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**THEATRICALIZATION OF SELF
PERSONAL BLOGS AS THEATRE PERFORMANCE**

MASTER'S THESIS

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>The aim of this thesis is to compare personal blogs and theatre art. The study is conducted as theoretical discourse and focuses on comparison of personal blogs with a subgenre of theatre art, performance art. Using actual selected examples from theatre art as well as from personal blogs, the study aims to outline the similarities, which personal blogs share with theatre performance. The theoretical framework of the thesis suggests that personal blogs with their nature of the observed subject, the blogger, and the observer, the reader, produce one of the basic elements of theatre art, theatricality. Furthermore, personal blogs are placed closer to postdramatic theatre, a form of theatre art that denies Western theatrical tradition and explores theatrical expression in many different ways. One of the genres of postdramatic theatre is also autobiographical performance. The theatre art of personal blogs equals this specific category of performance, where the performer tells her or his personal story in front of the audience. Both autobiographical performance and a personal blog tell about the performer's (the blogger's) self and about various aspects of her or his life. Since personal blogs reside within their own media, which is far from actual theatre art, the idea of autobiographical performance in personal blogs is approached with Bolter and Grusin's concept of remediation. Additionally, the thesis includes Brenda Laurel's proposal that computers share their nature with theatre art and thus also remediate theatre. In addition, the thesis examines the role of the personal blog's reader, the spectator, suggesting that there are at least three different categories of the personal blog's audience. Finally, the thesis introduces some selected examples of actual theatre productions both in theatre and on the Internet (e.g. the series of projects <i>Ballettikka Internettikka</i> by Slovene artists Igor Štromajer and Brane Zorman) to get a better insight into the performative nature of personal blogging.</p>	
<p>Asiasanat – Keywords personal blogs, personal blogger, reader of a personal blog, theatre art, performance art, theatre performance, autobiographical performance, remediation</p>	
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on verrata henkilökohtaisia blogeja teatteritaiteeseen. Tutkimuksen perusteena toimii teoreettinen esitelmä, joka keskittyy vertailuun henkilökohtaisen blogin ja performanssin välillä. Käyttäen valittuja esimerkkejä teatterista, sekä henkilökohtaisista blogeista, tutkimus pyrkii hahmottamaan yhtäläisyyksiä, jotka henkilökohtaiset blogit jakavat teatterin kanssa. Teoreettisesta rakenteesta lähtien henkilökohtaiset blogit luovat teatraalisuutta; se on yksi teatteritaiteen peruselementeistä. Blogeissa se syntyy kirjoittajan ja lukijan suhteesta. Lisäksi henkilökohtaiset blogit sijoitetaan lähemmäksi postdramaattista teatteria, joka kieltää länsiteatterin perinnettä ja tutkii teatteria monin eri tavoin. Yksi postdramaattisista genreistä on myös omaelämäkerrallinen performanssi. Tutkimuksen mukaan henkilökohtaisissa blogeissa on teatteritaidetta, joka on periaatteessa samanlaista kuin omaelämäkerrallisessa performanssissa, jossa näyttelijä kertoo hänen henkilökohtaisen tarinansa yleisön edessä. Sekä omaelämäkerrallinen performanssi, että henkilökohtainen blogi kertovat näyttelijän (bloggaajan) omasta itsestään ja hänen elämänsä monenlaisista näkökohdista. Koska henkilökohtaiset blogit ovat olemassa ihan omassa mediassaan, joka on todella kaukana teatterista, tutkimuksen lähestymistapana performanssiin toimii Bolterin ja Grusinin käsite remediaatiosta. Sen lisäksi tutkimus sisältää myös Brenda Laurelin ehdotuksen, että tietokoneet jakavat luontoa teatteritaiteen kanssa, eli tietokoneet tuottavat teatterin remediaatiota. Tutkimus selvittää myös henkilökohtaisen blogin lukijaa, katsojaa, eli hänen rooliaan; tutkimus ehdottaa, että henkilökohtaisissa blogeissa on olemassa ainakin kolme eri yleisöä. Lopuksi tutkimuksessa esitellään valittuja esityksien esimerkkejä sekä teatterista, että Internetistä (esim. slovenialaisten taitelijoiden Igor Štromajerin ja Brane Zormanin <i>Ballettikka Internettikka</i>-esitykset) paremman käsityksen saamiseksi henkilökohtaisen bloggaamisen performatiivisesta luonteesta.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords henkilökohtaiset blogit, henkilökohtainen bloggaaja, henkilökohtaisen blogin lukija, teatteritaide, performanssi, teatteriesitys, omaelämäkerrallinen performanssi, remediaatio	
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet brought the notion of individual freedom and the idea that a person, freed from the social and physiological constraints of the body, could be whoever and whatever they wanted to be, specifically, that they could discover and actualize their "true" self, who was held back by the constraints and limitations of the everyday world. (Shaap, 2003)

The aim of this thesis is to compare personal blogs and theatre art. The study is conducted as theoretical discourse and focuses on comparison of personal blogs with a subgenre of theatre art, performance art. Using actual selected examples from theatre art as well as from personal blogs, the study aims to outline the similarities, which personal blogs share with theatre performance.

1.1. BACKGROUND

In the year 2007, when the proposal for this thesis has emerged, the phenomenon of blogging reached its peak – at least in my home country Slovenia. On 9th of June 2007, in Slovene capital Ljubljana was even organised *Blogres*¹, the first international congress for bloggers. The programme of Blogres consisted of several lectures, practical workshops as well as discussions about blogging. Blogres, though, did not specify its focus on personal blogs; it covered the phenomenon of blogging in general, from hobby to economic and political blogs. The bloggers, who applied to attend the congress, were represented with their nicknames they had used in their blogs; they were given T-shirts and a bag with a tagline *Blog On!* On 29th of November, Slovene newspaper *Večer* had started to publish *Blogorola*, an actual paper that consisted of selected articles from Slovene blogosphere as well as of interviews with notable Slovene bloggers. Of course, I was a personal blogger myself, too, with a blog *Cimetova knjiga – Cinnamon Book*,

¹ The old web site of Blogres in English: <http://eng.blogres.si/>.

freshly opened on a site hosted by the provider Blogger, publishing posts² under a nickname Kaneli.

Motivation for the topic of this study has emerged from personal interest and practical personal experience as an active blogger. Since my previous background is in theatre studies, dramaturgy and playwriting, I have immediately recognized possible similarities between personal blogging and theatre art, or to be precise, with its subgenre performance art. Nevertheless, the selected genre of a blog, within I have detected the possible comparison with theatre art, was only a personal blog; thus, not all genres of blogs in general will be discussed within this paper. Second subject of my interest not only as a theatre theorist but also a playwright is the representation of individual's self when confronted with the others, the perception of individual's own self and the relationship between the individual's real and fake self. Consequently, as blogging was so widely held at the time when I was outlining my thesis, my selected topic appeared fresh and actual. However, four years later, in 2011, (personal) blogs are still present, yet the excitement about the phenomenon is not so strong anymore, at least when I consider Slovenia. After 2007, Blogres was organised only once again, in June 2008, and Blogorola quietly vanished from Slovene newspaper market after a few months of publishing. Hence, this study would be more effective in the time, when the idea for the research question was barely initiated, at least bearing in mind the situation in Slovene blogosphere³. On the other hand, many Slovene personal bloggers continue to publish and update their blogs regularly; some of the notable personal blogs I followed has vanished, but most of the blogs are still present. Finally, the overall nature of this thesis is multidisciplinary. The study brings together two different fields: theatre art and personal blogging. Therefore, the literature used to support my proposal also comes from several fields, from theatre theory and dramaturgy to sociology and digital culture.

Considering deeper understanding of blogs and blogging in general, I briefly introduce history of blogs, starting with Rebecca Blood and Jorn Barger in the chapter 2. In this chapter I also present the three personal bloggers I have selected as practical examples

² A post is an entry to a blog or to a discussion forum. A blog posts can consist only of images or video, too. In this paper, though, the term *post* is used when I consider the text the personal blogger publishes in a form of separate entries, defined by the date and/or the title.

³ A blogosphere is a network of blogs. Blogosphere can exist on a national level (e.g. Slovene blogosphere, Finnish blogosphere), however, it can also be considered in international context (global blogosphere).

for this study. Bearing in mind possible ethical issues, I have to emphasize that I have not contacted the selected bloggers if I might use their blogs in my thesis. Since I observe personal blogs as a theatrical performance, I have also approached the analysis of the selected personal blogs as I would have approached a performance in an actual theatre. When a theatre performance is created, it is offered to the audience – and thus also to the general public discussion. Because I have started the study from my dramaturgical background, I have always been familiar with the fact that theatre analysts and critics never contact for permission the artist or even the whole artistic team, who created the particular theatre performance discussed. The performance is on stage and accessible for everyone interested. Furthermore, due to my personal experience as a playwright, I was acquainted with a couple of cases, when students discussed my plays in their theses – and yet I had never been asked for permission. In this sense, I consider personal blogs as artworks, too. They are created; they are opened for the public. Hence, personal blogs can become an open subject of theoretical analysis. Moreover, the three selected personal bloggers presented with their nicknames Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa all happen to be Slovenes as well as female bloggers. These facts do not matter concerning the subject of the study, for I have selected the three bloggers according to my personal interest. I have been following the three bloggers for at least more than a year; in the case of Alcessa, I have been reading her blog since the year 2006. The gender and the country of the bloggers discussed within this paper play no particular role either. However, Nihrida publishes strictly in English and Alcessa writes in three languages, English, German and Slovene. These two personal bloggers appeal to more international readers; Nihrida in particular has, according to the observation of her readers' comments, a lot of followers from the USA. On the other hand, with the posts written only in Slovene, Irena specifically targets Slovene blogosphere.

During the process of the study, I did not conduct either interviews or submitted any questionnaires, for my interest was in theoretical approach and discourse. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis. This particular chapter is also the most important for the study, for in the chapter I am introducing the concept of personal blogs as autobiographical performances in theatre art. Chapter 2 thus establishes the fundamentals of the dramaturgical terminology used in the paper (e.g. theatre as opposed to theatre art, classical Western theatre art contrasted with postdramatic theatre

art), and explores some basic aspects of theatre art also with scientific definitions as provided by Patrice Pavis. Moreover, I am illustrating my proposal with practical examples from theatre art, internet art with the project *Ballettikka Internettikka* by Igor Štromajer and Brane Zorman as well as with the three selected personal bloggers Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa. In chapter 3, however, I elaborate further on the perception of a personal blog as an autobiographical performance and the personal blogger as a performer by observing the presentation of the personal blogger's self and her or his overall character in a personal blog. During this process, I briefly touch the creation of a personal brand, too. In addition, since the relationship between the personal blogger and her or his readers is a significant aspect in personal blogs opened to the general public, chapter 4 examines the affiliation between the personal blogger and the reader. In this case, the readers are considered as the audience. Conducting the categorization of the readers of personal blogs, I operate mainly with dramaturgical terms. In addition, I have included some visual material, too. The original draft for my thesis did not take any images into account, yet I have later decided to clarify the examined subjects in written discourse with additional visual material. Interfaces and platforms, offered by the providers of blogging sites, change and are improved almost every day. On the other hand, the selected bloggers discussed within this paper can close their blogs to the public, stop publishing or even delete the content permanently; therefore, their blogs might not be accessible anymore. In the future, the captured images in this thesis might improve the understanding and the perception of the particular subject. Besides, the images might reveal the appearance and the existence of blogs as they were in the year 2011. Finally, the selected images of contemporary theatre projects are included to clarify and illustrate the examples of the examined theatre art.

1.2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

According to my observation and examination, the particular subject of comparison between personal blogs and theatre art has not yet been addressed; at least not in the context of theatre theory. On the other hand, the selection of publications considering contemporary theatre and performance art is various and wide; the studies used within this paper have been read either in Slovene or in English. The relation of digital media and theatre art has been, for example, studied by Steve Dixon in his book *Digital Performance* (2007). Additionally, Bojana Kunst (2010) has examined *Ballettikka Internettikka* projects from the aspects beneficial for this paper. However, as the specific connection of personal blogs and theatre art is a rather distinctive case, I have been confronted with a challenge when selecting the literature that would support my proposal. The web page *Into the Blogosphere*⁴ is an anthology of articles considering broad analysis of blogs. The article by Frank Shaap *Links, Lives, Logs: Presentation in the Dutch Blogosphere* retrieved from this particular page, considers performative aspects and representation of the individual's self in (personal) blogs, yet not in a theatrical context. When observing the depicted blogger's self, Shaap used Erwin Goffman's study *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959); I have used the same study when exploring the presentation of personal bloggers. However, the anthology *Into the Blogosphere* has emerged around 2003; the last update on the page is from 2005. Therefore, these articles are already out-dated and the page does not follow the newest trends in blogging; nevertheless the site offers at least an insight of a scientific approach to blogs.

There are numerous published studies dealing with characteristics of blogging other than theatrical, e.g. social communication, fandom, community and participatory culture or political and economic aspects of blogging. As these studies in general did not cover the topic of my interest, I have used only *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* by Henry Jenkins (2006), *Blogwars : The New Political Battleground* by David D. Perelmutter (2008) and *Blogging and Other Social Media* by Alex Newson, Deryck Houghton and Justin Patten (2009). With these particular studies

⁴ The site *Into the Blogosphere* is available on <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/>.

I have briefly familiarized myself either with history of blogging or with more general aspects such as categories of blogs.

In 2005 Mia Vaska published a study of Finnish personal diaries *Suomalaisten Salatut Elämät [The Hidden Lives of the Finns]*. Vaska observes the phenomenon of a personal diary; she also briefly addresses the subject she labels as *Internet-päiväkirja [Internet diary]*. The study is available only in Finnish and is dealing with Finnish cultural environment. However, a very significant study for this thesis is the book *Computers as Theatre* by Brenda Laurel (1991). Laurel comes from theatre studies herself and in her book she suggested the comparison between computers and theatre art. Since personal blogs require a computer (or a digital device similar to computer) as an intermediate between the user (the blogger, the reader) and the Internet, the computer is thus an initial media for a personal blog to emerge; in this context, Laurel's book, no matter how old or out-dated, proves to be a useful source of information. Finally, the fact that somebody with the same background as mine (theatre studies) has actually discussed comparable subject (digital media contrasted with theatre) successfully, has encouraged my further exploration of theatrical nature in personal blogging.

1.3. TERMINOLOGY

Considering the terminology in the sources I have used, there are two terms that have to be addressed. Especially in the collection of the articles *Into the Blogosphere*, the term *weblog* or *lifelog* is generally used. The articles have mainly been published around 2003, when the term *blog* has obviously not been widely recognized yet. In addition, Mia Votka in her analysis of personal diaries from 2005 uses only the term *Internet-päiväkirja* [*Internet diary*], which could signify either a personal blog or its older forms. Later studies, for instance the studies of Jenkins (2006) and Perlmutter (2008) I have used within this paper, already operate with the term *blog*. In 2011, the term *blog* is widely used (e.g. articles and the media) – and as such, *the blog* is the essential term of this thesis. Anyhow, I have elaborated on the topic considering terminology mainly in chapter 1.

Dramaturgical terms have been clearer from the outset, apart from the distinction between *the theatre* and *theatre art*: I have had to make a decision, which of the terms I would use in the thesis. During the process of the study, I have grasped the notion that the term *performance* as used in sociology can signify a rather different perception than the equal term in theatre art. In theatre art, a *performance* signifies any activity the actors conduct on a theatre stage or in any other place in front of the audience. Furthermore, theatre art is in some cases referred to as *performing arts*. Additionally, the term *character* is used strictly in a theatrical context. I have explained these and additional dramaturgical terms and outlined their definitions as used in the context of my thesis mainly in chapter 2 as well as in other relevant chapters.

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This study consists of six parts. Chapter 1 is an introduction. Chapter 2 in its first section briefly introduces the history of blogs as well as it narrows the focus on personal blogs. The second section of chapter 2 outlines theoretical framework of the thesis. In this section, the comparison between personal blogs and theatre art is theoretically established. Chapter 3 continues the theoretic discourse by observing the representation of self as conducted by selected personal bloggers. Chapter 4 examines the position of the reader of a personal blog, and the relationship between the personal blogger and the reader. In this chapter, readers are categorized due to their action (or inaction) within personal blogs in accordance with dramaturgical terms. The study ends with conclusion in chapter 5.

2. FROM BLOGS TO PERFORMANCE

2.1. FOCUSING ON THE BLOGOSPHERE: PERSONAL BLOGS

Blogs are thus more dynamic than older-style home pages, more permanent than posts to a net discussion list. They are more private and personal than traditional journalism, more public than diaries.

(Jenkins, 2006, 186)

The term *weblog* has been, according to Rebeca Blood and her article *Weblogs: A history and perspective* (2000), created by Jorn Brager, an American blogger and author of the blog *Robot Wisdom.com*⁵. Both Brager's blog and the term he has created reach as far as to the mid-nineties. Anyhow, Blood published the article in question in the year 2000 when she observed the popularity of the new media; in the line with David D. Perlmutter in his book *Blogwars: The New Political Battleground* (2008), Rebecca Blood herself is one of the pioneers and sages of blogging. Blood reports how the term *blog* was actually invented: Peter Merholz announced in early 1999 that he was going to pronounce it *wee-blog* and inevitably this was shortened to *blog* with the weblog editor referred to as a *blogger* (2000). The term *blog* has remained firmly among users, and *weblogs* have successfully become *blogs*. Therefore, the term *blog* is used within this paper as well. Furthermore, Rebecca Blood points out the impact made by the offer of simple and free online tools for creating a blog.

This rapid growth continued steadily until July 1999 when Pitas, the first free build-your-own-weblog tool launched, and suddenly there were hundreds. In August, Pyra released Blogger, and Groksoup launched, and with the ease that these web-based tools provided, the bandwagon-jumping turned into an explosion. Late in 1999 software developer Dave Winer introduced Edit This Page, and Jeff A. Campbell launched Velocinews.

(2000)

⁵ The blog *Robot Wisdom* on <http://www.robotwisdom.com/> is still available as retrieved on October 4 2011.

Original blogs, according to Blood, were link-driven sites and required at least some basic knowledge of computer languages and coding. Barger's *RobotWisdom* is an existing example as the site consists mainly of links, or in the line with Barger *Headlines*, selected by the site's author, thus creating a form of a hypertext⁶ (image 1). Or as described by Perlmutter:

To him [Jorn Barger], the term was flexible, meaning a log on the Web, a log of observations, ideas, thoughts, links, notes, news that he was posting, but also a log of the Web, capsule descriptions of items he found along with hyperlinks to them. Barger had been an active Usenet participant. On RobotWisdom, his posts were disjointed—for example, “40 AAA batteries for \$7 shipped (Buy.com-DealNews)” and “Purported mp3 of December tsunami-quake (Columbia via Eureka) [wav?] I can't hear anything.” Barger did not provide space for comments or any level of interaction.
(2008, 89)

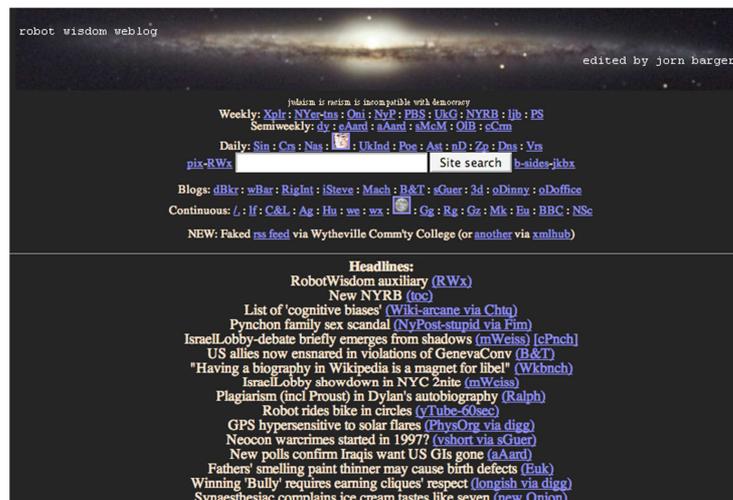


Image 1: The weblog Robot Wisdom by Jorn Barger (December 1997). [Retrieved from <http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=29486>, September 2011.]

With the creation of easy online tools at the end of nineties, the growth of a large and vivid blogger community has been set in motion. An individual was able to design her or his own space on the Internet – even without knowledge of any relevant computer

⁶ A hypertext is a digitalized text, usually available in computer-based media, which provides the reader with immediately accessible links to another text.

programming language. If creation of a personal home page⁷ still required more skills, creation of a blog was easier. Frank Shaap suggests a description of a blog in comparison to a personal home page, emphasizing the overall format and organization of the blogging site; Shaap, however, still operates with the term weblog.

Weblogs of course differ from "regular" personal home pages, but they both offer the author a web-based platform to express and present her/himself. Looking at both the differences and the similarities between them sheds light on the particularities of their form and function. Weblogs are primarily defined by their format, "consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first" (Walker, 2003). This format is shaped and facilitated by a wide variety of weblog software. The weblog software lets the weblogger enter data into the system with little to no knowledge of HTML and publishes it to the web. Older entries are automatically archived and the weblog software often provides visitors with the possibility of commenting on individual entries. (2003)

In addition to Blood and Shaap's conclusions, David D. Perlmutter also observes the development of online tools and discusses the rising popularity of blogs since their creation and reveals a part of the blogging history:

It was cumulative knowledge building about technology, from how to type HTML to what to blog about. In other words, what made blogs successful was not just personalization but affiliated voluntary associations and the ease of creating material and posting it. Today, one can "moblog" or "Twitter" from a cell phone or networked PDA. Many additional programs, like Typepad, MovableType, and Wordpress, simplified the blogging experience even further and helped the phenomenon become ubiquitous.
(2008, 90-91)

⁷ A personal home page is a page on the Internet created by an individual to present content of a personal nature (biography, special features, hobbies etc.).

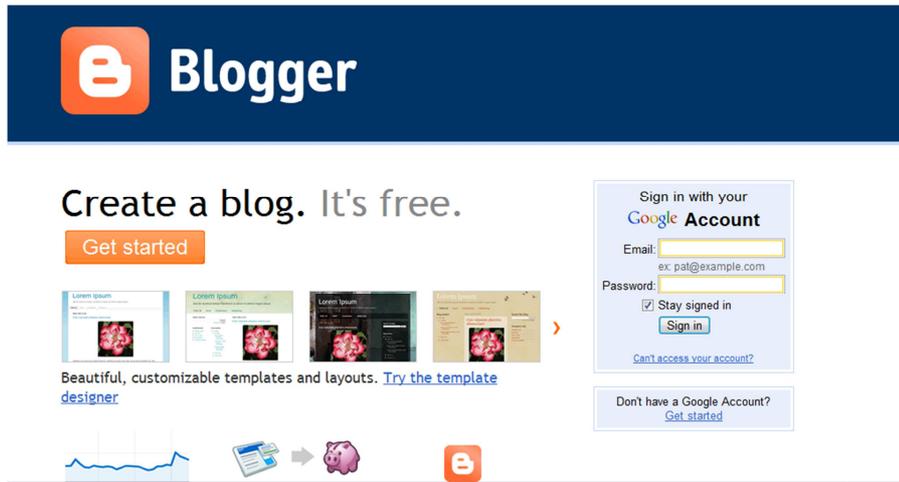


Image 2: The blog provider Blogger. [Image captured from <https://www.blogger.com/> in September 2011 by Martina Siler.]



Image 3: A personal blog on the blog provider Blogger. The blog *Cinnamon Book* is the thesis writer's blog. [Image captured from <http://kaneliki.blogspot.com/2008/05/> in September 2011 by Martina Siler.]

Nevertheless, I won't focus on differences or specifics of various commercial sites that offer the possibility and easy ready-made tools to start a blog; I will skip the discussion considering difference between platforms. I won't reach deeper and discuss the current distinctions between providers such as *Blogger*, *LiveJournal*, *Wordpress*, *Twitter* etc., and I won't discuss rapidly developing technology, hardware and software that enable diversity of blogging experience. My focus considers *the content* of blogs. In their book *Blogging and Other Social Media*, Alex Newson, Deryck Houghton and Justin Patten offer the following definition of a blog: "Blog is a term derived from »web log« A blog is a website where information is displayed in date order, with the most recent information on the top of the page" (2009, 3). What is more, Newson, Houghton and

Patten point out various categories of blogs, for example academic, food, technology, politics, sports and personal blogs. I could, however, add at least a couple of more categories, for example fashion blogs, make-up blogs, there are blogs written by dog owners, who write their blog through their dog's eyes (dog blogs), there are photo blogs etc. Newson, Houghton and Patten suggest that these broad categories of blogs could be categorized even further as one category of blogs offers various sub-categories. The authors illustrate their suggestion with the example of a law blogs, which can fall into at least three categories: pure law blogs, law firm blogs as well as personal blogs (ibid.5). These last and thus meaning personal blogs are also the main focus of this paper. Moreover, Newson, Houghton and Patten offer a definition of a personal blog; for them, authors of personal blogs write from the personal perspective, about the person and their feelings (ibid.5). In spite that this definition is rather brief, it includes the main and most important characteristic of a personal blog: a person, the blogger, writes about her or himself, about their private lives, feelings, events and thoughts. Hence, as suggested by Newson, Houghton and Patten, personal blogs fall under different categories as well. On the other hand, personal elements can be found in other types of blogs, too; nevertheless even such a basic element as the design of a blog includes some aspects of the author's personality. What is more, bloggers, who are perceived as authors of a personal blog, can post about their hobbies, fashion or make-up.

Introducing examples of non-personal blogs, I can start with Finnish blogger Emmi and her blog *No Fashion Victims*. Emmi publishes strictly about fashion, her outfits, shopping results and mayor fashion events she has visited. Emmi's posts are always heavy with pictures; the personal information that leaks through Emmi's text is in general associated with either fashion or shopping discoveries:

Odottelin tossa jokunen päivä sitten ystävääni lounaalle Kampin vitoskerroksessa ja päädyin siinä aikaa tappaessani mylläämään Spirit Storen alepöydän paitakasoja. Kätösiini tarttui tuo ylläolevien kuvien läpikuultavan ohutta kangasta oleva printtipaita, jonka 25 euron normihinnasta oli tiputettu puolet pois.

[The other day I was waiting to meet my friend for lunch at the fifth floor of Kamppi⁸. While I was waiting, I ended up in the store called Spirit Store, browsing through their shirts on sale. The shirt on the picture, a translucent printed shirt made from a thin material, went with me; original 25€ price was cut down on half.] (Emmi, *Wish you ever never met her at all*, 26 January 2011.)

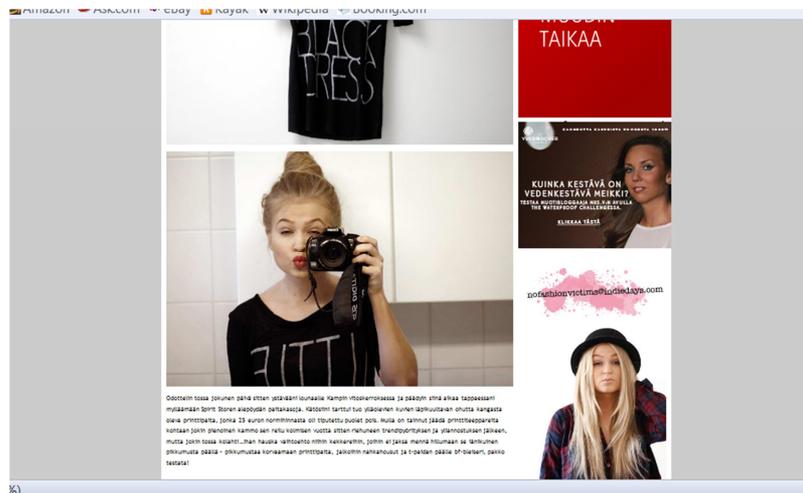


Image 4: The blog *No Fashion Victims*, the blogger Emmi showing her new T-shirt.

[Image captured from <http://nofashionvictims.indiedays.com/2011/01/page/3> by

Martina Siler, September 2011.]

Second example of a make-up blog with (almost) none of the personal information is American beauty blogger Scrangie and her blog *Scrangie*. Her posts are, as well as Emmi's, full of photographs, which are in most cases more important than the text of posts itself. Scrangie is showing swatches⁹ of polishes, thus presenting either specific brand, new collections etc. Almost all personal information and insight Scrangie inserts into her posts are her nail polish taste and opinion about specific polishes.

On The Wild Side. Blue-ish gunmetal grey frost. Okay, this is the only one I'm not crazy about. I like the shade, but it's really frosty and I'm not wild about frosty finishes. It's not a dupe of BB Couture For Men Blue Steel- it's lighter and more frosty. On the other hand, it does remind me of a Motley Crue song. (Scrangie, *Color Club*¹⁰] *Wild At Heart Collection Fall 2009*, September 2 2009)

⁸ [Kamppi is a big shopping center in the city center of Helsinki.]

⁹ A swatch is a display of a certain nail polish shade on the nails.

¹⁰ [Color Club is an American nail polish brand.]

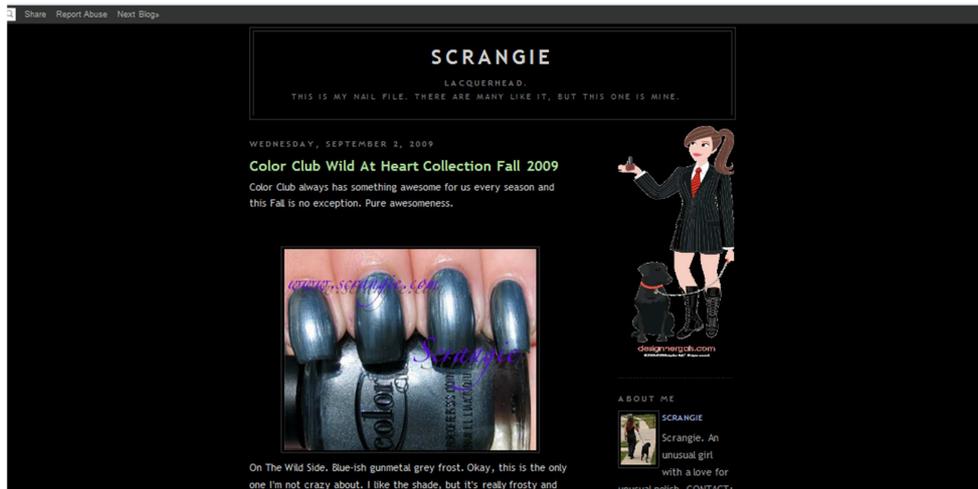


Image 5: A make-up blog by Scrangie. [Image captured from <http://www.scrangie.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

An example of a hobby blog is the blog *Treasure Box* by a blogger colorfulbottle. In the blog she is displaying her jewellery (necklaces, pendants, earrings) she makes from fimo¹¹. The blog is very heavy with images and posts themselves would not function without the photos of the jewellery introduced.

This is one of my latest designs. I had a mission, to make something that doesn't look to elegant and it is green. I also decided that it must not include floral design =)

This is what I ended up with: [image]. I might try to do something in the same colour and write on it music is my life and also try to include headphones. Do you think that is a good idea? How do you like it?

(Treasurer Box, *Music is my life*, 20 January 2011)

¹¹ Fimo is a name for polymer clay and it is used for making many things from jewelry to other accessories.

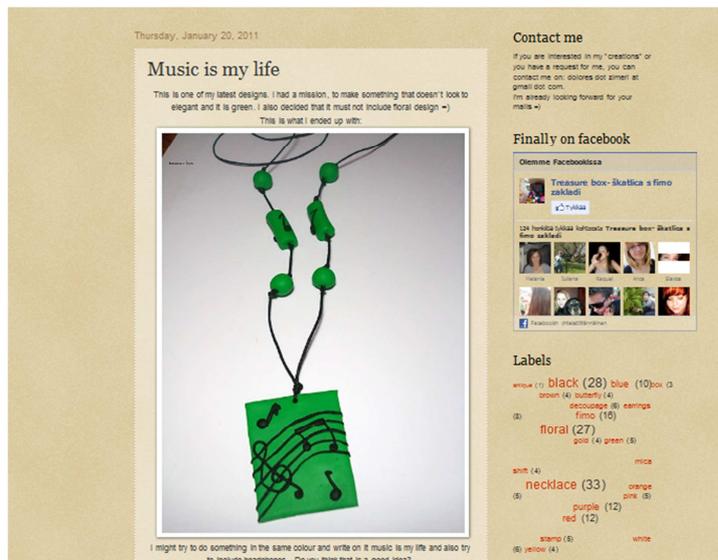


Image 6: The green necklace the blogger colorfulbottle has made and has displayed on her blog *Treasure Box*. [Picture captured from <http://boxoftreasures-colorfulbottle.blogspot.com/2011/01/music-is-my-life.html>, September 2011.]

A special and interesting example of an educational (as well as a dog blog), lastly, would be a blog by a Finnish reading dog Börje. The dog works in Sellon kirjasto [Sello library] in Espoo, Finland, and his owner writes the blog as her dog would tell the stories of the posts. Since Börje is a reading dog, a therapy dog helping children learn how to read by reading to him, the purpose of his blog is also educational. There are no personal details – apart from some news of a reading dog’s life (which is also a common dog’s life as the posts include visits in a dog park, swimming, playing etc.) The posts are written in simple Finnish, they are short and the words are divided into syllables so that the young readers can learn how to read not only by reading to Börje but also from Börje’s blog.

Po-mo on naa-pu-ri te-ras-sin val-koi-nen ter-ri-eri. Se on De-li-bee kah-vi-lan o-mis-ta-jan o-ma koi-ra. Nyt mei-tä on Sel-los-sa kak-si ko-me-aa koi-raa. To-sin vain mi-nä o-len las-ten lu-ku-koi-ra.

[The boss is the white terrier on the neighbor terrace. It is the dog of the Delibee coffee shop’s owner. We are now the two handsome dogs in Sello. Otherwise only I am the children’s reading dog.] (Börje, *Po-mo*, 9. June 2011.)



Image 7: The blog by reading dog Börje. [Image captured from <http://lukukoira.blogspot.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Upper examples illustrate the section of bloggers, who have devoted their blogs to their actual profession (Scrangie), hobbies (Emmi and colorfulbottle) or therapy dogs (Börje aka his owner), and do not tend to disclose their intimacy. Emmi, Scrangie and colorfulbottle include some tiny bits of their personal information, for instance colorfulbottle likes music, Börje tells that he was born in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, and that his owner is a female, yet the insight into the intimacy of these bloggers is strictly limited on their taste and thoughts about fashion, nail polish, handcrafting with fimo or learning how to read with the help of a therapy dog. In addition, make-up and fashion blogs are highly commercial as they are strongly connected with representation of the market and products. Besides, make-up bloggers often offer discount codes their readers can use in certain online shops when buying products the blogger has reviewed; therefore, these blogs are closely associated with general consuming society. The posts within these blogs, hobby blogs included, would also not function without images: usually, a whole post is built around a specific image. However, blogs with similar characteristics to the blogs of Emmi, Scrangie, colorfulbottle (*Treasuer Box*) and Börje are not directly connected with the form of a personal diary. Their purpose is elsewhere and the basic element is either information about products, handcrafting or education.

What then is considered as a personal blog, at least within the realm of this paper? Bloggers observed for the purposes of this study publish posts that are connected with their personal life. Personal bloggers tend to create a narration based on intimate details of their lives; they display themselves and offer a public insight of their very private

everyday. On the other hand, personal bloggers, too, might include other details that push their blogs into other categories like hobby blogs or make up blogs - but then again blogging is a diverse category, and a personal everyday usually consists of several elements, including food, hobbies, fashion and make-up. The whole nature of a blog is still close to private diaries, which used to exist within printed/handwritten media. Anyhow, according to Jeffrey Rosen, the founder of personal bloggers is Justin Hall, Internet-based diarist who also started his website in mid-nineties. When Hall had started to write his diary, such type of a personal website was known as *an online journal*; yet within the following years, *blog*, or in the case of online journals *personal blog*, has become the appropriate term. Or with the words of Justin Hall: “When I first started doing it, they called it a personal home page; then they said I’m one of the first Web diarists, and now I’m one of the first Web bloggers” (2004). Nevertheless, I must point out that all personal blogs are not *public* at all; they are at least not opened for all random readers. A blogger has an option to invite only some selected readers, who can access the content using a username and a password, or a blog can be completely locked and a blogger does not show it to anyone. This is an option that is offered, for example, to users of one of the earliest blog-publishing service Blogger. Of course there are always risks on the Internet. With some amount of speculation, I assume that blogs can also be hacked, usernames and passwords can be stolen and thus even private content would not be so private anymore. Nevertheless, the focus of this thesis is located exactly in those blogs that are opened to all readers – on purpose.

A Slovene blogger *Nihrida* on her blog with the same name writes mainly about nail polish and make-up, yet she often includes posts strictly about her private life. For this reason, *Nihrida*’s blog does suffer from a blogging borderline syndrome as she often reviews make up products and offers a lot of information on make-up brands; considering this detail, her blog is close to the commercialistic characters of blogs by *Emmi* and *Scrangie*. Yet in comparison with *Emmi* and *Scrangie*, *Nihrida* is rather different. She clearly disposes her feelings, especially her depression and sadness; sometimes, for example, she even mentions medicines she has taken. She includes a lot of information about her personal life, family relations, daily events etc. The frequency of personal posts within *Nihrida*’s blog is relatively high; they appear often enough, are strongly written and disclose more than just *Nihrida*’s nail polish taste or her favourite brand. This characteristic separates *Nihrida*’s blog from *Emmi*’s and *Scrangie*’s

examples; this is also the fact that pushes Nihrida's collection of posts into the realm of personal.

Another day, another sh*t. This time is totally different, but I can still smell it. I've said "fu*k it" too many times in the last couple of days. It already sounds like my new mantra. Snow, health problems, extra chipped manicure and lack of everything that makes me feel better. I miss my cats. I miss being held and taken care of. I miss good times. Giving something up and getting nothing in return is not a good bargain, is it? How do you know something is worth fighting for? How do you know it's time to give up and move on? Any answers?

(Nihrida, *Rantastic*, December 1 2010)

Furthermore, a Slovene blogger *Irena* on her blog *Irena Sirena* writes weekly topics: she writes about fashion, publishes photos of celebrities, yet (at least) every Saturday and Sunday she posts two long posts about her current life, which usually include details about her mood as well as the food she either ate in restaurants around Ljubljana, or successfully cooked herself. Irena thus publishes regular topics, for example *Fotošop dneva* [*Photoshop of the Day*], *Petkova bizarka* [*Friday's Bizarre*] and *Tedenska diareja* [*Weekly Diarrhoea*]. The last topic is also divided into further sub-topics, all devoted to Irena's current mood, thoughts and sometimes fears: *Dejstvo tedna* [*Fact of the Week*], *Tečnost tedna* [*Crankiness of the Week*], *Vprašanje tedna* [*Question of the Week*] etc.

Nikoli me ne neha presenečati, kakšno tolažbo najdejo nekateri ljudje v misli, da ne počnem ničesar oziroma vse delam z levo roko, plačilo pa mi mimogrede malo dežuje z neba, na lepe oči pa to. Nikoli me ne neha presenečati. Se kdo res počuti bolje, če že iz starta prevzame to miselnost?

[I'm still surprised how people can easily find comfort in the thought that I don't do nothing or I'm doing everything with my left hand, but the salary is just falling to my lap, just because I have beautiful eyes or something. It will never stop surprising myself. Does an individual really feel better thinking that way from the very beginning?]

(Irena, *Tedenska diareja* [*Weekly Diarrhoea*], January 22, 2011)

A German-Slovene blogger Alcessa on her blog *Moosings* also publishes regular topics, not specifically daily topics, but issues that repeat at least three times a week, or every second week; however, she still publishes random posts almost every day. However, all of these regular topics consider her personal life; Alcessa is a vegetarian, so she would always publish her own vegetarian recipes. Moreover, posts published randomly and not as a topic content are Alcessa's thoughts, impressions and as in the case of Nihrida and Irena quite precise details from her personal life.

Thursday's the only day I let the radio screech me awake at 6.50. Because at 7, we have our organic veggies delivered. I am usually half dead at that time, but I do appreciate the veggies. Sometimes, the man carrying them doesn't arrive until well past 8. This causes me to feel groggy and annoyed the whole morning. It does. I still appreciate the veggies, but.

(Alcessa, *Why Don't You-* , 9 September 2010).

Examples of Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa illustrate three different bloggers with totally different concept; all three blogs can also not be strictly categorized. What is important for the purposes of this paper, are those clearly distinctive characteristics that bind these three blogs under the tag of *a personal blog*. Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa all write about intimate details, everyday events, they mention their family life, sometimes even publish pictures. Nihrida is from a small Slovenian town Sevnica, she is in her twenties, has an older sister and adores sister's little daughter, her niece; she loves cats, listens to metal and has recently ended her relationship with her boyfriend (and got a new one within a couple of weeks). Her real name is Saša.

Irena, on the other hand, disclose her family relations more vaguely, just with a hint; every Sunday she accompanies her father to the antique market in Ljubljana. Irena never specifically mentions, where she is from, but she obviously resides in Slovenian capital. She also has a sister who travelled to Japan and brought some strange gifts. Regarding Irena's other hints in posts she also has a boyfriend and works in an office, either for some newspaper or a magazine; her real name might actually be Irena and she is possibly in her late twenties or early thirties.

Alcessa is a Slovene in mid-thirties married to a German; they live in Germany in Karlsruhe, they both love Sweden and lately also Finland. Thus, they both also like the moose that is a common inhabitant of Swedish forests and a very characteristic feature of this Nordic country. The moose is the central motive of the whole Alcessa's blog; a moose in Latin is, however, *Alces alces*. Before Alcessa and her husband have got married they had had a long-distance relationship and Alcessa hitchhiked to Germany. Their current apartment has a lot of IKEA furniture. Alcessa is a vegetarian (as the moose is as well), likes ecological products and speaks to her husband in German; they don't have children. She works as a freelance Slovene – German translator, she also likes to renovate old clothes and makes her own jewellery, grows her own herbs and hates garlic. She does not reveal her real name at any point.

All these details about Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa are information a reader can get from their blogs; most of these details have been revealed within posts, some are hidden within their profiles. A blog that offers so detailed information about personal life of the blogger, a blog that gives an insight into almost every day of the blogger's life, a blog that discloses blogger's age, sometimes also a real name, city, family relations, work, likes and dislikes – this is the genre of a blog that is, at least within this paper, perceived as a *personal blog*. These small specific bits of the huge worldwide blogosphere, personal blogs, are the basic field within which I am trying to discover relations with theatre art.

2.1. PERSONAL BLOGS AND THEATRE ART: A REMEDIATED PERFORMANCE

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all I need for an act of theatre to be engaged.

(Peter Brook, 9)

Mia Vatka in her book *Suomalaisten salatut elämät* [*The Hidden Lives of the Finns*] highlights the change that the development of the electronic messages, digitalised dealing with the text and the Internet itself has brought to the perception of a personal diary. (2005, 221)

Julkaisemattomassa, salaisessa päiväkirjassa kirjoittaja esittelee nykyitseään omalle tulevalle minälleen tai päiväkirjaan kätkeytyvälle kerronnalliselle puhetoverille, kun taas Internet-päiväkirjuri esittäytyy erittelee ajatuksiaan ulkopuolisille lukijoille.

[In a private, secret diary the writer presents her or his current self to her or his own future self, or to the imagined friend to whom the writer talks, whereas the Internet diarists represents her or himself and adjusts her or his thoughts for the outside reader.]

(ibid, 224)

Vatka, though, does not specifically point out, which provider she analyses in her discussion of “Internet diaries” (weblogs or lifelogs in older terminology). According to my assumption, in Vatka’s focus are providers such as, for example, *Open Diary*¹². The site has actually indicated what has later become a blog. In Online Diary, the platform does not enable posts published from top to bottom of the page according to the date they were published as in Blogger, Wordpress or SiOL’s Blogos; the reader has to open post by post as reading a paper-based diary. However, the provider Online Diary does

¹² The Open Diary is available on: <http://www.opend diary.com/>.

enable both readers' comments and posting visual material. Considering the function and the content, personal blogs and open diaries are basically the same; only their platform is different. Anyhow, in case of these very private yet on the other hand very public online diaries, thus referring specifically to personal blogs, the action of blogging involves, as already emphasized by Vatka, a spectator, the one who either lurks and observes what is written, or the one who is playing the game openly and provides comments; on the other side within the action of blogging, there is an actor, a writer, the blogger. In this chapter I will draw some fundamental links between theatre art and personal blogs. I do not want to claim that personal blogs are theatre by default, theatre by all means, just on the bare basis of their existence: I am only offering a possible interpretation, a possible view to observe a personal blog for it can display and contain certain characteristics of theatre art. Moreover, the conducted comparison is focusing on personal blogs only through the aspect of theatre art, regardless any possible similar characteristics personal blogs share with other artistic disciplines (e.g. literature). My main and only conceptual framework is theatre art. First of all, there is a definition of theatre art itself that has to be addressed as it is crucial for the comparison with personal blogs; second, there is a fundamental element of theatre art, which can actually emerge within other everyday actions as well, and this fundamental part is theatricality. In addition, from defining a perception of theatre art and introducing basic characteristic of theatricality, I am also going to focus on more contemporary ways of theatre art, trying to discover similar phenomena within personal blogs. Hence, the discussion rather follows several authors and artists, which are represented through the patchwork of their thoughts or works that appear significant for this study, consequently trying to offer as broad view of theatricality, theatre art and their ways of emanation as possible; this view is also examined through my professional background as a dramaturge.

To begin with, a very clear fact should be noted: personal blogs reside within their own media with its own and specific characteristic, whereas theatre art is yet again a media by itself. Patrice Pavis (1998, 397) claims *that there is no such thing as an absolute essence of theatre art*. And even if there is no such thing as an absolute essence of theatre art, Pavis suggests the elements that are necessary to any theatrical phenomenon:

The common denominator of everything we habitually call 'theatre' in our civilization is this: from a static point of view, a playing area (stage) and a

watching area (auditorium), an actor (gesture, voice) on stage and spectators in the auditorium. From a dynamic point of view, the creation of a 'fictional' world on stage in opposite to the 'real' world of the auditorium, and simultaneously, the establishment of a current 'communication' between actor and spectator (ibid.).

The term *theatre* is too general and too confusing as the word can signify either the actual place where theatrical performance occurs, or a theatrical performance itself. Therefore, the term *theatre art* is more specific in this case. On the other hand, there is also a term *performing arts*, which is also broadly used especially in the connection with contemporary theatre. In my opinion, however, theatre art and performing arts are synonymic terms for basically the same phenomenon. The term performing arts is usually applied to broad spectre of theatrical sub-genres from contemporary dance to installations; in my opinion, performing arts are also *pure theatre art* by all means. Theatre art (as well as performing arts) include an actor, an event and a spectator, who observes: either if the performance is a classical ballet, contemporary dance or a play. But before exploring the possible forms of theatre art that personal blogs can be compared to, there is an essential element, which has to be addressed – and this element is theatricality.

Teatralnost je postavitev subjekta glede na svet in glede na odnos do njegovega imaginarnega. Je postavitev struktur imaginarnega, postavljenih na prisotnosti prostora drugega, ki dopušča gledališče.

[Theatricality is a placement of the subject regarding to the world and regarding to the relation with her/his imaginary. It is the placement of structures of the imaginary, which are located in the presence of the space of the other; and that enables theatre.]

(Josette Feral, 1996, 8)

Theatricality therefore does not need much to appear: the one who observes has to understand the space of the observed subject as different, as a space which is not the part of observer's everyday. In spite the observer and the observed subject exist in the same time and place, even in the same room, there is an imaginary gap created between

them. The observed subject is the one that creates theatricality, splits the observer's reality and causes the essential gap between spaces.

Teatralnost igralca se torej postavlja v premestitev, ki jo igralec ustvari med seboj kot jazom in njim kot drugim, v dinamiko, ki jo zaznava

[Theatricality of the actor thus exists in the replacement the actor creates between her or himself as *self* and the observer as the *other*, in the dynamics that the one observes.]

(Feral, 1996, 11).

Moreover, Feral does not claim theatricality to be limited strictly to the field of theatre art; it can occur in everyday as well. The writer only recognizes theatre art to be the most successful machine for producing theatricality. Additionally, as theatricality is not theatre art itself, just an essential part of it, theatricality can be divided in several layers; several categories, several possibilities. Nevertheless basic elements that construct theatricality are, to simplify, the gap between the observer and the observed, and the different semiotic position of the observed subject in relation to the spectator. One is placed, the other is displaced; in case of personal blogs, one is the blogger, and the other is the reader. Here, the attention must briefly be drawn to most common interfaces offered to creators of their individual personal blogs (e.g. Blogger, WordPress, Blogos by SiOL¹³). The user can create her or his own personal platform; she or he titles the blog, and in many cases chooses a certain theme that makes the blog recognizable. This theme, however, is actually a blog's *brand*. A good example of such brand is the overall theme of the moose in the case of the blogger Alcessa, where visual elements of her blog's platform consist of various images of the moose and translations of the word *moose* in several languages. Then again a blogger can choose more subtle, yet still personalised theme as the blogger Irena, who only uses black background and designed layout of her blog's title, including an artistic image of what could be Irena's photo. Nihrida, however, is more direct and uses a clear photo of her eye and polished nails; otherwise her blog uses plain black and white tones. Of course also make-up, fashion and lifestyle bloggers (among others) use specific and recognizable branding. Finnish bloggers Mimmi and Peppi, for example, write their blog *More to Love!* about lifestyle

¹³ SiOL is a Slovenian provider and it provides blogs through a platform Blogos: <http://blog.siol.net/>.

of young overweight women in Finland. The platform of their blog emphasizes colours like bright magenta and features feminine items such as polished nails and lipstick, whereas the title of the blog *More to Love!* resembles a round and soft female body as well as a heart (image 7). Slovenian make-up blogger *Daltonista Polish* dedicates the title and the design of her blog, a dog paw with black, grey and white nails, to her terrier Dalton (image 8). Anyhow, even if these last two examples are not strictly personal blogs, the bloggers of *More to Love!* and *Daltonista Polish* still choose items that personalize and disclose something about the blogger's self – who is either a dog owner as Daltonista, or likes make-up and is proud of her body as Mimmi and Peppi.



Image 7: The brand of the blog *More to Love*. [Image captured by Martina Siler from <http://www.moretolove.fi/> in September 2011.]



Image 8: The brand of the blog *Daltonista Polish*. [Image captured by Martina Siler from <http://daltonistapolish.blogspot.com/> in September 2011.]

This basic personalization of a (personal) blog can also be compared to an example of creating a personal profile within chosen social utility such as for instance My Space¹⁴. In My Space, the actions are simple, yet they involve individual's time and creativity. On My Space, individual is free to design her or his profile, which can appear as a good opportunity to seek attention. Profiles with interesting design might attract more people, thus showing individual's abilities. Such profiles also reflect individual's perception of identity at least with the selection of background, images and current favourite song playing on the site. Image 9 depicts that at least the blog-publishing service Blogger offers a series of a pre-designed templates and themes (*Simple, Watermark, Ethereal* etc.) – yet according to my observation the bloggers, who use Blogger, rather tend to personalize and change these original templates as much as possible.



Image 9: The templates the provider Blogger offers to its users. [Image taken as print screen by Martina Siler from <http://www.blogger.com/template-editor.g?blogID=8883478166053870160>, September 2011]

Blogger, however, has also developed more options, which enable better personalization of a blog, such as adding various gadgets to the sidebar, images for the background and the title etc.

¹⁴ My Space at <http://fi.myspace.com/> is a social utility site, on which a user creates a personal profile in order to communicate with other users. As far as considering the year 2011, My Space has lost popularity due to social utility site Facebook.

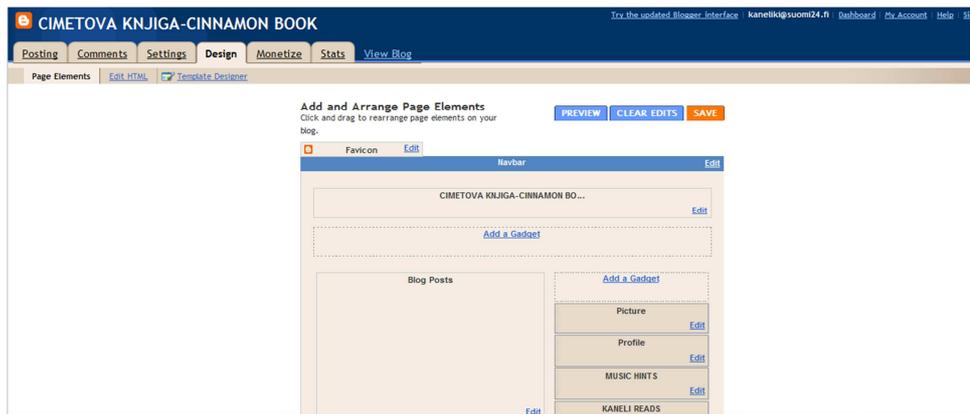


Image 10: Blogger's *Add and Arrange* options. [Image captured from her blog on <http://www.kaneliki.blogspot.com> by Martina Siler in September 2011].

Basic templates of such personal blogs are, on the other hand, all the same as the user chooses one or the other of many offered Blogger's options, but still the provider enables a broad personalization, and at the end it is all about who will transform the offered template into a more recognizable, unique personal platform that would depict the blogger's self in a best way possible. Susanna Paasonen has pointed out similar conclusions regarding the creation of homepages and personal profiles that can be also applicable in the case of personal blogs: "Online representations are selectively constructed and, in the case of personal profiles, tend to be 'ideal selves' /.../" (2009). Likewise, Paasonen compares home pages and personal profiles to "stages for displaying an ideal self – if not the best self possible – to be judged and witnessed by others" (ibid.). Therefore, the individual is able to create the spatial gap Feral writes about, and a random user is invited to observe. Here, the individual, the owner of the created spatial gap, is an actor. Feral points out the importance of the actor within the creation of theatricality; the actor is an essential part.

Igra torej implicira zavestno držo s strain izvajalca /*performeur*/, izvrševano v tukaj in zdaj prostoru, ki je drug od vsakdanjika.

[Acting thus implies conscious position of the actor /*performeur*/, and that position is executed in here-and-now space, the space other than the everyday.] (Feral, 1996, 12).

And regardless the fact that Feral writes mainly about the theatre art, she also signifies the transcendence of theatricality. Not only that theatricality can occur in a basic

everyday situation when one, for example, sits in a café and observes other visitors, or those who pass by; I understand that the phenomena of theatricality can occur in places that are not so *physical* as the theatre – or sitting in a café. The frame through which the observer observes a certain action has some more significant characteristics.

Ta okvir ni scenski, kot bi lahko mislili (fizični okvir, ki največkrat pripada področju vidnega), temveč virtualni okvir, ki nalaga igri svoje omejitve in svoboščine.

[This frame is not the frame of the set, as it could be thought (physical frame, that usually belongs to the visual), but it is a virtual frame, that marks the acting with its own limitation and freedom.] (Feral, 1996, 12).

Considering the spatial gap as a rather virtual frame, human-computer interaction and the Internet are already constructed as a (virtual) entering or just observing the space of the other. “The concern is no longer with the fourth wall (between “actor” and “audience”) but instead with the firewall,” plays with words Steve Dixon when considering digital performance (2007, 508). Brenda Laurel, on the other hand, has suggested connection between computers and theatre already in the early nineties of the previous century. In her study *Computers as Theatre* published in 1991, Laurel is bringing together her knowledge of theatre and experience with human-computer interaction. As Laurel’s book, however, reaches into the time when many of today’s digital phenomena had not yet existed, had not been developed to the current point (as in the year 2011) or it has barely started to emerge, Laurel’s discoveries feel ambiguous, abstract or even out-dated, but then again the writer suggests a good starting point when dealing with the comparison of the human-computer interaction and theatre art. Laurel points out that the overall experience of a theatre performance is a result of many routines that run in the background of the theatre show, such as lightning, sounds, set design etc. The action on the stage is all there is, claims Laurel. “For actor and the audience alike, the ultimate “reality” is what is happening in the imaginary world on the stage – the representation” (1991, 16). A theatre is a place where the spectator for her or his own pleasure accepts the fact of created authenticity, the fact of the fiction. The actor in the theatre places her or himself into a dramatic character; however, when an individual transforms her or himself into a character online, the act of replacement is always present, too. The body represented online reaches a level of a sign; the identity

of an individual touches the imaginary, thus focusing on producing an image. Yet still an image that requires an observation of the other, the spectator. An image that produces theatricality.

In a theatrical view of human-computer activity, the stage is a virtual world. It is populated by agents, both human and computer-generated, and other elements of the representational context (windows, teacups, desktops, or what-have-you. The technical magic that supports the representation, as in the theatre, is behind the scenes. Whether the magic is created by hardware, software or wetware is of no consequence; its only value is what it produces on the “stage”. In other words: the representation is all there is.

(Laurel, 1991, 17)

Laurel thus suggests that already the digital media (the computer), the starting point, the necessity for a creation of a personal blog, shares similar nature as the theatre itself. Designing human-computer interaction, is about, with words of Laurel (1991, 33), “creating imaginary worlds that have a special relationship to reality — worlds in which we can extend, amplify, and enrich our own capacities to think, feel, and act.” Spectator’s view within these imaginary worlds is influenced by the actions of the observed subject, the actor; finally representation is all what matters.

Personal blogs thus possess theatricality, they offer a playground for theatricality to emerge – but do personal blogs hide any other characteristic of theatre art? Could personal blogs *be* theatre? “The word ‘theatre’ has been applied, rightly or wrongly, to numerous forms of online communication, from email to performative websites, from MUDs to hypertext narratives, from video art webcasts to interactive theatre performances specially conceived to take place in cyberspace,” claims Steve Dixon (2007, 502). Why exactly a theatre is observed within these digital phenomena and what kind of a theatre? With the perception of Hans-Thies Lehmann and his study as *Postdramsko gledališče [Postdramatic theatre]* as read in Slovene translation from 2003, there are in fact more, at least two forms of theatre art: dramatic, the traditional narrative, and postdramatic, where fictional story and characters are gone and the action of performance emerges from gestures other than a fictional narrative. As a dramatic, traditional form, I understand a narrative, thus meaning a theatre play, presented on a

stage by actors, defined and designed with direction and dramaturgy, set design, costume design, sound etc. This characteristic of theatre art creates a living illusion of reality, where actors are trying to convince their audience that they are, in the case of William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*¹⁵, somewhere in Denmark, and a ghost is lurking behind the castle walls. Such perception of theatre art is thus (at least to some point) equal to the definition of a historical Western theatrical tradition as offered by Pavis (1998, 388): "It always presents an action (or mimetic representation of an action) through actors who incarnate or show characters for an audience gathered together to receive it at a time and place that may or may not be specified in advance". Traditional Western theatre art on a physical level thus requires not only specific place with precisely defined architecture including a stage; it requires many other necessary physical elements such as costumes, props, masks, lightning and other essentials that help to create a whole vision of an actual life. With a simple speculation I can assume that a general term "theatre" awakes exactly this association and evokes exactly this particular image of a traditional Western stage with a traditional Western play; at least when considering audience with European social background. I will, however, not compare personal blogs to historical "traditional Western" theatre art for I will rather focus on a theatre art that can appear in different forms, and there I will search for connections. Or with words of Pavis: "A text (or an action), an actor's body, a stage, a spectator – this would seem to be necessary sequence of all theatre communication. Each link in the chain, however, can take very different forms." I place personal blogs into the postdramatic, the performative, not into the realm of 'traditional Western' theatre art. The postdramatic form of theatre art is nevertheless not that young phenomenon either, in spite that the postdramatic theatre is in many cases labelled with the term contemporary theatre. Postdramatic theatre, however, has emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century when theatre artists started to play with the traditional Western theatre, and broke its form. Postdramatic theatre has thus become an opened form of theatre art, which enables broad experimentation with theatrical languages. Aldo Milohnić describes some characteristics of postdramatic theatre:

¹⁵ British playwright William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616) wrote the tragedy *Hamlet* between 1599 and 1601. In the play, Danish prince Hamlet exacts a revenge on his uncle Claudius for murdering the old king Hamlet (Claudius's brother and prince Hamlet's father).

A zero point of gesture or movement, an unbearable silence, a non-pronounced word, all these and many other forms of expression used in the performances of the postdramatic theatre, at the first sight (and only at the first sight!) are deprived of the performative force, but they are nevertheless theatrical events in its own rights.

(2004, 13)

Postdramatic theatre, according to Milohnić, creates an environment, in which a non-event is still a theatrical event. Performance can last continuously even for a week as created by American director Robert Wilson, or theatre happens in an aircraft that enables moments of zero gravity and performers' bodies float like in the orbit as done by Slovenian artist Dragan Živadinov. Other significant names of postdramatic theatre are also German playwright Heiner Mueller, Danish group Hotel Pro Forma and Belgian director Jan Fabre. Postdramatic theatre is on the first place a *visual* event; and visual is, if I consider video, photo or even make-up and fashion blogs, increasingly central on the Internet as well.



Image 11: An example of postdramatic, very visual theatre: performance *Einstein on the Beach* by American director Robert Wilson (1992). [Image retrieved from <http://www.dance-tech.net/profiles/blogs/revival-of-the-philip-glass-in-September-2011>.]



Image 12: A performance *Angel of Death* by Jan Fabre¹⁶. (2003). [Image retrieved from <http://desingel.orbitone.com/en/about-desingel/artists-in-residence/jan-fabre-and-troubleyn> in September 2011.]

Very significant for the relation between contemporary theatre and digital technology (especially computer and the Internet) are also works of Slovenian artist Igor Štromajer; this web-artist is also coming from theatre studies as he is originally theatre director. In 2001 Štromajer has started a project *Ballettika Internettikka* with Brane Zorman. This particular project is a series of artistic actions, which explore the possibilities of “Internet ballet performances combined with guerrilla tactics and mobile live Internet broadcasting strategies” (Intima Virtual Base, 2011). Within latest *Ballettika Internettikka* projects, Štromajer and Zorman are supposed to travel to distant locations in the world, where their robots are “dancing” and they broadcast the event live on the Internet. An actual example is *Ballettika Internettikka Nipponnikka*, which happened on Minami Torishima, an isolated island in Japan. The performance was done on November the 23rd 2009 at sunrise. It featured two robots holding hands, walking slowly into the sea, when two suns had risen above the Japanese horizon (image 13). The image of the broadcast was coloured red and accompanied by electronically generated music.

¹⁶ More information about Jan Fabre: <http://www.troubleyn.be/>.

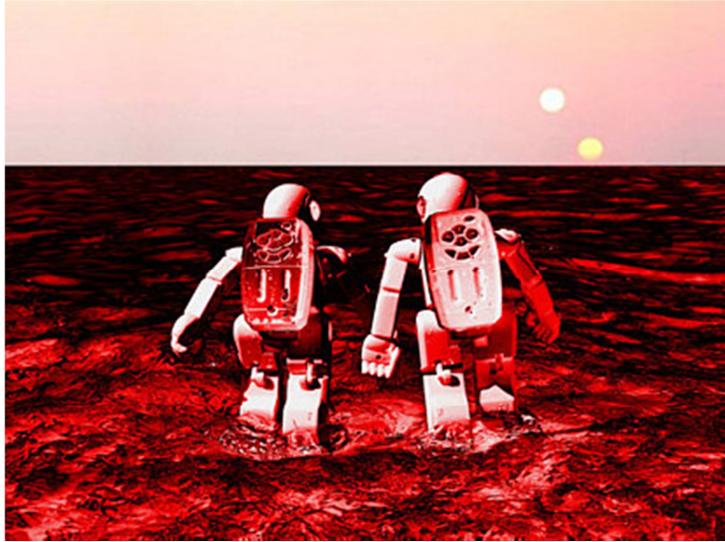


Image 13: The final act of *Baliettikka Internettikka Nipponnikka* by Štromajer and Zorman, November the 23rd 2009. [Image retrieved from <http://intima.wordpress.com/tag/nipponnikka/>, September 2011.]

As other *Baliettikka Internettikka* projects, also *Nipponnikka* was broadcasted live. The performance lasted for about five minutes, but the fact that it was broadcasted live proposed the same here-and-now experience as an actual theatre performance offers to its spectators. Moreover, the event of *Nipponnikka* was constructed already with Štromajer's posts on Twitter¹⁷ about the whole process, from packing the two robots and traveling to Minami Torishima to final testing of all the systems before the live broadcast. On the other hand, regardless the whole performance was so carefully documented, so accurate if we consider posts on Twitter, *Nipponnikka* can evoke questions about the real and the fake: were the artists really there or the performance was only a carefully constructed theatrical fiction? Posts on Twitter and the final broadcast are the only documentation of the project; there is no other footage.

B. Internettikka is always a disappointment.

Never exactly what u want to see, never meets your expectations.

Senseless, absurd. Since 2001.

08:53 Nov 23rd from web

(Intima Virtual Base/Igor Štromajer on Twitter, 2009)

¹⁷ Twitter at <http://twitter.com> is a microblogging provider that enables users to post short 140-character messages (tweets).

Štromajer nevertheless demonstrates that a theatre performance requires technology, which enables *Ballettikka Internettikka*'s actions to be broadcasted from remote places such as Minami Torishima or Svalbard in the Arctic to reach the necessary component for their existence – the spectators. For without a live broadcast, which ends up in the user's computer in some other part of the world (or even in some other time zone), *Ballettikka Internettikka* could not exist as a performance, no matter the real or the fake of its actual place. Štromajer's projects prove what has already been suggested by Brenda Laurel: a computer can *remediate* theatre art. To clarify the term, Bolter and Grusin in their study *Remediation: Understanding New Media* determinate the remediation as the representation of one medium in another (2002, 45). What is more, the goal of remediation is "to refashion or rehabilitate other media" (ibid. 56), and the authors also find remediation to be a characteristic of the new digital media. "The very act of remediation, however, ensures that the older medium cannot be entirely effaced; the new medium remains dependent on the older one in acknowledge or unacknowledged ways" (ibid. 47). In the case of computers that remediate theatre art, I see the particular remediation to happen in a more subtle way: theatre art *occurs* in a digitalized form. It is not about absorption of the older media (the theatre) into the computer; it is more about the actual *occurrence and similarity*.

Theoretically, theatre in virtual form affects "a transubstantiation wherein the elements of the "now" are "changed, through the contemporary consecration of the new Eucharist, the linkage of human and machine," and thus theatre and performance "can still appear in live and virtual spaces (the same thing only different)

(Dixon, 2007, 515).

Theatre art, which finds its place in another media, the computer, necessarily requires a "remediated" spectator as well: an *online spectator*. Štromajer also emphasizes the intimate relationship between the (online) spectator and the artist; this theatrical experience becomes a one-to-one relationship as the user can access a theatrical event (e.g. the broadcasts of *Ballettikka Internettikka*) from the intimacy of her or his own private place/computer. Theatre art, which resides remediated within the computer and seeks for an online spectator, is thus far from the experience of the original Greek *theatron*, where audience has gathered as a group to enjoy a theatre performance; the

one-to-one relationship, however, is also a relationship between the blogger (the actor) and the reader (the spectator). The event of *Nipponnikka*, though, includes a form of a blog as well. Štromajer uses Twitter, a microblogging site, to construct the overall event of *Nipponnikka*; according to Bojana Kunst (2010), the preparation of the event is almost dramaturgically structured with posts on Twitter, and the performance thus not include a live broadcast only. In my opinion, Štromajer with microposts on Twitter demonstrates that a blog (even if it is a microblog) *can create* a dramaturgical structure and *can be performative*. For Štromajer's exact and descriptive posts create expectation, they trigger their online observers with anticipation: there is a tension, there is suspense, which finally culminates in the broadcast itself. Posts on Twitter are therefore an essential theatrical tool – and another way of remediating theatrical experience.

We are literally in the middle of nowhere. This is where the Sun rise. It's The Beginning. Diving in 13 hours!
17:02 Nov 22nd from Ping.fm

Good morning! We almost couldn't sleep at all, and it was hard to wake up so early. Weather conditions OK for diving. Getting ready (in 1h).
05:03 Nov 23rd from Ping.fm

Computer, video&audio editing systems activated. All commands are being loaded. Everything's gonna be RED this morning! Starting countdown.
05:22 Nov 23rd from Ping.fm
(Intima Virtual Base/Igor Štromajer on Twitter, 2009).

Nevertheless, the remediation of theatre art in *Ballettikka Internettikka* is deliberate, whereas the personal blogger's intentions are far from creating theatre art. Yet it is the same remediation, *occurrence* of the original media (theatre art) I am searching for in personal blogs, too, and I do think that personal blogs remediate theatre art as well – unintentionally. When searching for this specific remediation of theatre art within personal blogs, Aldo Milohnić highlights another important feature of postdramatic theatre.

The participants could be – and they probably are in the first place - actors, performers, individuals acting on the stage and, nowadays rather frequently, presenting their own “personal stories” or “histories”/.../. Both in contemporary theatre and dance, thus in performing arts in general, we are facing growing interest in individual histories and individual memory (2004, 12).

This characteristic of telling performer’s own personal story in front of the audience is not that new either as it has emerged with performance art and happenings in the sixties. Performance art, though, would be a subdivision, or even a subculture of theatre art; it is a postdramatic form. Performance can be a simple gesture, involving only a performer, the actor as the one that conducts the action, and the audience; performance art only requires a spatial gap that creates theatricality. The performer would not place her or his identity into a position of a fictive character, but would rather remain her or his (more or less) true self, displaying her or his intimacy, displaying and showing her or his body and its nakedness, and in the cases of extreme performance art, the performer would even damage and hurt her or himself; the blood in these genres of performance art can thus be the real and not the fake theatrical one. However, I want to compare personal blogs with those less radical genres of performance art – autobiographical performance that emphasizes the basic narrative of the self, *the self as the text*, if using the thought of Regis Durand (1996, 25). An actual example of an autobiographical performance is Russian artist Evgeny Grishkovets. In his solo performance *Kak ya syel sobaku* [*How I ate a dog*] from 2000, Grishkovets stands alone on an almost bare stage. Using just a few props he tells a story of his experience in the Russian army, when he was posted to Sakhalin.

I remember how we travelled seven days from the Taiga station to the Vladivostok station on a passenger/mail train. We travelled slowly, stood at each crossing, and I was grateful to the railroad workers for these tiny delays.... We were going..., and interestingly, you could be going anywhere, to the east, to the south, to the north, and the whole time it would be the exact same scenery, in the sense that, it changes, of course, but the feeling remains that it’s the exact same: This means not very thickly growing birch trees, those uniformly spaced white-black trees, everywhere....

(2009)



Image 14: Evgeny Grishkovets performing *How I Ate a Dog* in 2003. [Image retrieved from http://torrentszona.com/torrent-8409/Evgeniy_Grishkovets_Kak_ya_syel_sobaku_/2003/, September 2011.]

Grishkovets thus uses his own personal memories to tell a story on stage. He tells about extraordinary events that happened to him during serving the army at Sakhalin Island; the title of the performance, however, corresponds with the event when he ate a dog with his homesick Korean companion, who did not want to dine alone, and Grishkovets joined him. In Grishkovets' performance, *me, my memories, my impressions, my feelings* are the central character; and this *me* with personal memories and feelings is the performer himself. Grishkovets on the stage is the same Grishkovets who observed the grim scenery when traveling to Sakhalin, the same Grishkovets who saw giant butterflies in Sakhalin and the same Grishkovets who later ate a dog Korean style. The same occurs when bloggers posts in personal blogs – for personal bloggers as well tend to tell “stories” about what they did at some point in the (very recent) past. Personal bloggers, too, put *me, my memories, my impressions, my feelings* etc. into the centre of attention. And the events personal bloggers talk about might not even be that extraordinary as in the case of Grishkovets:

Prebrala sem vse časopise. Naredila malo morje stvari za naprej. Malo dremala. Narezala največji kos čokolade kdajkoli in si skoraj odrezala nekaj prstov. Spekla sem ekstra čokoladne piškote, pravzaprav čokolado v masi (“Zakaj pa nisi dala mafinov v model za mafine?” je vprašala gospa mama), oprala sem vse obleke, ampak res vse, nekaj tudi na roko (in ne maram prati večjih kosov na

roko), pojedla sem pol kile malin (Zofi pa skoraj toliko), zaletavala sem se v steno, skakala v zrak, si povzročila slabost s preveč pojedenimi piškoti, nalakirala nohte, opravila vse možne lepotne rituale, za katere si nikoli ne vzamem časa, oprala vse čopiče (tiste za slikanje obraza, ne platen), skregala sem se vsaj dvakrat in vsaj enkrat na pet minut sem se uprla želji, da bi vrgla kaj v steno.

[I read all newspapers. I did a lot of stuff that I should do next week. Took a nap. Cut the biggest block of chocolate ever and almost cut my fingers off. Baked very chocolate cookies, more like a chocolate in a dough (“Why didn’t you put muffins in the cups?” asked lady mother), I washed all my clothes, really all clothes, some even by hand (and I don’t like to wash big pieces of clothing by hand), I ate half of a kilo of raspberries (Zofi [a turtle] ate almost as much as I did), I was crashing into the wall, jumping in the air, I was sick because I ate too much cookies, I polished my nails, did so many of those beauty rituals I usually don’t have time for, I washed all brushes (for painting the face, not the canvas), I argued at least twice and at least every five minutes I denied my wish to throw something into the wall.]

(Irena, *Neracionalno* [*Norational*], 12.6.2011)

In the case of personal blogs, each specific post functions as a small autobiographical performance; and as theatre art, personal blogs as well are determined with time. It is not about actual passing of time as in the theatre art, yet the here-and-now, the experience of *uniqueness* is in my opinion similar. Each post within blog services I observe (Blogger, WordPress, SiOL’s Blogos) displays exact date and even precise time when particular material was published; the blog also obtains a characteristic of an event that is not going to happen again, and that is a characteristic of performance art, too. The reader can return to the archive of posts and browse through what has already been written, yet posts can lose their strength, their current relevance considering the time or even the historical situation in which they have been written. Passing of time changes the context of the post; and the content might function only within the exact moment. Grishkovets in *How I ate a dog* has an original story (it has been also published as a play), however, he also adapts it, or adds relevant thoughts according to current events. In August 2000, for example, Grishkovets as a former sailor commented on the tragedy of the Russian submarine Kursk, which happened that summer.

Štromajer's *Ballettika Internettikka Nipponnikka* is available as a video, yet the spectator's awareness of the original here-and-now, the overall experience of *Nipponnikka* as a performance, cannot be preserved. For when *Nipponnikka* was broadcasted live, the spectators were able to observe a sunrise in some remote Japanese island, whereas in other parts of the world (e.g. Finland, Jyväskylä, on November the 22nd 2009 at 23:04 EET) it was a pitch black night; and because of this fact, the unrepeatable feeling of here-and-now was even stronger. The event of *Nipponnikka* was happening at exactly that particular time and at exactly that particular place, whereas the video is only an archive of what has already happened in Minami Torishima on November the 23rd 2009 at 6:04 JST, and won't happen again; also the posts of Twitter cannot create the anticipation again as the event has already happened. A personal blog, on the other hand, reflects the here-and-now in the user, too. I compare an individual access of a personal blogger's post to an intimate event, which happens in a one-to-one relationship; this is the *dynamic of the one who observes*. When the user accesses a new personal blogger's post, the event happens: the personal blogger, as Grishkovets, starts to tell her or his story directly to the user. Furthermore, the blogger can also create anticipation with a post, or even a series of posts, that precede an event in blogger's life; here it is on the blogger to decide how much importance would she or he put on the event itself, thus evoking more or less interest in the reader. In Irena's case that is, for example, a trip to Stockholm. Irena published five posts considering her touristic trip to Sweden's capital in spring 2011, whereas the first post (*Štokholm! [Stockholm!]*) was an excited announcement about her trip, and the four posts that followed (*Štokholmijada [Stockholmiade]*, *Stockholm z vilico in nožem v roki [Stockholm with knife and fork]*, *Na stockholmskih ulicah [On the streets of Stockholm]* and *Hej hej, tack tack*) were full of Irena's impressions and thoughts about the country and the city she has visited (food, fashion etc.).

Finally, when the relationship between the reader and the blogger is considered, there is an important element that has to be pointed out – *interactivity*. The theatrical gap between the reader and the blogger is created, yet the two worlds are not entirely separated; moreover, within blogs, communication, reflection or just any kind of feedback from the reader is actually desired. "People who are participating in the representation aren't audience members anymore. It's not that the audience joins the actors on stage. It's that they *become* actors and the notion of passive observers

disappears” (Laurel, 1999, 17); I will more deeply consider the blogger-reader relationship and its forms in the chapter 3.2. Anyhow, this active observer Brenda Laurel writes about is also a significant characteristic of postdramatic theatre; the concept of an active spectator has, however, emerged already with Bertold Brecht in early thirties of the last century. Contemporary postdramatic theatre art requires an (inter)active spectator as well. If Brecht’s epic theatre was about breaking the fourth wall, direct talk of the actors to the spectators and songs interrupting theatrical illusion, then contemporary postdramatic theatre reaches even further as the spectator is sometimes also confronted with an action. In a performance *Q&A- Very Private, Very Public!* (Ljubljana, 2001) by Slovenian theatre director Emil Hrvatin, a chosen spectator was addressed to sit on the stage and to write down her or his thoughts; later, the performer asked the spectator to read the thoughts she or he has wrote down. Furthermore, the performer asked a spectator to massage her back, and as other spectators watched these actions, the spectator thus became a performer as well.



Image 15: *Very Private, Very Public*, director Emil Hrvatin, 2001. [Image retrieved from <http://www.maska.si/sl/?redirect=153> , September 2011.]

In Dragan Živadinov’s *Biomehanika Noordung* (*Biomechanics Noordung*, 1999), the performance happened in an aircraft above Star City in Russia that simulated moments of zero-gravity and thus the bodies of performers as well as the spectators were floating together for a few seconds; the particular aircraft, however, was originally used to train cosmonauts.



Image 16: *Biomechanics Noordung*, director Dragan Živadinov, 1999. [Image retrieved from <http://www.proneon.si/reklamni-napisi/proneon-art/galerija-1/>, September 2011.]

Such technical extremes do not happen in personal blogging, yet the reader, too, has an option to obtain a profile and to comment openly on the posts the personal blogger produce; the blogger and the reader can equally affect the perception of the following readers, and change the initial impression of the particular post. What happens is a dialog and both, the blogger and the reader, are *performing* together. “Since all action is confined to the world of the representation, all agents are situated in the same context, have access to the same objects, and speak the same language,” suggests Brenda Laurel (1999, 18). Additionally, the personal blogger can directly address her or his audience with the style of the post itself. Nihrida always asks the opinion of her readers on a particular subject at the end of her posts, especially if she writes about cosmetic products, whereas Irena regularly posts a quiz, including a photo of some celebrity, asking her readers to guess who the chosen celebrity is. Moreover, when Irena writes personal posts, she addresses her reader in second person singular; Slovene language differs between a singular and a plural grammatical form of *you*. Hence, Irena builds an intimate one-to-one relationship between her and her reader. The audience, however, is engaged also by bloggers other than personal: many beauty bloggers often organise a *give-away*. They ask the readers to participate in a draw (usually conducted with a special application forms on the blog), and the reward of this raffle can be bottles of nail polish or other cosmetic products. Even personal bloggers can organise such interactive contests. In winter 2010, Alcessa has asked her readers to suggest her television series she could watch with her husband, and the one who had suggested a series Alcessa and her husband found interesting to watch next, won a necklace made by the blogger

herself; the winner was also able to choose the necklace she or he liked best on the basis of a photo of the products.

To conclude the theoretical outline of my conceptual framework, I must point out again that a personal blog *does not* directly represent either theatre art or its subculture performance art. On the other hand, a personal blog's structure and function include enough theatrical tactics, which are able to push the personal blog's performative potentials further into the field of theatre art. First of all, personal blogs do produce theatricality as a gap between the blogger and the reader is created. The personal blog is as Peter Brook¹⁸'s *empty space*: the blogger walks (writes, talks) in it, and the reader observes. Second, with the example of Štromajer's *Ballettikka Internettikka Nipponnikka* I wanted to explore the grounds and possibilities for the remediation of theatre art, which occurs within digital media. In my opinion, the remediation of theatre art within in digital media (the computer and the Internet) is present, yet subtle and sometimes unintended; here, I followed Brenda Laurel, who suggested that computers remediate theatre already in 1991. However, if I consider personal blogs, theatre art in them occurs as a *remediated autobiographical performance*. Furthermore, with other practical theatrical examples I wanted to outline similar characteristics between theatre art and personal blogging. Observing personal blogs through the definition of a postdramatic theatre art, remediated theatre and, finally, remediated autobiographical performance, is just one possible framework for the examination of the personal blogging-phenomenon; and certainly this particular framework is not the only one when considering the analysis of personal blogs. In the chapters yet to follow the analysis of personal blogs through the concept of (postdramatic) theatre art and autobiographical performance will continue with the examination of the representation of the blogger, the actor, and of the representation of the reader, the (interactive) spectator.

¹⁸ Peter Brook (1925) is a British theatre director and an innovator of theatrical language. He published the book *The Empty Space* about his approaches to theatre art in 1968.

3. PERSONAL BLOGS AND BLOGGERS AS THEATRE AND THE ACTORS

3.1. THE BLOGGER: THE PERFORMANCE OF SELF

To be is to be perceived.

To be is to be seen.

(Portela, 2003, 24)

Considering an individual's *self* within digital media, Bolter and Grusin (2002, 231) write that "new media offer new opportunities for self-definition /.../." Within their discussion of these new media the authors, though, mention neither personal nor any other kind of blogs, yet they offer a good starting point when bearing in mind a personal blogger's presentation of *the self*. First of all, a personal blogger's self is, if I keep following Bolter and Grusin, *a remediated self*. It is the self, which is redefined and represented through another media; the self, which is reconstructed on a personal blog. "The remediated self is also evident in "virtual communities" on the Internet, in which individuals stake out and occupy verbal and visual points of view through textual and graphic manifestations /.../" (Bolter and Grusin, 2002, 232). On the Internet, if I consider, for example, at least individual's online discussion forums participation, the user does not appear in her or his *physical* form; her or his appearance is limited on words and images. In the case of personal blogs, the blogger's self is remediated and reconstructed through the user's blog, the platform the chosen blog provider enables. This remediation in personal blogs is, in my opinion, yet a more complex phenomenon. A personal blogger has to produce her or his *overall representation* on the Internet. The user's self is not only remediated to an online existence evident in virtual communities (forums): a general forum participator chooses an avatar¹⁹ and a nickname, whereas a personal blogger has to choose a more significant approach for her or his online existence. A personal blogger has to conduct the complete structure of a personal blog. This structure, however, also includes an avatar and a nickname, yet a personal blogger

¹⁹ In digital culture, an avatar is the graphical representation of the user, usually displayed as an image (icon) in online forums etc., or in a 3D format (virtual worlds). However, when I use the term avatar, I am signifying the iconic (2D) avatars.

must select carefully what would draw the attention of the readers. According to Leo Babauta and his article *7 Essential Things You Should Be Doing When Your Blog Is Still Young* (2008), a blogger has to, among other things, *create a great brand*. Babauta points out how important the personal brand actually is:

When you first create your blog, you should think a bit about the brand you're going to create. When you create a brand, you are sending an unspoken message. What unspoken message do you want to send? Start by defining your target audience, then by figuring out what desires you will tap into. Then craft an unspoken message that will be true to yourself while tapping into those desires. Use that unspoken message to craft your brand (the title of your blog) as well as everything else you do, from blog design to post topics to the tone you write with and more. (ibid.)



Image 17: Alcessa's personal brand – the moose. [Image captured from <http://alcessa.wordpress.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]



Image 18: Nihrida's personal brand – her eye and her nails (Nihrida herself). [Image captured from <http://www.nihrida.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Babauta, on the other hand, writes about blogs in general, yet his suggestions can be applied on personal blogs as well. A personal blog and its brand are the blogger's own personal space, a reflection of her or his interests, activities – and a reflection of her or his individual life. If an individual wants to be seen, to be noticed as a (personal) blogger, she or he has to, so Babauta, work carefully on her or his online presentation. This presentation, however, does not include only a good brand: Babauta points out the importance of *amazing and useful content*. How amazing and how useful the content is finally depends on the readers of a particular personal blog, for there is no such thing as an absolute taste and general liking. Anyhow, the creation of a personal blog (the brand and the content) can be perceived as an embodiment of the personal blogger's self on the Internet. A personal blog is therefore a redefined individual's self, but this redefinition is not only about reconstruction: it is even more about *construction* of an individual's self. Or the self she or he would like to be. Hence, the creation of a personal blog is similar to building a personal web-page, if not even identical. Zizi Papacharissi, who is considering the presentation of self in virtual life on the basis of a personal home page, claims that “the Web page creator executes a carefully controlled performance through which self presentation is achieved under optimal conditions” (2002). In the previous chapter, I have outlined a general framework through which I observe personal blogs as *a remediated autobiographical performance*. Nevertheless the performance of a personal blogger is closer to fiction than the actual autobiographical performance, which occurs within theatre art. On a metaphorical level, I understand the replacement of one's *authentic self* into *represented self*, when considering personal blogs, similar to the creation of a fictive character in a Western theatre play. The process, through which a personal blogger goes when constructing her or his online version, is similar to the actor on stage, interpreting a character from a theatre play. Here is, though, also a paradox for an autobiographical performance should disclose its author's *actual* and not *fictional* characteristics, events, actions etc. On the other hand, as outlined in the previous chapter, the act of theatrical replacement is present *always* when the actor conducts an action and the spectator observes. The performer in an autobiographical performance creates a spatial gap between her or his observers, too; the gap where emerges theatricality. In my opinion, however, there are several different levels of theatricality: these levels reach from *autobiographical* (the real or the most authentic) towards *fiction*, where I would place traditional Western theatre plays. Digital media, the computer and the Internet, are an environment that offers the user many

opportunities for experimenting with her or his identity and the self. “In general, the freedom to be oneself is the freedom to become someone (or something) else,” write Bolter and Grusin (2002, 247). Or as stated by Zizi Papacharissi: “The anonymous and textual nature of cyberspace allows one to overcome identity fixes, such as gender, looks, and disabilities” (2002). Finally, Mia Vatka, too, proposes the possible fictional creation of an individual’s virtual self within an Internet diary:

Internet-päiväkirjojen kirjoittajat saattavatkin virittää jo aiemmin viitatus dramaturgisen toiminnan äärimmilleen virtuaalista kertojahahmon loudessaan. Selvimmin tämä ilmenee Internet-päiväkirjoissa, joissa kirjoittaja antaa kertojahahmolleen omasta itsestään poikkeavan nimen.

[When it comes to creating a virtual telling character, Internet diarists can push their ideas to the outermost limits of their already mentioned dramaturgical action. This can be clearly seen especially in those Internet diaries, where the writer gives the telling character a name very different than her or his own.]

(2005, 230)

Considering an individual’s performance in public, Erwin Goffman in his text *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* researched the individual’s behaviour when confronted with other individuals by using dramaturgical terms. Thus, he applied theatrical elements into a research considering an individual’s behaviour in everyday life.

A “performance” may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. Taking a particular participant and his performance as basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants. The pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions may be called a “part” or “routine.” (Goffman, 1990, 32).

Goffman’s text might be considered out dated as it reaches as far as into the year 1959 – but it does offer thoughts, which are applicable when dealing with an individual’s

performance in a personal blog. Both Papacharissi and Shaap, have also applied Goffman's thoughts on her discussion considering the presentation of self within either personal home pages (Papacharissi) or Dutch personal blogs (Shaap). Considering individual's presentation of self within a personal blog, Goffman points out an important fact: there is the *front* and there is the *backstage* of the individual's performance of self. The front is what the individual discloses to her or his audience; the back is what remains hidden and closed to the public. Along with Goffman (1990, 83) “/.../ we often find that the personal front of the performer is employed not so much because it allows him to present himself as he would like to appear, but because his appearance and manner can do something for a scene of wider scope,” whereas the backstage is the place where “illusions and impressions are openly constructed” (ibid.114). What a personal blogger offers to her or his readers is *only the front*. This front can be manipulated so that it attracts the particular targeted audience; Babauta would label this manipulation as producing *an amazing and useful content*. Yet as in Goffman's perception of the performance of self, in personal blogging as well the backstage remains hidden. What the three personal bloggers Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa disclose to the public and what attracts their audience, is still *nothing but the front*. “Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance,” claims Goffman (ibid.32). Moreover, Goffman suggests that an individual's front is performed always on one place. Goffman labels this place as a setting, which is another dramaturgical term, meaning the set design on the stage, produced for a particular play. From this point of view, a personal blog is equal to the one and constant spot, where an individual's performance takes place – similar to a theatre stage with a set design. A personal blogger can be the self she or he performs *only* within the given framework, the brand of her or his blog. There, the individual's presentation can be broadly supported by modes other than textual (e.g. images and other visual design, music, video). An individual's personal blog is thus also the individual's *setting*. According to Papacharissi (2002), the individual has maximal option to control the information disclosed to the others; a personal home page (or in this case a personal blog) is an ideal setting for the individual's information game. As the remediation of the self through the means of the Internet, however, enables at least a change of gender and looks, the personal blogger's front acts even more ambiguous than the front of an analogue everyday life. Individual's backstage would remain always hidden. Goffman even

suggests that the audience is actually aware of the nature of the performance and “/.../ they know the definition of the situation of the performance fosters but do not have destructive information about it” (1990, 144). This definition is comparable to the audience in the theatre. Either if theatrical audience came for a traditional Western play or a postdramatic performance, the audience is aware of the fact that *this is just theatre art*. Yet in personal blogs, the content should be authentic, a product of a real person in the backstage of a personal blog. When I am considering personal blogs and the presentation of their bloggers, this question of actual authenticity is always present. Alice E. Marwick and Danah Boyd, on the other hand, offer a possibility how to deal with the same question of authenticity when they analyse personal posts on Twitter: “We are interested not in an absolute sense of authenticity, but in what Tweeter consider ‘authentic’” (2010, 6). Or as Goffman points out: “/.../ Performer may be taken in by his own act convinced at the moment that the impression of reality which he fosters is the one and only reality.” (1990, 86) In this chapter I will thus explore the representation of personal bloggers within their blogs. At this point I will not state a question how authentic they are; I will observe just *the presented front* the three selected personal bloggers Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa offer, thus outlining the individual’s performance as conducted in a personal blog. The presented front is the only truth a reader/the audience of a personal blogger would know. As such, it is becoming an autobiographical performance, regardless all speculations considering false images, gender, age etc. For what is disclosed on a setting of a personal blog, can feel very intimate and *very real* after all.

Goffman suggests that an individual’s identity is actually a result of a constant performance before other individuals: “I have been using the term *performance* to refer to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (1990, 32). This is more than characteristic for personal blogging, where an individual, the blogger, needs constant posting to sustain her or his presence in the (personal) blogosphere. Goffman, however, points out also how an individual would dramatically highlight and portray the facts that might otherwise remain obscure. (ibid.40). In case of personal blogs, not only some general facts are brought to the surface – but a whole individual’s life, or at least those bits of a personal blogger’s life that she or he decides to reveal to the public. The first, the initial presentation of the self

of a personal blogger is already the text she or he writes about her or himself under the *About Me* or any other similar option that various blog providers enable for their users. There, the personal blogger points out those characteristics she or he finds vital for the initial presentation, for the first impression (which might be the most important as well). The option in Blogger, for example, discloses even the blogger's gender, astrological sign, industry (occupation), location and other interest like favourite movies, music and books. The personal blogger can write more or less about her or him:

Welcome to my blog! Here are some of my interests: animals, nail polish, nature, cosmetics, drawing, vampires and other weird stuff. If you have any questions or requests, feel free to contact me.

(Nihrida in *About Me* on the blog Nihrida)

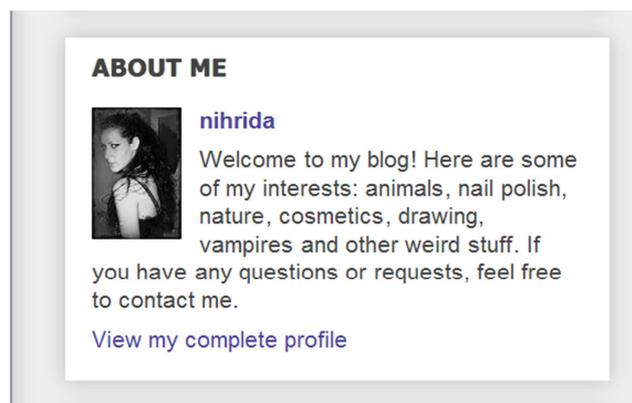


Image 19: A short representation of Nihrida and her avatar on her blog. [Image captured from <http://www.nihrida.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Alcessa represents herself and titles the short presentation on the sidebar *Alcessa Is*, and continues:

...an eldBEEPerly Slovenian lady moose on the loose in Germany:

been ruralizing, munching, musing, playing, hiding, seeking and other dangerous stuff here and, gosh, do I love it.

In addition to this short presentation, Alcessa also has a separate page on her blog titled *Alcessa?* where she through five facts explains even more about the purpose of her blog:

An elk/a moose is a lonely wolf, a wise owl, a bull in a china shop, a barking dog, a proud peacock.

Ein Elch geht auf keine Kuhhaut.

Nemo alcessa in patria.

Los je los.

Varokaa hirviä!

Of course it isn't a coincidence that this blog is reigned by the King of the Northern Forests: Moose (Europe: elk) are shy animals, preferring dusk to daylight, but are also known to appear in your living room all of a sudden, feasting on your apples and getting unbelievably drunk and wasting much of your time. Surely you know it's all because they also have communication needs, in spite of all the silent, lonely grass-munching going on in secret places that occupies most of their time. Our time.

(Alcessa, *Fact One*, subpage Alcessa? of the blog Moosings)



Image 20: A short presentation of Alcessa on her blog. [Image captured from <http://alcessa.wordpress.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Irena, on the other hand, is more ambiguous. She does not choose to disclose anything in the initial presentation and she does not choose to publish *About Me* (or some similar) option. The only representation about Irena would thus be her blog's tagline "*Smell like*

you mean it,” which again feels more or less ambiguous. Some further research considering Irena’s tagline shows that *Smell like you mean it* is actually a song by American Indie rock band The Killers. Does that mean that Irena likes this particular band? Perhaps, but the blogger, however, discloses the most about herself through her posts.



Image 21: The presentation/the brand of the blogger Irena on her blog *Irena Sirena*.

[Image captured from <http://irena.blog.siol.net/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Irena’s representative action of not choosing to write a short “About Me” section points out that the strongest and the most representative movements within personal blogs are, after all, the posts. Personal blogs, especially the posts, offer a possibility for *theatricalization of the self*. Patrice Pavis (1998, 394) explains theatricalization: “To theatricalize an event or a text is to interpreting on stage using stage design and the actors, who present the situation.” As a personal blogger’s action on her or his blog is considered to be a remediated autobiographical performance, then a personal blogger conducts *remediated theatricalization* as well. A personal blogger interprets her or his situation within a personal blog, using the infrastructure the blog enables. A stage design is the blog’s platform; an actor is the personal blogger. One of the mayor theatrical themes in Nihrida’s personal posts is health problems and depression. Within those posts, she often places herself into a role of a suffering individual; Nihrida, however, never discloses her actual intention behind the post, does she seek for compassion or not. She just takes her private stage of her blog and tells about her bad health, nightmares and mood swings. She conducts a similar action as an autobiographical performer in theatre art would do: she steps in front of the audience and talks openly about some very intimate details concerning her life. The language

Nihrida uses is not very skilled, her English is neither good nor bad, and she does not avoid swearing. On the other hand, her language is highly descriptive, lively and full of anticipation; her personal posts burst from action, she knows how to use suspense – and thus she knows how to hold her audience’s attention. The particular post is also dramatically illustrated with a detailed photo of the marks an ECG test has left on Nihrida’s shoulder (image 22).

My tonsils swelled, I got a massive headache, pain in my joints and fever. OK, I can handle that. Then came the sickness. After kneeling in front of the porcelain throne (aka the toilet) for a few minutes, I wanted to get up and take my meds... and everything got blank. I can remember opening my eyes, seeing the tiles and I felt just so sick, like never before in my life. It was a mess of heat flashes, dizziness, sickness... I was confused and couldn't move. All I could do was call my mother... and it got _____ again. Then I remember my mother holding me, my father calling the ambulance and I thought I was gonna die. Well, not really die, but close enough. I could smell the dirt... but maybe that was because I was lying on the floor. (Nihrida, *Move on... Nothing to See Here*, June 16 2011)



Image 22: The marks from an ECG test on Nihrida’s shoulder. [Image captured from <http://www.nihrida.com/2011/06/move-on-nothing-to-see-here.html> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Considering actual images the bloggers select when performing their self, among the three analysed personal bloggers, Nihrida is also the most outspoken. As her blog is partly a make-up blog, Nihrida is not afraid to post photographs of her; furthermore, she includes photographs into her personal posts, too. When Nihrida writes about make-up, she would disclose only some parts of her body, an eye with an eye shadow or a hand with painted nails, but within her personal posts she is not afraid to show her entire image – or even a close-up in a bathing suit as depicted on image 23. She does not hide, she has no secrets as well as she also posts images that show her sleepy, with no make-up and with messy hair (image 25). A regular reader of Nihrida’s blog could recognize her on the street easily; finally, Nihrida’s avatar is a portrait of the blog’s author. Along with her posts about suffering from depression, occasional illnesses and additional photographs of Nihrida as a young girl in her twenties, she creates an impression of a fragile, sensitive beauty. The character of Nihrida is a suffering, yet compassionate young woman with modelesque features: according to Western standards for beauty (generally speaking), Nihrida resembles an ideal image of a young Western women. She is tall, slim, with white skin, long dark hair and grey eyes. According to how often she posts her photographs, Nihrida seems to be aware of her beauty attributes (even when she is sleepy and does not wear make-up). She knows how to dress as she posts photos of her outfits as well, and she knows how to apply various make-ups (image 24).



Image 23: Nihrida displaying herself in a bikini. [Image captured from <http://www.nihrida.com/2011/08/novigrad-cittanova-pt-ii.html> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]



Image 24: Nihrida displaying her outfit and a river in Slovenia (Logarska dolina).
[Image captured from <http://www.nihrida.com/2011/06/trip-to-logarska-dolina.html> by
Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Furthermore, Nihrida presents herself as an empathetic towards her family and especially towards animals. Her favourite animal is cat, and she points this fact out very often.



Image 25: Nihrida's morning picture with her cat. [Image captured from
<http://www.nihrida.com/2011/02/its-good-to-be-home.html> by Martina Siler in
September 2011.]

On the other hand, Nihrida does not mention her studies, apart from some random facts that she has not graduated yet. These hidden bits of her life, Nihrida's *backstage*, might, if I include a speculation, ruin the impression she is offering to her audience/the readers. She appears to be old enough to hold a degree and to work, but regardless her very personal posts, she avoids this theme. Nihrida discloses more about her qualities than her actual disabilities (or what the audience might understand as a disability). Even if depression would be a weakness or something embarrassing in contemporary Western culture, she is observing it from as an attractive feature. Nevertheless some iconic names and idols of the generation born within the eighties (the generation of Nihrida, too) had suffered from depression, for example a musician Kurt Cobain,²⁰ who was generally popular among Slovene teenagers during the nineties. Young depressed and suicidal heroes have always been attractive, if I only consider Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*²¹ from 1774. " /.../ We often find that the personal front of the performer is employed not so much because it allows him to present himself as he would like to appear but because his appearance and manner can do something for a scene of wider scope," concludes Goffman (1990,83). Depression is also a spectacle.

I was at the doctor today. My little pills are causing me a lot of trouble. Not only are they not helping with my depression, they're also the one reason for my tachycardia. I need to change them now. And I was warned by my doctor there's a chance of something going wrong if we aren't careful when doing that. Great! That's really what I need. Prescription drugs rehab.

(Nihrida, *Terrified*, 10.4. 2010)

I got new medications (one for my depression and one to help me with my nightmares). Look at my pretty new pills! I wonder if these are also bitter...

(Nihrida, *Shrinks and Pills*, 14.4.2010)

Every single day was/is the same. Wake up, eat to live, live to eat, blog a little and go to bed. And those terrible headaches if I accidentally forgot to take my

²⁰ Kurt Cobain (1967 – 1994) was a lead singer, guitarist, and a songwriter of the American grunge band Nirvana (1987 – 1994). Cobain also suffered from depression (e.g. his song *Lithium*) and finally committed a suicide.

²¹ The novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe written in 1774 was so popular that some of the readers did the same suicide as Goethe's hero Werther, suffering and depressed because of an unhappy love, does in the novel.

meds... I miss my ups and downs. I miss being able to cry. I miss not being a zombie. And most of all I miss being genuinely happy.

(Nihrida, *This Is Not Me Anymore*, 16.7.2011)

If Nihrida is theatrically outspoken, Irena, on the other hand, discloses more about her feelings and inner thoughts. She is more refined; as she writes in Slovenian, she uses high language that is sometimes also poetic, and even if she uses more colloquial expressions, she still keeps her language on a high level. She is also not afraid to make up new words (e.g. *foodgasm* for a very good meal). Overall, Irena uses metaphors and plays with words skilfully – as a skilled playwright would write a monologue to one of her or his characters. In comparison to Nihrida, Irena does not publish photos of herself; or actually she does, but she would never reveal her face. She only shows her face (or an artistic image of it) within her blog's brand; she also displays her face in her avatar, yet again she does not show a whole image. Otherwise Irena discloses only her back, her shoes, a part of her hair and such other details, yet she does not appear in total (images 26 and 27). She is interested into fashion as she often posts images of celebrities and their outfits, but she would never publish her daily outfit (only clothes she would buy).



Image 26: Irena is displaying a part of her body and her dress. [Image captured from <http://irena.blog.siol.net/2011/06/12/neracionalno/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]



Image 27: Irena displaying a part of her body. [Image captured from <http://irena.blog.sirol.net/2011/09/07/antistres-terapija/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Irena's avatar, however, is a photo of a young woman, her face shown from nose up, wearing a pair of black bunny ears with lace (image 28). Nevertheless a regular reader of Irena's blog would know that the bunny ears were a gift of Irena's sister, who brought them from Japan.

Težko razložim svoje navdušenje, ampak čipkasta zajčja ušesa so ravno prav zapozneli funny fashion thing, ki ravno prav nagovarja mojo silly stran in je ravno pravšnja doza kiča, ki ga rabim v življenju. Ja!

[I can hardly explain my excitement, but bunny ears with lace are just the proper late funny fashion thing. They show just the right amount of my silly side and they are just the right amount of kitsch I need in my life. Yes!].

(Irena, *Bunny games*, 28 October 2010)



Image 28: Irena's avatar image. [Image retrieved from <http://irena.blog.sirol.net/2010/10/28/bunny-games/> in September 2011.]

In relation to the avatar image, Irena's character obtains more playful characteristics; the blogger thus displays a hint of self-irony. On the other hand, Irena's character does hide a lot of other everyday details. Irena, for example, never tells openly if she is in a relationship or not; she includes only some hints every now and then. Thus, Irena's character is more ambiguous – and, on the other hand, this is what can trig more curiosity from her readers. Irena's audience can picture their character's entire image for themselves for she does not offer any details on her height, weight, colour of her eyes etc. In this context, Irena's character is less theatrical and more narrative; in comparison to Nihrida, Irena's posts include less action and more reflection. However, an autobiographical performance within postdramatic theatre can also appear as disclosing only a performer's personal reflections. Irena's posts are, in general, well written inner and intimate monologues. She writes in a fluent Slovene, sometimes adding English titles or separate words (e.g. the post *Bunny games*), yet these foreign words appear as A slang to a native Slovene, thus moving Irena's posts closer to a live speech. Irena's style of performing within her blog is close to autobiographical performances by Grishkovets. Irena is always the central character in her posts, reflecting what other people think of her (or what she thinks the others think of her), reflecting what is happening around her, reflecting her feelings regarding a specific topic. There is the world outside, and there is Irena; two different actors, but the only one who speaks is Irena. Her point of view is the only approach to a certain theme a reader can get in her posts; after all, the blog is Irena's own.

Očitno sem spet v obdobju, ko imam raje samo enega človeka, ne družbo večih. Ljudje se obnašajo drugače, ko so sami. Pri več ljudeh naenkrat se izgubim. Saj včasih je to dobro, včasih ni. Ljudje, ki so me že navajeni, me ne jemljejo več resno. Pogruntali so me in me ne jemljejo več resno.

[It seems I am again in that period when I like only one person, not a whole big bunch. People behave differently when they are alone. If there are more people, I get lost. Well, that's sometimes good, but sometimes it is not. Those people that know me do not take me seriously anymore. They have figured me out and they don't take me seriously any longer.]

(Irena, *Tedenska diareja* [*Weekly diarrhoea*], 30.4. 2011)

Niti ene stvari v stanovanju ni, ki bi jo razdevičila jaz. Niti ene stvari, ki bi jo jaz prva uporabila, odvila, poškodovala, priključila. Niti ene. In jaz sem oseba, ki še časopis rada bere prva, brezmadežen in poravnan.

[There is nothing in this apartment that would be deflowered by me. Not a single thing that I would use the first that I would open the first, damage the first, turn on the first. Not a single thing. And I am a person, who likes to be the first in the house to read the newspaper, all fresh, clean and untouched.]

(Irena, *Tako novo, tako okrnjeno* [*So New, So Damaged*], 27.7.2011)

Ker nimam izpita in ker mi gre na živce tuje pametovanje o tem, kako nujno potreben je izpit za avto ter sem na sploh vsa čudna in manjvredna, ker nimam izpita, to avtomatično pomeni, da se mi zdi izpit nepotreben košček papirja. Super logika.

[Because I don't own a driving licence plus I'm annoyed by other people's words how one actually needs a driving licence and I am obviously all weird and worthless since I don't have this licence, that all automatically means I consider the licence as a useless piece of paper. Great logic.]

(Irena, *Tedenska diareja* [*Weekly diarrhoea*], 27.8.2011)

Irena is highlighting those characteristics that could be, from her point of view, considered as weird, unusual (e.g. how she avoids bigger groups of people). As Nihrida, Irena as well turns even possible disabilities and social disadvantages into special, interesting characteristics (e.g. the fact she does not own a driving licence and she does not want one). Irena performs as a unique, self-confident individual, yet in comparison to Nihrida, she adds self-ironic tones when she considers herself as a victim (e.g. how people don't take her seriously and how she wants even her newspapers untouched).

Lastly, Alcessa is the most rational writer among the three chosen bloggers. She also writes about her reflections and feelings of the outer world, yet she does not burst out as Nihrida or she is not as intimate as Irena can be. Alcessa's blog is a collection of her hobbies, like vegetarian cooking, sewing and other handcrafting; furthermore, she writes about her trips, rowing (kayaking) and birdwatching. Alcessa adds also thoughts connected to various political and other general events, sometimes very brief, sometimes longer (e.g. regional election winning of the Green party in German Baden-

Württemberg, March 2011). The specific of Alcessa's blog is that she writes in (at least) three languages, whereas Nihrida and Irena write either only in her second language English (Nihrida) or only in her native Slovene (Irena). Alcessa, however, writes in German, English and Slovene, thus targeting much broader spectre of the readers; as she learns French, she every now and then writes in this language, too. As a translator and linguist, Alcessa is making this fact very obvious – through many languages she uses within her blog as well as considering themes of her posts. And according to the writer herself, her blog has to be written in more than one language:

Fact Three: This blog is multilingual because its Moose is unable to use only one language: she definitely needs German to philosophize about the Meaning of Life, she needs her mother tongue, Slovenian, to be Honest, and she needs English to say all those Fancy Things that need to be said and also to talk to some really funny people out there. She is aware that she will occasionally put her hoof into it, grammatically or otherwise. But such is life.

(Alcessa, *Fact Three*, subpage Alcessa? of the blog Moosings)

Furthermore, Alcessa uses high language and in comparison to Nihrida and Irena, she is the most skilled writer. Alcessa's posts sometimes offer an impression of short stories, yet on the other hand she knows how to capture action – and suspense.

I unscrew the bottle cap without paying attention and the next moment the water goes “bzzzzzzzt”, I go “aaaaaaahhhhhh” and my husband is looking at me, all wet. He's also obviously dying of laughter, everyone else on the bus is giggling their heads off and I am laughing with them as soon as I realize what has just happened. I can't believe I have just made a whole bus full of Finns giggle like crazy. And my poor wet husband, too. All because there was too much gas in my water bottle on a really hot day in a crowded bus leaving the Vuosaari Harbour...

(Alcessa, *How I Found Out I Liked The Finns*, 25.8.2011)

As the other two personal bloggers Nihrida and Irena, Alcessa is the central character within her posts. She often writes about her husband (whom she obviously likes a lot), yet he is never a main character, but always her “partner in crime.”

On Saturday, we went cycling to France again, but this time we added some 10 kilometres and we ate *Flammkuchen* in Seltz. Everything else was as gorgeous and beautiful and wonderful as last Saturday. *sigh*

On Sunday, we cooked together. Well, we pretended we were chefs exercising our haute cuisine skills or something. Pictures to be published soon.

And yesterday, we went paddling. Yes, we went paddling on a Monday, hoping everyone else will stay at home and let us crawl along the small lake undisturbed. Well, you cannot keep windsurfers at home on a day like this, but otherwise, we were quite alone ...

(Alcessa, I Don't Care If Monday is Blue, 13.9.2011)

In the context of theatre art, Alcessa is, as Grishkovets, an excellent teller; even more as she uses a lot of wit and self-irony. Thus, her style of blogging is close to a stand-up comedy form, another theatrical genre. In a stand-up comedy, the performer performs her or his stories or anecdotes in front of a live audience; the venue does not need to be a theatre. When performing their entertainment show, stand-up comedians can also ironically blend their personal life into the gigs.

Sem preneumna, da bi lahko stopila čez prag balkona. Po novem čez prag poletim, palec na nogi se mi zatakne za rob, copata mi pritiska na ostale prste, z rokami trdo pristanem na ploščicah v kuhinji in skoraj preobrnem dve kišti z brezalkoholnim pivom.

Fu.

[I am too stupid to cross the balcony's threshold. From now on I can fly over the threshold, my big toe gets stuck under it, my slipper squeezes all the other toes, with my hands I make a hard landing on the kitchen tiles and I almost knock over two crates of non-alcoholic beer.

Fu.] (Alcessa, *Izjava za javnost [Public Statement]*, 2.9.2011)

Bearing in mind actual images of the blogger, Alcessa's avatar is carefully selected in her blog's brand spirit – the moose (image 29). However, among the three personal bloggers observed within this paper, Alcessa has the best developed and the most recognizable brand. The overall theme of her blog, from the title of the blog, *Moosings*, to the blogger's nickname and an avatar create a synchronized and a significant whole.



Image 29: Alcessa's avatar. [Image retrieved from <http://en.gravatar.com/alcessa> in September 2011.]

In other personal images, Alcessa chooses rather not to disclose herself – at least not completely. As Irena, Alcessa too displays just some parts of her body, for example her back, haircut, or a part of her face (images 30, 31 and 32). She rather remains (relatively) hidden, thus offering more imagination to her readers/the audience.



Image 30: Alcessa on her profile. [Image captured from <http://alcessa.wordpress.com> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]



Image 31: Alcessa's photo of her birdwatching. [Image captured from <http://alcessa.wordpress.com/2010/02/page/2> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

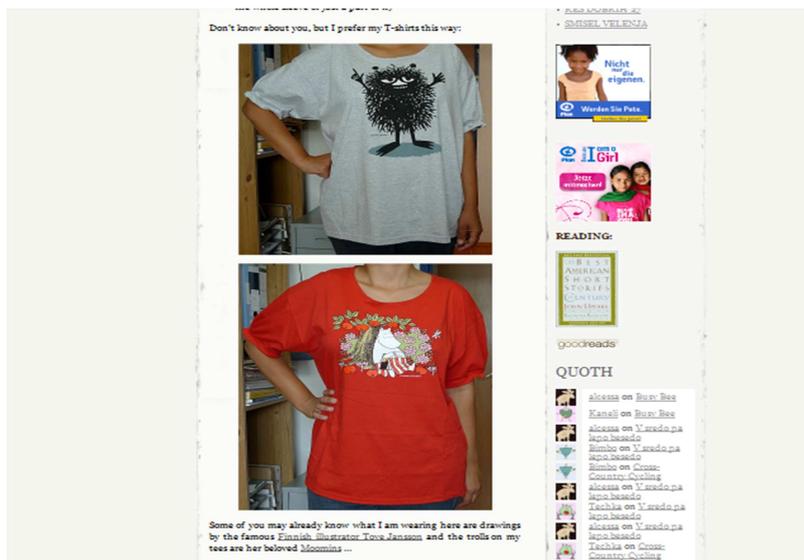


Image 32: Alcessa's photo of her refashioned Moomin T-shirts. [Image captured from <http://alcessa.wordpress.com/2011/07/30/a-good-tourists-re-fashion/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Through the observation of the presentation of self the three chosen bloggers Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa conduct, I would point out Nihrida to be the most performative. This fact does not, however, consider her posts, her text: Nihrida is the only one who actually posts images of herself. A lot of photographs, and very detailed. The posting of her personal images, not hiding her face or her body, brings Nihrida closer to an actual autobiographical performance, where a performer stands in front of her or his audience undisguised. Nihrida shares not only her intimate stories about depression; she also does

not hide behind the possibilities of the anonymous nature of the Internet. Irena and Alcessa, in contrast, are examples of personal bloggers, who do use images – yet on a subtle way. They do not disclose their whole body image; they prefer to stay hidden or to show only some parts of themselves. Furthermore, these two bloggers do include personal images, but these pictures are in most cases photographs of their apartments, from their trips, or of the things they have either bought or made. In all three blogs, though, posts are not built around an image as it usually happens in make-up, fashion or hobby blogs. When Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa write their most personal posts, all three writers add images as an additional illustration (image 33). The images thus correspond with posts on the level of additional clarification and illustration for the reader. Irena and Alcessa often publish posts without images; Nihrida, on the other hand, is a very visual personal blogger.

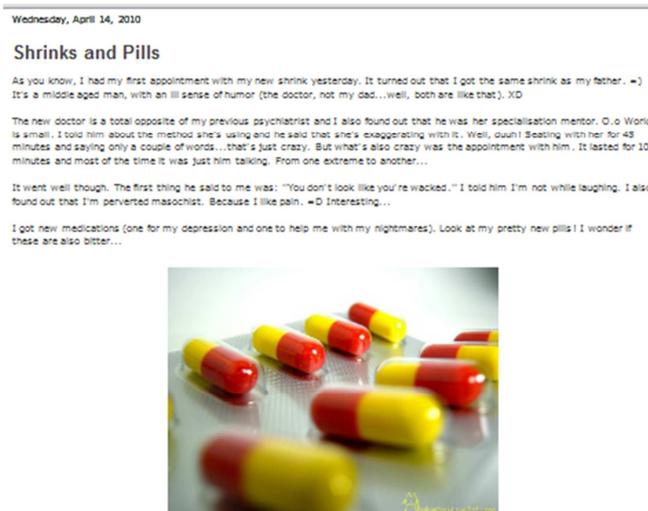


Image 33: Nihrida's photo of pills in addition to her post about depression. [Image captured from <http://www.nihrida.com/2010/04/shrinks-and-pills.html> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

The autobiographical performance that occurs in personal blogs is, however, a remediated performance; as such, it does not necessarily require complete images. A remediated media would follow the older original – but finally, it would become a more or less independent *new media* itself. If an autobiographical performance, which occurs in theatre art, requires a live presence of the performer's body, then a remediated autobiographical performance within a personal blog firstly requires *a performative text*. Posts full of action, a suffering character (Nihrida), intimate monologues, bitter self-

irony (Irena) and, finally, a stand-up comedy wit (Alcessa); their posts are performative posts. As a reader/spectator, I am intrigued especially by well-written posts, which would also contain a lot of action and anticipation. A good theatricalization is what matters. The personal bloggers I am following are skilled and good writers/storytellers. They theatricalize their everyday life with an attractive text. When observing the Dutch blogosphere and the presentation of self within it, Frank Shaap proposed similar conclusions regarding the text. The author, however, specified personal blogs as *lifelogs*. However, Shaap's conclusions are applicable when considering the importance of how the posts are written.

The world and the people in it, webbloggers included, seem to be pretty much what they are. Occasionally being a man or being a woman, living in this town or that, having a bad day at work or a good one will be interesting enough to write about, but for the lifelogger presenting him/herself successfully comes down to finding a unique vantage point and the right words to describe everyday, mundane experiences.

(2003)

In a traditional Western theatre, the text (a play) is the one that determines an action. The spectators come to follow a development of a particular story, a development of certain characters. In postdramatic theatre, however, a text is not so important anymore - yet an autobiographical performance resides in a slightly different level. An autobiographical performance *requires* a story, a story of the theatricalized self.

On the other hand and considering that a performance within a personal blog is, due to the ambiguous and anonymous nature of the Internet, actually closer to the *fiction*, a personal blog also equals a theatrical genre of *monodrama*. According to Patrice Pavis (1990, 217), a monodrama is a play with only one actor usually portraying only one character. Besides, a monodrama focuses on the character's intimate motivations, subjectivity or lyrics. In her contemporary, almost postdramatic play *4.48 Psychosis* (staged in 2000), British playwright Sarah Kane has captured an intimate inner monologue of a depressed self. The title of the play corresponds with an early morning hour 4:48 a.m., when the playwright, who also suffered from depression, was waking up each morning due to her depression episodes. Because of this illness Kane committed

suicide in February 1999; the play is thus based on Kane's experience with depression. *4.48 Psychosis* is a fragmented patchwork of thoughts of an individual suffering from a severe depression. Unlike in traditional Western theatre plays, *4.48 Psychosis* does not contain a consistent plot or dramatic structure (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement)²²: the play is rather a collection of several unconnected episodes, each portraying an insight of a depressed mind. *4.48 Psychosis* displays and inner life of a depressed individual; as the play's theme basically speaks about its author's life, the play is also an autobiographical performative text.

I am sad

I feel that the future is hopeless and that things cannot improve

I am bored and dissatisfied with everything

I am a complete failure of a person

I am guilty, I am being punished

I would like to kill myself

/.../ (2001, 206)

In personal blogging, too, posts can be written in the same intimate monologue-manner as in the particular Kane's play (*Nihrida* and *Irena*). Since I analyse personal blogs as a remediated autobiographical performance, I do perceive the posts within personal blogs as both the text and the performance. When the reader accesses a particular post, the performance of the written text occurs. The possible fictional nature of the represented character, the personal blogger's front, pushes personal blogs closer to the genre of a monodrama; again, this is a remediated monodrama, as it happens within media other than theatre, a personal blog. Nevertheless the three practical cases *Nihrida*, *Irena* and *Alcessa* are only possible examples of the presentation and theatricalization of self within personal blogging. In my opinion, there are so many individual representations as personal bloggers: each blogger conducts her or his own, more or less unique display of individual's front. Or with as suggested by Frank Shaap:

²² According to Gustav Freytag and his study *Die Technik des Dramas* [*The Technique of Drama*] (1863), a drama is divided into five parts, which some refer to as a dramatic arc: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement.

The presentation of self on personal home pages happens primarily through the articulation of mundane, everyday qualities and categorizations, focusing on work, family, and hobbies. Although lifelogs sometimes mirror this approach with an "about me" page, the primary means of presentation of self is through the articulation of a unique vantage point from which the weblog author writes.

(2003)

In addition, some other bloggers can also use video material, making video posts and thus displaying not only their image but also their voice and other details. Examples of bloggers, who occasionally publish a video post, are Mimmi and Peppi on their lifestyle blog *More to Love*. However, in comparison to other personal blogs I follow and also as a personal blogger myself, I have noticed personal bloggers in general tend to present even their weaknesses (e.g. eating too much, unemployment, not willing to jog etc.) as interesting, positive, intriguing features. Considering images some personal bloggers are more outspoken as Nihrida, and then the other prefer to stay hidden: personal blogger Nina, for example, never uses images at all, and her posts consist of text only. In general personal bloggers do follow Babauta's advice, trying to produce an amazing content by using both textual and visual possibilities. Or as Goffman points out: "The performance of an individual in a front region may be seen as an effort to give the appearance that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards" (1990, 114). In personal blogging these *certain standards*, though, are each particular personal blogger's way of representation she or he perceives as attractive for the audience: either with a powerful text, strong images or other characteristic features. For if a personal blog is opened to the public the personal blogger wants to be perceived – and to attract as many readers as possible. Anyhow, the relationship between the personal blogger (the actor) and the audience (the reader) will be observed in the next chapter.

4. THE PERSONAL BLOGGER AND THE READER

4.1. THE READER: THE PERSONAL BLOGGER'S AUDIENCE

The role of the spectator has changed: the function of wanderer and clairvoyant give way to the functions of performer, of a spectator who is requested to act, to fulfil expected task, so that the work can reveal its full potential and show itself in its entirety. (Valentina Valentini, 2003, 83)

In her study of personal diaries, the analogue, paper-based private journals, Mia Votka points out an important fact: the reader's comments. According to Votka (2005, 200), when a personal diary was snatched from its secret place and it was read by somebody other than the writer (e.g. the diarist's family), those uninvited readers were in some cases leaving written comments on particular entries. Researching personal diaries Votka thus offers information that private diaries were read by the public even before the phenomena of the Internet and regardless the fact that these paper-based diaries, unlike public personal blogs, had been intentionally hidden and not meant for reading. Personal bloggers who open their blogs to general public, however, have other intentions. As already discussed in the previous chapter, public personal bloggers create their recognizable personal brand and try to create interesting content with theatricalization of their self. In an open personal blog on the Internet, however, the readers (the audience) and their responses are *desired*. In this chapter, I will observe the relation between the personal blogger and the reader, the personal blog's audience. How is the concept of the audience established within a personal blog? How do the readers/the audience appear in this remediated autobiographical performance? And finally, what is the relation between the personal blogger and the readers?

Alice E. Marwick and Danah Boyd (2010) are considering the phenomenon of the audience on Twitter. Regardless the fact that Twitter enables only short posts (up to 140 characters), it is a blogging site, where many bloggers post short personal posts (tweets). In the opinion of Marwick and Boyd "the network audience is an abstract concept and

varies among Twitter users, in part because it is so difficult to ascertain who is actually there.” (ibid. 9) When a personal blog is opened for all readers, the situation is similar as with Twitter: without any additional tools it is hard to determine, who is actually reading the blog (and if there is any reader at all). Most blog providers and in particular the three that host the blogs observed within this paper (Blogger, Wordpress and Blogos by SiOL), enable a possibility of comments for the readers, which the blogger can either use on the blog or disable completely. My interest, though, is in those personal bloggers that desire comments from the readers, and leave this option enabled in their settings (image 34).

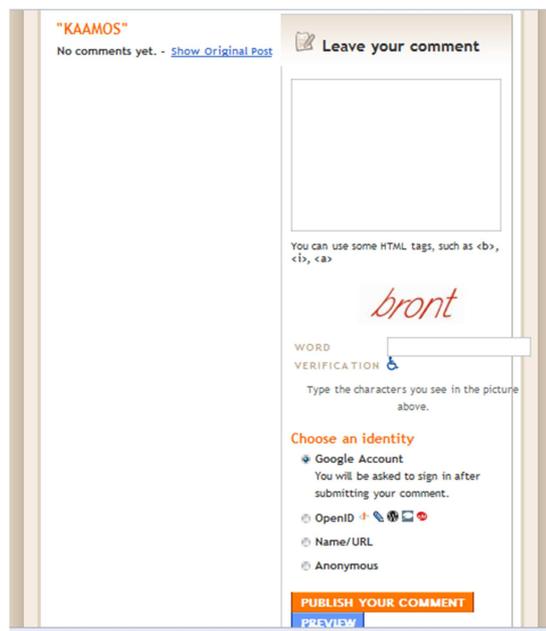


Image 34: The option to post comments under posts in Blogger. [Image captured from her blog on <http://kaneliki.blogspot.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

According to Jakob Nielsen (2006), who researched the participation in online communities, “90% of users are lurkers who never contribute, 9% of users contribute a little, and 1% of users account for almost all the action.” Nielsen labels this phenomenon as the *90-9-1 Rule* and provides a diagram as an illustration (diagram 1).

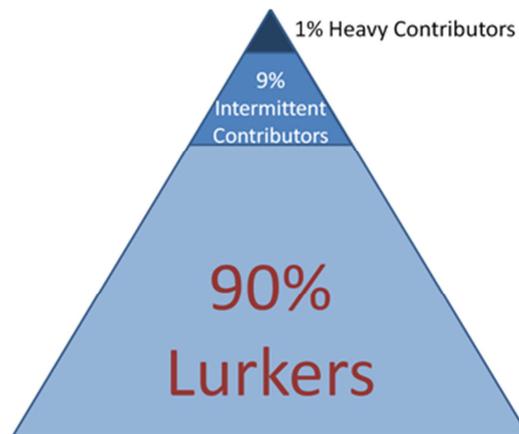


Diagram 1: User participation in online communities, the 90-9-1 Rule. (The diagram by Jakob Nielsen). [Image retrieved from http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html in September 2011.]

Nielsen (ibid.) explains the term lurker as a user, who does not contribute actively in an online community (e.g. posts in discussion forums or comments on a blog); she or he rather stays in the background, only reading and observing the displayed content. For (personal) blogs, however, there are several online tools available on the free market that help the blogger to determine who is following or just lurking the published content (images 35 – 38). At least the blog providers Blogger and Wordpress enable Google Friend Connect (GFC)²³ function, through which the blog's followers can become visible. GFC requires a personal profile, including an image (an avatar); thus, the readers are even more visible to the blogger. Furthermore, GFC also provides the blogger with an exact number of followers. Nihrida, for example, has 2411 followers at the moment²⁴, and the number continues to grow almost every day. Second possible option to find out who is actually visiting the blog is tools like Revolver Maps²⁵ that provide a map or a globe with spots from where the recent viewers came. Likewise, a blogger can also install a free web traffic analysis tool, for example StatCounter²⁶, which shows detailed statistics considering the visitors of a particular web page/ blog (e.g. general visitors count, IP addresses, most popular post etc.).

²³ Google Friend Connect or GFC is an online tool that, among other features, enables users to follow a certain blog through their created account. More information: <http://www.google.com/friendconnect/home/overview>

²⁴ Information retrieved from <http://www.nihrida.com/>, 14 September 2011.

²⁵ Revolver Maps is available on <http://www.revolvermaps.com/>.

²⁶ StatCounter is available on <http://statcounter.com/>.

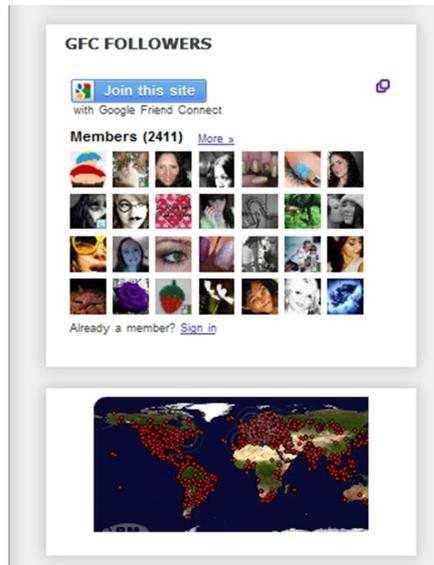


Image 35: Nihrida’s GFC followers and the map of her visitors. [Image captured from <http://www.nihrida.com/> by Martina Siler, 14 September 2011.]



Image 36: Alcessa’s visitor counter. [Image captured from <http://alcessa.wordpress.com/> by Martina Siler, 14 September 2011.]

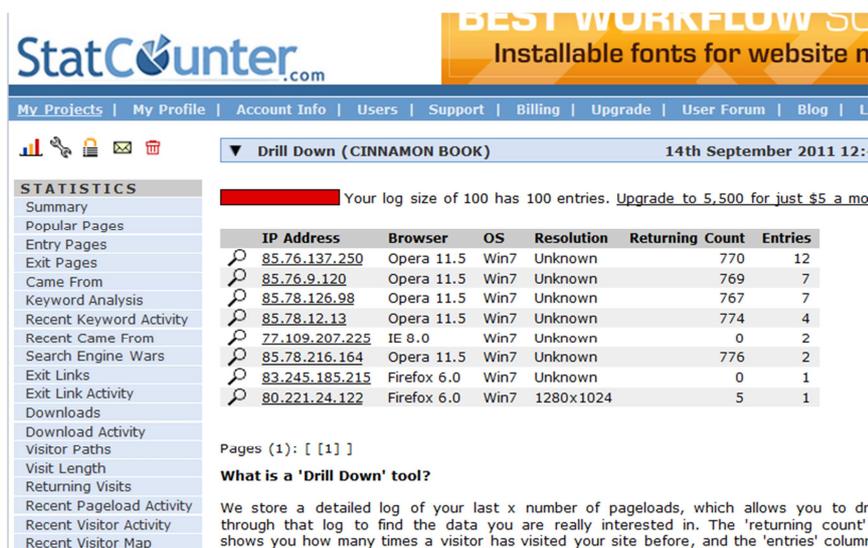


Image 37: The web traffic analysis tool StatCounter showing IP addresses of the visitors of the personal blog *Cinnamon Book* (the thesis author’s blog).

[Image captured from <http://statcounter.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

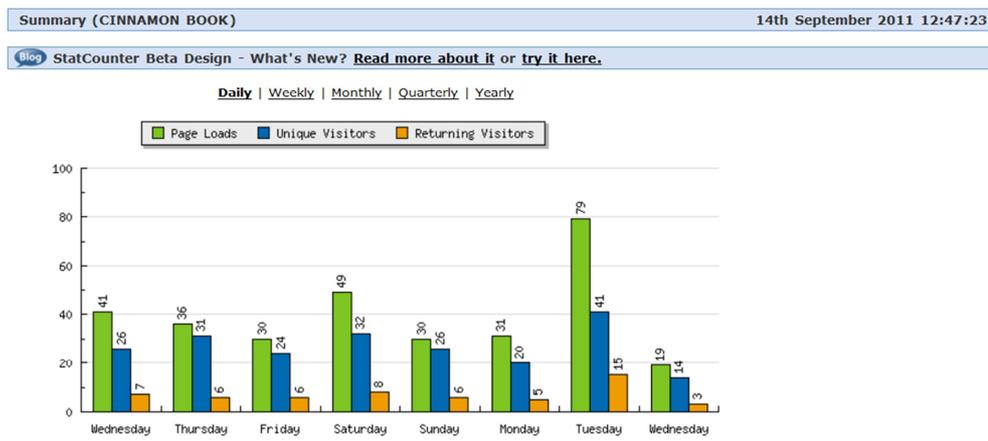


Image 38: StatCounter presenting the daily statistics of a blog's visitors as a graph. [Image captured from <http://statcounter.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

Statistically speaking, the blogger, who is using one of these or any other free online tools, can get quite an amount of information regarding either the active readers or the bigger amount of lurkers: from the country and IP address, where the reader came from, to her or his operating system and resolution, from the entrance page, from which the reader entered the blog to the exit link, where the reader left the blog. A significant amount of visitors, if I only consider my personal blog, comes to the page as they are searching for some particular information; these are not permanent readers or followers of the blog, for their only purpose is to find data or images on the Internet. However, as Marwick and Boyd point out, despite all possible tools the blogger can get, it is still hard to determine *who* is actually reading the blog in the sense of the target audience – and especially if the readers appear more or less as lurkers. When starting a new blog, Babauta (2008) suggests the blogger to define the target audience. Hence, the blogger should adapt her or his posts to attract a particular audience (e.g. young English speaking women, interested in animals, fashion and make-up in Nihrida's case). This adaptation of the blog's content is again close to Goffman's perception of the presentation of self for the blogger has to maintain a certain standards within posts that would attract the readers rather than keep them away.

When performer guides his private activity in accordance with incorporated moral standards, he may associate these standards with a reference group of some kind, thus creating a non-present audience for his activity. /.../ The

individual may privately maintain standards of behaviour which he does not personally believe in, maintaining these standards because of a lively belief that an unseen audience is present who will punish deviations from these standards. In other words, an individual may be his own audience or may imagine an audience to be present.

(Goffman, 1990, 87)

With some amount of speculation I assume the personal blogger can thus start a personal blog with the constant thought present that the audience is actually out there and they are following carefully each post the blogger publishes. Therefore, the awareness of performing is constantly present in the blogger's behaviour within her or his personal blog, and the blogger will try to maintain the best presentation of self possible - or what she or he considers to be the best for her or his reference group, the target audience. This action, however, is closely associated with the general presentation or theatricalization of the blogger's self discussed in the previous chapter. Since I consider the personal blog as a remediated autobiographical performance, the further observation of the personal blog's audience will also continue from the point of theatre art. The lurkers, the inactive percentage of a personal blog's readers, equal a spectator of a traditional Western theatre art. In line with Patrice Pavis (1991, 351), the spectator in a traditional theatre would identify with the story on stage; furthermore, between the spectator and the actors there is also a concrete spatial relationship, the stage and the auditorium. Nevertheless Pavis (*ibid.*) points out that the relation between the audience and the actors also changes depending on the genre of theatre art: each genre (e.g. Elizabethan theatre or Brecht's epic theatre) has its own way of relating to the audience. As a traditional spectator I understand a spectator of a theatre art that produces an illusion. The spectator in a traditional theatre observes the story on stage, the play, from the auditorium, trusting the illusion and identifying with the characters on stage. This audience should not be actively involved into the play on the stage: the gap between the actors and the audience is clear. Here, the spectators are not allowed to comment on what they see – or even talk with the actors. Consequently, the actors on stage create an illusion that the audience is *not really there*, an illusion of the *fourth wall*²⁷. A lurker also observes the content of the personal blog from behind the gap. Even if the personal

²⁷ The fourth wall is a dramaturgical term meaning the fictive wall between the stage, the place where the theatre play (or any other action) occurs, and the auditorium, the place of the spectators.

blogger does not pretend that the readers/the audience are there and no fourth wall exists between them, the lurker's observation of the personal blogger's autobiographical performance is closer to a spectator of a traditional theatre. The division between the personal blogger and the lurker is clear, the lurker does not comment and is not actively involved into the performance on a personal blog. The blogger posts, the lurker reads. The blogger might speak directly, as Irena often writes to a "you" in a second person singular, yet the lurker does not respond. The experience of the lurker is compared to a spectator of a fictional monodrama, where a certain character addresses her or his monologues to another, not present person.

But how about the disclosed audience, those 9% and 1% of the readers, who produce comments on posts more or less regularly? First of all, the readers that comment on the posts equal an interactive audience of a postdramatic performance. Since I have already touched the concept of an interactive audience in previous chapters (especially in chapter 2.2.), I have mentioned that in many cases of postdramatic performances the spectators are directly addressed by the performers, or even thrown into the action themselves. Another such practical example from theatre art is an autobiographical performance by American performer Lois Weaver *What Tammy Needs to Know?* In the performance Lois Weaver aka Tammy is trying to find out how could a 55-year old former country singer become famous lesbian performance artist. However, in her self-ironic autobiographically inspired performance as seen in Kiasma-teatteri [Kiasma Theatre] in Helsinki in 2006, Lois Weaver turned to the audience with her questions many times. One of her questions was if somebody in the audience has any letters written but never sent. As the answer from a particular spectator was affirmative, the performer promised to give her e-mail address so that the spectator could send these letters to Weaver. Nevertheless, Weaver's performance and her actual questions and dialog with the spectators are only an additional illustration of interactive audience within postdramatic theatre. In my opinion, however, there is the same interaction within personal blogging as well: the personal blogger performs her or his autobiographical performance and the reader observes, provides comments and thus interacts with the personal blogger. Since the autobiographical performance within personal blogging is remediated, the personal blogger does not even need to turn to the audience directly (e.g. with various questions): the enabled option to post comments already employs an invitation for the readers to interact on the personal blog. This

interaction, though, appears in different forms. According to the three observed personal blogs by Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa as well as my general experience with other personal blogs, comments can vary from short feedbacks to long elaborations on a particular subject. The comments are still very specific considering each specific post the personal blogger posts. In case of Nihrida's posts on depression, for example, her readers tend to either comfort Nihrida or post their own personal experience with this illness.

Davorin said: What a post! You make me cry! Since day one we met I know you are gorgeous person and real fighter. You have all my support in the future! :*

You Nailed It! said: My sister has been depressed too and I feel that she got out it better than me and my family did, she just didn't notice what she made us go through, but she couldn't help it so I'm not mad at her. I hope that you get better and that you'll be able to feel genuinely happy in a while!

Monticka said: I feel for you, I really do! I've taken pills for depression, I hated taking them and felt like they didn't help, only my mother noticed me getting much stronger and happier. I took them for about 2½ years plus 1 year to get off them. I'm happy you went to another doctor, but I'm not happy with her "letting" you go from 150 mg to 75 mg in a heart beat! That is not the way to do it, that's when you notice those the side affects from hell plus mentally instability! Even tho you might feel better before, the side effects can fool you into feeling like crap all over again. I remember every step I took, from 100 to 75, to 50 to 25 per day and then 25 every other day, it was bad, every step and it took me a year to do so! When I tried doing it faster, everything got bad, really bad. Just as if I was back where I started before the pills. I feel 150 to 75 is too big of a step... It would have made me get really mentally unstable and feel sick from the withdrawal, just like real drugs. I'm hoping the side effects won't get aggressive, but if they do, PLEASE talk to your doctor so you can work out a slower pace. Oh, and btw, I'm not saying you did anything wrong.

On the contrary, just looking out for you, girl! ^_^ Getting another doctor and telling them what you think is right, is a big step into getting rehabilitated. Both getting better and proving it to yourself that you believe in it!

(Comments on Nihrida's post *This is Not Me Anymore*, July 16 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.nihrida.com/2011/07/this-is-not-me-anymore.html#comments> .)

With the action of commenting and revealing their own personal experience, the readers are becoming autobiographical performers, too. The reader-performer phenomenon, however, is in my opinion stronger when the reader is actually the personal blogger her or himself. When posting a comment, the reader must choose how she or he will appear; in most cases, she or he must insert a certain nickname and provide a link to her or his web page. In the cases of those readers, who comment under the brand of their own personal blog, a collision of two (or more) individual performances happens on a setting of one, the commented personal blog. In the line with Babauta (2008), a blogger should comment on other blogs in order to network with other bloggers and get more potential readers for her or his own blog. In the theatrical context, the readers-personal bloggers, who comment on other personal blogger's posts, are entering another individual's setting with their own online self, a character they are representing within their own personal blog (a nickname, an avatar and other images). Since these readers-personal bloggers are entitled to provide a link to their personal blog (e.g. when commenting in Blogger or in Wordpress-based blogs), the links from one personal blog to another are even creating a *hypertext* of performances by several individuals (personal bloggers). The situation in personal blogs is thus different than the situation within a postdramatic theatre performance, for in a theatre performance the actors are still actors and the spectators are still just spectators, regardless how involved they might get into the performance. In the case of personal blogs and the readers-bloggers, *all* are actors. Consequently, a label *active spectator* is more appropriate for those readers, who do not own a personal blog and do not appear under a blog-based personal brand. Moreover, these readers can also become occasional performers, especially if they write a comment considering their own personal experience, personal history etc. On the other hand, I am suggesting that these active spectators do not own their own blog and thus no recognizable personal brand; they can also comment as anonymous, with no nickname

or avatar. Hence, even when the active spectator becomes a performer, this role is still closer to interactive audience, who is entitled to do an action within a performance of the actor. Corresponding with the general notion of a spectator in theatre art, I am categorizing the readers of personal blogs into three categories:

- *Passive spectators* or lurkers.
- *Active spectators* or readers without their own blog.
- *Actors* or readers-personal bloggers appearing under the personal brand of their own blog.

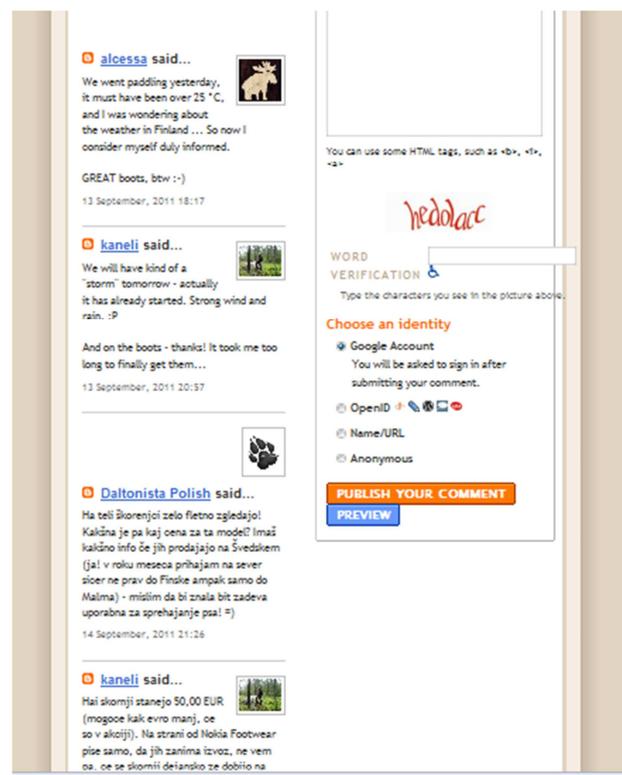


Image 39: Comments on a post in Blogger. [Image captured from her blog on <http://kaneliki.blogspot.com/> by Martina Siler in September 2011.]

The relation between the personal blogger and her or his readers depends on the readers' appearance (or category), too. The blogger certainly cannot correspond with lurkers; apart from creating attractive content and other characteristics of the blog that enable a satisfactory passive observation. With the active readers (active spectators) and other bloggers (actors), on the other hand, the blogger can lead an open conversation. The way of interaction between the blogger and her or his active readers and other bloggers

varies from case to case, yet in general, a dialog among the blogger and the readers is established. Therefore, a personal blog actually consists of several minor performances. First is the overall presentation of the blogger's self with the creation of a personal brand, second are separated autobiographical performances in each post and third is the interaction of the active readers and other bloggers (other actors); especially the last interaction indicates a hypertext of performances on other blogs. Considering comments, though, they add content to the initial performance, the post, thus possibly changing the reception of the readers/the audience yet to follow.

Finally, a personal blogger has to stay constantly present to maintain her or his audience. "Siinä missä paperipäiväkirjan pitäjä kirjoittaa tekstiään päivittäin, Internet-päiväkirjuri päivittää. [If a writer of a paper diary writes daily entries, then Internet-diarist updates.]," proposes Votka (2005, 230). The word *updating*, even more in Finnish, where the particular verb derives from *päivä*, a day, suggests constant everyday action already with its meaning. The three bloggers observed more carefully within this paper, Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa, have all their own ways of staying present more or less every day. Irena publishes regular daily topics that repeat every week. Every Saturday she writes a post *Tedenska diareja [Weekly Diarrhea]*, in which she sums up the past week by analyzing her emotions, the best food of the week, song of the week etc. Moreover, Irena sometimes publishes only photos, for example in her topics *Posladek dneva [Dessert of the Day]* and *Fotošop dneva [Photoshop of the Day]* she publishes images of celebrities, who she finds attractive and interesting. Even in cases, when she is away for holiday or for some other reason, Irena always mentions her readers that she has enabled an auto-publishing option, prepared her posts in advance and let the function to publish them each day. Alcessa, however, keeps her audience's attention with the same tactics. Each Monday she publishes a recipe and additional images of her vegetarian cooking; each Wednesday she observes an interesting word, in most cases German. On Fridays she publishes a *Kleingeschwätzelttes am Freitag / Petkove čvečkarije [A Little Chat on Friday]*, a post in German/Slovenian, usually dealing with short stories or the blogger's brief thoughts. Nihrida, on the other hand, does not have daily topics (yet), but she publishes quite often and almost every day. She is in general very visual blogger and so she sometimes publishes only photos with a minimum of text; then again when she writes about depression, she can produce long posts. Since Nihrida is partly a make-up blogger, too, she publishes either swatches of

various nail polishes or other make-up she has used almost on a daily basis. As Irena, both Nihrida as well as Alcessa use the auto-update function, prepare the posts in advance and inform their readers about their upcoming absence. Moreover, Vatka even compares Internet diarists to newspapers such as, for example, Finnish *Iltalehti* and *Ilta-Sanomat*, which write articles about celebrities' lives (aka yellow press). Thus, Vatka is suggesting both the displayed intimacy as well as regularity of the posts on a daily basis (like newspaper): *Toisaalta Internet-päiväkirjat ovat kuin iltapäivälehtiä: ne jakavat jonkun yksityisyyttä pieninä paloina potentiaalisesti suurille massoille. [On the other hand, Internet-diaries are like evening newspapers: they share somebody's privacy in small parts to potentially big masses.]* (2005, 232)

Additionally, in order to make the reading/following easier, each of the three personal bloggers applies *labels* to their posts. These labels characterize particular posts, connect them into groups and ease a possible search through the personal blogger's archive; the labels are especially useful for those passive readers, who only search for some particular information (e.g. a cluster of posts about a life and culture in Finland under the label *Suomi Finland* on my personal blog *Cinnamon Book*).



Image 40: Labels of blog's posts in Blogger. [Image captured from her blog *Cinnamon Book* <http://kaneliki.blogspot.com/> by Martina Siler, September 2011.]

In conclusion, the relation between the personal blogger and her or his readers varies from a blogger to blogger; in general personal bloggers are aware of the public, they communicate and interact with the audience. The caring relation of a personal blogger towards her or his readers can also demonstrate in the fact that some bloggers (e.g. Nihrida and Alcessa) also publish posts according to their readers' wishes, thus proving

how important the readers (and their possible feedback) are for the blog. Moreover, the audience of personal blogs does not appear in only one format: in my opinion, the categories include passive spectators, active spectators and other bloggers as actors. Exceptions in either direction are, of course, possible within all three categories (e.g. a blogger decides to comment as anonymous, or she or he follows the other blog only as a lurker). Anyhow, this observation of a reader of a personal blog in the context of theatre art is only one possible option of how to understand the role of the reader/the audience. As a whole, public personal blogs would not exist without a proper audience, either silent or talkative – and the personal blogger must find out how to keep her or his theatricalization of self interesting enough so that the setting of her or his performance has always enough audience behind the gap of theatricality.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. THE THEATRE OF PERSONAL BLOGS

Whether future online performance forms will be considered theater, “interactive television,” or some unique new performance genre is a question that performance theorists will doubtless continue to discuss—and to disagree upon.

(Dixon, 2007, 531)

A young Syrian-American woman Amina Abdallah Arraf al Omari wrote a blog about her life as a lesbian in Damascus, the capital of Syria. The title of the blog was *A Gay Girl in Damascus* (image 41), and the teacher Amina was writing mainly about events in Arab world that emerged in the year 2011, when citizens of the most Arab countries from North Africa to Middle East started revolutionary movements in order to change the political systems within their states.

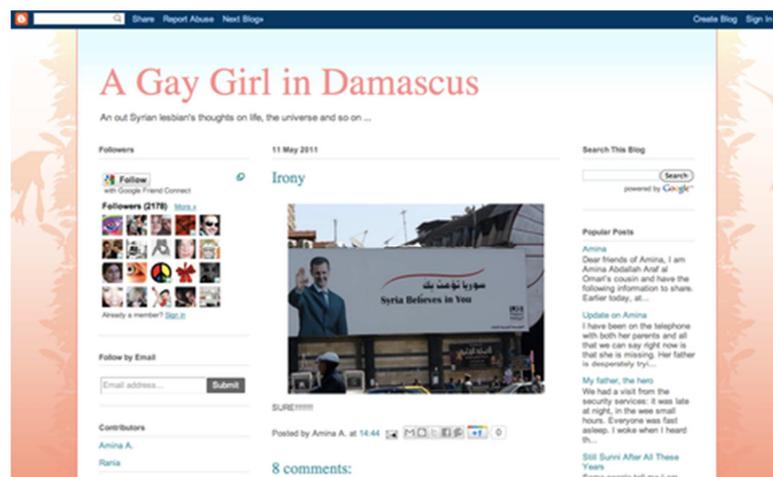


Image 41: The blog *A Gay Girl in Damascus* by Amina Arraf. [Image retrieved from <http://electronicintifada.net/blog/ali-abunimah/new-evidence-about-amina-gay-girl-damascus-hoax> in September 2011.]

Amina Arraf, an affected young intellectual, wrote her politically inspired blog mainly about Syrian uprising in 2011, but since she also wrote about herself as a gay woman living in Syria, where homosexuality is illegal, the blog was personal, too. Arraf, for example, wrote how one night two security agents came to take her to prison due to her blogging action as well as her sexual orientation. According to Arraf, however, her

father stood for her and saved her. The post *My Father, The Hero* published on 26 April 2011 is skilfully written, describing such details as Amina's clothes she wore that night, including cultural references unknown to a person with a little knowledge of Arab world (words such as *wahhabi*, *sunni*, *salafi*). The relationship between the father and the daughter described in the post seemed strong and real. Amina Arraf, as represented through her blog, seemed real as well. "I am complex, I am many things; I am an Arab, I am Syrian, I am a woman, I am queer, I am Muslim, I am binational, I am tall, I am too thin; my sect is Sunni, my clan is Omari, my tribe is Quraysh, my city is Damascus. I am also a Virginian. I was born on an afternoon in a hospital in sight of where Woodrow Wilson entered the world, where streets are named for country stars," wrote Arraf about herself (2011). She also had a family: apart from her Syrian father in Damascus and her American mother, Amina also had a girlfriend Sandra Bagaria and a cousin Rania Ismail. In early June 2011, though, news broke that Amina Arraf was abducted and the followers of Amina's blog had started a campaign to free their blogger. On 14 June 2011, the international media as well as the biggest Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat reported that a Syrian female blogger Amina Arraf was actually a 40-year old white American male Tom MacMaster. Located in Edinburgh, straight and married.

I accessed the blog *A Gay Girl in Damascus* shortly after I read the news about the hoax of *Amina Arraf* in Helsingin Sanomat. The posts felt genuine, honest and personal; with only some basic knowledge about Syria, the revolution in Arab countries and Islamic culture in general I believed the written words. If I would have not known about the hoax at the time when I had first visited Amina's blog, I would have taken it for real. A month later after my first visit, all posts of *A Gay Girl in Damascus* were deleted. In September 2011 the blog has still been available on the Internet, with only one post left. The post that remained has nothing to do with Amina's life neither with the blog's actual author for it only explains that "everything is vanishing." What triggered me in the story of Amina Arraf, however, has nothing to do with either the revolution in Arab countries or with the life of the gay population in Islamic world. I was impressed with the successfully conducted hoax behind the blog. Yet as a dramaturge I would not even label the whole Amina Arraf phenomenon as a hoax. In my opinion, Tom MacMasters conducted a pure theatre performance. He used the advantages of the Internet, its ambiguous and anonymous nature, and created a believable character with all aspects of

individual's life. MacMasters even provided relevant photos of a dark young woman (image 41) and in addition, Amina owned a profile on Facebook with 187 friends, photos and regular updates. On the blog and on the Internet, American man MacMasters was Syrian woman Amina.



Image 42: The photo of *Amina Arraf*. [Image retrieved from <http://www.whatsonxiamen.com/news19478.html> in September 2011.]

My thesis tackles precisely this possibility of occurrence of theatre art in personal blogs. I am not, however, interested in the hoaxes in the blogging world. I won't write either about the disappointment and anger of Amina's fans after the hoax was discovered, or about MacMaster's motives for creation of Arraf. For me, the case of Amina Arraf is purely *theatrical*. In my thesis I have elaborated on an assumption that personal blogs share similarities with theatre art. I do not want to claim that personal blogs are theatre art by default; the initial intention of personal bloggers is most probably not in the creation of performance. Yet in my opinion, the performance happens, even unintentionally, and the relations between the personal blogger and her or his readers are similar to the relation between the actor and the audience in the theatre. In the theoretical framework of the thesis, I suggested that personal blogs with their nature of the observed subject, the blogger, and the observer, the reader, produce one of the basic elements of theatre art – theatricality. Furthermore, I placed personal blogs closer to *postdramatic theatre*, a form of theatre art that denies Western theatrical tradition and explores theatrical expression in many different ways. One of the genres of postdramatic theatre is also autobiographical performance. In my opinion, the theatre art of personal blogs equals this category of performance, where the performer tells her or

his personal story in front of the audience. Both autobiographical performance and a personal blog are about *me, my life, my feelings, my impressions* etc. Since personal blogs reside within their own media, which is far from actual theatre art (or theatre stage for that matter), I have approached the idea of autobiographical performance in personal blogs with Bolter and Grusin's concept of remediation. Additionally, I included Brenda Laurel's proposal that computers share their nature with theatre art and thus also remediate theatre. Besides, I introduced some selected examples of actual theatre productions to get a better insight into the performative nature of blogging. Moreover, the series of projects *Ballettikka Internettikka* by Slovene artists Igor Štromajer and Brane Zorman was the most significant example, as these performative projects emerge within digital media, are broadcasted on the Internet and thus remediate theatre art, too. With the analysis of a particular *Ballettikka Internettikka* project, *Ballettikka Internettikka Nipponnikka*, I illustrated how a theatrical performance can practically occur within the digital media and the Internet. As an example of an autobiographical performance, I introduced Russian theatre artist Evgeny Grishkovets. As practical examples of personal blogs, I presented three personal bloggers, who blog as Nihrida, Irena and Alcessa. The bloggers had been chosen from the selection of personal blogs I follow as a personal blogger myself and, as the most important, due to the quality of the content these three bloggers produce in their blogs. The fact that these three bloggers are all female and basically belong to Slovene blogosphere did not matter for the purposes of this thesis. Additionally, I also used some other blogs to illustrate the given examples in the thesis as well as I included my own experience as a personal blogger.

Observing the blogger as the performer of her or his autobiographical performance, the theoretical basis of the analysis was Goffman's study of the performance of individual's self in everyday life. From this point of view, the case of Amina Arraf could not be perceived as an autobiographical performance in personal blog since the blog's author was a man and the character of Amina was not real. However, as suggested by Goffman as well as by Marwick and Boyd, the presented front is the only authenticity the blog's readers would know. For the readers, the presented front of a personal blogger is the only reality: the backstage of the performer/personal blogger stays always hidden. Despite the fact that the personal blogger's performance should be autobiographical and real, there is always the possibility of the fiction due to the ambiguous and anonymous nature of the Internet as suggested by Papacharissi and Shaap. Nevertheless, when a

personal blogger creates her or his overall personal brand, she or he can also construct her or his online self. The act of replacement from the real into another system of signs is present always when a performer steps in front of the audience (or a personal blogger publishes a post). Hence, the case of Amina Arraf is an autobiographical performance on the very end of the line that starts at the real and ends at the fiction. Under the terms of the Internet, Arraf was real and she conducted her autobiographical performance. When the backstage of Amina Arraf revealed the real writer MacMaster, the autobiographical performance was only transformed to a fictional theatrical act. The case and the hoax of Amina Arraf has reached the media and the general public as the theme of her blog was appropriate due to current revolutionary events in Arab countries. If I speculate, it is certainly possible that there are many other hoaxes in personal bloggers' world (the blogosphere), but since those bloggers are not as famous as Amina, their fictive theatricalization of the self remains on the stage.

Considering the relationship between the personal blogger and the reader, I categorized the readers in three categories according to dramaturgical terminology. Passive readers or lurkers equal passive spectator of a traditional Western theatre art, the readers, who provide comments are active spectators of postdramatic theatre and, finally, the other bloggers, who contribute their remarks, function as actors entering from their own performance to another one. In general the relationship between the personal blogger and the reader is interactive; the personal blogger in most observed cases addresses the reader directly. As in a postdramatic performance, the wall between the blogger and the reader does not exist. Or with the words of Dixon:

Since television predominantly operates one-way, when a television presenter directly addresses the viewer, we perceive the presenter on screen, as in most instances we do with the performer in theatre and performance, as a third-person “he” or “she” rather than the “you” of real-life interaction (because the television viewer is acknowledged but unrecognized). But in interactive installations and performances where the user/audience member is directly addressed and can respond meaningfully, the performer becomes a “you,” operating in the second

person rather than the third by nature of the direct interaction with the viewer, even when the performer is mediatized on a screen.

(2007, 580)

Personal bloggers, who open their blogs to the public, need to find a way how to attract their (target) audience. Appealing content, well written posts, striking images; there are as many ways as personal bloggers. Some apply their own reality to their presented front, some reach further towards fiction and ideal self. What matters is to be constantly present and to be seen – as was Amina Arraf.

In this study I have conducted a multidisciplinary interpretation of personal blogs, which has brought together two different worlds, theatre art and digital culture. According to my experience, apart from Brenda Laurel and her book *Computers as Theatre*, the possible connection between theatre art and digital media (the computer and the Internet) has rarely been either addressed or studied. The thesis offers a possible view to observe personal blogs; considering general studies of blogging, my thesis focuses only on a small part of the global blogosphere. This theoretical discourse might thus contribute to the understanding of personal blogging in theatrical context. The nature of this study is rather specific and also limited to the field of theatre theory. However, in the future studies, a connection between reality television and personal blogs could also be examined. In the last decade (2000 – 2011), reality television programmes depicting individual's actual life and lifestyle have gained popularity among broadcasters – as well as among the audience. For instance in Finland, a commercial channel *Liv*²⁸ broadcasts mainly shows about various aspects of individual's actual life, from redecorating someone's home, changing a personal style and taming a dog to intimate stories about losing weight, dating, abortion etc. Similarly other Finnish commercial channels offer reality shows, e.g. *Suomen Huippumalli Haussa* [*Finland's Next Top Model*], where young female models compete for the contract with a modelling agency. In the line with this particular trend on the television, the overwhelming aspect of voyeurism in contemporary society and the individual's urge to display certain aspects of her or his intimacy could be addressed in personal blogging as well. In theatre art, on the other hand, it would be appealing to stage selected material

²⁸ In Swedish, the second official language in Finland, the word *liv* signifies *life*. More information about the channel: <http://www.livtv.fi/>.

from personal blogs as a performance or as a play. If the material would be presented with an actor (or more actors), not the actual blogger, the original autobiographical content of a personal blog would be transformed into an actual theatrical fiction. However, this is only a hypothesis considering theatrical possibilities personal blogs could offer to theatre art.

The process of writing the thesis was partly a struggle. I felt the connection and similarity of personal blogs and theatre art from the day when I had become personal blogger myself, but I could not find the proper way to articulate the relationship between personal blogs and theatre performance more scientifically. I outlined my theoretic framework a couple of times, I confronted difficulties trying to find supportive literature, but then again I studied some literature in vain (e.g. a book *The Art of the Internet* by Janez Strehovec), I kept changing the approach and the overall structure of the thesis. The completed study represents the path I have finally found and followed. Certainly this comparison of personal blogs and theatre performance I have conducted within this paper could be elaborated again in another context, from a different point of view and with additional efficiency. Moreover, the relation between personal blogging and theatre art could be examined further and from aspects other than those suggested within the thesis. In conclusion to this study, Mia Vatka (2005, 232) emphasizes the importance of stories in present-day life, thus discovering the reason for storytelling, playwriting, performing and, finally, personal blogging.

Nykyihminen ei kuitenkaan ole menettänyt kykyään eikä haluaan kuulla tarinoita. Se selittää myös ihmisen tarvetta kurkistaa toisen elämään päiväkirjojen, elämäkertojen ja Internetin avulla.

Contemporary human being had still not loose either the ability or desire to listen to the stories. This explains also human's need to take a peep into diaries of others, the storytellers, also with the help of the Internet.

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