

Chapter XXII

The Dramaturgy of Digital Experience

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Everyday life in the 21st Century

Every morning when I wake up, I reach over to the bedside table and slide my finger across the surface of my smart phone, flicking it to life. Since I went to sleep last night, I gained 65 new tweets, 33 email messages, six instant messages, and dozens of Facebook notifications. A stream of news waits, pre-filtered by my settings...or my friends. I scan through some of it and send a few tweets to my friends in Europe and Australia. I reply to a few work-related email messages from colleagues in Denmark.

After making coffee, I open the lid of my laptop, enlarging my windows to the world of information. I check a different set of news and entertainment headlines. I scan the weather in Denmark (where my coworkers live), Kandahar (where my husband is located), and Tucson (where I'm currently located). I also see the editing screen for my blog and a calendar that auto-updates my activities with those of my family and close friends. I open TweetDeck, which shows me five scrolling columns of messages: Tweets from friends, two particular hashtags I'm following, direct messages, and Facebook updates. I update my Facebook status. I used to update my other online profiles (Google, LinkedIn, Academia.edu, about.me), but lately, I've gotten too busy to bother. I spend about five minutes agonizing over whether to accept a friend request from an old high school boyfriend, whom I was glad to forget about 20 years ago. I click on a couple of video clips, a few images, and soon my screen is filled with multiple windows of information, competing for my attention, shaping my understanding of the world around me.

My computer phone rings, alerting me that my husband wants to videoconference with me. I turn off video before I answer -- I haven't combed my hair yet. He's deployed in Afghanistan and living in fairly depressing surrounds, so I try to look pleasant whenever we talk. But I'm also busy working. Audio-only allows me to multitask; he can't see my eyes darting all over the screen, reading incoming messages from friends, checking status updates, or clicking on news feeds. He also can't see me carry the computer to the bathroom so I can simultaneously talk and put on mascara. Finally, I click video. A few minutes later, my computer alerts me that my husband has updated his status. I click on the alert to see a picture of me. He apparently took it just a moment ago and is commenting to his friend network about our still-occurring conversation. Good thing I combed my hair.

A constant and fragmented interplay of information constitutes the reality of everyday life. For readers, this description of my general pattern of communication may seem banal, bizarre, outdated, or somewhere between. My use patterns are certainly not unique or, for that matter, particularly interesting. The details are less important than the illustration of how much our everyday lives are saturated with digital technologies. In early 2012, Nielsen announced its latest label for persons aged 18-34: "Generation C," for "Connected." Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have revolutionized how we converse, consume, play, and protest. Mobile devices allow us to carry the Internet with us wherever we go, which provides us with instantaneous connectivity to personal or professional networks and endless sources of information that influence our everyday realities. Media forms overlap and converge and digital media surround us almost every waking hour.

"Digital experience," as a title for this chapter, can include almost any social activity, from the most obviously digital—such as immersive virtual worlds where people interact with others in avatar forms, to less obvious everyday moments, like riding on a bus full of people tethered to their (our) mobile phones, individually connected to immense global networks, perhaps blithe to the one in which they're physically located, or as Sherry Turkle recently writes, "alone together" (2011).

Through convergence, mobility, and always-on patterns of use, 'digital' frames for experience grow more transparent and ever more powerful mediators of everyday life. What challenge does this pose for a dramaturgic perspective? What differentiates digital or Internet-mediated contexts from other earlier mediating technologies, such as language, writing, and electronic media such as telephones, radios, televisions and fax machines? What's different about how we conceptualize and experience self, identity, and social experience, given the ubiquity of digital media in our everyday lives?

There are many dramaturgic approaches from which we might analyze my early morning activities, to explore how meaning is negotiated through these interactions, or how identities and relationships play out in various contexts. We could invoke Goffman to consider how regardless of which device or interface I'm using, what I'm wearing, or where I'm located, I am performing multiple roles on multiple simultaneous stages with a globally distributed range of actual and potential audiences. We could explore the performative aspects of role initiation, impression management, realigning actions, expressions 'given' versus 'given off,' and so forth. We could look at how performances overlap not just in different contexts but also across time. We could consider how Goffman's classic delineations for 'individuals' and 'social establishments' (1959) are remarkably blurred in networked cultures; many nonhuman as well as human elements influence activities and interactions. We could focus on how the setting or 'stage' may not only be distant from the body of the performer, but may continue the performance without the actor's

presence or knowledge. Actions we might have traditionally separated as public/private or frontstage/backstage are blurred, if not fundamentally imploded.

The strength of the dramaturgic approach is that it focuses on how meaning is constructed interactively. Theoretically, the framework is well suited to grapple with the intricate overlapping layers of action that comprise digital contexts. Methodologically, dramaturgic approaches are challenged to grapple with unprecedented layers and flows of global, networked information, which complicate research practices that were developed for and remain entrenched in the study of traditional, physically situated social environments.

In this chapter, I address some of these challenges and questions: First, I outline key characteristics of digital interaction to illustrate how these influence presence, self-presentation, and sociality. I argue that digital media heighten dramaturgical awareness because of the need to deliberately write self into being, an activity that requires both technical skills and reflexivity about what is required to enact embodiment. Second, I discuss how certain unique aspects of virtual and networked practice complicate and blur conventional dramaturgic categories such as the individual, the interaction, and the situation. I suggest that that these shifts in everyday enactments pose significant methodological challenges to the researcher. Finally, I conclude by discussing the importance of continuing to develop creative and innovative research practices that resonate with contemporary networked social contexts.

Persistent characteristics of digital (Internet) media

There are many ways to discuss how digital media influence the enactment of self, the interplay of self and other, and the construction of meaning in context. Here, I focus on key affordances of the Internet¹ and the fundamental technical requirements for interacting with others via any digital interface that links to the Internet. These features and requirements impact how we experience space, place and time, how we think about and enact the self, how we interact with others, and how we make sense of both local and global situations.

Presence and sociality is distinct from physicality

The Internet enables instantaneous transmission of information between people, regardless of geo-location. The Internet extends our senses in McLuhanesque fashion, allowing us to see, listen, and reach well beyond our local sensory limits. The telegraph, radio, television, and phone did the same, but the digital and networked qualities of information, as well as the multiple modalities for interacting with it, yield significant differences in experience. One can experientially

¹The Internet, the backbone for digital experience, can be defined at the most basic level as a meta- medium for the transmission of digital information. But it is also much more than this.

²Of course this is not unproblematic and I don't mean to paint a naïve portrait of a gloriously

connect to situations far removed from one's physical location, or be engaged in multiple, distinctive situations simultaneously.

Having a sense of presence without actually being there is a hallmark of Internet-mediated communication. Presence becomes a more complicated concept because it is determined by participation more than proximity, a point made early on by Meyrowitz (1986), who discussed the distinction of social from physical presence. This liminality, as Waskul says, means "places are transmitted from one locality to any and all users' varied geographic 'space' (2005, p. 55). In this way, physicality is separated from sociality. As Waskul continues, "the dislocating and disembodied characteristics of the medium necessarily force a reconstitution of self and society. To state it bluntly, places, bodies, and selves are unavoidably translated into the conventions of the medium—they are not 'there' otherwise; in these environments, they must be *made* to exist" (2005, p. 55).

This can play out in more or less remarkable ways. In the early 1990s, novel and shocking examples fueled academic as well as public interest. In one instance, a key member of an online community who was known and beloved as a disabled older female turned out to be a middle-aged male psychologist (Van Gelder, 1985). The discovery of this long-time deception resulted in the demise of a stable and longstanding community. It demonstrated not only the ability of a person to construct and sustain an alternate identity very unlike his physical attributes, but the extent to which this deception impacted the lives of other community members. A few years later in another community, a member named "Mr. Bungle" took over the characters of two other people in a public online living room and performed a violent rape scene between them. Unable to control their own identities, these two victims could only shut down their computers. Even so, their online counterparts continued to be violated, as the rape scene kept going. This case, which has come to be known as "the rape in cyberspace" (Dibble, 1992), highlighted the potential selfhood of an avatar and illustrated how visceral, embodied presence could be separated from physical bodies. Text-based violation of one's online identity caused intensely physical emotional responses for both the online and offline persons involved.

The 1990s Internet facilitated a marked shift in the way people understand, on an everyday level, where and how meaning derives in interactions. In particular, it shifts attention to the content and form of interaction, which has a richness that belies the instinctive notion that text-only exchanges could never be as meaningful as face-to-face. The Internet also shifts attention toward the way the enactment of self can be edited and altered; for many users (see interviews by Turkle, 1995; Markham, 1998), computer-mediated communication promotes a strong sense of control, or freedom to choose how to fill in missing information for others. This sense of control is aided by the fact that one's choices are made within a non-simultaneous context, in which time is more flexible.

Time is a malleable variable

As well as collapsing distance or making it irrelevant, Internet technologies can disrupt time, shifting it from an unchanging or universal flow to a pliable variable in everyday interactions. Once a novelty, we now take for granted the ability to stop and start time in the midst of a conversation to consider and adjust our interactive choices. Most of us don't notice that we are, in effect, manipulating time to suit our purposes.

Time is also shifted in ways we cannot control and may not notice, by the interface we're using, the quality of our network connection, and other factors. For example, technologies make it easy to keep the past present. Archived and searchable, I can review my personal email communication back to 1996, bringing details into the present that might have previously been lost and more importantly forgotten in old manila work folders, notebooks, or a diary. Facebook promotes searching for long lost friends and acquaintances, encouraging us to pick up where we left off back in high school or college. This potential creates a unique situation in that now, we not only have to manage various presentations of self (a taken for granted dramaturgical premise) but also the presentations of selves from the past that collide with selves of the present. While not unique to the digital environment, the ease with which people can search and find each other, made possible by the persistence of our digital content over time and the strength and finesse of search engine algorithms, is astonishing. Anyone who has reconnected with someone they never thought they'd see again because of Facebook (such as a former boyfriend), or who has received a status update from someone who is dead confronts this unique dynamic and must reconcile the way the Internet changes one's experience of time.

These characteristics of the Internet -- the reconfiguration of proximity and distance and the manipulation of time -- significantly influenced the development of platforms and interfaces we now take for granted. We can develop relationships regardless of our individual physical abilities, appearances, and locations. People can and do build communities based on common interests, bridging typical barriers of geography and regional or national politics.² Robust virtual worlds and game environments facilitate our capacity to build innovative places and interact with others in avatar forms we have partially or totally invented. Although contemporary tools and modes of interaction are far more ubiquitous and mobile, the characteristics above have notably remained salient.

If we delve just a bit deeper into the pragmatic and technical aspects of how we actually interact with others when we're using a computer interface, we start to parse out what has been called 'ekstasis' (Berger, 1963; Waskul, 2005): how everyday activities in digital media contexts

²Of course this is not unproblematic and I don't mean to paint a naïve portrait of a gloriously democratic Internet. Real barriers still exist, such as access, speed of connection, capacity of device, physical characteristics or abilities of users, and so forth. New barriers are created by the technologies and our use of them.

require conscious deliberation, technical skills, and more reflexivity about activities or rules that are in constant play in the construction of self and society.

Presentation of self as a deliberate, technical achievement

Participation in digital contexts, while perhaps engaging or exhausting for the entire body, requires--at the most fundamental level-- focused activity of only certain body parts, primarily the eyes and hands. The user must pay attention to the physical details of particular devices and attain a basic level of skill with the mode of interaction, which can be as simple as clicking a button on the screen in order to open a chat window and typing on a keyboard, or as complex as learning a series of keystroke combinations and other programming procedures to make one's avatar body speak or maneuver in a particular direction.³ Anything that would be hoisted or hosted by one's voice, movements, and senses is a technical achievement. In early stages of learning a new mode of interaction, one's self consciousness about this process is intensified. This is because one must make active choices within platforms that have fairly stringent constraints on one's movements and actions.

Even after learning the technical procedures, selfhood remains highly deliberative and interactive; in online environments, we write self into being, constructing our existence and building the boundaries of our social worlds via strings of symbols on keyboards.⁴ Then, to recognize our own existence in any meaningful way, we must be responded to (MacKinnon, 1995; Markham, 2005). This baseline communicative exchange is augmented by audio, images, and video, and is certainly moderated by a range of software programs and devices. If I want to express emotion in SMS, IM, or email, I must choose from a range of possible emoticons or I can try to build a particular emotion into the content or form of the message. In visually-oriented systems like blogs or Facebook, emotional expression in specific messages may not be as salient as the overall picture of self I present to others, constructed through my choice of background images, profile pictures, updates, display of links or friends, and so forth. In video conferencing, the deliberation may take the form of tilting the camera in particular ways to fulfill specific purposes. Whatever the system or platform or purpose, selfhood is more an active choice than spontaneous reaction.⁵ These deliberations may feel awkward at first, but as newness fades, they become more routine, natural, and automatic, incorporated into what Merleau-Ponty (1945) calls the 'body schema.'⁶

Notions of the self in the digital Internet age

³ See, e.g., Toft Nørgård (2011) for vivid phenomenological descriptions of the corporality in gaming.

⁴ See e.g., Markham, 1998; Waskul, 2003; Sunden, 2003; boyd, 2006.

⁵ For interesting empirical examples in social media, see Marwick, 2010; Senft, 2012.

⁶ For elaboration, see e.g., Newman (2002) and Toft Nørgård (2011).

Computers, particularly those that seem to think on their own, have long fostered the perception that selfhood is as much about information as it is about individual bodies. Sherry Turkle offered an early notion of the “second self” in her 1980s studies of how people interact with and relate to their machines to understand their own identities and to speculate on what is required to have a self, or to be considered an intelligent life form (1984). Her work is situated within a long history of scholarship exploring how selfhood can be interlinked with the ways we anthropomorphize or give agency to our machines, how identities and relationships can be constructed and maintained in online virtual spaces, and how our everyday interactions and lives are increasingly intertwined with technologies for communication.

Here, I highlight two major trends that mark the way we engage or comprehend digital experience: the virtual self and the networked or informational self. Although we could focus on any number of other ways of thinking about selfhood, these two metaphors are useful because they reflect the way people make sense of their everyday experiences with digital media, mark a distinct shift at the turn of the 21st Century, and help draw attention to the central role of information and networked information flow in the dramaturgy of everyday life.

The virtual self

Throughout the 1990s, the idea of the virtual self intrigued both scholars and the general public for at least two reasons: First, one could ‘be’ in two places at once; sitting at the kitchen table in pajamas in Detroit and attending a meeting halfway around the world, in Tokyo. In this case, virtuality would describe a state of being ‘nearly’ there, whereby the non-physically present self is, ideally, a verisimilitude of the ‘actual’ self. Second and opposite, one could disconnect from one’s ‘authentic’ identity to switch to something or someone else, a venture that would be most successful if no strings between the real and the virtual remain. Disembodied and decentralized communication seemed to herald a level playing field, a naturally democratized public sphere.⁷

“On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.” This caption of an early 1990s New Yorker cartoon is one of the most widely recognized statements about Internet experience. Although it’s not directly about being virtual, it tells us a lot about what the term might mean in an everyday sense. Passing as something or someone else (not a dog) is facilitated by physical distance, a medium for communication, a situation that involves interaction with others, and anonymity. These situational elements allow a person to play a role different from the one s/he is

⁷The idea of virtuality caused fear as well; if anyone could pose as someone else, how would you know whom to trust? This latter response emphasizes a key paradox about selfhood: While we might understand in theory that self is informational, there is still a strong belief that one’s ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ self is something that can be seen, therefore is embodied. A common question throughout this early wave of Internet development was: “If I can’t see the person behind the screen, how can I know it’s really real?”

stuck with (or perceives s/he is stuck with) because of his or her physicality. This can then allow for a presentation of the self that may or may not be considered by self or other as 'authentic' but may be labeled 'real' or 'not real' depending on any number of unanticipated and unknowable factors. The determination of the reality of the situation emerges as one interacts with others, something Goffman would call a "working consensus," whereby "together the participants contribute to a single overall definition of the situation which involves not so much a real agreement as to what exists but rather a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honored (1959, p. 9-10). The crucial issue is not what is 'real,' but "whether it will be credited or discredited" at that moment (p. 253).

The idea of multiple virtual selves is perhaps characterized best by Sherry Turkle (1995), who discusses the window as a metaphor for thinking about how individuals cycle through various identities:

The self is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings at different times, something that a person experiences when, for example, she wakes up as a lover, makes breakfast as a mother, and drives to work as a lawyer. The life practice of windows is that of a decentered self that exists in many worlds and plays many roles at the same time The experience of this parallelism encourages treating on-screen and off-screen lives with a surprising degree of equality. (p. 14)

Turkle's notion of the self as a "multiple distributed system" resonates closely with Gergen's (1991) notion of the "saturated self," which focuses more on how our interconnection with global networks of information influences the way we experience selfhood. Without traditional time/space boundaries to limit our exposure to other people or information flows, we develop multiple, ad hoc, 'multiphrenic' identities. Friends from previous places and times never really disappear, creating exponential relationships. Details about events in far-distant regions impact us not just through our exposure to the news but at a close-up personal level, through our direct contact—first via email and mailing lists and now via social media—with people whose lives are affected.

Although we may not think about disembodiment and virtuality as much as we did in the early 1990s, it remains a key aspect of digital experience. Any time we use Internet technologies, we extend beyond our physical limits. The stuff we use to identify ourselves or to interact with others is informational, digital, and infinitely malleable. While at some point originating or emanating from the body, these pieces of what one might or might not perceive to be essential components of the self are immediately disembodied. As web 2.0 technologies continue to blur the online and offline aspects of our selves, nuanced definitions of virtuality remain relevant for

exploring what we might call the gap between the notion that self is centrally located and embodied and the notion that one's selves are social, plural, networked, and inevitably 'virtual'.⁸

The networked, or informational self

Ubiquitous, mobile media interfaces have replaced the computers that grounded our engagement in digital media during the 1990s. No longer sitting at desks in front of devices, connecting to the world through portals on our screens as virtual beings, we move through complex networks of information flows, where media we produce, consume, and share converge across a global range of stages. As Coleman notes, we have "entered an age of pervasive media. . . . We can date this shift to the turn of the twenty-first century, when social media applications grew massively popular and became extensions of real life identities. . . . [T]he trend we see today is that one's lived identity and one's life online move closer to each other" (p. 50). We design and manage the appearance of our profiles on multiple personal and professional sites, creating what some of the participants in Turkle's most recent studies might call 'avatars of me' (2011, p. 180-182). These function on our behalf, representing a particular aspect of us for a particular purpose or audience.

It is worth noting the extent to which "the Internet contributes to a dynamic in which users frame themselves simultaneously as seller, buyer, and commodity" (Senft, 2012). This is in part prompted by "the fact that users are now also asked to think of themselves in categories like smart shoppers, reputable vendors, trusted citizen journalists, popular fans, reliable information mavens, essential humor portals, and so forth" (p. 3). It's also prompted by the desire to be seen and noticed, added to a widespread belief that average people can become famous (and therefore rich) from their everyday activities (Uhls & Greenfield, 2011).

Even without directly thinking of self as a commodity, people spend considerable time managing information about themselves in the dataspheres. We have grown accustomed to the idea that digital information is manipulated to build 'truth' and render particular frames for meaning. We take for granted that public figures carefully construct personae that fit their needs. Likewise, young students are taught strategies to monitor and manage their public information (such as Facebook profiles or blogs). At very young ages, this is to keep predators away. In high school and college, the strategies shift to building a marketable self, editing out status updates, comments, or photos that might negatively influence a potential career opportunity.

Of course, the building of identity as a brand is not always controllable or chosen. Our identities can be immediately up for grabs and endlessly modified as others post photos of us, forward comments we've made, and otherwise remix and redistribute data about us in their own

⁸ For more discussion of this from several different disciplinary perspectives, see for example Coleman, 2011; Boellstorff, 2008; Hayles, 1999; Latour, 2005; Turkle, 1995, 2012; and Waskul, 2003.

spheres. A child's social interactions may begin before he or she is even born, as parents post sonograms, open Twitter accounts, and create online sites that speak on behalf of the child. This sort of identity formation isn't new; it occurred in earlier times as parents documented the development of their families, taking hundreds of pictures or hours of video. But the scale and scope is quite different -- whereas we once might have endured the occasional family slide show on the walls of our own and others' living rooms, intimate details of our lives now play out in ways we cannot fathom.

Innovating within fields of blurred boundaries

Life in the digital era is not perhaps more intensely performative than in any other era, but these performances are digitized and distributed (highly malleable), public (in a way that can be archived and traced), networked (globally and immensely), and media-saturated--both in terms of information saturation (e.g., Gergen, 1991) and pop-culture saturation (e.g., Baudrillard, 1988). Despite the fact that the Internet has been around for several decades now, we're still constantly adjusting to new ways and forms of being with and acting in the world. Beyond the complication of our interactions with others, we are being challenged to grapple with the fact that the technologies around us play more active roles in our everyday interactions.

We're more connected to more people, from both our past and present. We build and maintain multiple online avatars to extend or augment our offline identities. We also must grapple with the fact that our information can function as a relatively independent social entity without our awareness or control.

We use our technologies to distance or shield us from interpersonal conflict or conversely, to give others a closer experience of our personal local situations. Hoping to be noticed in what many have characterized as a world of increasing isolation, we reach out in some cases for help from strangers, or in other cases "shout to be heard," designing and branding ourselves "for exposure, for the greatest degree of circulation and spectatorship" (Coleman, 2013, p. 59).

We are tethered to technologies. Networked devices are present and active in most social situations, bringing a potentially constant flow of additional parties to any interaction. Aware that more and more of our everyday lives are public, we attempt to control our activities and expressions in the same way public figures would, by editing messages, removing comments from our blogs, or otherwise strategically manipulating our various profiles. Even realizing we're surrounded by surveillance technologies, we still allow apps on our smart phones to monitor and collect information and willingly strap on 'self-quantifying' devices to measure our footsteps, monitor and publish our heart rates, and display our GPS coordinates to the world.

We are adjusting our interaction modes in ways that accommodate to the bounds of our devices and technologies. As Bolter (2012) notes, we interact not only with others but also “with the algorithm, the code that lies beneath the surface of the application” (p. 39). He continues, “Good digital design today encourages its users to proceduralize their behavior in order to enter into the interactions, and a large portion of those in developed countries have accepted this as the path to participation in digital media culture” (p. 45). These ‘event loops’ are also designed to appear seamless, as an essential part of everyday sociality. All of my Internet research colleagues have learned how to limit an utterance to 140 characters. The success of the social media platform Facebook is based on mass communication rituals that we learn and then incorporate. We don’t pay attention to this for the most part, unless it disrupts or reveals the frame within which we have been operating.

Of course, the other hallmark of the Internet is that people adapt software to suit their needs, so we are not simply pawns in some technologically deterministic way. Facebook, Twitter, and other interfaces are swift to change the codes that constrain and enable our behaviors once consumer dissatisfaction reaches a certain level. Still, and this is the key point, our forms of interaction are more and more in response to or reaction to the software, interfaces, and devices. What has been long considered the medium, setting, stage, or context should thus be embraced and explored as an active participant in everyday interactions.

For me, a symbolic interactionist studying digital culture since the early 1990s, these ways of being in the second decade of the 21st Century highlight certain elements of interaction that were not as visible in traditional face-to-face settings:

1. Boundaries between self and other are often unclear, particularly when information develops a social life of its own, beyond one’s immediate circumstances.
2. Boundaries of situations and identification of contexts are often unclear as dramas play out in settings and times far removed from the origin of interaction.
3. Agency is not the sole property of individual entities, but a temporal performative element that emerges in the dynamic interplay of people and their technologies for communication.
4. Performativity can be linked not only to individuals but actions of the devices, interfaces, networks of information through which dramas occur and meaning is negotiated.

These contexts of flow compel social researchers to consider the way we have historically conceptualized the object and phenomenon and challenge us to focus on methods for making sense of constantly shifting globalized terrains of meaning. There is great value in experimenting in ways of knowing that shift away from the individual. We can track and analyze complexity of interactions in ways we couldn’t before, which gives us extraordinary opportunities, but only if we

look closely at and perhaps challenge the methodological grounds of our research practice. This remains one of the most significant challenges we face if we are researchers who have been trained to focus the analytical gaze on individuals and individual objects. How do we shift our preconceptions and lived practices as researchers to move into the flow?

The methods we tend to use were designed for and work best in face-to-face settings. They also tend to emphasize or facilitate analytical focus on individuals, either by observing behaviors and putting these into perspective with the rest of the setting, or by talking to individuals to get their perception of what is happening. We generally study meaning by looking at how it manifests, but often trace it back to the communicative practices or behaviors and performances of individuals or roles. As noted by Rees (Rabinow et al., 2008), “anthropologists are increasingly studying *timely* phenomena with tools developed to study *people out of time*” (position 10). It remains easier to focus on the outcomes rather than the processes of interaction. While this gets at a certain level of meaning and interaction, it may end up focusing on the performers instead of the performative.

Importantly, while our methods textbooks may not have yet caught up to the age of ubiquitous media, the fundamental premises of dramaturgy remain a rich origin point for developing creative ways of rethinking how we explore digital experience: What we think of as “Self” and “Other” are ongoing negotiations among individuals in specific contexts, which could be examined through the lens of drama; what might seem a stable entity is a state continually achieved through adjustment and realignment of performance; rules and structures govern these performances; and over time and through various processes of enculturation, actions become habitual, serving as invisible frames governing behaviors, sensemaking, responses, and meaning.

The dramaturgical approach includes a rich and diverse range of creative approaches to exploring this sort of cultural practice. Close attention to our frames and experimentation can help enrich our understanding of what a dramaturgic approach can become.

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