



Ayman Kole, Martin A. M. Gansinger (Eds.)

Roots Reloaded

Culture, Identity and Social Development
in the Digital Age



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Dedicated to Ahmed-Nouri and Atilla

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About the Editors

Dr. Ayman Kole (born 1980, Sydney, Australia) completed an experience course at the prestigious Australian, Film, TV and Radio school whilst still a student studying in High School in 1996. He studied intensively at the University of Sydney, completing a BA in Arts with triple majors: English, Performance Studies and Studies in Religion in 2002. He also finished a scriptwriting course at the same University. He worked as a High School English Teacher before completing his MA in English at the University of Sydney in 2006. During his studies in the Masters Degree program, he wrote the short story 'The Mirror' which was selected as the Phoenix Journal finalist and published by Sydney University Press. He later was successfully accepted as a PhD student at Charles Sturt University to commence work on his thesis encompassing Literature, History and Creative Writing. His objective was to explore the historical, cultural and social landscape of Eastern Europe and the Middle East with a focus on the 17th century and he spent time in Turkey and Cyprus conducting thorough historical research. In his work, Ayman investigated how people can be manipulated and just how quickly firmly held beliefs can be either modified or replaced in light of effectively staged performances. Furthermore, his thesis aimed to alert inquisitive minds to the cons and trickery of harmful or pretentious movements and this message can be applied to the realm of religion and politics today. One of Ayman's strengths in writing is his richly detailed research and his ability to create a fascinating narrative not from only one cultural perspective, but from many competing social groups of the selected era. Indeed, his profound insightfulness of the 17th century, illustrating the differences and commonalities between the major religions of the area are just as relevant today as they were in the past. His novel 'Mark of the Crescent' was published in Australia. He currently holds the position as Head of Social Media Department at Girne American University, Faculty of Communication. He primarily lectures in Literature, Creative Writing, Film & TV Production, History of Communication, Film Criticism & Analysis, Scriptwriting, Advertising, World Cinema, Public Relations and Media Studies.

Dr. Martin Abdel Matin Gansinger (born 1979 in Austria) studied Communication Science and Political Science at the University of Vienna and passed both with distinction. His Master's thesis discusses recursive patterns of cultural, social, and political resistance in various forms of Black American musical expression and the potential of HipHop as an alternative communication-structure for the compensation of dysfunctional representation through mainstream-media and has been published in 2008. He furthermore analyzed the conditions of communication and interaction in regard to the practice of collective improvisation as a musical method and its correspondence to the concept of the Ideal Speech Situation as introduced by Habermas – as well as its efficiency in the context of Intercultural Communication – to attain a Doctor's degree in Communication Science (published 2010).

Next to being an editor and journalist for *jazzzeit*-magazine and Vienna-based radio station orange 94.0 from 2005-2009 he has been working as a PR-coordinator for the internationally awarded, independent label JazzWerkstatt Records. Martin Abdel Matin Gansinger conducted several long-term field studies abroad and received financial funding through the University of Vienna's research scholarship. He spent a year in Ghana in coordination with the Vienna Institute for Development and Cooperation and Prof. John Collins from the University of Ghana/Accra, researching Intercultural Communication processes in the context of transfusional West African music styles - including an extended stay at the local compound of the Jamaica-based *Bobo Shanti-Mansion*, one of the strictest subdivisions of the *Rastafari*-movement, and allowance to their communal *Nyahbinghi*-ceremonies. Further field research aiming at extemporaneous communication techniques and its use in traditional knowledge- and recognition-systems has been done in Fez/Morocco and the convent of the Naqshbandi Sufi order in Lefke/Cyprus where he is working and residing since 2009. He is currently holding the position of an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Communication at Girne American University, teaching Undergraduate-, Master-, and Ph.D.-classes as well as appointed Head of Department of Radio, TV & Cinema.

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Introduction

No road traveled is free of obstacles. Yet, already, the 21st century is set to be dominated by the Digital Era. The path of e-learning is fast developing an infrastructure integral to training in a comprehensive manner, utilizing technological tools to instigate effective communication. The boundless avenues of wireless communication have led to an explosion in business and educational efficiency. Social media has transcended all known perimeters of yesterday to access and distribute instant information, thereby producing a society of eager networkers. Without a doubt, these online platforms will continue to expand. The digital revolution will construct more activities, refine existing applications, create more like-minded communities through social groups, voice the hopes and agonies of crisis-affected peoples, share regular news or alarming updates, challenge or promote political persuasions, and provide means to express various opinions from left to right and those in the middle.

Therefore, it is at such a period that we allow promising young academics – alongside experienced scholars – to contribute their opinions, findings and overall efforts to this dynamic new field that widens its sphere each day.

From the Aboriginal tribes of Australia, to the Maoris of New Zealand, and then the Sufi-teachings of mystical Islam, the significance of the oral and written traditions and their current relation to online activities will be explored in the opening article.

Our various extensions into the Digital Era will continue with a closer look at weight loss support groups and their widening sphere on Facebook, Facebook usage in language learning interactions, smartphone addiction and internet dependency issues as well as online perspectives of controversial ethical issues.

As mentioned earlier, the Digital progress has already left its dominating mark as the world entered the 21st century. Without a doubt, as technology continues its ascent, society will be faced with new and altering values in an effort to catch-up with this extraordinary Digitization, adapt satisfactorily in order to utilize these strong developments in everyday life.

Dr. Ayman Kole & Dr. Martin A. M. Gansinger

Tatiana Pentes

blackBOX V3: Painting A Digital Picture of Documented Memory

<http://www.strangecities.net/blackboxv3.html>

Abstract: BLACK BOX V3: Painting A Digital Picture of Documented Memory is a digital art film where the protagonist Nina's discovery of symbolic objects, ethnic dance, & musical forms (Hindustani, Rembetika, Chinese Jazz) reveal her cultural/ spiritual origins. The digital film is a documentary archiving an interactive version for download & play.

LAUNCH: http://bit.ly/BLACKBOX_V3 (Shockwave Player)

Keywords: Interactive Media, Digital Art, Identity, Cultural Memory

Pandora's Box

It is inscribed, as on Pandora's Box...do not open...passions...escape in all directions from a box that lies open... (Latour, 1987, p. 7)

This article is an examination and critical positioning of my current digital media project *blackBOX – Painting a Digital Picture of Documented Memory*. *blackBOX* is an interactive CD-ROM 'game' and also an internet work. *blackBOX* seeks to exploit and enhance the creative potentials of digitally produced music, sound, image and text relationships in an interactive and online environment. This work seeks to reverse, obscure and distort the dominating/colonialist gaze in a playful manner. *blackBOX* is produced through the hybrid meeting of visual arts practice, digital film production and documentary dance performance. It also interacts with the notion of 'electronic' (image/sound/text) writing, that was in fact prefigured in early Russian *avant-garde* practices. In the words of El Lissitzky:

*The new book demands the new writer. Inkstand and goose quill are dead...
The printed sheet transcends space and time. The printed sheet, the infinity
of the book, must be transcended... (El Lissitzky, 1923)*

The protagonist of the *blackBOX* digital media work, Nina, undertakes a journey, a struggle and search for virtual objects. The idea of mobilising a series of myths cross-culturally is at play both in the inner workings of the game device and in the computer interface strategy. The visual screens are composed of the virtual surface fragments of the archival materials and objects. These spaces form an electronic stage where the narrative elements unfold as part cinema, part computer arcade game.

blackBOX has been devised for gallery installation. The digital story first emerges from the textile surface of heroine Nina's (a Russian/Greek girl) red velvet dress, adorned with roses, through a bed of oriental cushions, where she writhes in her chrysalis. Sanskrit, Greek and Russian text are projected across her body. Images of the girl move into

representations of a modern urban metropolis. The player/participant is invited to explore this interactive metropolis, as filtered through the digital experiences and sensations of the girl, and to discover three metaphorical ‘Chinese Boxes’, which contain three symbolic performances.

The key interface design metaphor at this stage is a Chinese ornamental window, and interaction with this interface frames the central narrative. Inside this framework the girl discovers performances from three ‘imagined’ Australian diasporic communities; Rembetika (the Greek blues); classical Indian dance and music (Odissi and Kuchipudi traditions); and fragments of Australian jazz performed by musicians with Russian origins.

Interface design metaphor

The interface design metaphor for *blackBOX* is an electronic stage/screen surface where performances appear as if conjured from the imagination, or a dream. The participant/player moves around the digital surface of the stage, exploring through opening boxes, musical and dramatic performances, interviews with the musicians and dancers, documentary fragments of performances, statements by artists, text documents, newsprint articles, archival radio fragments, televisual and other related material. The action/performances appear within the immersive environment of a series of Byzantine (Greek), Sanskrit (Indian) and 1930s’ Russian jazz in Chinese diaspora.

Chinese-inspired screen frames combine electronic text and images in various assemblages trigger embedded material, a visual/audio hypertext (Hockey, 2001). Traditional modes of storytelling and music are challenged in this interface design, as the player/participant is provoked to engage with the music and performances.

As the player interacts with the screen, they consider the ways in which (traditional) musical and dance forms mix in various ‘compositions’ to create a hybrid of different cultural forms. This ‘game’ also acts as a digital archive and documentation of the metamorphosis of traditional cultural and musical forms, through the creative potentials