Diffractive Reading in the Reading Club

reflection and refraction only displace/mirror, never bring a radical new viewpoint


We nooses tous des bastardi elettronici che usano lingue globali

Ours Lingages by Annie Abrahams (translation Rui Torres).
With as rewriters: Lily Robert-Foley, Camille Bloomfield, Jonathan Bailliehache and Jan de Weille.

http://readingclub.fr/events/5956491d9da50cf70d000004/0/text

In this communication I would like to discuss referring, to Karen Barad, Donna Haraway and Iris van der Tuin among others, how the Reading Club can be considered an example of
a diffractive reading and writing practice.

From 2013, I have been working with Emmanuel Guez on a project called the Reading Club. It is an online venue for collaborative reading and writing, both of which occur within a precisely defined framework. “Reariters” are invited to read a given text and to rewrite it within a set number of characters. The public also gets involved, reading and commenting in a chat field. Performances have been held in various languages (sometimes simultaneously), including code.

Show event page – original text of _We nooses..._ – chat window, public voice, logfile – cinematographic archive

slide 3
explain colors – no colors, char settings, min max, duration, speed.

slide 4
an intertextual playground,
a laboratory
and an interpretive arena
The Reading Club (the interface is an adaption by Clement Charmet of the collective writing tool called etherpad – code is on git hub) was originally announced as, all at once an intertextual playground, a laboratory and an interpretive arena. It was meant to be a device to explore collaborative reading on the web and to test (once more) the status of the authors.

But it is more. Through the admin settings the Reading Club's interface becomes an acting partner in the writing: it doesn't write itself, but it “makes” the writing. These settings function as what Brian Massumi and Erin Manning call “enabling constraints”: “sets of designed constraints that are meant to create specific conditions for creative interaction where something is set to happen, but there is no preconceived notion of exactly what the outcome will be or should be.”

The Reading Club has been included in an exhibition at The Jeu de Paume in Paris in 2013 and the Electronic Literature Collection Vol 3 in 2016. You can find its code on git hub. The Reading Club is a complex apparatus where text is floating, always changing, never the same. Text in the Reading Club is performing and moving, literally pushed around and also emotionally touching. Reariters are subjected to stress by the act of writing, implying deletion and addition. When a reariter erases another reariter, this is "felt". The reariters have no steady ground in the evolving text. They are continuously scanning their screen for interesting gaps, to be only very temporarily capable of introducing something, of making a mark in the stuttering story with no end. However, the limited time frame of each session interrupts the reariting process and brings it to an artificial end: a stop, that is not really one, because afterwards everyone can replay each session in an endless loop.

**Apparatus is (Other-s) ... Session of the Reading Club in the frame of Scripting the Other, November 1st 2017. Reariters: Renee Carmichael, Emmanuel Guez, Nick Montfort, Zonbectro. Original text by Annie Abrahams.**
Thinking in/with the Reading Club is necessarily diffractive. “Diffraction”, says Haraway, “does not produce 'the same' displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction.” Thus the Reading Club manifests itself as a facilitator for a diffractive, distributed intelligence on-the-fly, creating text and relational patterns that do not depend on canons. It generates creative and unexpected “outcomes”. These are, in my opinion, not so much the texts produced, as the “diffractive moments” experienced by the reariters.
The surprise of an interpellation or of affect is taken to be a moment of insight that is of importance for the production of knowledge.

"Diffraction” by Iris van der Tuin in Posthuman Glossary, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc London New York, Editors Rosi Braidotti, Maria Hlavajova, p100.

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Van der Tuin in the Posthuman Glossary states concerning these diffractive moments: “The surprise of an interpellation or of affect is taken to be a moment of insight that is of importance for the production of knowledge.”

slide 11

Reariters have to leave the self-centered reflective habits of the classical writer, and accept the posture of a simple component who will never have an overview, but can share in a dialogically reariting through one another with the hard-and-software.

With their audience they are led out of self reflexivity, out of systemised subjectivity, out of a world that only reproduces what they already know into an intra-active “worlding”.

What is a worlding? What is an –ing? Does the addition of a suffix –ing denoting the verbal noun phrase shift the world from a being to a doing; to a gerundive and generative process?

Helen Palmer and Vicky Hunter 16 03 2018 http://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/w/worlding

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dialogically rearing through one another with the hard-and-software. With their audience they are led out of self reflexivity, out of systemised subjectivity, out of a world that only reproduces what they already know into an intra-active “worlding”.

Reading Club (2017)
Reading Club et al. (Annie Abrahams, Emmanuel Guez)

Reading Club sees itself as an online venue for collaborative reading and writing, both of which occur within a precisely defined framework. Abrahams and Guez invite “readers” to read an existing text and to comment on and rewrite it within a set number of characters. The public also can get involved, reading and commenting in a chat field. Performances already have been held in various languages (sometimes simultaneously), including code. All are documented on the website, recorded over time. What makes this real-time language game so attractive is its interweaving of reading and writing on the net: the questions it raises about notions of authorship; and last but not least its humorously competitive character. Reading Club takes its place among the oeuvre of Abrahams, a pioneer in network performance who continues to explore aspects of communication under the Internet’s telematic conditions. She continues this exploration in a multitude of locations and with changing participants, using the tools of physical (tele-)presence, objects or - as in Reading Club – text.

Artwork: Link
Artist homepage: https://sabrahams.wordpress.com

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