivators or demotivational posters are ironic parodies of motivational posters. Idea popularized by the US Despair.Inc., founded in 1998, known as the "Brand for Cynics" as their products satirise the motivational corporations' indoctrination style of management. The co-founder E.L. Kersten included 18 satirical

based on *Bitmap* application or movie clips (distributed in many versions via YouTube, Dailymotion, etc.) as well as google doodle,[53] hacker art,[54] 'tradi digital' art,[55] computer art[56] or hacathon art.[57]

The different forms of *ars electronica* are often labelled as digital folklore issues and as such arouse folklorists, in spite of the lack of appropriate methodological tools of analysis that are not yet developed adequately by digital humanities. Moreover, these new creative issues are sometimes perceived by orthodox folklorists as digital kitsch, weird innovation, or technological pop art.

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illustrations (demotivators) to his book on corporate culture: *The Art of Demotivation* (2005) that gained great popularity. On functional aspect of demotivators: K. Ozga, *Demotivators as Deprecating and Phatic Multimodel Communicative Acts*, [in:] A. Maiorani, Ch. Christie (eds.), *Multimodal Epistemologies: Towards an Integrated Framework*, Routledge, New York–London 2014, pp. 28–49.

53 A **Google doodle** is a temporary alteration of their logo designed on Google's homepage that is intended to celebrate holidays, events, and people. The idea commenced in 2008, and the first animated and interactive doodles were posted in 2010. The Google logo art has been developed by professional "doodlers", but also by young winners of the contest "Doodle4Google". The total collection counts more than 2000 items. See: https://www.google.com/doodles, retrieved 2.05.2016.

54 **Hacker art** is a part of **hacker culture** represented by **hackers** (but not "crackers") **and hactivists** ("Anonymous"), whose medium is art, and artists whose artistic medium is technology. They may work (separately **or** in any combination) with computer software and hardware, graphics, text, poetry, literature, sculpture, music, audio/video, reactive sensoric system, animation, etc. See: S. Levy, *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution*, O'Reilly Media Inc., Sebastopol, CA 2010; P. Olson, *We Are Anonymous: Inside the Hacker World of LulzSec, Anonymous, and the Global Cyber Insurgency*, Back Bay Books, New York 2012; G. Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*, Verso Books, New York 2014.

55 https://www.pinterest.com/inozentes/traditionaldigital-art/, retrieved 4.05.2016.

56 B. Wands, *Art of the Digital Age,* Thames and Hudson, London 2007; G.D. Taylor, *When The Machine Made Art: The Troubled History of Computer Art*, Bloomsbury, New York 2014.

57 **Hackathon** is an atypical programming marathon. It is a contest where participants exchange experiences and acquire new contacts, and coding is treated as a form of skill and art. Hackathon events are organised worldwide. The Art of Code Hackathon (Wrocław, Poland 2015) was aimed at programmers, graphic designers and enthusiasts of new technologies. See:www.smtsoftware.com/pl/ **art-of-code**-hackathon-wroclaw/; www.artofcod.it, retrieved 4.05.2016.

**Fig. 10.** 10 April 2016: 120th Anniversary of First Modern Olympic Games (https://www.google.com/logos/doodles/2016/120th-anniversary-of-first-modern-olympic-games-6314245085986816-hp2x.jpg)



**Fig. 11.** June 2016: UEFA Euro2016 (https://www.google.com/logos/doodles/2016/uefa-euro-2016-5086697013379072-hp2x.gif)



**Fig. 12.** June 2014: 25th anniversary of first free elections in Poland (https://www.google.com/doodles/25th-anniversary-of-first-free-elections-in-poland)

Without doubt the above mentioned forms represent todays' culture that is created and shaped via digitally mediated technology. It should be underlined that postmodern culture is a constantly and fast evolving phenomenon; what is today's novelty, tomorrow could be perceived as an evidence of tradition. We also should take into consideration that an infinite number of websites and digital folklore data are of ephemeral character: today they are, but tomorrow they gone forever. That is why digitally borne new heritage should be collected and preserved for future, but the question is: do we need to store them all?

Moreover, fascination with the intuitive recognition of the new digitally created folklore contents faces further methodological, technological and ethical problems. There are few basic questions not yet resolved:

- what sort of data should be covered by un umbrella term of a digital folkloristics?
- whose digital community is represented by the digital folklore metadata?
- how to create new born digital folklore inventories, repositories, and updated archives?
- who are digital folklorists?

This is about time to discuss the above mentioned and further incoming issues.[58] At the moment we are unable to give our readers any binding answer, but we want to direct their attention toward a digitally borne cultural heritage.

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[58] We expect interesting results of the forthcoming conference "Towards digital folkloristics. Research perspectives, archival praxis, ethical challenges" organised by a new SIEF working group "Digital Ethnology and Folklore", 14–16 September 2016, Riga, Latvia. See: http://www.siefhome.org/, retrieved 23.04.2016.

# Chapter IV

## Post September 11: Global Fear vs Digital Humour

On September 11, 2001 terrorists (19 of them), associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda, hijacked four airliners and carried out massive suicide attacks against American and international symbols of the 'free world' in the United States. Two of the planes (the first at 8:45 a.m., the second at 9:03 a.m.) were flown into the twin 110-floor skyscrapers of the World Trade Center in New York City. A third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington D.C. at 9:55 a.m., and the fourth crashed at 10:10 a.m. in a field in Pennsylvania. The attacks resulted in over 3,000 people killed and over 10,000 injured, including police officers and firefighters. Both of the towers subsequently collapsed, which in turn threw a cloud of debris onto the surrounding New York streets and buildings. In memory of the victims of the attack, the 9/11 Memorial and Museum were built and new buildings have been erected at the site of the former World Trade Center.

The tragedy of September 11th was a shock for people all over the world. It triggered the war against terrorism, which in turn caused an intensification of the problems connected with terrorism, defined as "an international use of violence or a threat to use violence in order to achieve political change".[1] The issue of terrorism became a permanent topic of discourse for the US government, as well as for politicians, scholars and scientists, mass-media, and the general population in day to day conversations.

Both terrorism and globalisation[2] are concepts in political scholarship that evoke not only the widest discussions, but also the sharpest disagreement.[3] In the late 1990's there were already many largely differing approaches among influential authors to the problem (e.g. Giddens versus Appadurai[4]).

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1  B. Hoffman, *Inside terrorism*, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London 1999, p. 42.

2  **Globalisation** is frequently described as "the proces of increasing interconnectedness between societies such that in one part of the world more and more have effects on peoples and societies far away". J. Baylis, S. Smith (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997, p. 7; L. Zacher, *Spór o globalizację – eseje o przyszłości świata*, ELIPSA, Warszawa 2003.

3  R. Appelbaum, W.I. Robinson (eds.), *Critical Globalization Studies*, Routledge, New York 2005, J.E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, W.W. Norton Company, Washington, D.C. 2002.

4  A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Powells' Books, University of Minnessota 1997; A. Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our Lives*, Profile Books, London 1999.

Nevertheless, much criticism has concentrated on the alleged cultural hegemony of the Western world, as underlined by Samuel Huntington's prophetic study, *The Clash of Civilisations*.[5] Globalisation, treated primarily as a liberal Westernisation / Americanisation of the globe, may be perceived as a spread of Western values, ways of life and ideas (e.g. free market economy, democracy, human and women's rights, consumerism, secular state, a.s.o.) to the rest of the world, in a fashion which shows disregard for deep cultural and ethnic differences between western and non-western societies.

This provoked fierce reaction especially from the radical ideologies, sects and religions that recently developed into the self-proclaimed Islamic State (called also ISIS or Daesh). It posed a great challenge and even danger to the liberal West. We could observe what happened on September 11 (2001), the Bali bombing (2002), the Madrid (2004) and London (2005) train and underground bombings, and quite recently in Paris on January 2015 ("Charlie Hebdo" massacre) as well as Nice attack on the Bastille Day 2016 as an examples of many more attacks over the world.

Extremists tend to view alien influences as a threat to their identity, customs, traditions and rudimentary institutions. These groups do not want to accept western values and are hostile to western culture, feeling obliged to "defend" themselves from its spreading influence. The Western world is perceived by them as hedonistic, without faith, hypocritical, corrupt, exploitative and arrogant. Globalisation is therefore no more than a new form of western colonisation and imperialism. It is interesting to note that terrorists skilfully use western infrastructure (air planes, skyscrapers) and opportunities provided by globalisation (e.g. open form of society, permeable borders, means of communication, the Internet, financial markets and, possibly, weapons of mass destruction crafted by western scientists) to fuel their movement propaganda and the resources and to attack societies, particularly western ones. They act in the most aggressive, violent, fanatical and lethal way which is marked by terrorism.[6]

This is particularly dangerous form of terrorism as it affects a huge number of people and causes vast material destruction. It is the most

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5   S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York 1996 (and further enlarged editions).

6   K. Booth, T. Dunne (eds.), *World in Collision. Terror and the Future of Global Order*, Palgrave McMillan, New York 2002.

visible and destructive response to global secular and liberal culture so far, and is not so much a "clash of the civilisations", as Huntington predicted, but rather a "clash of cultures".[7]

Paradoxically, rebelling against the western form of globalisation has only accelerated its progress. An example of these effects is a consolidation of international efforts against terrorism. Eastern European countries during the last decades have been increasingly under the influence of globalisation in the spheres of technology, politics, economy, human rights and popular culture. Poland is among these countries. Now a member of NATO and the European Union, it has since the fall of communism in 1989 been undergoing a protracted process of political, economic and social transition that is deeply connected with global influences, and ones which are to a certain degree in opposition to the former climate of local conservatism, central management and traditional individualism.

The onset of this transition, coupled with the information revolution, gave rise to adaptive psychological problems in the sphere of Polish social mentality post 9/11. Awareness of global fears at the beginning of the 21st century was thrust upon the social consciousness very suddenly. We could easily observe how discussion regarding the philosophy of civilisation fell into the domain of mass-media culture. Reputable Polish newspapers published views and opinions on the matter, quoting Oriana Fallaci, Samuel Huntington, Umberto Eco, Susan Sontag, Benjamin Barber as well as other foreign and Polish analysts. Mass media on the other hand, including many tabloids and fanzines as well as TV channels presented the problem in sensationalised manner.

That is why many sensational stories, satirical cartoons, urban legends, and 'friend of friend' messages and hoaxes reflected social and psychological fears. We would like to remind you that fears are not only biologically determined instincts, but they are learned and determined by culture.[8] Therefore fears focus protective activity based on education and science, but also there are trends based on morality and rejection of the action. Fears regarding international terrorism were based on religious and civilisational premises. After the tragedy of September 11 we met in Poland an immediate social

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7   F. Fukuyama, *History and September 11*, [in:] K. Booth, T. Dunne (eds.), *World in Collision*…, pp. 27–36; B.R. Barber, *Democracy and Terror in the Era of Jihad vs. McWorld*, [in:] K. Booth, T. Dunne (eds.), *World in Collision*…, pp. 245–262.

8   D.L. Scruton (ed.), *Sociophobics. The Anthropology of Fear*, Westview Press, London 1986; Y. Tuan, *Lanscapes of Fear*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1980.

and psychological reaction[9] often expressed by compensative, neutralising and therapeutic satirical and comic *clichés*. Being so distant geographically, and living in a monocultural society with ethnocentric identity, Poles eagerly exchanged up to date opinions, including their fears, dangers, threats, prejudices and emotional expressions in confrontations with those new, alien and dangerous phenomena. Poles realised they live in a global village that is 'infected' by global epidemics of fear.

In 2001 and 2002 we paid special attention to the black political humour about 9/11 in various e-folklore genres which were transmitted and handed down digitally among the younger generation. By the way they were copied from the Internet and distributed transcontinentally owing to the power of electronic means of interpersonal communication, such as mobile phones and personal computers. There were dozens of sick jokes, riddles, childrens' rhymes, hoaxes, sayings and other transitory forms. This e-folklore circulated in enormous quantity, and all of its issues were of a compensative psychological character in the face of unknown and anticipated danger.

Visual messages (memes, cartoons, graphic e-messages, email attachments, animated photographs) also circulated. Let us recall an example of a cryptonym:

# Q33NYC

printed in Times New Roman,[10] which when transformed into Microsoft Wingdings produces the following image:

✈ 📄📄☠✡👍

In the field of visual folklore a photograph was circulated showing the classic Manhattan skyline (complete with the two World Trade Center towers) against an idyllic blue sky and the caption "In a Perfect World":

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9   V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, "Post September 11th: Oral and Visual Folklore in Poland as an Expression of the Global Fear", *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts*, 2003, No. 4. https://blackboard.lincoln.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/users/dmeyerdinkgrafe/archive/archive_articles.html, retrieved 13.01.2015.

10   There was circulated email claiming that entering "Q33 NY" was a flight number of the first plane to hit the Twin Tower. In reality Q33 is a numer of bus from LaGuardia airport (Queens) to the central station in Manhattan.

**Fig. 13.** Twin Towers (Image credit: unknown, circulating via emails); V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, "Post September 11th: Oral and Visual Folklore in Poland as an Expression of the Global Fear", *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts*, 2003, No. 4, p. 3

In the "joke" version the photograph was an animated picture showing the two twin towers swaying in order to avoid the plane, with a supplementary caption reading "rubber towers in a perfect world":



**Fig. 14.** Rubber Towers (Image credit: unknown, circulating via emails); V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, "Post September 11th: Oral and Visual Folklore in Poland as an Expression of the Global Fear", *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts*, 2003, No. 4, p. 3

We also would like to quote several examples of e-folklore genres. The first are humoristic riddles:

> **Q**: *What song does Bin Laden sing while on plane?* **A**: *'One way ticket…'*

> **Q**: *How do you play Taliban bingo?* **A**: *B-52…, F-16…, B-1…*

> **Q**: *Who are the fastest readers in the world?* **A**: *New Yorkers. They can go through 110 floors in a few seconds.*

> **Q**: *What does Bin Laden and Hiroshima have in common?* **A**: *Nothing, yet…*

> **Q**: *Why do the Americans play chess badly?* **A**: *Because they lost two towers.*

The second very popular genre were jokes in the form of newspaper advertisements:

1.  *American company seeks secretary. Requirements: foreign languages, use of computer, fax and stinger missiles.*

2.  *Jihad Airlines are seeking one way pilots. Payment after completion.*

Another type of joke was represented by SMS jokes:

*1. This SMS contains anthrax. Your mobile will self-destruct.*

*2. This SMS is from NATO base. Press 1 – if you want us to destroy Afghanistan, 2 – Pakistan, 3 – Sudan. Thank you!*

*3. This year's nomination for the Oscar in the category of special effects: Osama bin Laden.*

It is also interesting that certain popular songs were becoming transformed into parodies, such as: "Hey Mr. Taliban, Taliban Banana! Air force come and they flatten my home!…". The above is a version of popular calypso under the original title of *Banana Boat Song – Day-O…* sung by Harry Belafonte and popularised owing to *Beetle Juice*, a 1988 American fantasy film directed by Tim Burton. We should also quote the *Osama Song* followed by satirical illustrations and distributed on Internet:[11]

*I'm a littla Taliban,*
*I come from the country of Afghanistan.*
*If I'm gonna die in a big "crach",*
*it is the will of allmighty Allah.*
*I didn't have the money for the vacation*

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11   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOK2cmyD-kc, retrieved 19.06.2016.

*so I joined a terrorist organisation.*
*I learned to fly a plane from a friend*
*but he forgot to teach me to land.*

*I love my papa I love my mama,*
*but most of all I love Osama. (2x)*
*I am feeling the most happy*

*when I hear the scream (aah) of yuppie.*
*I don't care much of where I'm going*
*because I drive 747 a Boeing.*
*I make sure that USA will remember*
*the date of 11th of September.*
*We choose this day because of this,*
*It's the International Day of Peace.*

*Oh I love my papa I love my mama,*
*but most of all I love Osama. (2x)*

*And I would be a real nice lad,*
*if I won into Jihad.*
*For just because of this one attack*
*Americans want to bomb us back.*
*I knew that repercussions would come*
*and it's a great commercial for Islam.*
*It's not much but now I can*
*see my house on CNN.*

*Oh I love my papa I love my mama,*
*but most of all I love Osama. (2x)*

The Polish comic translation of the above lyrics was patterned after Czech students' translation and was published on 8th November 2001 in the newspaper "Życie Warszawy" (No. 261). Soon it became very popular amongst Polish students.[12] We should also mention the very old European folklore genre called "chain letter" or "chain of luck" (former "St. Anthony's chain") which was updated and circulated as an email message:

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12 Polish translation: http://www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,talib,i_am_a_little_taliban. html, retrieved 19.06.2016.

1. *This is a lucky e-mail. Send it to 5 people and you will be lucky. Maria Kowalsky sent it and won a washing machine, Jacques Chirac also sent it and won the elections, George Bush did not send it and lost 2 towers…*

2. *This lucky email attachment contains anthrax. Send it to all your friends and lick the screen. Thank you for your cooperation.*

Another email which contains the following message:

*Urgent message! Hi, I have a great favour to ask of you. I am going on holiday for 2 weeks and have that just found out friends from abroad are coming to stay. Could you please accommodate them? They are friendly, really religious and well equipped. They will not cause you any trouble. I have already given them your telephone number. I am sending you their photo. They will arrive on a green and white Mercedes. Thank you very much.*

The above letter was accompanied by the following picture enclosed as an attachment:



**Fig. 15.** Visitors (Image credit: Unknown, circulating via emails)

Ten years passed, but religious terrorism did not stop. Moreover, the self-proclaimed Islamic state (ISIS) has intensified its terrorist attacks and war (especially in the region of Iraq and Syria, but also in Africa) on the one hand, while on the other hand thousands of war victims escape and migrate on boats towards European Union states hoping for a better future. Let us quote the circulating rhyme:

*Hug a planet*
*Hug a tree*
*Hug a Muslim refugee.*

Europe is facing the worst refugee and migrant crisis since World War II. The United Nations Organisation estimates 1 million desperate people crossed the Mediterranean to escape war, poverty and persecution in their home countries in 2015. The year 2016 started with a series of terror threats in Europe. New Year's festivities were cancelled in Brussels, after authorities uncovered plans for suicide attacks. In Paris, fireworks were cancelled following multiple terrorist attacks in November that left 130 dead, and in Germany, several train stations were shut because of a terror alert.

These facts cause new social and cultural problems within the European societies that spread fears, intolerance and xenophobic reactions on the one hand, while on the other hand the marginalised Islamic migrants are the target for indoctrination and 'headhunting' by the possible new extremists and future terrorists. The situation encourages Netizens to express their fear reaction and threat reactivity in the form of digital humour. Modified and updated variants of former e-folklore forms have been redistributed immediately in the digital world. Let us present the following meme example:



**Fig. 16.** Migrants (Image credit: Unknown, circulating via emails)

We should like to emphasise that the visual comic presentations are of a transnational, global character. Thanks to the Internet and mobile applications they immediately circulate in many multiplications (or their variants

and versions) amongst the digital community. We treat these comic illustrations as a form of modern folklore, because they play the same social function as traditional migratory legends and stories handed down from one bearer to the another listener / bearer. Moreover, they are – like typical folklore genres – anonymous and collective creations of a syncretic character where forms and contents are culturally accepted not only by the sender, but also by the addressee.

In conclusion we find that the printed and visual folklore humour regarding terrorism has three primal functions: informative, a warning as well as therapeutic. We should remember that under the humorous, often nonsense and offensive approach to a risky subject there is a deep individual and collective cultural fear. Discussing the "anthropology of fear" we should see a possibility to study the "anthropology of hope" for the good of the global generation living in the 21st century.



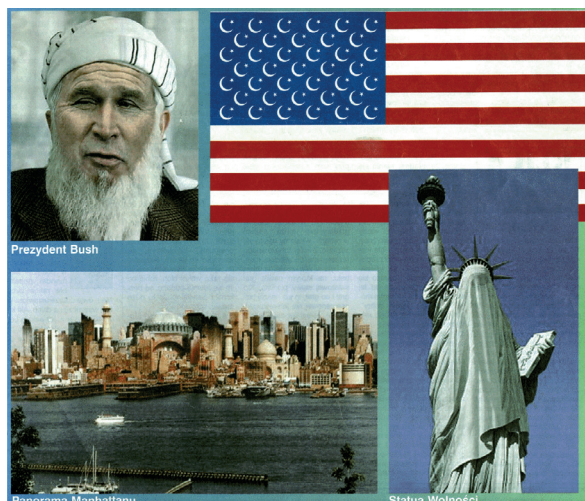**Fig. 17.** 'New' American flag (Image credit: Unknown, circulating via emails)



**Fig. 18.** 'New' Manhattan (Image credit: Unknown, circulating via emails)

# Chapter V

## The Haiti Legends Revisited and the Power of e-Rumour[1]

# Haiti earthquake history

Let us go back to 2010. In that year there occurred around 30 annotated earthquakes in different parts of the world, but at least five in Haiti, Chile, China, Philippines, and Indonesia were of a major significance, because of their magnitude 7 and above at the Richter's scale, that resulted in serious damage over larger areas and caused fatalities. The most tragic earthquake occured on 12th January in Haiti. The catastrophe took place at 16:53 (21:53 UTC) on Tuesday, 12 January 2010, with an epicentre near the town Léogâne, approximately 25 km west of Haiti's capital.
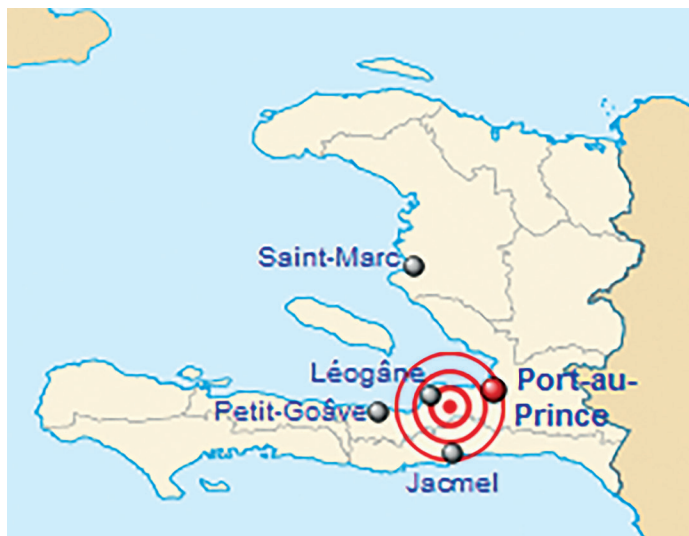


**Fig. 19.** Epicenter of the Haiti earthquake (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/0/0c/Haiti_earthquake_map.png)

By 24 January, at least 52 aftershocks had been recorded. The earthquake struck in the most populated area of the country, including Port-au-Prince (nation's capital), Jacmel and other settlements in the region. The earthquake devastated the area and affected 3,500,000 inahabitants with a confirmed death toll over 250,000. The International Federation of Red Cross estimated that as many as 300,000 people were injured, and about 1 million Haitians were left homeless. There were damaged or destroyed 250,000 residences

and 30,000 commercial buildings as well as 90% of the government, public and notable landmark buildings (e.g. Presidential Palace, Port-au-Prince Cathedral).



**Fig. 20.** Jacmel (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Earthquake_damage_in_Jacmel_2010-01-17_4.jpg)

Immediately after that calamity many countries responded to Haiti's appeals for humanitarian aid, pledging funds and dispatching rescue and medical teams, engineers, and so on. That positive reaction of the world's public opinion was confirmed by online comments on many websites. But also together with good news fake stories were disseminated. In January 2010, CNN ran a story of how Twitter users spread at least a few myths regarding helping Haiti. One was a myth that several airlines were flying any USA doctors and nurses who wanted to help in Haiti free of charge. Twitter users also circulated a rumour that UPS would ship for free any package under 50 lbs to Haiti. Neither was true.

The Caribbean island of Hispaniola is shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere and is ranked 163 of 188 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index for 2015, with the total population just under 10 million.[2] Before the 2010 earthquake – according to the research of Disaster Emergency Committee[3] – 86%

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[2] Data based on the annual Development Reports of of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). See: *en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Development_Index*, retrieved 9.02.2016.

[3] http://www.dec.org.uk/articles/haiti-earthquake-facts-and-figures, retrieved 9.02.2016.

of people in Port-au-Prince were living in slum conditions, half of the capital inhabitants had no access to latrines and only one-third had access to tap water. As for education in Haiti, there was 80% provided in often poor-quality private schools in contrast to the state system that offered a better level of education, but in far too few places. In 2016 – in spite of massive humanitarian help and an international money influx directed to this small country, Haiti still continues to feel effects of the devastating 2010 earthquake.[4]

Hispaniola is seismically active and has a history of destructive earthquakes. During Haiti's time as a French colony called Saint Dominque, French historian Moreau de Saint-Méry (1750–1819) recorded destructive earthquakes in 1751 and 1770 in Port-au-Prince. Other sources recorded earthquake damages (Sans-Souci Palace, Cap-Haïtien and other northern towns) on 7 May 1842.[5] Also, an earthquake struck the Dominican Republic and shook Haiti on 4 August 1946, producing a *tsunami* that killed about 2,000 people and injured many others.[6] In addition to earthquakes, the island has been struck frequently by cyclones, which have caused flooding and widespread damage, as well as being racked by political chaos for much of its history. Among dictators who ruled Haiti with an iron fist – one of the most notorious was "Papa Doc" François Duvalier, the president (1957–1971) whose secret police killed tens of thousands of people.

## Devil's Pact

When disasters strike, one natural modern response is an outpouring of sympathy and support for people affected. On the other hand, the world's cultural history and mythology as well as folklore beliefs give many instances of negative attitudes towards those experiencing nature's calamities that were explained with moral or magical ways in the past. The best known example is Greek mythology, in which Poseidon[7] was the god of waters and earthquakes. His epithets Seisichtho, Enosichthon and Ennosigaios meant "earth-shaker" and referred to his role in causing earthquakes. When offended either ignored,

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4   http://time.com/3662225/haiti-earthquake-five-year-after/, retrieved 9.02.2016.

5   Quoted by C. Prepetite, "Temblements de terre en Haïti, mythe ou réalité?", *Le Matin*, No. 33082 (9. October 2008).

6   M.J. Jan (bishop of Cap-Haïtien), *Documentation religieuse*, Éditions Henri Deschamps, Port-au-Prince 1972.

7   The Romans called him Neptune. In Nordic mythology similar role belonged to god Loki (*Edda* epics), and to giant catfish Namazu in Japanese mythology.

or in a bad mood, he struck the ground with a trident, causing earthquakes and other calamities. He also used earthquakes to punish and inflict fear upon people as revenge.

In the case of the Haitian tragedy of 2010 old demons from the past were also evoked. The day after the earthquake the CBN (Christian Broadcasting Network) the conservative and controversial American televangelist Pat Robertson (host of the 700 Club programme)[8] in his talk-show invoked seriously the legend to suggest that the poverty-stricken country's long history of natural disasters and political turmoil stemmed from a deal with the devil made by the leaders of its 1791 revolution against French rule. In Internet video it went as follows:

"Something happened a long time ago in Haiti […] they were under the heel of the French, uh, you know, Napoleon the third and whatever […] and they got together and swore a pact to the devil, they said, we will serve you, if you get us free from the Prince. True story".[9]

Robertson stated that the revolt succeeded, but that ever since then the Haitians have been cursed by one thing to the another. Of course his words were video recorded and immediately quoted by CNN and other press agencies together with their online editions.

The old legend about Haitian-Satanic pact and "God's wrath" dates back to the decades following Haiti independence in 1804.[10] Probably the tale started together with Roman Catholic crusade against *voodoo* rituals widely practiced there as the Afro-Haitian religion.[11] The legend has been disseminated because anti-slavery movements became more and more popular in the Caribbean, both Americas and Europe. The last aspect was underlined by Haitian history specialist Dr. Kate Ramsey (University of Miami) who was interviewed by CNN on 14th January. She stated as follows:

"They did become mobilized to discredit what was called the first black republic by outsiders, especially in the contexts of debates of abolition in the Caribbean and elsewhere. European colonists […] believed that the Haitian slaves could not have possibly pulled this off themselves and must have outside help.

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8   Pat Robertson has previously linked terrorist attacks and natural disasters (like "Hurricane Katrina", which killed about 2000 people on the Gulf Coast in 2005) to legalised abortion in the United States.

9   http://www.salon.com/2010/01/14/haiti_satan_pact/, retrieved 7.02.2016.

10   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutty_Boukman, retrieved 7.02.2016.

11   *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 12, London 1994, pp. 430–431 [entry "voodoo"]; T. Łepkowski, *Haiti. Początki państwa i narodu*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1964, pp. 461–463.

Evangelical Christians have evoked the Haiti legend more recently and elaborated it. […] It's utterly fabrication, and it's an extremely offensive one".[12]

On 15th January CNN online published the first 38 forum comments, mainly very critical, such as: "Pat Robertson, the greatest false prophet of our time, has done it again" or "The problem is here not what Pat Robertson has said, it is that people still believe in such archaic nonsense that they allow people like Robertson to anger them with his religious babble".

Our attention has been especially drawn to another comment that quoted a rumour based on this situation. This folklore message runs as follows: "I heard some people said that Pat Robertson has recently had a nuclear test done in the Coast of Haiti just to kill all the Haitian people on behalf of the earthquake".[13]

Massive criticism did not stop the dissemination of the legend, that was treated as the Haiti national identification myth. On 17th January 2010 one of the American fora republished the following:

"Haiti's government is a government of the devil, by the devil, and for the devil. It is a matter of well-documented historical fact that the nation of Haiti was dedicated to Satan 200 years ago. On August 14, 1791, a group of houngans (*voodoo* priests), led by a former slave houngan named Boukman, made a pact with the Devil at a place called Bois-Caiman. All present vowed to exterminate all of the white Frenchmen on the island. They sacrificed a black pig in a *voodoo* ritual at which hundreds of slaves drank the pig's blood. In this ritual, Boukman asked Satan for his help in liberating Haiti from the French. In exchange, the *voodoo* priests offered to give the country to Satan for 200 years and swore to serve him. On January 1, 1804, the nation of Haiti was born and thus began a new demonic tyranny…".[14]

The belief that Haiti is cursed we also met during our work on the anthropology of AIDS. In the 80's many believed that HIV spreads thanks to the most risky group called 4H: homosexuals, heroin users, haemophiliacs and Haitians still practising voodoo.[15] The ancient as well as European

12  http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/14haiti, retrieved 15.01.2010. See also K. Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law. Vodou and Power in Haiti*, The University of Chicago Press, pilot edition of Amazon 2010.

13  http://edition.cnn.com/2010/ WORLD/americas/01/14haiti.pat.rober, retrieved 15.01.2010.

14  http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/2430711/posts, retrieved 18.01.2010.

15  V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, *AIDS. Studium antropologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2000, p. 11. See also: M. Smallman-Raynor, A. Cliff, P. Hagget (eds.), *London International Atlas of AIDS*, Blackwell Reference, London 1992.

epidemics confirm the searches for scapegoats, allegedly responsible for the plague. That is why Haiti legend is not only a longstanding trope of anti-Haitian venom. It is a part of a long tradition of the Plague notion and reflects its relation to the sacred and profane. It explains why common interpretations of the plague as a form of punishment or calamity which was brought upon society by external forces exist. The treatment of the plague as the "wrath of God" may be considered like an irrational occurrence as opossed to those which were regarded as natural ones. Traces of this way of thinking might be noticed as early as in the ancient times through the Old Testament and the times of European modernity which can be found within certain European literary and iconographic works.[16] And the symbolism of the plague as a reaction to the breakage with taboo may be found throughout various folklore texts stemming from the Middle Ages to modern times.

## Polish-Haitian stories

In Poland the recent Haiti quake by chance evoked a completely forgotten legend of Polish descendants in Haiti. On 23 January 2010 the largest quality daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* published as a scoop the first one the interview with Geri Benoit (née Belnowski), a Haitian ambassador in Rome (and ex-spouse of Haitian president René Préval), known in Haiti as Polone Nwa (Black Pole). She said she is very proud of her Polish ancestors and her place of origin – Cazale that is a Polish village. In two month time Geri Benoit Belnowski will visit Poland for charity purposes.

On 28 January the same daily published an article titled *Our compatriots from Haiti been wating 200 years for Polish help*.[17] The article was followed by impressive photos and life stories of the poor Cazale locals, proudly convinced they got Polish roots because of a few Polish sounding names, a few blue eyes either lighter brown skin or European-looking fair hair. They dance the local *kokoda* thinking it's Polish one. When "Polish" Pope John Paul II visited Haiti (9 March 1983), the Cazale delegation with Polish flag greeted him ceremonially. This was confirmed by Prof. Leszek Kolankiewicz, a culture anthropology specialist, who was interviewed by *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 21 January and said

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16  V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–64 and *Illustrations*.

17  B. Kaniewska, Ś. Wojtkowiak, "Nasi rodacy z Haiti. 200 lat czekają, aż Polacy przyjadą i pomogą", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28.01.2010, *Duży Format* [appendix], pp. 6–7.

the black Poles have not much idea about Poland and its language, but have a strong conviction that they are Polish descendants. In modern Poland, by contrast, society in general had no idea about Poland's links to Haiti.

The tale dates back to 1802 and 1803 and the times of Polish legions fighting abroad "For Your and Our Liberty". Many Polish soldiers, hopeful to win back Polish territory, made an alliance with Republican France and joined her army, but as distinct Polish units. That is why about 5,200 Polish soldiers of the Dąbrowski Legion were sent to Saint Domingue by Napoleon to quell the revolution. The old Haitian story has it that Poles had gone over to the Haitian side and fought side by side with oppressed blacks. As friends of Saint Domingue they were rewarded by Jean-Jacques Dessaline (the Haitian emperor in the years 1804–1806) and settled in the territory of Cazale, La Vallee de Jacmel, Fond des Blancs and La Baleine, Port Salut and St. Jean du Sud.

In reality – historical research reveals[18] Poles were not prepared to fight in the style necessary by line. Many of them did no speak French and the tropical climate was much too hot for them. At least more than 4,000 died, primarily of yellow fever as happened to 35 year old General Władysław Jabłonowski who died before his officers and soldiers arrived.[19] Other Polish troops were killed or disabled, nearly 200 were sent to France and a few were subsumed into the British Colonial Army. Finally, about 150–180 common soldiers (never officers!) saved their own lives by changing sides and settling in Haiti.

Another version of the legend has been popularized in Polish literary works.[20] According to the variant, Poles under the command of French Fressinet, who was afraid they would go to the Haitians, one day at San Marc bayoneted an unarmed Haitian squad during morning muster. That could not be a true story, because Poles were in a very small number there – as historians stated.

Anyway, after the San Domingo revolution, Poles were well treated and esteemed by locals, so in their second constitution of 1805, which was also the first constitution of Haiti itself, included the preamble No. 13, formulated

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18  J. Pachonski, W.K. Reuel, *Poland's Caribbean Tragedy: A Study of Polish Legions in the Haitian War of Independence 1802–1803*, East European Monographs, Boulder, Co., Columbia University Press, New York 1986. See also historical works about Polish Legion and legionists written by Adam Skałkowski at the beginning of 20th century.

19  This episode is mentioned by the great Polish romantisist poet, Adam Mickiewicz in his epics *Pan Tadeusz*, Paris 1834.

20  S. Żeromski, *Popioły*, Warszawa 1904 (in Polish).

as follows: "The preceding article cannot in the smallest degree affect white women who have been naturalized Haytians by Government, nor does it extend to children already born, or that may be born of the said women. The Germans and Polanders naturalized by government are also comprized [*sic!*] in the dispositions of the present article".[21] In later Haitian constitutions the cited paragraph was deleted.

Intriguingly, just a few days before writing this, I discussed the Haitian stories with an acquaitance who informed me that the mentioned preamble was cancelled… soon after football match with Poles in 1974, when the result was (Haiti) 0:7 (Poland). I must admit I was told this story during the time of 2010 Football World Cup, a very unsuccessful event for Poles. But that is another story…

## The Ghanaian Hoax

On Monday 18 January 2010, global online media followed BBC News and immediately informed about another rumour evoking serious panic in Ghana, which last experienced an earthquake 70 years ago. In consequence of the predicted quake, many Ghanaians, both in rural and urban areas, spent Sunday night sleeping outside or rather not sleeping at all:

"Within minutes, the news had circulated down to even the last village you know of without proper access to telecommunication services. Almost every Ghanaian was caught at parks, open fields and playing grounds with the notion that earthquakes are limited to houses only or less devastating in open places where there are no structures".[22]

What happened is that on the evening of 17 January Ghanaian people began receiving on their mobile phones the following text message: "Today's night 12:30 to 3:30 a.m. COSMIC RAYS entering earth from Mars. Switch off ur mobiles today's night? NASA BBC NEWS? Plz pass to all ur friends".[23] By early morning, people were also disseminating messages that the impending quake was an aftershock of the Haitian quake. At 4 a.m., the Ghana Deputy

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21 The Document was printed in the *New York Evening Post*, July 15, 1805.

22 www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2010/01/19.

23 This prank news was cited and commented aftermath by many media agencies; e.g. in Poland: http://www.polskieradio.pl/23/266/Artykul/196249,Pogloski-gorsze-od-trzesienia, retrieved 19.01.2010; http://deser.gazeta.pl/deser/1,83453,7467621,Jeden_SMS_wywolal_atak_paniki_w_calym_kraju.html, retrieved 18.01.2010.

Information Minister Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa called a BBC correspondent to check the earthquake warning as there was national panic and fear. Before 5 a.m., the BBC Network Africa, Accra Peace FM and Ghana's Joy FM Station calmed down listeners by explaining it was all a fake hoax, a false rumour, or just a misinformation, a prank.

The above news met immediate online reaction. A few widely posted the alarm on their blogs,[24] but many reacted more personally. We quote a pair of examples.[25]

"Here in Tajikistan we get earthquake rumors every six months or so. They spread by phone and text message, and everyone ends up standing in the street waiting for a quake to hit. I get the feeling, though, that the rumors predate cell phones. It's larger problem that has to do with fear and lack of information".

"Even though this turned out not to be true I was quite surprised that some Ghanaians couldn't even be bothered after being warned by neighbours, etc. about the 'earthquake' they just blew it off and went back to bed. If it had actually been true they could have been in great danger. What's a few minutes of lost sleep as compared to losing your life? All the same it was terrible for anyone to have started such a tale".

Two years later, in 2012, by chance we noticed that the hoax appeared once again in online circulation together with the comment:

"Tonight 12:30 a.m. to 3:30 a.m. cosmo rays entering earth from mars. Switch off your mobile at night. Don't keep your cell with you & put it away while you are sleeping because they are too dangerous rays: NASA informs BBC NEWS. Pls spread this news […]. The message above is clearly nothing more than just another HOAX. I don't know why people are circulating panic messages […] this message has been circulating since 2008 and suddenly reappeared today, 6 April 2012. I also received text messages containg this false information and saw similar Facebook posts".[26]

The Ghanaian rumour spread by mobile phones and the online comments it triggered illustrate the power of modern digital technology in the disseminating of global e-folklore genres. It also illustrates the strength

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24  For ex. www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2010/01/19, retrieved 20.01.2010.

25  *Op. cit.*

26  https://journeytothestars.wordpress.com/tag/nasa-bbc-rumors-cosmic-rays-from-mars/, retrieved 10.05.2012.

and weakness of communication networks, together with problems of individual ethics and privacy as well as control, monitoring, registry, or even censorship. There is also a problem of real and false information, and the role of global (e.g. NASA, BBC) and local (broadcast media) authorities.

As for the legend, it sleeps silently now… Perhaps to wake up one day, in some other distant place.

# Chapter VI

## The Global Dating Phenomenon

# Introduction

The development of digital technology has facilitated the growth of interpersonal contacts through the spread of low cost telephone calls, mobile telephony, online chatting and emailing. Various forms of electronic contact have replaced traditional face-to-face communication within a so called 'social network', while a further intriguing aspect of this phenomenon is 'online dating' or 'Internet dating'. This is a personal introductory system whereby individuals can find and contact each other over the Internet to arrange a date. Globalisation makes it possible to organise certain behaviours[1] that follow the rules of match-making or dating, giving people the chance to find their soul mate and become a part of the eternal story of pairing a man and a woman. Online dating is now a part of everyday life for millions of people. It is the largest single way in which relationships start today. Young, but also middle-aged and elderly are subscribers to friend finding and dating websites looking for an e-pal, a friend, a companion, a lover, a partner, a consort or a spouse. This trend is caused by the increase of human loneliness in many developed countries.

It is more than possible that the growing number of singletons (estimated to reach up to 40% of world adult population by 2021) will change habits, housing, use of energy, cost of living, services, etc.[2] This truly revolutionary process may destroy the fabric of life based on home, family and permanent place of living. Young singletons of both sexes no longer feel socially odd; they use their status to explore the world, to build their careers before settling down, to try out new experiences and to enjoy working life to achieve a greater self-esteem. Singletons happy with their single status, known in the USA as "quirkylones" (from *quirky alone*) create a growing population all over the world. This trend is slowly

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1 The relations between online behaviour and the trend towards globalisation is a huge theme (e.g. A. Ross, *G.O.D. is great. How to Build a Global Organism*, Charleston, S.C. 2010).

2 At the Biennale of Architecture (Venice, 2008), a Dutch company Droog Design presented an exhibition entitled Singletown. They also provided general information about the structure of needs for modern and future single people, delineated in accordance with statistical prospects for this trend elaborated by Austrian Institute of Ecology.

becoming evident; suffice it to mention holidays for singles, solo-lifestyle promotion (i.e. National Unmarried and Single Americans Week), single meals in supermarkets, smaller apartments and properties, but also the rising amount of sheltered accommodation for the elderly and nursing homes, and finally the growth of online dating websites.

Being single could be either a life-style choice (mostly for those of working age) or a necessity (for those who have entered their retirement age). Whilst there are advantages to being single there are also disadvantages. Apart from financial aspects, there are psychological ones (need of "nest", help, constant company and support), but also social (some couples treat singles as predatory) and many older people are really lonely despite having children and grandchildren.

The online dating websites obviously conceal deep cultural fears arising from the increase of human loneliness in many developed countries. General causes of that situation are perhaps the break-up of traditional kinship structures and gender revolution on the one hand, and a trend towards individual autonomy on the other, as well as the 'atomisation' of society. The latter can be linked to the decline of the family unit, the rise of neo-liberalism, consumerism and the cult of the individual. Within this framework, even relationships have become a commodity, with online dating sites providing a locus and means of exchange. All the above-mentioned problems are well illustrated by studying online dating services in which we see a correlation with the globalisation of westernised life-styles, people's mobility and atomisation of traditional family structures in many countries nowadays.

## Brief history

It is clear that online dating is now a part of the postmodern cultural scenario, but simultaneously it is a modern version and continuation of the old matrimonial agencies, so the practice itself is not new. According to the history researchers,[3] personal advertisements have a long history

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[3] Z. Bajka, "Krótka historia reklamy na świecie i w Polsce", *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, 1993, No. 3–4, pp. 16–47; K. Orszulak-Dudkowska, *Ogłoszenie matrymonialne. Studium z pogranicza folklorystyki i antropologii kultury* [Matrimonial Advertisements. Between Folkloristics and Anthropology of Culture], Łódź 2008, p. 13. See also: H.G. Cocks, *Classified: The Secret History of the Personal Column*, Random House, London 2009; F. Beauman, *Shapely Ankle Preferr'd: A History of the Lonely Hearts Advertisement*, Vintage, London 2012.

going back 300 years, and they are only a little bit younger that the printed newspapers and magazines themselves. Probably the first ever 'lonely hearts' advertisement was published on 19th July 1695 in *A Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade* edited by John Houghton. It was placed by a "gentleman of about 30 years of age, that says he had a very good estate" to "willingly match himself to some good young gentlewoman that has a fortune of 3,000 £ or thereabouts…".[4]

During the 18th century personal advertisements were placed more boldly in British, American and German newspapers. In the 19th century Victorian England *The Matrimonial News* (1870–1895) was the first popular newspaper devoted solely to marriage.[5] Taboo or not, it was followed by the launch of several matrimonial magazines.

In the 20th century, while traditional matchmaking through relatives, friends, clergymen and local matchmakers still was commonly practised, in the 1940s the new institution called The Marriage Bureau appeared in Europe as well as in the United States,[6] and after World War II it developed well into the 1960s and 1970s. In those newly emerged commercial dating agencies men and women were asked to fill confidential forms with personal details and a description of their ideal mate, then the marriage bureau paired them up and set up their first date in person.

As for the computer matchmaking idea, Stanford University mathematics students coined in 1959 the Happy Families Planning Service as a class project by programming an IBM computer to pair 49 women and 49 men who had filled out questionnaires at a computer-date matching party. This experimental project resulted in one happy marriage, but left unknown for public.[7]

The popularity of matching and pairing was more accepted publicly thanks to the worldly franchised American TV reality show *The Dating Game* invented by Chuck Barris (ABC series 1965–1986) in which a single woman would be given a choice of three bachelors whom she could talk with, but not see. Also in the 1980s, television channels popularised *video dating*, where users created

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4   J. Houghton (ed.), *A Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade*, 1695, vol. I, p. 58 [Bodleian Library, Oxford].

5   J. Phegley, *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England*, Praeger, Santa Barbara, California 2012, p. 84.

6   A first statistics-based (for social equivalents) dating service named "Introduction" was opened in 1941 (Newark, New Jersey).

7   C.S. Gillmor, "Computers in Love: Date Matching at Stanford", *Soundstone and Tile*, 2002, Vol. 26, Nos. 2–3 (Summer/Fall), pp. 1–9 (http://historicalsociety. stanford.edu/pdfST/ST26no2_3.pdf).

video film of themselves on VHS cassette which was then viewed by other customers. It stayed popular well into the late 1990s. Nevertheless there was still a traditional opinion that meeting a spouse with the help of commercial matrimonial services was viewed as an act of desperation.

The social stigmatisation of this sort of dating did not stop much even when the first dating websites were created by Lee Zehrer. As a pioneer in the Internet dating market he purchased the domain www. Kiss.com[8] (in December 1994) and www.Match.com (a future giant in the dating business) that he registered in January of 1995.[9] In that time online dating ran as follows: "Our online ordering system was done via emails that we printed out and entered into Filemaker Pro. We ran daily transaction batches using MacAuthorize over a 14.4 modem at the end of the day then emails people addresses they ordered".[10] Soon the further online dating websites were launched and in the beginning of 1996 already 16 sites were listed on Yahoo.com.

In the next years the online dating sector grew up enormously. Social networking sites like Friendster and Myspace (both launched in 2002) have revolutionised the technology, adding another realm where users can interact and fall in love online. In 2003 Joe Tracy published *Online Dating Magazine* with the goal to "connect, relate and educate" readers. Then a great number of websites evolved their feature sets to include many of the social networking functionalities, with the influence of Facebook (created in 2004) and Twitter (2006).

Therefore the definition of online dating services had to be enlarged. There are sites of a broadly-based formula, with members coming from a variety of backgrounds looking for different types of relationships. Other sites are more specific, often of a niche character based on the type of members, interests, location, or specific relationship wishes. The factors which can affect the establishment of a new relationship are mainly age, education, geography, musical tastes, and honesty. Perhaps the most important factor is personal chemistry, but this can only be tested by actual meetings. Therefore an offer ranges from mass sites such as Match.com and eHarmony.com to those specialising in niche interests, e.g. alternative dating like Grindr (for gays) and Her (for lesbians); Ashley Madison for people seeking extramarital relations, as well as GlutenFree Singles, Asexualitic.com, ChristianCafe.com,

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8   This site is still active and boasts 12 million users.

9   Match.com charges $ 29,99 for a one-month membership while boasting about its 29 million members in 2015.

10   http://www.lovesites.com/history-of-internet-dating, retrieved 20.01.2016.

TattooSingles.com, etc. Most unmoderated websites allow members to upload photos or videos of themselves and browse the photos and videos of others. The dating sites do not as yet provide "off the shelf" relationships, although those that use psychometric based matching could be seen as moving in this direction.[11] Sites may offer additional services, such as webcasts, online chat, telephone chat (VOIP), and message boards.
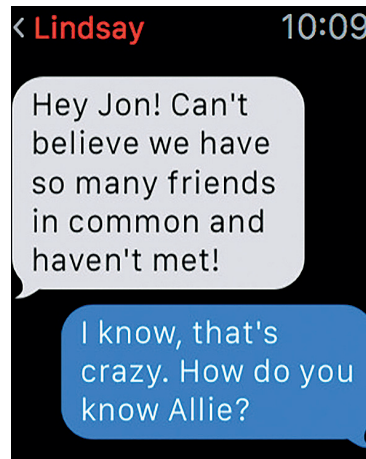


**Fig. 21.** Tinder's chatboard (http://a4.mzstatic.com/us/r30/Purple1/v4/26/af/d6/26afd60a-5fde-f8ad-b3ff-2ba7b6d2f9e4/screen390x390.jpeg)

Quite a new discovery is a social application – using Facebook – that appeared in 2012 and has been called Tinder. It is a location based ultrafast dating application that facilitates communication between mutually interested users, allowing matched users to chat.

Tinder was the first 'swiping app', where the dater uses a swiping motion to choose between the photos of other users: swiping right for potentially good matches and swiping left on a photo to move to the next one. By 2014 it was registering about one billion 'swipes' per day. This application is used in 196 countries and is available in about 30 languages. As of April 2015, Tinder users swipe through 1,6 billion Tinder profiles and make more than 26 million matches per day. On October 1, 2015, Tinder released globally a new feature called *Super Like*. Instead of indicating anonymously one is interested in someone by swiping right, one can now *Super Like* them which notifies them that user is interested in them. Tinder says that with the use of *Super Like*, users are three times as likely to find a match.

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11   www.match.com, retrieved 25.01.2016.

Online dating sites are a big and growing business. This huge global dating industry works under American umbrella corporations mainly. Since 2004 annual Internet dating industry conferences have been attended each time by more than 500 executives from all over the world,[12] and in 2013 the Online Dating Association was set up in the UK by a number of industry players who saw the need for the industry to step up and take responsibility for setting and maintaining standards. Some dating websites provide free registration, but may offer services which require a monthly fee. Other sites depend on advertising for their revenue. In the mid of dating sites history, i.e. in 2007 they earned about $ 1,03 billion in revenue. According to IBISWorld in 2015 dating sites in the U.S. revenue and dating applications were expected to log $ 628,8 million that year.[13]

**Opinions of online dating, 2005-2013**
*% of internet users who agree with each of the following statements*
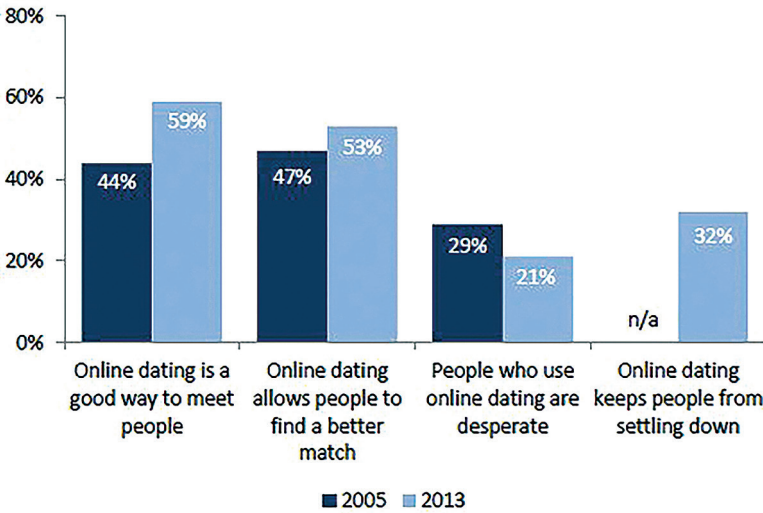


Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=2,252 adults ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. 2005 survey was conducted September 14-December 8, 2005, n=3,215 adults ages 18+.

**Fig. 22.** Attitudes toward online dating in the United States (http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/29/5-facts-about-online-dating)

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12   www.idateconference.com, retrieved 22.01.2016.

13   www.ibisworld.com/industry/default.aspx?indid, retrieved 22.01.2016; *A Business of Love: Online Dating by the Numbers*, http://visualeconomics.creditloan.com/a-business-of-love-online-dating-by-the-numbers/#ixzz3xyLBYSUy,    retrieved 22.01.2016.

Moreover they are not only profitable. In 2007 the Online Dating Magazine stated that more than 20 million people worldwide visited at least one online dating website a day and estimated (in 2011) that there are more than 280,000 marriages a year as a direct result of online dating service in comparison to 120,000 marriages in 2008.[14] And in 2016 a well known American Statistical Centre announced the following research:

## The success story: a new e-folklore genre

As the dating online community counts itself in millions of members, as this kind of net-community creates a specific Internet subculture with its own rules of subscribing, advertising and contacting, as well as a specific netiquette, language and folklore.

One can observe a parallel between modern singles online advertisements and traditional matchmaking. The traditional matchmaker who once played the role of mediator is replaced online by a magical and hidden webmaster. Less magic incantions are directed to the online dater by the relationship advisor or dating coach. But advertisements are personal, always attractive and at the same time anonymous (hidden under the dater's nickname), although often accompanied by a photo.

The structure of the typical online advert contains incipit, description, motivation, requirements and the aim of contact. The presentation of an individual (self-portrayal) together with his/her wishes regarding the prospective partner is nowadays called a 'member's profile', and takes the form of a persuasion text. The profile message is a sort of a self-marketing offer that combines three intentional (informative, inducing, and causative) functions. The poetics of this new form reminds one of so-called secondary speech, and is also based on typical communication and proto-epistolary features: sender – addressee opposition, opening and closing formulas, specific rhetoric, etc. The conscious creativity and intentional use of the seemingly spontaneous, genuine and witty phrases typical for the traditional art of conversation confirm the deep, cultural and conversational roots of the profile.

The last, but not the least, e-folklore results not only from typical member's profiles that show repetitive similarity based on the same structural scheme, and the circulation of dating tips recommended by relationship advisors,

14  http://www.onlinedatingmagazine.com/onlinedatingstatistics.html, retrieved 8.06.2016.

but also by a new e-genre called 'success stories'[15] published by web masters and often followed by photos and video clips of happy and lucky couples. In general the content of the stories is often based on the plot type rules specific of fairy tales (such as *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Sleeping Beauty*), where two potential lovers destined for each other are forced to overcome numerous obstacles to be able to unite by a feeling of strong love and live happily ever after. Success stories invariably contain opening and closing formulas reported by a narrative subject who performs a narrative action towards the narrative object. The happy ending tales appear in the website space and allow people's private life stories to be shared with the net dating community, that is common for the postmodern digital culture. Let us quote few success stories from dating online sites:

1. ***Nicole and David.*** Thank you eHarmony for helping us find love, for without that we would not have our two beautiful children! *From: Palm Beach Gardens, FL. Married: November 27th, 2004*[16]

2. ***Alex and Jola.*** Jola and I are both originally from Europe (I am from the UK and she is from Poland) and moved ago, separately, to the USA several years and have similar stories. *From: UK and Poland. Married: September 17th, 2011*[17]

3. ***Elvira and Richard.*** I was on eHarmony for the better part of a year. Met a few nice ladies but nothing really sparked. Elvira signed on and within 24 hours of her doing that, we were matched and communicating with each other. *From: Simi Valley, California. Matched: February 18th, 2013*[18]

4. ***Kerry & Rob, Married 6/2015.*** From the first message, we both knew. After both initially saying that neither of us would marry again, within 6 weeks I told Rob I'd marry him. He said he'd marry me and so… we did! Plenty of fish brought two soul mates together. As long as you know yourself and you know what you're looking for, it's the perfect place to find a partner.[19]

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15  V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, "e-Folklore in the Age of Globalization", *Fabula*, 2006, Vol. 47, No. 3–4, p. 252.

16  www.eHarmony.com, retrieved 25.01.2016.

17  www.eHarmony.com, retrieved 25.01.2016.

18  www.eHarmony.com, retrieved 25.01.2016.

19  www.pof.com, retrieved 25.01.2016.

5. **Blair & Leann, Married 8/2015.** I started online dating in February 2013, I met a handful of women… some of which I am still friends with today… but I also met Leann. She was cute, quirky, funny, and seemed to be dating for all the right reasons. We messaged on Plenty of Fish for a few weeks, then we moved it to Facebook, then texting, then I finally got her to call me! We talked for hours and hours every night. When we decided to meet, Leann came to visit me about 2 hours away. We had dinner, went to the local animal shelter, and then she went home. We didn't talk for 2 weeks after, and I was so upset!!! Come to find out, she was in shock about how perfect we were together. She apologized, and we decided to try again. A few dates and months went by and we made it official November 17th. I moved in with her the following Spring, and we were engaged a year later!!!! Today we are looking for wedding venues, and we couldn't be more excited! Sure, things don't always run smoothly, but I am the happiest I have ever been in my life! Our paths may have never crossed without Plenty of Fish! Thank you![20]

6. Dear match.com, I would like to start off by saying a big thank you for helping me find my fiancé. Thanks to match.com I met Steve and we hit it off straight away. After five months of dating we moved in together and have never looked back. Last August Steve popped the question and I said yes. Our big day is on the 26th October 2012 and I can't wait to become Mrs Earthy. I have finally found the one person in the whole world who loves me and truly understand me. I always love telling people how we met and I have recommended that all my single friends sign up straight away. Big thank you match.com :) **Claire x [Date: 24 September 2015]**[21]

7. After being married for 37 years I lost my husband to a massive heart attack. I was lost and broken. After the hell subsided and I was in a much better place I needed to get some happiness back in my life. My GP told me to try match.com but also be aware of being vulnerable. I was on Match for a while and had a few dates but they weren't for me. Then up popped this gorgeous man called Paul whom I felt was just my dream date. He saw me and the contact started. We clicked immediately and decided to meet up in Cambridge. The minute I saw him waiting

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20  www.pof.com, retrieved 25.01.2016.
21  www.match.com, retrieved 25.01.2016.

at the bus stop I KNEW and so did he. We fell in love that day. Had the most romantic day in Cambridge and had lunch by the river. After a year of seeing each other at weekends as he lives in Kings Lynn and I live in Haverhill we revisited our date when we met. We both felt the same and still do. Thanks to match.com we have now booked our wedding in Kings Lynn for next September and you have given two grieving widows a second chance of love and happiness. This is something we never thought possible. Thank you match for making two elder people happy and in love again after so much heartache. We both thank *you from* our hearts **x x x** [*Date: 1 October 2015*][22]

Success stories are also published in the form of an interview. On Match.com there is a column titled *In their own words* where happy couples are interviewed as follows: "Why did you decide to join match.com?"; "How long did it take you to find Jamie?"; "Tell us about first date?"; "How did the relationship progress?"; "What does the future hold in share?"; "Would you recommend match.com to a friend?". The answers are always positive, enthusiastic and thankful to a website operator.

The above confirms the power of lonely hearts and dating websites in finding 'half an apple' or soulmate, but there is also question how far are they authentic, and to what an extent they are created by the hidden web-editor and business marketing expert?

We also should consider successful dating from another perspective. Online dating sites produce not only forever happy couples, but also provide a pleasant, safe, and virtual way to spend time by writing, flirting, chatting, making fun and just playing without any further obligations.

Dating sites' home pages do not show disappointed users. They are probably quite numerous but they are not counted. In our qualitative research we met few ex-members.

Let us quote their anonymous opinions:[23]

1. *The key word which sums up dating services is disappointment.*

2. *Education or intelligence is a far more important factor than we are usually prepared to acknowledge through fear of being accused of intellectual snobbery. As an Oxford graduate I have long been aware of the isolation*

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*imposed by intelligence. While I am able to adjust to almost any social environment, I have very few close friends whose academic achievements are not similar or better than my own. In the "education" box on computer profiles the phrase "university of life" often appears. It is a useful warning, combining pretentiousness with ignorance.*

3. *The meeting. The chemistry simply doesn't work. One or both parties doesn't attract the other. It becomes apparent that one of the parties has lied about age, appearance or marital status.*

4. *Dishonesty in female profiles is frequent. Obviously I have not examined the males. Adding 5 or 10 years to their date of birth or uploading a photo that is 20 years old are common ploys. Of course they are pointless, since the first meeting will reveal the truth, thus making it an extremely short meeting. Some even cut pictures out of glamour magazines…*

5. *The actual operators of dating sites are mostly incompetent, lazy and unscrupulous. Their sales pitch offers a free service, but immediately requires a significant fee as soon as you want to contact someone. Having taken that fee, they then try to sell you a better version of the same service for even more money. Another tactic is to get you to join by creating a bogus request from a glamorous lady. Some sites have somehow stolen your details from a rival dating service.*

6. *Encounters.com includes profiles from people who have not joined their service and are therefore not allowed to reply to any contact unless they pay up. Encounters software even includes a censorship program to prevent anyone sending their normal email address or phone number until a full reply has been received from a paying subscriber. This restriction can be avoided in some cases by sending the phone number in words, but in another language such as French or German. In effect Encounters is spying on you, but this is no surprise since it is owned by the same Murdoch family which is in big trouble in the UK over phone hacking.*

Reminding our readers that online dating sites are not only modern digital matchmakers, but also a business maker, we leave the above with no comment.

# Polish-British Online Experiment[24]

Studying national and international dating websites in 10 years perspective (2005–2015) we perceive cultural, racial, and societal differences, variations in wealth and poverty, social stratifications, local customs, traditional family crisis, as well as gender positions at a local level.[25]

Let us look at the United Kingdom, where the number of people living alone has increased by more than four times during the last 40 years, and now is about 18 million, in a total population of 64,6 million. According to the Office of National Statistics there were 26,7 million households in the UK in 2014, and 28% of these contained only one person.[26] This situation is reflected in the range of different British online dating services and characterised by the largest number of users in comparison to other European dating websites.[27] The question of why the British are lonelier than others might be a separate large scale study undertaken by an interdisciplinary research team.

Our interest was limited to older British males, and their cultural attitudes to dating online. This was the aim of our action research, mainly of a qualitative character. That detailed online ethnographical field work was done back in 2009, when the number of British people living alone was 15 million (in total UK population of only 60 mln), and in England only was predicted to increase to around 9 million by 2021.[28] Our today's opinion confirms the constantly

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[24] The paragraph mostly reprinted from V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, D. Beer, "Global Singlevillage and Cultural Attitudes of Older British Males to Dating-on-line", *Ethnologia Polona*, 2008–2009, Vols. 29–30, pp. 155–163. See also: V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, *Antropolog on-line, a badanie w działaniu. Eksperyment polsko-brytyjski*, [in:] E.A. Jagiełło, P. Schmidt (eds.), *Homo Interneticus? Etnograficzne wędrówki w głąb Sieci*, Lublin, pp. 14–20 (http://www.wiedzaiedukacja.eu).

[25] V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, "e-Folklore in the Age of Globalization", *Fabula*, 2006, Vol. 47, Nos. 3–4, p. 252.

[26] According to the Office of National Statistics there were 26,7 million households in the UK in 2014, and 28% of these contained only one person. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/family-demography/families-and-households/2014/families-and-households-in-the-uk--2014.html, retrieved 26.01.2016.

[27] For instance, on the 5th of December 2008 the system of the DatingDirect.com indicated 5 men in Denmark (total population 5,5 M), 6 in Poland (total population 38 M), 13 in Italy (60 M), 15 in Germany (82 M), 17 in France (65 M), 63 in the USA, but in Britain – 1,000, and in London alone, 420 men.

[28] See report *Single Person Households* by Guy Palmer, New Policy Institute, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, April 2006.

evolved same trend, that is why our detailed online field work of 2009 is not out of date and worth presenting here.

The research was conducted by a Polish female and an English male, in the 60–65 age group, and both single at the moment. The project gave us the opportunity to investigate cultural differences and attitudes to online dating amongst the middle aged, limited to one sex (male) and ethnicity only. For our study we have chosen DatingDirect.com, one of the largest and most popular dating services available to British users. The site is owned and operated by Meetic, a company based in France, which claims to be "the leading European provider of online encounters".[29] A snapshot of online activity is provided when the user logs on to the site, e.g. "28,767 users in 93 countries are now online".[30] This number can vary, the figure above was observed on Tuesday lunchtime, but can rise to around 70,000 on a Saturday evening. The trend was constant during many sessions – the British undoubtely dominated.

The research was limited to a sample of 80 selected white Caucasian men aged 60–65 (the majority of English origin) who published their personal profile, responded to author's test (described below) and were active DatingDirect.com members during the last three months of 2008. The following user determined criteria applied: relationship status – single, divorced, or widowed; level of education – first university degree to doctorate; income – moderate to high; household – individual. Religion, employed or retired and number of own children were not taken into account. It is interesting that the above criteria were fulfilled (according to subscribers' declaration) by a different number of daters in different online sessions.

As we mentioned before, the female author of the this text published an affinity test together with her personal profile. The test consisted of 20 questions chosen from a question bank available to users on the site. Similar tests were published by men, and as we realised, members treated them as an introductory 'hello' or ice-breaker (in contrast to the less elegant electronic 'wink') rather than a real tool for a choosing somebody. Several conclusions, which are of a specific cultural character arise from the anlysis of the test answers.

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29  This has recently increased to 5M, assumed to be an international total, a consequence of further consolidation of operators in the dating market. *Le Monde*, 14.02.2009.

30  http://www.datingdirect.com/meetic.php?url=/home/index.php (accessed at 12:35 a.m. on 12 May 2009).

The question "Are you more up for trekking in the desert or relaxing on all-inclusive Club Med holiday?" showed the preference (nearly 100%) for trekking type (read: activity holiday). During further correspondence we realised that in reality older Englishmen 'genetically' appreciated individual travel rather than in tourist groups, but being older/retired they preferred less tiring, quiet forms of "small" holidays, or just walking in the country.

They preferred a more individual style as to leisure; TV and DVDs at home rather than a trip to a distant cinema. No one liked hosting parties or having guests to any extent. To them so called "going out" means going to a nearby pub for a meal or a drink. They also drank alone at home; no one declared to be abstinent from alcohol. As to hobbies, the vast majority preferred gardening (national British hobby) and computer. DIY (*do it yourself*), regarded by people from the Continent as a type of English mania for never ending home, house and garage improvements came next. Reading books or sports activities (mainly cycling, but also sailing, sometimes tennis and golf or cricket) were mentioned by a minority of respondents.

The majority said they were self-sufficient with household duties and independent, whilst only two respondents preferred to be looked after and pampered (from the question: "Do you prefer to be looked after and pampered, or to stand on your own two feet?"). It might be that these particular statements should not be taken at face value; respondents may prefer to hide their true motivation.

Moreover, in contrast to face-to-face communication, computer-mediated communication assists our stereotypical English male to overcome his shyness and inhibition, which may arise from traditionally "cool" upbringing, and social class stratification, and indicated by speech and restricted behaviour codes. Following global dating 'netiquette', he moves beyond his comfort zone, and becomes more open towards strangers, writing about personal details and emotions as well as feeling freed from conventional rules of spelling, which is a further cyberspace behaviour.[31] For the above reasons, the activity of Internet dating might be perceived by the anthropologist as a liminal zone, a marginal and borderline state disconnected from 'the profane' but not yet 'sacred'.[32] This problem will inevitably reassert itself, when the virtual relationship turns to a real one, which for most users is the desired outcome.

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[31] K. Fox, *Watching the English. The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*, Hodder & Stoughton, London 2004, p. 208 et seq.

[32] A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*: *étude systématique*, E. Nourry, Paris 1909.

Moving on from the dream to reality, there will be many opportunities to make contact with females aged between 55 and 65 years, but there will also be problems. Many women will be divorced or widowed, rather than never married. Generally they will be active, and ready for a 'second time around' within their own age group, or sometimes, with younger men. Males may perceive that these females come with 'baggage', that is to say, their past experiences which have yet to be fully resolved, and may feel that they cannot cope with this.

Living abroad (the question: "Would living abroad pose a problem for you?") seemed to be a challenge to older men, which they were not eager to contemplate. It is quite common for retired couples to relocate from the UK to Spain, attracted by the warmer climate and a large British presence, with little need to integrate, i.e. learn Spanish or associate with the local population. In contrast, moving to Poland would require some language learning, cultural adjustment and tolerance to a less welcoming long winter season. The question: "Do you think it is imperative to live together when you are in love?" produced a number of negative responses, which might suggest that the British males were seeking a platonic relationship only, and in general preferred their own space and small circle of close friends as well as own a house that gives the feeling of self-independence.

In spite of their declarations, our respondents were apparently not very romantic or spontaneous people in spite of what they declared. Only few answered to the questions: "Would you be willing to do anything for love?" or "Would you be ready to follow someone you love to the end of world if necessary?" in the affirmative. Whilst such an aspiration is to be less expected amongst older people it is also conditioned by the English socio-cultural meaning of the term 'romantic'– perceived as 'quixotic', 'artistic' and 'bohemian' person rather than a solid and 'realistic' candidate. This is in contrast to many continental European cultures, where it is taken for granted that one can be a serious, prospective personality, yet when in love, a romantic as well. To quote an amusing and witty excerpt from a male dater's report of an email exchange with a virtual lady, 64 years of age: "She takes things too literally. From a message to me: 'in your profile you say you are not romantic'. So I tell her there is a further category available, 'not romantic at all' which I chose not to use. Now she is excited by an artist, HUGELY romantic…".

A few men, when they realised that a Polish (middle-aged) woman was active on a British site, directed her to her national online dating services ("You should state in your profile that you live permanently in Poland. I'm no longer interested. Sorry"). One wrote as follows: "Hi, the vast majority of my visits

and winks have been from people I wish not to be contacted by, in places like Africa and South America, or the Philippines…". The above quoted statements show that Internet contact with continental women may be perceived as more risky. It might be also a manifestation of conservative British islanders' feeling of superiority widely known – since 19th century – under the term 'splendid isolation'.

Some answers indicated the knowledge of well-known folklore tales, probably based on a real story,[33] e.g.: "I also have been contacted by ladies who only want money to come to England. Are you a genuine lady or a man pretending to be a lady?". On the other hand a few had a 'soft spot' towards Poles and Poland or just a neutral attitude to the nationality: "You write an interesting email and I see no problem keeping contact with a Polish woman".

Our potential daters were tolerant and could accept two different religions at home (question: "Do you think that two different religions can exist in a couple without causing problems?"), although it should be noted that majority were atheists or non-practicing Protestants.

It is also interesting that many of our DatingDirect.com daters had little success in finding a suitable woman. How many succeed we are not able to say. The majority honestly stated that they had been on dating sites for a few months or up to six months, sometime more than one year, next they 'rested' for some time, or change to a similar site or a different site altogether, and later return to DatingDirect.com, as one member stated: "I have been on this site on and off for quite some time but the people virtually remain the same and not many people reply". The lack of response from females may have a number of causes. But there is a further problem, which the dating sites do not share with their members: new users can register free and thus appear in searches. In reality they may be part of the "living dead"[34] unable to reply to messages unless they pay a subscription to become a full member.

In larger towns the virtual date will often metamorphose into a live date, and if unsuccessful there is the opportunity to look for someone really fascinating who might fulfill their requirements. In villages and small towns

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33 Dozens of men with red roses in hands awaited young, pretty women of Russian origin at the John Kennedy airport meeting point. No one arrived, but they had sent checks to cover their travel costs. But you know, you cannot get pretty girl to be yours forever for few bucks.

34 This term is used in J. Silverstein, M. Lasky: *Online Dating for Dummies*, Wiley Publishing Inc., Hoboken, N.J. 2004.

men will maintain virtual contact for much longer; they prefer to chat using the DatingDirect site. One respondent wrote: "I walked dogs, next some chatting with women, lunch, gardening, writing emails to new online women, and the day is nearly off". That is why they have got up to several hundred of winks and visits, and – feeling that they have got unlimited possibilities to realise a 'cyberlove' – they are not in hurry, preferring to play and spend time from a safe distance at home. To offer an extreme case: "That would be 823 over a two year period as compared with another site I am on where it is 2,257 in under half of time. I think it might be worth your taking a look at this site. If you google: krsci.encounters dating – you will get my profile there. I would suggest that you sign free, which will allow you to browse profiles, you will be able to read emails… [etc. instructions ]. The site[35] is run by *The Times* newspaper and most of the people on it are well educated…".

In replying to the above man, the author asked if there is any sense in studying so many profiles, keeping correspondence, etc. The man replied that there are people who collect stamps or etchings, and there are people who treat virtual dating as an addictive activity. Should the user wish to stop their Internet activity, the dating sites have a number of ways of maintaining the users interest. Subscriptions are automatically renewed, although there are involved procedures for avoiding this. Non-payment will result in demotion to the living dead as described above. In the meantime there will be messages from the webmaster with encouraging or 'missing you' emails, the best cheap renewal offers, new matches, etc. So whilst the user may feel manipulated by the cyberlove business, they often return, because it is a lonely, scary world outside.

Summing up our research we observe that some specific features are related to the social isolation of the older British male. First of all family and kinship ties there are reduced. This contrasts with e.g. Poland, where families are closer with stronger links between generations, and the added obligation on the children to support parents in their old age. Secondly, there is less social interaction in Britain, due to the customary individualism and conservatism as well as the desire for privacy and the traditional "English" style of life. Hence our respondents may experience difficulties in overcoming their loneliness, and may find it much easier to use the computer as a substitute for the companion of which they dream.

Our research indicated that international dating online for elderly seems to be less successful; this may be due to the perception of the English ethnic

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[35] http://www.encounters.co.uk, retrieved 14.06.2015.

stereotypes (the 'stiff upper lip' and the 'cold-bloodedness') circulated on the Continent, but not only. There are also political and economic predjudical aspects.

As for Poles, today's they are the second largest overseas-born community in the UK (after residents born in India). In 2016 the number of Poles is estimated as up to 1 million including the descendants of over 200,000 post-World War II immigrants who settled in the UK. The Poles abroad, especially the younger generation date online, using Polish websites.[36]

## Post Script: Global Single Village

Online dating services are able to connect singles and lonely people over the world continents and cultures, but not everywhere do they meet official appreciation. The extreme case is the People's Republic of China, where transnational matchmaking is illegal. The Republic of Philippines prohibits the business of organizing or facilitating marriages between Filipinas and foreign men under the Republic Act, but this law is routinely circumvented by mail-order bride / husband online agencies outside the country. On the other hand Singapore's governmental body called 'Social Development Network' supports and facilitates dating activities in the country, and thus paradoxically not many of Singaporeans have ever used an online dating service.

In researching dating websites we realised that subscribers' online behaviours are of global character and become more and more similar as a result of the power of post-modern media. Simultaneously, however, we observe that the cyberdating community on 'the Net' behaves globally, but thinks locally.

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[36] The biggest www.Polishearts.com indicated 1,103,060 members registered in 16 countries. At the moment of the session (Thursday, lunchtime) 750 were online. Retrieved: 28.01.2016.

# Chapter VII

## Matchmaking through Avatars: Social Aspects of Online Dating[1]

1   Paper delivered by V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska and A. Ross on the panel during the 10th Congress of the Société International d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF), Lisbon, 18 April 2011. Published in: V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, T. Meder, A. Ross (eds.), *Shaping Virtual Lives. Online Identities, Representations, and Conducts*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2012, pp. 89–100. See also V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, *Randka z awatarem, czyli o społecznym znaczeniu tożsamości wirtualnych*, [in:] L.W. Zacher (ed.), *Wirtualizacja. Problemy, wyzwania, skutki*, Poltex, Warszawa 2013, pp. 529–544.

The new world of digital devices and social media is extending our notions of personal identity. The effects reverberate through many areas of modern social life, through the labour market, education, trade, and global news, all the way to social, family, and personal life. Powerful online applications and attractive social media running on the new devices are encouraging people to move into a new space, known as virtual space or cyberspace.

In that new space, a person can deliberately remould or recreate his or her identity as a screen presence expressing an online personality, which is often pseudonymous following a widespread custom of using a new and invented name. In Internet jargon, the pseudonym is a 'nickname' or a 'handle' and is accompanied by a freely chosen graphic image to represent the person. People who live in different virtual communities often develop a plural identity arising from the sum of the various repertoires of their online roles.

Post-modern humans often use the new media to overcome the boundaries or limits of their physical embodiment and their given social position, as well as the constraints of their "tribal" or inherited traditions. Here is important to recall that for many centuries a conservative notion of identity was connected with the group identity, whereby a person who tried to live as an outsider faced a cruel *vita nuda* and social exclusion.[2]

Today people can transform some of the attributes of social stigmatisation into positive manifestations of their private "self"and individual identity. With the increasing salience of online life, the notion of privacy is slowly disappearing, and multiplying identities of a Protean type[3] are growing up. In real or physical life, the post-modern *homo irretitus* (web-entangled man) spends many hours a day in front of a computer screen.

This lonely life is eased by communication with similar online addicts on social networking sites, by digital forms of entertainment such as television, music, and movies, and by addictive computer games. Such individuals will occasionally change their name and identity in order to feel free and anonymous. The changed identity is often accompanied by a graphical image. In the world of online social media and games, the image takes the form of a freely chosen and stylised graphic called an *avatar*.

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2   G. Agamben, *Nudità*, Nottetempo, Roma 2005.
3   R.J. Lifton, *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in the Age of Fragmentation*, Basic Books, New York 1993.

In Hindu tradition, the old Sanskrit term *avatāra* (meaning "descent") denoted the incarnation of a deity. Now the notion of an avatar has been updated to become a prominent part of post-modern culture. Since the first appearance online in 1985 of the beta version of a role-playing game invented by Chip Morningstar and Randy Farmer called *Habitat*,[4] the term *avatar* has come to denote the screen representation of an online gamer. In this new incarnation of the term, the gamer uses the mouse and keyboard, or a joystick, to control the movements of an animated screen figure that represents the gamer. The animated screen figure is the avatar.

Since that time, thanks to science-fiction authors such as William Gibson and Neal Stephenson,[5] as well as multitudes of online gamers (e.g. players of *massively multiplayer online role-playing games*, also known as MMORPGs), the career of the new incarnation of the term has taken off. Now millions of online producers and consumers of video clips, mobile applications, social forums, and instant messaging services have avatars and have learned to recognise and appreciate the avatars their online peers deploy.

Global stardom for the new concept came in 2009 with the eponymous hero (also known as Jake Sully) of James Cameron's blockbuster movie *Avatar*.[6] The virtual tribe of avatars was fruitful and multiplied in cyberspace, both in the form of the computer-generated three-dimensional action figures used to represent gamers in computer games and as the expressive two-dimensional icons (portrait photos and cartoon icons) that participants use to represent themselves on web forums and in other online communities. As avatars grew more prominent and pervasive on the Internet, it was inevitable that people would begin to use them for online dating.

Independently of the avatar story, online dating services first appeared in 1995, when the American corporation Match.com opened for business. Now the online dating industry has grown to include well over a thousand lifestyle and dating sites together with innumerable niche sites pairing people by race, sexual orientation, and religion, or offering online social

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4   C. Morningstar, R. Farmer, *Habitat*, Lucasfilm Games, 1986.

5   W. Gibson, *Count Zero*, Victor Gollancz, London 1986; N. Stephenson, *Snow Crash*, Bantam Books, New York 1992.

6   Cameron, James (film director), *Avatar*, Twentieth-Century Fox 2009. See review: A. Ross, *Avatars 'r' us. Movie review*, 2 pages. http://www.andyross.net.

contacts within specific circles (so finely sliced and diced as to cater just for women behind bars, or smokers and marijuana users, or *Star Trek* fans, to cite a few freely chosen examples). In the USA and UK, the online dating industry is the highest grossing online industry after video games and digital music.

Most online dating sites encourage their members to upload photos of themselves together with their profiles and browse the photos of other users. The members then exchange mail and other on line data to their hearts' content, or until they feel moved to go to the next level and meet in the flesh. On the biggest dating sites (e.g. eHarmony, Match.com), the machines do the matchmaking one-to-one, in social isolation.[7]

By contrast, on social networking sites such as Facebook (now with over 1 billion users and still growing) or the company formerly known as MySpace (which once had over 100 million members) a community approach limits the intimacy of personal exchanges and enforces a keep-it-clean policy for any postings that other members of the online community can access. For this reason, much of the social interaction is not dating but rather public flirting: "although the social networking sites appeal mainly to young users and are not strictly dating sites, they bring the community back into whatever dating is generated there".[8] When your friends can read your posts, you're not likely to start getting as intimate as you are when you think you're alone with your date. But in either case, social or one-on-one, the interactions are mostly via text.

In parallel to this development, software developers in the world of computer games created ever more addictive games based on 3D avatars, such as Second Life, invented in 2003 by Linden Lab, a financial giant hosting more than 20 million users (called residents)[9] and IMVU (Instant Messaging Virtual Universe) founded by Will Harvey in 2004. IMVU is a 3D graphical instant messaging client reportedly generated about $40 million in revenue for the year 2010, and claimed over 40 million registered users and 6 million unique visitors per month.[10]

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7   R. Epstein, "The truth about online dating", *Scientific American*, 2007, 30 January, pp. 28–35. http://www.scientificamerican.com, retrieved 12.03.2012.

8   *Ibidem*, p. 35.

9   A.M. Kaplan, M. Haenlein, "The Fairyland of Second Life", *Business Horizons*, 2009, No. 52/6, pp. 563–572.

10  R. Wauters, "IMVU hits $40 million annual revenue run rate", *TechCrunch*, 2010. http://techcrunch.com/2010/04/24/imvu-revenue, retrieved 8.03.2012.

In recent years, these technically more sophisticated games have popularised avatar dating within their virtual world, where the screen avatars do all the things virtually together that their owners might like to do with each other in the real physical world. Thus online dating developed to the next level.[11]
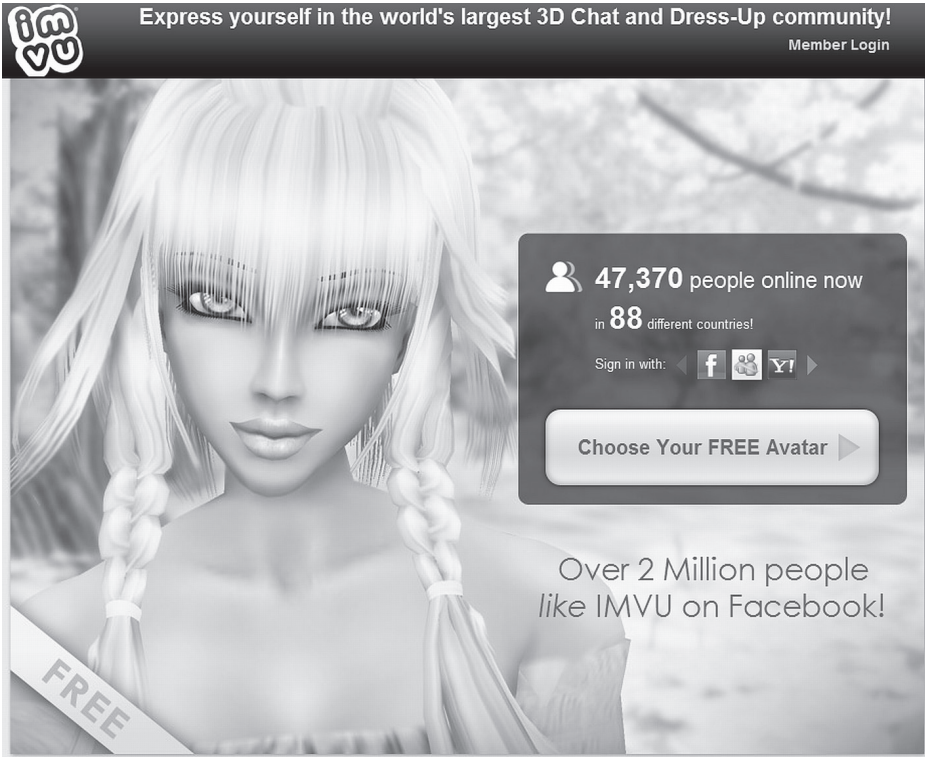


**Fig. 23.** IMVU picture (http://pl.imvu.com/)

Virtual dating combines online dating with online gaming. Virtual dating involves people using their avatars to interact in a virtual space that resembles a real-life dating environment, complete with photo-realistic 3D avatars and scenic props, where they can listen to music and play various games that provoke online conversation between the people behind the avatars. For example, in Second Life individuals can meet, chat, and flirt in a romantic virtual café in a city, such as NewYork, Paris, Cracow, or a tropical island resort.

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11 J. Frost et al., "People are experience goods: improving online dating with virtual Dates", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 2008, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 51–61.

**Fig. 24.** Exotic locations: a beach in Second Life (http://www.secondlife.com)

They can eat and drink in a virtual restaurant with their animated date, even though in reality the users are relaxing at home in their pyjamas, with no more than their mouse and keyboard to keep them busy and no risk of ruining their best outfits or succumbing to the temptations of too many gourmet calories. The animated screen dolls do all the usual human work of building up a relationship. They react to each other's every move, they gesture and speak at the whim of their owners, and when the date is done they even kiss goodbye, if the proceedings went as well as the pair of dreamers behind the avatars had hoped.

The avatars perform these ritualised mating games amid meticulously optimised atmospherics, where the streets and sidewalks are always clean and free of undesirable drunks or vagrants, the females are absurdly beautiful and unnaturally receptive, the males are impossibly handsome and clean-shaven, and any date can end in torrid sex where the partners keep going to unreal extremes. A user can often equip his or her avatar with an extensive array of pornographic accessories, and if the user is still bored or feels that the body image or persona or outfit is insufficiently alluring there is always the option to revamp everything with an instant virtual shopping expedition, for example, for a bigger bosom or a bolder dress or more muscular shoulders or a smarter suit. If you have an appetite for the best caviar and want to send a hundred roses to your avatar date, you can indulge your whim with artificial money, which is always available at a very reasonable exchange rate, all calculated, naturally, to maximise the revenue the online dating agency can generate from the user's real money. Naturally, too, the customers driving the avatars in their romantic escapades find their own hedonistic impulses

escalating in their avatar world where the usual physical limits are replaced by virtual infinities, and human greed for unlimited consumer goods can drive the customers to become more and more addicted. All the while, the dating site's proprietors and their associates in all the subsidiary businesses that grow like mushrooms around these sites smile with joy as they watch the revenues accumulate in their bank accounts.



**Fig. 25.** OmniDate, virtual dating for entrepreneurs picture (http://www.omnidate.com)

While even the technically less adventurous online dating sites allow members to select their partners on the basis of attributes such as education, income, and exact geographical location, avatar dating allows users to explore each other much more intimately for such attributes as compatibility of character, sense of humour, liking for fun, and emotional rapport, all of which enables the members to develop substantial friendships and satisfying relationships with people from anywhere in the world, people whose real names and faces they need never encounter. Moreover, most 3D social games offer special premium membership, allowing those prepared to pay for the privilege to enjoy all sorts of sexual acts between their avatars.

This freedom stands in evident contrast to that on offer in the usual social networking applications, such as Facebook, where a family-friendly moral code prevails and nothing pornographic is allowed on the sites. But even the premium freedom is only a start. Any member can decide one day to make the transition from virtual interactions to the less exotic pleasures of more realistic dating online, with sharing of real names and photos of real faces and bodies, oreven to go the whole hog and start dating offline.

Once a dedicated seeker after online romance has experienced the virtual delights of avatar dating in an online venue, taking that last step and going for areal, physical, face-to-face meeting with the person behind the avatar date can be a let-down. On the screen, the date was always radiant with surreal beauty, in a fashion-model world where women have wide eyes and curvaceous bodies, full lips and flawless complexions, and men are tall and well muscled, with full heads of hair, smooth chins and impeccable tans. Before that all-important first date in the physical world of everyday life, the seeker wore Seven Mile Boots and met his or her date in a virtual paradise. The avatars met in luridly coloured landscapes featuring flower-framed waterfalls and endless beaches sloping into turquoise seas, where after a drip-dry splash in the waves the pixel-perfect pair drive in a luxury limousine to a colourful restaurant serving dishes that look perfect but taste of nothing at all.

However the seeker personalised his or her online experiences, the virtual dates were mere chapters in a fairy tale jazzed up with pop-culture clichés. Moreover, on most dating sites the fairy tale was far from free of charge: users have to pay by the hour, the week, or the month, for their virtual dates and for all the virtual enhancements to the avatars and their circumstances that made those dates so special in memory. Whether the more fastidious users liked it or not, they paid for the kitsch artistry the web designers used to trick up their animated world, for the aesthetics of avatar dating are that of Barbie and Ken and similar products, styled to appeal to the broadest possible demographic and secure the profit margins. Perhaps this only reflects modern offline life, where local colour becomes ever more diluted in the globalised styling of goods designed in London and made in China.

Online dates are limited in other ways too: to keep the software programming task within bounds, the avatar exchanges that make up screen conversations with dates are probably selected from a predefined set of distinctly limited questions and answers, where users clicked on the least boring conversational gambit to take their avatar date another step forward and hopefully began to build up a meaningful picture of the likes and dislikes of the person behind their screen date's mask. At least one advantage of all this pointing and clicking will appeal to the fussy dater: if you don't like your date you can end the encounter instantly, painlessly, and move on to another avatar with another driver. Those unpleasant feelings you call forth in your date by rejecting them so summarily are safely hidden behind a remote screen.
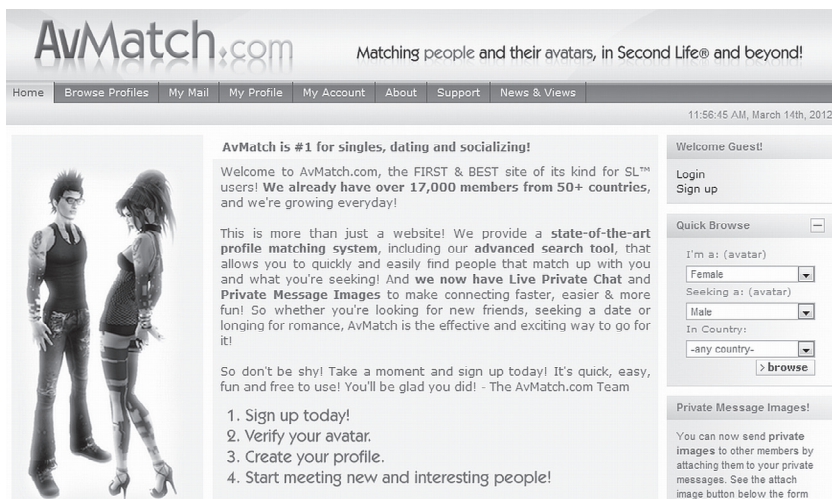
**Fig. 26.** Av Match picture (http://www.avmatch.com/)

All this potentially addictive interactivity in virtual dating space has been possible since 2008, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Dave Wilkie and Stefan Embleton their virtual dating site Weopia (which is based in Canada).[12] The innovation was quickly replicated by OmniDate, AvMatch, RED Virtual Date, and others. Unlike the innovators behind Second Life, these new pioneers foresee that their avatar dating system will be used by real people who want to set up real-life dates with their screen companions in the fullness of time. The sites offer their services simply as a way of going on a virtual first date and recommend it as less time consuming, less expensive, and less hazardous than meeting at a local venue where anything and everything can go wrong.

Enthusiasts for the technology of virtual dating emphasise the sophisticated software behind the scenes. The programs offer unprecedented opportunities to establish deeper yet safer understanding with your online partner through mutual exploration in fantasy worlds, shared fun playing games you both know and enjoy, and digitally enhanced insight into your date's character and likeability. They are the best way known to their programmers of preventing disappointment on your first date in the real world. Reasonably enough, the advocates point out that virtual dating is much more friendly to women than, say, online dating based on webcameras or telepresence technologies that break through the wall of fantasy and pose a real danger of stalking and similar real-world problems.

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12  Wilkie, Dave / Embleton, Stefan (founders), Weopia 2008.

Virtual dating apparently has the most appeal for teenagers, though older customers (in their 20s or 30s) are numerous enough too on the more popular sites. But much older users seem to be very rare; they seem to prefer the more old fashioned and serious online dating sites where prospective partners are encouraged to post real photos of themselves accompanied by detailed and fact-laden profiles. For people beyond the first flush of youth, online dating is evidently a serious business, where the ticking of the biological clock takes all the fun out of fooling around in cloud cuckoo land. This merely reflects the facts in real life, where biologists and psychologists agree that there is no mystery as to why the most active daters, sexually, emotionally, and socially, are young people looking forward to a full life together with their new partners that will flower into children and all the rest. As to the fantasy side of avatar life, where multiple identities are almost the norm and nothing is quite as it seems, young people in real life too are often searching for their own identity and eager to try any new trick to help understand themselves a little better, even at the risk of a few bumps and bruises along the way.

People on virtual dates often project whimsical or distorted forms of themselves into the digital outlines of their avatars. These forms might somehow symbolise areal aspect of the personality of the user behind the mask, or they might just be a witty upside-down creature, but generally we can expect them to be a projection of a desired image (to be sexier, thinner, bolder, or stronger) inspired by pop culture stereotypes and ideals set by the latest celebrities. Complementing that choice, we can also expect that the other avatars people engage with or date in their romantic games reflect what the players tend to find attractive in the opposite sex (at least for heterosexual games – other players might prefer to play gay games in the safety of their online bubble worlds). The personal preferences we can expect to observe on both sides will reflect the ambitions of the players to be admired or desired, not only physically but also socially and mentally.

The basic drive behind any virtually enhanced dating behaviour is wishful thinking – to be more intelligent, more witty, more experienced, more appealing, more blessed with social graces, and more attractive in general. Naturally, this drive animates not only online dating but also dating in the flesh, the traditional way, where the participants always plan the early steps obsessively to optimise the first impressions they make. The difference is that in the virtual case the brakes are off. It seems almost churlish to spurn the opportunity to incarnate oneself as a more amazing and more fabulous creature than one ever could in traditional online dating. In that world, even photos that have

been painstakingly enhanced in Photoshop and résumés and profiles that have been edited and optimized to the point of untruth can do little to hide the facts of biology and economics.

Given the point of traditional online dating, which is to smooth the transition to a physical date with a face-to-face meeting, there is little point in overdoing the creative input. By contrast, in all-out 3D avatar dating the residual link to everyday reality is so tenuous as to be negligible. Why not have fun and pretend to be Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt for a day? The avatars are playdolls, and the wilder and wittier the play the better, so long as the players remember that their multiple identities are free creations of the human spirit, constrained only by the frames and the aesthetics offered by the site designer.

Seen in this light, avatar dating is decoupled from its origins in human mate selection and becomes a sport or pastime in its own right, like tennis or Sudoku, with the fantasy limited less by the romantic or sexual appetites of the players than by their deeper psychology.

Several sociological and psychological studies have dealt with multiple virtual identities.[13] All of them start out from the idea that when people merge their human identity with the array of virtual prostheses that the avatars provide for them, they become virtual cyborgs. As such, they create transcendent selves that rise above their human biology andaccept the fusion of human and machine that their online activities presuppose. As people transcend their biology to animate virtual agents in their virtual worlds, they find their relatively simple real identities fragmenting into a multiplicity of partial virtual identities, united by a transcendent self that no longer feels bound by the oring old biological facts of real life.

The novelty of the cyborg self is its ability to change its character to suit its virtual circumstances. This brings advantages to the human behind the cyborg, such as the option to avoid face-to-face conversations for people who formerly feared their repercussions or the ridicule they once endured; the ability to express their views and opinions without discrimination or penalisation in the case of marginalised or persecuted groups; or the opportunity to encounter or to stimulate similar ideas among like-minded people. But these

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13  T. Flew, *New Media: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 2008; G. Riva, C. Galimberti (eds.), *Towards Cyber Psychology: Mind, Cognition and Society in the Internet Age*, IOS Press, Amsterdam 2003; S. Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of Internet*, Simon & Schuster, New York 1995; *idem*, *The Second Self: Computer and the Human Spirit*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2005.

advantages are also accompanied by actual or possible disadvantages, such as the fact that many people, once given such virtual freedom, soon become addicted to their virtual lives and lose touch with their roots in physical reality, or the fact that astheir online fluency increases they begin to lose their fluency in offline communication, especially in the sphere of social contacts.[14]

These psychosocial consequences of cultivating a more and more pervasive online life are brought to fever pitch in virtual dating, where deep human passions are entrained to the exchange of bits and bytes, because their virtual identity becomes of existential importance to the people who rely upon it to find sexual or romantic fulfilment. Those who in human life are timid or lack confidence have the chance at last to recreate themselves as they really want to be in the hope that through their online flirting and chatting they will succeed at least in experiencing the joys of cybersex and perhaps even in starting an offline relationship in the physical world.

In all these endeavours, avatars give their owners the freedom to create their ideal incarnation – or at least give them a handy self, free from the perhaps cloying or oppressive restrictions of the real cultural norms and customs of the world they live in, and offer them a new way to feel and play with all the possibilities they may previously have yearned to explore. It is all too easy to idealise a potential partner in a virtual world, but it also gratifyingly easy to idealise one's own self there and enjoy a new freedom.

Given all these consequences, both actual and possible, it is only right to point out that many people who thus live out their fantasy lives online start off by findingthe whole experience a matter of fun and games but slowly find themselves resenting the reality they left behind. They may even go on to inflict pain, depression, and suffering not only upon themselves but also upon their parents, families, spouses, partners, and friends. The online players who become most addicted need psychological help. On the other hand, avatars and virtual realities are quickly becoming invaluable tools in the toolkit of modern psychiatry as effective means to cure phobias and as useful weapons in cognitive therapy for anxiety disorders,[15] in both

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14  N. Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York 2010; S. Maushart, *The Winter of Our Disconnect*, Profile Books, London 2011; S. Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, Basic Books, New York 2011.

15  A. Gaggioli et al., "Avatars in clinical psychology: a framework for the clinical use of virtual humans", *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, 2003, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 117–125.

cases because the avatar is an active and steerable representation of the patient embedded in a realistic world.

Avatars technology has become an integral part of digital communication for general users thanks to its anonymity, safety, comfort, and easy access.[16] A range of problems arise from the opportunities the technology creates for deception through the use of false identities, for harassment of a victim with unwanted communications, and indeed for infidelity among the devotees of avatar dating, but all these problems existed in one form or another in pre-digital life too.

Before we go on to consider the future of avatar dating and matchmaking, it is worth pausing to emphasise the paradox behind online dating. The popularity of the practice is grounded in a strange fact about human nature: all of a person's intimate relationships in real life need to be reinforced by close and constant physical contacts in order to survive, which gives the potentially runaway world of the inner passions a strong and effective anchor in everyday being; whereas in cyberspace the hindrance imposed by physical distance is essentially overcome, and at the same time the psychic engagement is made more intense, which causes a positive feedback that reinforces the emotional attachments.[17] Without the massive inertia of his or her physical being, a person's inner feelings can run riot, causing such an obsession with the online target that things can go badly wrong. On the other hand, the same freedom from inertia can allow mutual epiphanies of the spirit that make life worth living again for those who once despaired. The paradox is not new to digital media: generations ago it was summed up in the folk wisdom that absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Avatar dating has a lot going for it. In physical relationships, people often hide their true feelings and inner fantasies, their 'bad' inclinations and 'naughty' dreams, and the harder knocks that the university of life has dealt them, but all these blocks are lifted when they can express themselves through their avatars. Problematic personal features like shyness, social phobias, poverty, physical unattractiveness, traumatic experiences, disability, and other social barriers can all disappear while two people date each other with avatars. These benefits are evidently compelling enough to persuade more and more people to try it.

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16  M.T. Whitty, A.N. Carr, *Romance Psychology of Online Relationships*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2006.

17  A. Ben-Ze'ev, *Love Online. Emotions on the Internet*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 53.

Altogether, the future of avatar dating looks good. People who explore each other through avatars have at their disposal a tool of unprecedented power to cut through the psychosocial barriers that can make dating in the physical world such a bore. As the technology matures and the avatars become more realistic, until we can all live as wholeheartedly in our virtual worlds as Jake Sully did in the movie *Avatar*, the attraction of avatar dating can only increase. Much as airline pilots today spend most of their training hours 'flying' in simulators, so future marriedcouples might spend more time getting to know each other on avatar dates than in the flesh. In any case, the technology is here to stay.[18]
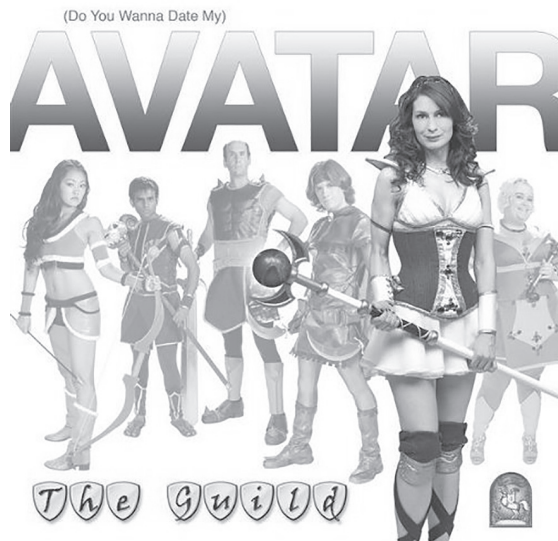


**Fig. 27.** AvMatch, for avatar dating in Second Life (https://join.secondlife.com/)

*Hang with me in my MMO*
*So many places we can go*
*You'll never see my actual face*
*Our love, our love will be in virtual space*
*I'm craving to emote with you*
*So many animations I can do*
*Be anything you want me to be*
*C'mon, c'mon and share a potion with me*

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18   A. Ross, *G.O.D. Is Great: How to Build a Global Organism*, Ross Verlag, Germany 2010, pp. 12–29.

*Do you wanna date my avatar?*
*She's a star*
*And she's hotter than reality by far*
*Wanna date my avatar?*

"(Do You Wanna Date My) Avatar"
[Day& Whedon 2009]

# Chapter VIII

**The Global Food Story and the Internet[1]**

Food is essential to human life. Since the very beginning human civilisation has been involved in food collection, because – from the biological approach – humans need to eat to stay alive. In Abraham Maslow's well-known pyramidal hierarchy of human needs food is the one of the basic physiological needs (followed by breathing, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, and secretion):[2]
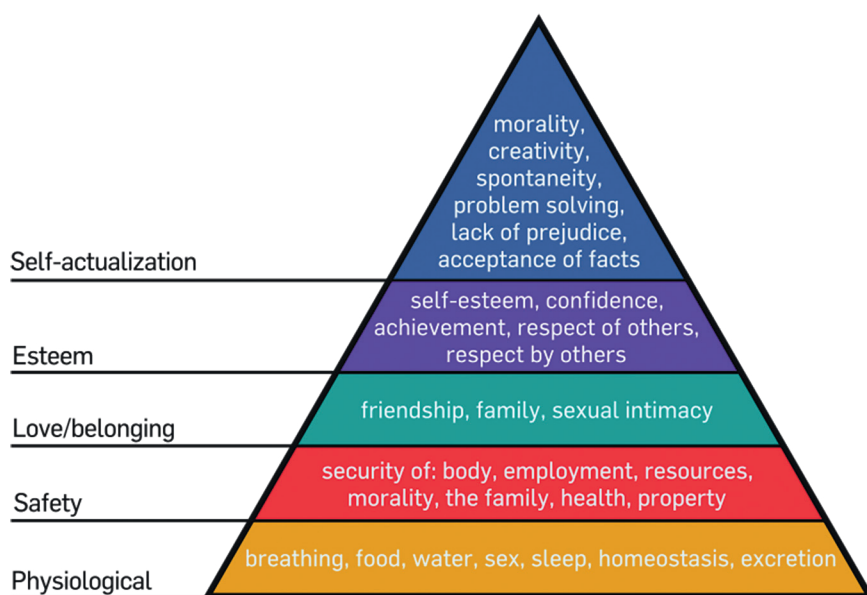


**Fig. 28.** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs)

Approximately 10,000 years ago, humans made a revolutionary transition from food collecting to food production by means of the domestication of plants and animals. Then they began to cultivate crops and keep herds as sources of food. During centuries methods of food production, preservation, distribution and consumption have been developed thanks to modernisation of technology and material culture.

Within cultural anthropology, ethnology and folklore studies a total system of practices and concepts encompassing food together with eating habits

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2   A. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation", *Psychological Review*, 1943, No. 50(4), pp. 370–396.

and patterns of consumption is called *foodways*.[3] All types of foodways, i.e. the processes enabling humans to interact with food (via three "Ps": production, preparation, and performance) belong to intangible heritage of humanity, while food as a product is understood as a tangible material. Between these two zones there is a sensoric space – the edibility: "Edible artefacts are perishable, palatable […]. By focusing on the sensory features of edible material culture, we can better understand the complexities of representing and interpreting food in museums".[4]

From the cultural point of view, food is also a universal notion,[5] even though many cultures have their own particular food preferences as well as taboos.[6] Let us recall the French structuralist Lévi-Strauss's culinary triangle (*raw – cooked – rotten*).[7] His scheme was based on two opposite polarities: *nature–culture* and *elaborated–unelaborated*. Within the scheme, there were three main types of cooking: boiling, roasting, and smoking. Lévi-Strauss looked at how methods of cooking in a society form a language that can reveal universal truths about societies.

In regard to many modern societies the Lévi-Strauss scheme seems much outdated, because traditional cooking has been replaced, in many parts of the world, by the industrial preparation of factory-farmed food cooked in microwave ovens or by using other technical equipment. Nevertheless food was a great civiliser, and the kitchen – the studio of the first art. Food as a symbol

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3    J.J. Honigmann, *Foodways in a Muskeg Community*, Ottawa 1961; P. Adema, *Food-ways*, [in:] A.S. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, pp. 232–233.

4    S. Conrad Gothie, *No Food or Drink in the Museum? The challenges of Edible Artifacts*, [in:] L.M. Long (ed.), *The Food and Folklore Reader*, Bloomsbury, London–New York–New Delhi–Sydney 2015, p. 366. See also: A.L. Matalas et al., *The Cyprus Food and Nutrition Virtual Museum. An Attempt to Preserve and Disseminate Knowledge about Past Foodways and Controversial Issues Regarding the Revival of Traditional Food*, [in:] P. Lysaght (ed.), *The Return of Traditional Food*, Lund University, Lund 2013, pp. 146–151.

5    C. Counihan, P. van Esterik (eds.), *Food and Culture. A Reader*, Routledge, New York 1997.

6    M. Harris, E.B. Ross (eds.), *Food and Evolution: Toward a Theory of Human Food Habits*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1987; M. Jones, *Feast. Why Humans Share Food*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008.

7    C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les mythologique. I. Le cru et le cuit*, Plon, Paris 1964; E. Leach, *Oysters, Smoked Salmon and Stilton Cheese*, [in:] E. Leach, *Lévi-Strauss*, Fontana, London 1994, 4th ed., revised by James Laidlaw, pp. 30–34.

of ethnic and religious identity always played the role in rituals, celebrations and festivals. Also it was a form of the communication between individuals and community groups, between producers and consumers as well as a sort of social and political power. Nowadays discourses about food, especially on social media, affect the dietary choices of many people on a daily basis all over the world.

The above is easily confirmed in the post-modern culture strongly disseminated by the effects of the digital culture. Post-modern humans use the Internet to overcome the boundaries of their local ecological and social environment as well as the constraints of their socially or locally inherited traditions. In the frame of Internet studies, the global food culture phenomenon reveals a post-modern culinary outlook and attitudes towards food and foodways in the context of environmental, economic, ethical, health, and everyday lifestyle issues.

We should underline the influence of the Internet as a provider of a seemingly limitless flow of information and discourse about food sources, production, distribution, preparation and consumption. During the last two decades food culture has been influenced by transcultural food and nutritional knowledge, transnational behavioural patterns, and global marketing. It has also been affected by global eating habits and a cuisine influenced by *fast food* and *slow food* trends, particularly by organic and non-genetically modified healthy foods (non-GMO), as well as by so-called local and traditional farm market products.[8] Within the European Union there was created an opportunity for producers from the food industry to protect regional and traditional names through the signs PDO – protected designation of origin, PGI – protected geographical indication and TSG – traditional speciality guaranteed, and hence to promote the areas they are produced. The registration of product's names allowed the variety of the regional foods to be increased and provide high quality and exceptional products to exist on a market that is dominated by mass-produced food. From one hand the manufacture of regional and traditional products helps with the development of diversification of agricultural activities and promoting these regions, from other hand it is followed by slow and organic food trends. The above factors are easy to be observed in the growing popularity of so called regional farmers' markets organized

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8   V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, K. Orszulak-Dudkowska, *Farmer's Markets in Poland: Revitalisation of Traditional Food Products*, [in:] P. Lysaght (ed.), *The Return of Traditional Food*, Lund University, Lund 2013, pp. 113–117.

as events and fairs also within the space of a big city shopping malls and hyper-markets.

The author's research is based on an overview study of Internet websites linked to food. Innumerable food-related sites show that the Internet is a global cookbook, a food tourism guide, a food bloggers' and networks' home, as well as a domain for stories about well-known chefs. All of these factors serve to create the background for global and transcultural post-modern food narration. There are three different types of reflexivity that might be of interest in this context – the first type of discourse is created by people who produce and sell food and meals, the second type concerns tales about food and celebrities as well as about food events and shows, and the third type of story is told by scholars who study food as a cultural, social, and economic phenomenon and who try to understand the role of food narratives in the contemporary world.

Recent innovations cannot change the fact that tales and stories of food exist in all storytelling societies. They socialise their audiences as food producers, distributors and consumers. The ways in which a society has always talked about food are reflected in the language of old proverbs, beliefs, folk-narratives, and tales, as well as in literary and art reminiscences.

From the historical point of view, many literary, scientific, and popular studies present dietary choices that are related to a given local culture's cuisine. Let us recall that the first European written culinary reports date from classical antiquity.[9] Over three centuries before the Common Era, Archestratus of Gela, whom some call the father of gastronomy, wrote a humorous didactic poem or rather an early cookbook in Greek, entitled *Hedypatheia* (*Life of Luxury*). A few centuries later, in the second century of the Common Era, Galen of Pergamon published a recipe for barley soup in his *Powers of Foods*, which is accessible to modern cooks thanks to the related websites.[10] There

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[9]    J. Wilkins, D. Harvey, M. Dobson, *Food in Antiquity*, Exeter University Press, Exeter 1995; M. Grant, *Roman Cookery: Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens*, Serif, London 2008.

[10]   Ancient cuisine is promoted online not only by food lovers, but also by scholars, such as Sally Grainger, Mark Grant, Patrick Fass, Andrew Dolby, Maciej Kokoszko and others (Z. Rzeźnicka, *Ancient and Byzantine Food and the Internet*, [in:] V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, P. Lysaght (eds.), *Food and the Internet. Proceedings of the 20th International Ethnological Food Research Conference, Department of Folklore and Ethnology, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Łódź, Poland, 3–6 September 2014*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2015, pp. 253–261.

are also websites which present short films to demonstrate how old-time food is prepared.[11]

In literature as well as in the fine arts (e.g. the Pietro Lorenzetti paintings), culinary references regarding the Middle Ages[12] are not hard to find, also thanks to Internet sources.

For example, the first ever written Polish sentence was concerned with food preparation and went as follows: "*day ut ia pobrusa a ti poziwai*" ("I will grind (the corn) in the quern and you will rest"). This sentence was said by a Czech settler called Boguchwal to his Polish wife and appeared in the *Book of Henryków* written in Latin in 1270:[13]
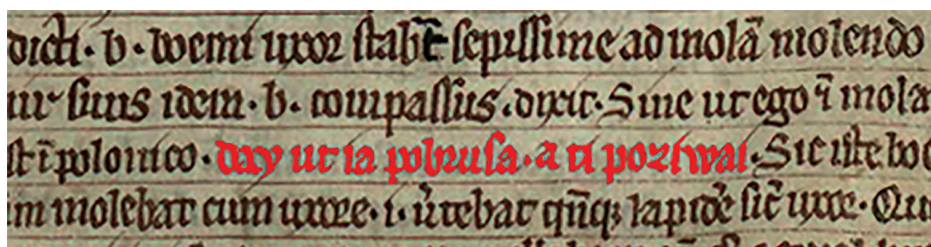


**Fig. 29.** First written Polish sentence (http://digital.fides.org.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=744&from =publication)

Also in the Net, one can find a Polish didactic poem on table manners that was written by Przecław Słota in the early fifteenth century.[14] The above mentioned poem as well as other culinary artistic references corresponded

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11  The online Project *Archeology Gastronomy: Feasting Throughout History*, organised in connection with the Olympic Games held in the United Kingdom in 2012 is a good example of this kind activity. www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcY-p4CNJzM, retrieved 1.06.2014.

12  M. Weiss Adamson (ed.), *Regional Cuisines of Medieval Europe*: *A Book of Essays*, Routledge, New York 2002; M. Dębińska, W.W. Weaver, *Food and Drink in Medieval Poland: Rediscovering a Cuisine of the Past*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1999.

13  "Bogwali uxor stabat, ad molam molendo. Cui vir suus idem Bogwalus, compassus dixit: Sine, ut ego etiam molam. Hoc est in polonico: Day, ut ia pobrusa, a ti poziwai" (p. 24). See digitised text: *Liber fundationis claustri Sancte Marie Virginis in Henrichow* = Księga henrykowska (http://digital.fides.org.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=744&from=publication, retrieved 10.06.2016). *The Book of Henryków* entered in 2015 the list of UNESCO "Memory of the World".

14  https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/O_zachowaniu_si%C4%99_przy_stole, retrieved 11.01.2016.

to European Renaissance interests in feasts, meals and cuisine as popular types and motifs in writing and paintings.[15] Let us recall *The Last Supper*, a fifteenth century mural painting by Leonardo da Vinci, as well as paintings by Dutch and Italian masters – all of which can be viewed on the Internet. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, thanks to the spread of Gutenberg's printing discovery, the first cookbooks appeared, mainly in France.[16]

Since 1825, when the epicure Anthelme Brillat-Savarin published his famous *Physiology of Taste*,[17] and in parallel with the development of socio-cultural sciences, culinary culture has become the subject of many serious studies during the following century. In the second half of the twentieth century, many researchers (some influenced by the French historical Annales School) contrasted relations between food culture and nutrition with the socio-economic history of various societies, as well as the role of food in constructing what were called collective identities[18] of ethnic or national character. Since then, public awareness of nutritional issues, gastronomic activities (e.g. displaying an interest in ethnic cuisine, custom-made kitchens and specialised cookery equipment) as well as the cultural saliency of food in general, have increased alongside the development of more scientifically-grounded nutritional knowledge.[19]

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15  J. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare. Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories*, Ashgate, Surrey, UK 2010.

16  François Pierre de la Varenne, *The French Cook*, 1651. New edition: Equinox Publishing, Sheffield 2001.

17  A. Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût, ou Méditations de gastronomie transcendante; ouvrage théorique, historique et à l'ordre du jour, dédié aux Gastronomes parisiens, par un Professeur, membre de plusieurs sociétés littéraires et savantes*, Le texte est re-publié aux éditions Charpentier en 1838. Original edition: A. Sautelet, 1825, 2 vols. (This English web edition published by eBooks@Adelaide).

18  E.g. J. Ferniot, J. Le Goff (eds.), *La Cuisine et la table: 5000 ans de gastronomie*, Seuil, Paris 1986; H. Couffignal, *La cuisine des Pauvres*, Robert Morel, Paris 1970; A. Girard, "Le triomphe de la cuisinière bourgeoise, Livres culinaires, cuisine et société aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 1977, No. 10, Vol. 24, PUF, Paris; K.C. Chang (ed.), *Food in Chinese Culture. Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1977; P. Caplan, *Food, Health and Identity*, Routledge, London 1997; P. Falk, "Homo culinarius: towards an historical anthropology of taste", *Social Science Information – sur les sciences sociales*, 1991, No. 30(4), pp. 757–790.

19  One of the most visionary technology and business leaders of last years is Nathan Myrhvold. N. Myrhvold et al., *Modernist Cuisine*, Taschen, Köln 2011 (5 vols.).

In the last two decades, culinary guide books have become more and more popular among readers. In parallel, culinary culture studies have become ever more frequent in European and world scholarship.[20] The resulting research has revealed that food plays a symbolic part in the modernisation process.[21] Thanks to the digital revolution and the increased pace of information exchange and communication at a global level, food culture has been influenced by transcultural food knowledge, global marketing, new lifestyles and eating habits, and new ways to prepare and consume food. A wide range of food companies now promote world cuisine online as well as *fast* and *slow food*, organic and genetically unaltered food, and much more. On the one hand, an increase in production of ready-made food based on standardised global defaults regarding consumption and taste, can be observed, while on the other, tradition has become an important factor for much production and consumption of food today, especially in areas such as the revitalisation of forgotten regional products and culinary heritage. Internet sites represent both trends.

In the virtual global village an avid *homo culinarius*[22] meets and communicates with two main culinary tribes: cooks and gourmands,[23] also known as connoisseurs or just 'foodies'. Both communities tell their own stories under the umbrella of an anthropology and psychology of senses.[24]

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20 E.g. C. Couninham, P. van Esterik (eds.), *op. cit.*; S.H. Katz, W.W. Weaver, *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, 3 vols., Scribner, New York 2002.

21 J.C. Margolin, R. Sauzet (eds.), *Pratiques et discours alimentaires a la Renaissance*, G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris 1982; A. Fenton, E. Kisbán (eds.), *Food in Change. Eating Habits from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh 1986; P. Lysaght, Ch. Burckhardt-Seebass (eds.), *Changing Tastes. Food Culture and the Processes of Industrialization*, Verlag der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft der Volkskunde/Department of Irish Folklore, UCD, Basel, Switzerland–Dublin 2004.

22 P. Falk, "Homo Culinarius…", pp. 757–790.

23 M. Tomaszewska-Bolałek, *'Homo Gourmand' and 'Homo Cooking': Two Main Culinary Tribes of the Internet Era*, [in:] V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska P. Lysaght (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 209–218.

24 C. Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures*, Routledge, New York 1993; D. Hoves, C. Classen, *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society*, Routledge, New York 2013; C. Korsmeyer (ed.), *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink (Sensory Formations)*, Bloombsbury Academic, London 2005; G.M. Shepherd, *Neurogastronomy: How the Brain Creates Flavor and Why It Matters*, Columbia University Press, New York 2011.

Innumerable food-related sites show that the Internet hosts a global cook book for modern civilisation. Online authors reveal a lot about popular – and unpopular – food preferences in daily and ritual (ceremonial or religious) menus. There is also an enormous number of sites regarding table manners (illustrated by film presentations, e.g. on YouTube), the aesthetics of food display and the art of decoration and serving meals. There is also a very popular activity of happy cooks – making photographs of food and meals to be shared in public (e.g. www.Instagram.com). Some enthusiasts even shoot photos while cooking anything that looks appetizing and immediately post their pictures online to share their latest creative work. This is a visual affirmation of pride in their cookery skills that they may or not may augment with informative text.



**Fig. 30.** Roast stuffed piglet. Annual party 2016: Philosophical Faculty, University of Łódź. Photo: author

This hobbyist activity as well as professional food photography carried out by agencies and magazines is often termed as a *food porn* or *gastro porn*.[25] Internet serves drinks and wines guides, viticulture programmes and enology tours, food tourism, restaurant reviews and rankings, food festivals, fairs and competitions, healthy and anti-obesity diets, raw foodism, the issues of sustainable consumption and self-sufficiency, the new technicalities of food production and preservation as well as the newest scientific approach to the home cuisine.[26]

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[25] A.E. McBride, "Food Porn", *Gastronomica. The Journal of Critical Food Studies*, 2010, No. 10(1), pp. 34–38.

[26] www.modernistcuisine.com, retrieved 10.06.2014.

As well as all this, the Internet and television cookery shows give rise to media promotion of chefs who are treated by their audiences as global pop culture celebrities. Here we can mention the popularity of Gordon Ramsay, Nigella Lawson, or "The Naked Chef" Jamie Oliver, and the newest Brazilian's discovery – Helena Rizzo, the World's Best Female Chef 2014[27] can be mentioned, as well as the numerous chefs who are popular at a national level (e.g. Magda Gessler or Wojciech Modest Amaro in Poland).

All of these celebrities follow the example of Julia Child, an American chef, author[28] and television personality from the 1960s to the late 1990s, who was the subject of the well known film *Julie and Julia* (2009).[29] Legendary cook Julia Child (1912–2004) had a tremendous impact on culinary history in America. In 2001 she donated her kitchen to the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution:[30]



**Fig. 31.** Julia Child's original kitchen (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Julia_Child%27s_Kitchen_-_Smithsonian.jpg)

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[27] www.theworld50best.com/awards/best-female-chef, retrieved 20.06.2014.

[28] J. Child, S. Beck, L. Bertholle, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Random House/A. Knopf, New York 1961 (vol. 1), 1970 (vol. 2).

[29] In the film directed by Nora Ephron, Amy Adams starred as Julie Powell and Maryl Streep as Julia Child.

[30] http://amhistory.si.edu/juliachild/, retrieved 11.01.2016; http://americanhistory.si.edu/food/julia-childs-kitchen, retrieved 11.01.2016.

**Fig. 32.** Julia Child's copper pans and pots (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Julia_Child%27s_Kitchen_-_Smithsonian.jpg)

Today's celebrity-chef careers reproduce the same general scheme (plot type) as Julia Child's. As well as being regarded as cuisine and pop culture celebrities, philosophers of food, interesting Today's celebrity-chef careers reproduce the same general scheme (plot type) as Julia Child's. As well as being regarded as cuisine and pop culture celebrities, philosophers of food, interesting personalities, and showbiz professionals, these people behave, at the same time, as modern cooking shamans who believe that they are spreading to a global audience the magical art of cooking assisted by their own personal narratives.

The combination of tabloid or magazine coverage, television cookery shows and celebrity chef websites, as well as the contribution of food critics and leading culinary writers[31] serve to illustrate the cultural convergence of the postmodern mass media stories. This convergence creates a background to what is called 'transmedia storytelling' (also known as 'transmedia narratives' or 'multiplatform storytelling'),[32] and franchise-type formats using digital technologies.

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[31]  J. Steingarten, *The Man Who Ate Everything*, Vintage, London 1996.

[32]  A. Phillips, *A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling*, McGraw-Hill, New York 2012; J. Steingarten, "Transmedia Storytelling", *MIT Technology Review*, 15.01.2003.

Intertextuality of transmedia places food consumers in a powerful position while disavowing any commercial manipulation by food producers and sellers. The convergence media theoretician, Henry Jenkins,[33] underscores the point that co-ordinated use of storytelling across platforms can make characters (together, it might be added, with associated cookery concepts and the wit and wisdom of the performance) more compelling. The result is a story that unfolds across multiple media outlets and platforms, and in which some of the end users take an active role in the process of reinforcing (by expanding and elaborating) and distributing (by forwarding and recommending) the memetic units (the chapters or episodes) of the ongoing story. The result is a story that unfolds across media platforms where the end users take an active role in the process of reinforcing and distributing the ongoing tale.

Individual cooking is a fashionable modern hobby for both sexes (even children and youths are educated in how to prepare meals and cook them[34]). Popular cooking TV shows and Internet presentations no longer warn men that the home kitchen is a space reserved for mothers and daughters. As there are more and more individual households and the families struggle to balance the conflicting demands of work and home, it is vital that everyday cooking for the family should no longer be viewed strictly as a women's job: "Men cook for fun, for friends and close family gatherings, or for themselves…".[35] Individual cooking tends to contrast with *fast food* outlets for hurried consumers and with the restaurant or catering gastronomy of richer clients.

The above is easily observed by studying food-related websites. Participatory culture is also represented by online blogging. A blog is an e-folklore genre and an electronic form of self-presentation that involves narrative reporting on a more or less regular basis. *Food blogging* is a very popular online activity.[36] *Food blogs* (also known as *gastro-blogs*) belong to the field of digital culture and are connected with cooking philosophy and practice. Food bloggers are more or less creative authors of food stories and pictures, and their

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[33] H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York University Press, New York 2008. Revised edition.

[34] E.g. J. Mechling, *Boy Scouts and the Manly Art of Cooking*, [in:] L.M. Long (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 146–155.

[35] R. Dutra Campos de Almeida, *When Men Go to the Kitchen: Food and Gender in Brazilian Websites*, [in:] V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, P. Lysaght (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 193–200.

[36] See interesting papers on food blogging as a new genre published by L. Solanilla, F.X. Medina, A. Báti, K. Orszulak-Dudkowska, K. Hebda in: V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, P. Lysaght (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 201–208, 221–249.

individual websites collect fans or audiences, sometimes to be counted in thousands, which make them attractive as marketing and advertising platforms. Food bloggers tend to be original, but they often follow each other intentionally or accidentally, repeating types and motifs from the cooking stories of others. The most influential is the story told by the American food blogger, Julie Powell, who in 2002 began to write a blog chronicling her attempt to cook all of the hundreds of recipes in Julia Child's huge book entitled *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.[37] The blog quickly achieved great popularity and it resulted in Powell's book, *Julie and Julia*, which was published in 2005[38] (Powell 2005), and which was then followed in 2009 by the movie mentioned earlier.

The demand of food blogging in the frame of food networking communities and Food Network's franchised sites reveals a new behaviour pattern. According to the recent survey research made on 173 (from 395 identifiable) Catalonian food bloggers, they also had a strong presence on social networks (Facebook – 86%, Twitter – 58%) followed by photo networks such as Instagram (23%), Pinterest (20%), and Flickr (13%).[39] Very popular food forum participants and network users exchange and publicise their knowledge and critical opinions. These friends of culinary folklore often talk about what type of food or ingredient is healthy or unhealthy and toxic eventually. This sort of knowledge can be rooted not only in books and in science but also in personal experience and local tradition.

Many bloggers' sites give rise to modern food superstitions, quoted as *relata refero* stories, known to folklorists as "friend of a friend" personal narratives. Internet has also become the home of food philosophies and dietary movements, such as worldwide vegetarian and vegan communities in contrast to anti-dietary movements, as well as of the growing alternative agro-food networks connecting farms, producers, shops, and consumers. Local food is a strong focus of meaning for many people. The meanings which they may attribute to local food can be classified under five headings: functional, ecological, aesthetic, ethical, and political.[40] One may observe

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37  J. Child, S. Beck, L. Bertholle, *op. cit.*

38  J. Powell, *Julie and Julia. 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen*, Little, Brown & Co., New York 2005.

39  L. Solanilla, F.X. Medina, *Gastronomy and Social Networks: Heritage and Food Blogging in Catalonia*, [in:] V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, P. Lysaght, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

40  G. Brunori, "Local Food and Alternative Food Networks: A Communication Perspective", *Anthropology of Food* (web journal), S2, March 2007.

the potential to detach them from conventional food networks and to attach them to alternative food sites. The last ones struggle to defend their ethical and aesthetic values against the standardising pressures of the corporate mainstream with its "placeless and nameless" global supply networks.[41] As the era of "cheap food" draws to a close, the future of alternative food economies and the knowledge and cultural politics of the Fair Trade movement, are bound up with the move from transparent to virtual livelihoods, as noticed in the above-mentioned research.

Summing up what has been said, food has been publicised on the Internet using multiple media systems, including text, image, and sound recording, for different narrative purposes, including production, marketing and advertising reasons, the art of table decoration, social history, academic research, and cultural promotion. At the same time, food has served as the central part of a wider culinary culture in post-modern societies, where artifacts related to food embody workmanship, tastes, lifestyles, and so on. We should also add a semiotic aspect, because food has always been both a system of production and a system of signs ("You are what you eat"[42]). The arts and crafts of cookery have always involved different people whose purposes have often been divergent, and which have ranged from everyday cooking to highly refined gastronomy. At the same time, we have witnessed a surge in the promotion of food events and fairs, cookbooks, scientific essays, TV shows and interviews, magazines, advertisements, Internet blogs and oral stories, all of which has been concerned with the representation of food by modern food tribes. Media professionals, communication and marketing specialists, academic researchers and medical doctors, professional cooks and household kitchen hobbyists, have developed discourses, used similar language, and have tried to work together by comparing and sharing products and methods, in order to contribute their approaches to postmodern culinary culture. These stories inform the global food imagination.

In the age of digital culture, a field of food anthropology, which has also developed as the anthropology of gastronomy and the anthropology of the senses, a need is felt to consolidate an interdisciplinary reflection

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41  D. Goodman, M.E. Dupuis, M.K. Goodman, *Alternative Food Networks: Knowledge, Practice, and Politics* (Routledge Studies of Gastronomy, Food and Drink), Routledge, London 2011.

42  Evergreen saying of A. Savarin-Billat repeated by L.A. Feuerbach: *Concerning Spiritualism and Materialism* (Essay) 1863/4. www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/ youarewhatyoueathtml, retrieved 23.06.2014.

on themes, methodologies, and different or mixed forms of communication that constitute today's *corpus* of food cuisine (cooking) knowledge, culture, and imagery.

All the above mentioned issues and those not mentioned here were reflected in the "Food and the Internet" conference project.[43] The development of communication technologies is but one aspect. One result of this is that postmodern culinary culture, in many countries, is influenced by benefits of the brave new digital world and global exchange of information. Also thanks to this possibility satiating people can be informed as to how many of their sisters and brothers suffer from hunger all over the same world. Last but not least, thanks to the ongoing digitalization process of libraries and archives, the Internet is a source and a scientific tool that enables us to study food culture not only synchronically but also diachronically.

The above text was written, not with the aim of exploring fully this entire topic, but with the hope of sharing opinions, images, practices, methodologies, and comments which arise in the context of the online food information.[44]

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[43] That was a result of 20th Conference of the International Ethnological Food Research Group affiliated to the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore and ran from 3 to 6 September 2014, at the University of Łódź. The best results of these insights were selected in the publication volume: V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, P. Lysaght (eds.), *op. cit.*

[44] After writing the above essay, I looked at the TV schedule and discovered that in this week (4–10.04.2016) the BBC alone has 25 programmes about cooking.

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