Constructing New Textual Relationships to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland:

The Longest Tattoo Chain Campaign through the Lens of Digital Practices

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Abstract

This article uses Deuze's (2006) Principals of Digital Culture (participation, remediation, and bricolage) to analyze Lithograph's Longest Tattoo Chain campaigns in which the company broke up Alice's Adventures in Wonderland into 2500 temporary tattoos that participants placed on their bodies and then took photos of. I specifically focus on the digital representations of the tattoos, examining how the Principals of Digital Culture get enacted in ways that show the continuity between print and digital texts as well as the ways that digital practices open up possibilities for new textual creations.

Keywords: Digital, Textuality, Remediation, Participation, Bricolage, Tattoos

1. Introduction

Manoff (2006) argues that "material differences between print and electronic media can be seen in the ease with which the elements of digital objects can be manipulated, combined, rearranged, allowing for new modes of textual creation" (312-13).   While critics have asserted that print texts lose meaning when translated to digital texts, Manoff challenges this claim by illustrating the ways that digital spaces can provide opportunities for new kinds of textual creations that enhance, expand, and even challenge print texts.   Hayles (2003) suggests that "the transformation of a print document into an electronic text" (263) is "a form of translation, which is inevitably also an act of interpretation" (263).   This view positions translation as a process of active meaning making rather than just a passive recording of a text in a different medium/framework.   These kinds of processes of creating new modes of text and of interpreting print texts are at the heart of digital culture practices in the current cultural moment.   Explaining the nature of principals driving digital culture, Deuze (2006) argues that it "can be seen as an emerging set of values, practices, and expectations regarding the way people (should) act and interact within the contemporary network society" (63).   He contends that these practices are

located both in "online and offline phenomena, with links to trends and developments predating the World Wide Web, yet having an immediate impact and particularly changing the ways in which we use and give meaning to living in an increasingly interconnected, always on(line) environment" (63). Citing participation, remediation, and bricolage as the three key principal expectations and practices of digital spaces, Deuze(2006) illustrates the impact of these practices on views of offline and online textual practices.

In this article, I draw on these three to understand the challenges to the perceived beliefs about the separation between print and digital texts.   To illustrate the ways in which the three core practices are being enacted in a way that highlights the complexity of the relationship between the two mediums, I study Lithograph, an online company that sells literary-themed products like tote bags, t-shirts and temporary tattoos that feature literary quotes and images on them.   Recently, the company invited people to be a part of the World's Largest Tattoo Chain in which Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was broken up into approximately 2500 individual quotes and put on temporary tattoos.   Participants paid $1 to receive a tattoo and be a part of the campaign.   The participants chose where on their bodies to place the tattoos, took photos of their tattoos, and then loaded the photos to Lithograph.com in sequential order of the original texts so that viewers/readers can still read the novel in its original order by viewing the digital pictures of the tattoos.   The Longest Tattoo Chain gives rise to new, multiple fluid, and dynamic readings of Alice's stories both through the physical embodiment of the words (in the form of the tattoos) and through the contextual frameworks within which participants locate these words (through the stating of their photographs).   In alignment with Manoff's(2006) arguments, this study illustrates the ways that digital affordances like photography and websites can allow for those new modes of textual creation (Manoff, 2006, 312)By studying the photographic representations of the temporary tattoos, we can see the ways in which digital objects are rearranged and constructed so as to embrace the playfulness that print texts like Alice's Adventures in Wonderland encourage as well as create new venues for re-thinking what dominant literacy practices are being enacted in digital spaces.

2. The Growing Number of Literary Tattoos:

While the history of tattoos is quite long and there is not room here in this article to tell it, a fairly recent trend in tattooing in Western cultures has been one that focuses literary works. "A new wave of literary-inspired tattoos is proving you can be a bit creative without ending up with a garish design. Tattoo artists the world over are being asked to immortalize their client's favorite novels, poems and fairytales, be it with a quote or a symbol" (Travers2015). Literary-themed tattoos, a subset of fandom/fannish tattoos (Jones2015)are becoming increasingly popular, which is, according to Talmadge& Taylor (2010), not surprising: "the increasing presence of literary tattoos illustrate that tattoos are becoming more mainstream now, as acceptable as pierced ears and daring haircuts, and almost as common.   So, it comes as no surprise that people you might label 'bookish types'—those librarians among us who know the Dewey decimal number for poetry by heart . . . or booksellers—would join the not-so conformist wave, inking a permanent declaration of love of books and writing into their very skin" (ix-x).   Further, Herndon (2014) explains the fascination with literary tattoos as such: "because that's the beauty of books—we are all touched by them.   They speak to us and give us what we need in any given moment and can leave indelible marks on our lives, sometimes even changing them completely.   And behind each tattoo is a different story, a different meaning, a different explanation of why that book or phrase is so important.   There are so many stories to be told."   Thus, literary tattoos can serve as a way to represent the impact that texts have on readers as well as providing them ways to present the stories in different ways, based on their interpretations of

the text and its significance to them and to literary traditions.

2.1 Skin as Challenge to Traditional Literacy Practices

Prior to the Longest Tattoo Chain project, the most ambitious literary tattoo project was Jackson's novella entitled Skinwhich was permanently tattooed on 2,095 different people's bodies, one word at a time.   Skin, which is touted as A Mortal World of Art, is not meant to be read in book format or even read in its entirety in sequential order as most books are.   Rather, the textexists onlyon participants' bodies—most of whom do not know each other and will, most likely, never meet.   Each "word"—as participants in the project are called—is both isolated from one another ("words" don't know who the other "words" are necessarily) and yet connected through an embodied text project; they are one part of the story, even if they don't know the whole story.   As Talmadge&Taylor (2010) highlight,   "Skin doesn't exist anywhere but as tattoos on people who are scattered all around the world.   Skin participants are members of a living, breathing work of literature" (52).   Yet, as Campbell, one of the words, explains, "belonging to Skin is a metaphorical kind of belonging.   I've met a handful of the other words, but that's only because I live in New York.   A word who lives in rural Idaho may never meet another word, much less Jackson herself . . . The relationship is beautifully abstract" (Talmadge& Taylor, 2010, 52).   Despite the separate-ness of the "words," feelings of connectedness seems to be a significant reason that people want to be a part of such a project.   As Josef asks in her blog where she writes about her participation in Skin, "Can you imagine being a part of a living, global story?"   Over 10,000 people applied to be a part of Skin, illustrating the great desire to be a part of something unique, permanent, and literary.

The Skin project collectively bridges the material world of the body and digital spaces because pictures of the tattoos are posted online—not in any sort of sequential or organized way (i.e. like a centralized website), but some of the "words" have taken pictures of their tattoos and presented them in various places on the Internet to make visible their participation in the project.   They also sent pictures to Jackson who was part of a video project completed by Berkley Art Museum in which Skin was highlighted through random images of some of the tattoos, rather than presenting the texts in an organized manner that would reveal what the story is.   The video is available both at the museum and online, thus being a digital artifact that bridges the material and the virtual.   Digital spaces were used, then, to showcasethe project and the people involved in it, one that connected the "words" through story—not necessarily through a physical, embodied relationship.   In these ways, Skin challenges relationships to texts and calls for different kinds of engagements and types of "reading."

3. Lithograph's World's Longest Tattoo Chain

Skin is a creative project that was, at one point, the most ambitious of its kind.   However, Lithograph's Longest Tattoo Chain is now the largest literary tattoo project in the world, with 5,000 tattooed participants who have worn temporary tattoos of quotes from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.   Lithograph's international campaign to create the World's Longest Tattoo Chain was started in 2015.   The first campaign for tattoos from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was so successful that the company offered the same promotion for the second book, Through the Looking Glass, a campaign that sold out even more quickly than the first one. The company'sfounder, Fein, describes the intentions behind the project: "To celebrate the importance of books in our lives, and to launch our collection of temporary literary tattoos, we asked book lovers on Kickstarter to help us create the World's Longest Tattoo Chain" (lithograph.com).This call and the philosophy inherent in it obviously attracted people's imaginations because of the great

response and quick sell-out of both Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass campaigns.

There are two significant differences between Skin and the Longest Tattoo Chainthat need to be considered in order to understand the significance of the Longest Tattoo Chain.   First, the Alice quotes are temporary tattoos, meant to be worn for a short time rather than be inked on the body in perpetuity.   A tattoo does not have to be permanent, though, in order to have long-term significance. The Alice quotes are meant to be worn long enough for the participant to take a photo of the tattoo and post it to a digital website.   When temporary tattoos are presented in digital space (as they are with the Longest Tattoo Chain), a different sense of permanence is granted them and sustained through digital spaces.In other words, while the embodied presence of the tattoo is, on one level, temporary, the record of the tattoo and the ongoing use of the tattoo photos suggest a different kind of "permanence" that is constructed in digital spaces, one that relies on both physical and digital spaces in order to be enacted and engaged in.   Second, the Longest Tattoo Chain Project intends for people to read the Alice stories in their entirety—on flesh. Skinis not meant to be read for the story but appreciated for the idea—i.e. the randomness and materiality of the project itself.   In contrast, the Longest Tattoo Chain encourages people to actually read the stories in their entirety through presenting photos of the individual tattoos in sequential order in a durable digital space, thus emphasizing the importance of both more traditional methods and more digitally-afforded/forward-looking/unique approaches to and engagements with texts.By not eschewing the print-based logic, this projects shows how print and digital texts mediate each other and "play together."

The process to participate in the Longest Tattoo Chain was fairly simple.   Whenpeople sent an email request to be a part of the project, they received a temporary tattoo that was a randomly selected passage from either Alice's Adventures in Wonderland or Through the Looking Glass.When participants received their tattoos, they decided where to place them on their bodies.   They then posted a picture of their tattoos on lithograph.com.   Even though tattoos were randomly assigned, each one was given a number so that when the participant posted her/his photo of the tattoo, it was in the correct place in the sequence of the stories.   As is clear from this process, the project started in a digital space through an online company requesting participation, moved to physical embodiment as the participants received their tattoos and placed them on their bodies, and then moved back to a digital spacewhen they posted their photos online, intended to be read/viewed by people online.   Through posting a picture of their tattooed words, participants were, in essence, creating an *embodied* version of the book. As Mumford (2015) explains, "when it's all finished, people will be able to read Carroll's fantastical tale across the skin of thousands of 'Alice' fans."   We can learn a great deal about digital values/expectations and practices by studying those photographic representations of the tattoos becausethey illustrate the ways that traditional representations of literary texts are being enacted in a plethora of ways through new relationships between digital and physical spaces.

4. Tattoo Continuum: Participation, Remediation, and Bricolage

When studying the ways in which participants staged the photographs of their tattoos, we see a continuum of strategies, from ones solidly located in the printed textsto much more interpretive and abstract representations of the tattoos, illustrating how a personal decision to have a tattoo can actually be part of a collective re-thinking of what counts as "text" and as "valuable" and what is counted as a "correct" interpretation of famous literary works like Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.   Throughout this section, I draw on Deuze's(2006) three principals of digital culture because they are significant

concepts that have been frequently discussed in media and cultural studies. He argues that the key expectations that people bring with them to these networked environments are encapsulated into three key concepts: participation, remediation, and bricolage. Participation means that we are "active agents in the process of meaning-making" (68); remediation is when we "adopt but at the same time modify, manipulate, and thus reform consensual ways of understanding reality" (68);and bricolage is defined as when "we reflexively assemble our own particular versions of such reality" (68). Though using these concepts to analyze the key trends across the tattoo presentations in the Longest Tattoo Chain project, we can see the ways these practices are being enacted in digital spaces so as to not only impact/reform our conceptions of the separation between physical and online spaces, but also to create the possibility for relationships between print and digital spaces that emphasize key identity practices that circulate today in both online and offline worlds.

4.1 Relationships to Traditional, Print Texts

At one end of the continuum of the representations of the tattoos in the Longest Tattoo Chain arephotographs thattake a traditional approach to the print text. In this grouping, participants locate the temporary tattoo next to the pages in the print book where the quote is found. Participants who use this fairly traditional strategy rely mostly on the drawings of Sir John Tenniel, the renowned illustrator of the first edition of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. While there have been many other visual interpretations of the Alice in Wonderland works, the Tenniel drawings (besides the 1951 Disney movie and now, perhaps, 2010 Johnny-Depp version of the movie) are the most enduring of the images and central to our cultural imaginings of Alice. It is no surprise, then, that many of the photographs in the Longest Tattoo Chain include Tenniel's drawings. The famous drawings become a backdrop for the tattoos, thus locating the photograph clearly in a print-based tradition. Illustrative of this type of photographic representation, Tattoo #12 in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland ("Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!") is placed on the underside of a wrist, with the arm leaning on the page of a book where the quote comes from. The featured pageincludes a Tenniel illustration of the White Rabbit, who is the speaker of the quote. The book is resting in her lap as she sits outside on the grass, much like Alice was doing at the beginning of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.The photo of Tattoo #1692 ("said the Duchess, as she tucked her arm affectionately into Alice's") takes a slightly different approach by including another temporary tattoo next to the quote, a tattoo that is a copy of a Tenniel drawing of the Duchess. Even though the Duchess tattoo is abstracted from the book (and not located in the pages of the book), the tattoo is still clearly located in traditional representations of the original book (albeit in a clever way that aligns with the Longest Tattoo Chain project itself through telling the story through temporary tattoos).

4.1.1 Analysis

All of these strategies locate these representations in a relationship to and valuing of the original text and do so in fairly traditional ways, emphasizing a continuity between online and offline engagements with the text. Like all of us, the participants obviously have a great deal of experience with print texts and, thus, print-based expectations and values. Despite the flexibility of the Lithograph guidelines and the many options available to people creating in digital spaces now, these participants still chose this more traditional route, perhaps emphasizing these participants' strong relationship to the original text, even as they wanted to engage with a digital project that has the potential to challenge the very basis of print-based assumptions. But there are significant ways in which these more traditional representations extend our considerations of and engagements with the print

texts, thus challenging those assumptions/values/expectations. While the tattoo wearers on this end of the continuum stick close to the traditional images, they have the choice to participate in this way. The campaignallows the participantsto determine which image to useand in what context to place the tattoo, thus including the individual in an important part of the meaning-making process. Their active participation makes them co-illustrators and potentially even co-authors of sorts, thuschallenging the idea illustrator controlling the visual representations.

This type of participation and the ways it draws readers into a more co-constructive processties into the concept of Deuze's (2006) digital culture principal of participation. He refers to a "participatory authorship" (68), a concept which challenges the idea of a few individuals having control over the creation of public texts. Through their staging of the photos, participants become "active agents in the process of meaning-making" (66). Further, Deuze (2006) draws on Jenkins (2004, p. 93) who "calls this shift toward a more inclusive production process 'cultural convergence,' fostering 'a new participatory folk culture by giving average people the tools to archive, annotate, appropriate, and circulate content'" (Deuze, 2006, 67).Thus, the flexibility of the campaign allows participants to appropriate the print images, place them in a new context, and circulate their own interpretations of the text rather than simply repeating what is in the print text. As Deuze (2006) argues, "it seems clear that people not only have come to expect participation from the media, they increasingly have found ways to enact this participation in the multiple ways they use and make media" (68). The Longest Tattoo Chain project is an excellent example of how participants us the tools available to them to make meaning in new ways and circulate these new meanings broadly by locating them in digital spaces that can be accessed by more people than an individual's single tattoo usually is.

This grouping of tattoos also represents a type of remediation, which is another principal aspect of digital culture, according to Deuze (2006). Drawing on Bolter &Grusin's(1999) definition of remediation, Deuze (2006) describes this process in the following way: "we adopt but at the same time modify, manipulate, and thus reform consensual ways of understanding reality" (66). He points out that Bolter and Grusin "argue that every new medium diverges from yet also reproduces older media" (68). In this first grouping of tattoos, participants remediate the older media by adopting images from the print book and its images while, at the same time, modifying them in ways that capture/include both the new and old media, juxtaposes those media, and yet also show the continuity between them. Using the traditional images challenges tradition while at the same time locating the new approaches within that tradition. Whereas "tradition can be seen as the perceived safety or sense of security in sameness, similarity, routines, and deeply entrenched patterns of organization" (Deuze, 2006, 69)—and, I would contend, deeply entrenched patterns of thinking--remediation challenges that tradition through situating the traditional within the new. Instead of a clean break from tradition, though, remediation recycles and relies on what came before in order to create/present the new ideas. These principles can all be seen in the tattoos in this grouping.

4.2 Active Engagement with Story Lines

At another place on the continuum in the photographic representations of the temporary tattoos are those that create a completely new visual to re-create the scene/event referred to in the quote, a visual, though, that goes beyond what is presented in the original drawings or other interpretations of the book.In interesting ways, these photoslocate the tattoo wearer as part of the story, rather than simply a reader, suggesting a different set of the ways that digital practices can encourage participation and also remediate traditional print-based assumptions. In the photo for Tattoo #287 ("And four times

seven is—oh dear!"), the tattoo is featured on a hand that is figuring out the math problem the quote talks about, making the participant an active part of the story since she is echoing/engaging in the action in which the book character is participating.Likewise, the photograph of Tattoo #4774 ("And what it is that you do!") shows that tattoo on a hand holding a pencil to graph paper with one word written on it—"you."   Like the previous example, this participant represents herself through the act of writing on paper—and writing a word that is in the quote but also could directly relate to the participants' identification with the text.   Further, in the photograph of Tattoo #2396 ("The jury all wrote down on their slates"), the tattoo is placed on a hand that is framed by the sleeve of a white dress shirt and a formal suit coat.   The hand holds a piece of chalk, poised over a blank chalkboard.   Again, the participant is locating himself within the happenings in the text by presenting himself as an active participant in the process of the story, rather than just a reader.   These participants becomeco-creators, not just viewers because they are actively "involved" in the story.

4.2.1 Analysis

This grouping of tattoosclearly highlights the concept of participation because the tattoo wearers are acting as "active agents in the process of meaning-making" (Deuze, 2006, 66) through actively situating themselves within the framework of the story rather than simply being passive readers of the story.   In this way, the Longest Tattoo Chain project fosters "'a new participatory folk culture by giving average people the tools to archive, annotate, appropriate and recirculate content'" (Deuze, 2006, quoting Jenkins 2004 p. 67).   More significantly, though, this grouping, like the first one, also highlights ways that remediationgets enacted. Bolter &Grusin(1999) argue that "what is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media" (15).   These photographic representations of the tattoos refashion the older media of the text by situating the reader/viewer next to the text.   The participants stick close to the original stories by performing the actions in the stories, but they remediate the original text by providing their own multiple interpretations and engagements with the text. In terms of the tattoos in this category, they work both within the traditional system of the Alice in Wonderland stories because the photo stagings align themselves with the typical meanings associated with the quotes; however, these representations also work outside the system through the tattoo wearers' active participation in the story.   Further, the photos refashion older media (the print text) using new technology (the photograph and the presentation of the photograph on the website).   The old media is still present in the representations, though, thus showing the continuity as well as distinctions between the print and embodied interpretations.

4.3 Challenges to Tradition

On another point of the continuum are tattoo photos thatcompletely challenge the traditional print-based Alice in Wonderland texts. Through various strategies, the participants practice bricolage which is another key principal/value of digital culture as defined by Deuze (2006).   Bricolageis the process of "remixing, reconstructing, and reusing of separate artifacts, actions, ideas, symbols, and styles in order to create new insights or meanings" (Deuze, 2006, 69).   This kind of remixing and reusing can be seen in photographic representations of Tattoo #3849 ("There was something very queer about the water, she thought").   The picture features the tattoo on the inside of the forearm, with the hand holding a rainbow-colored bottle of Absolut Vodka.   This image demonstrates the use of the available tools available to create something new that challenges not only the traditional drawings in

Alice in Wonderland works but also the meanings of the quote (i.e. "queer water" becomes Vodka). While there is a tangential link to the tattoo quote, the participant draws on other tools/artifacts that he/she has available to create a new interpretation of the text, one that changes (challenges, even) the original meaning of the text;   this practice is the heart of bricolage. Another photo that takes a similar approach is the one that presents Tattoo #4912 ("'Can you do Division? Divide a loaf by a knife—what's the answer to that?'") in which an up-turned arm is held vertical to a canyon cut in a rock—representing a different kind of "division."   Taking new tools/materials and reflecting on the quote, this photo extends the meaning of the quote and locates it in a different context, thus creating something new from readily available materials. In one of the most unique representations, the photo of Tattoo #3515 ("After we've brought them out so far") echoes these strategies.   The picture (which is one of the most unique of all of the ones presented in both campaigns) features two faces (one male, one female) in close proximity to each other.   The woman faces the viewer while the man's face is turned to face the woman.   Both of them have stuck out their tongues, curling them in a seductive/sexualized way.   This photo challenges the traditional definition of the story yet still relates tangentially to the quote—"brought them out so far."   The original text does not refer to tongues (and certainly does not have sexualized undertones), so this representation takes the tattooed quote out of the context of the text and asks viewers to read the quote in a singular way, defined by the photo rather than through its relationship to the Alice stories. This picture, then, draws on available means to create a different meaning entirely.   Further, at the far end of this grouping is the photo for Tattoo #5007 ("When the feast's over, we'll go to the ball.") which provides a picture of an Edwardian-dressed woman who is seated at a fancy table set with fine china.   She is eating a turkey leg daintily, with tea and fruit set out on the table in front of her.   Interestingly, the tattoo is not included anywhere in the picture.   This picture draws on the quote of the non-visible tattoo by featuring a banquet of sorts, but it challenges the Longest Tattoo Chain project by not following the rules—by not featuring the tattoo on the body.   Thus, this photo takes the available means to subvert the very purpose of the project in which the photograph (and its posting on the website) participates.

4.3.1 Analysis

The strategies in this unique grouping illustrate key parts of the process of bricolage. Vanevenhoven et al (2011) presentthe core elements of bricolage that Baker and Nelson (2005) offer: "In reviewing the literature on bricolage, Baker and Nelson (2005) characterize bricolage as a concept having three core elements: making do with what's at hand, taking on diverse or novel tasks, and accumulating and using diverse skills and resources" (Vanevenhoven et al, 2011 53).   The representations in this grouping highlight all three elements. First, the participants make do with what's at hand by drawing on the parameters of the Longest Tattoo Chain campaign (except for the photo for Tattoo #5007 which subverts those parameters).   They take things in their environment that are readily available to them (like a bottle of Absolut vodka) to create images that create new meanings. Second, through the available means, the participants take on a novel task—participating in a unique tattoo project that questions the digital/physical separation that is so commonly presented.   The results of this participation are "diverse or novel" approaches to the tattooed quotes and thus, the text is read differently—in new ways that still engage with (or use as a jumping off point) the print text.   Finally, the participants use diverse skills to create their interpretations of the quotes, constructing meanings that are not necessarily consistent with the original meaning of the text and invite the reader to re-consider the quote itself, outside of the context of the text.   They also draw on technological affordances of digital photography and online spaces (i.e. lithograph.com) to not only present but

actually create the new meanings that challenge the readers.

5. Conclusion:

Studying Lithograph's Longest Tattoo Chain campaigns provides insights into the ways that key digital practices are being enacted to change and expand our cultural relationships to print-based texts and the assumptions that have historically accompanied them.   Rather than digital texts being seen as a complete break from traditional practices/beliefs, though, this study shows how the two modes work together.   When used in digital environments, the practices of participation, remediation, and bricolage put the digital texts in conversation with the print ones, even as the digital texts extend, re-create and even challenge those principles/values.   As Hayles (2003) argues, the current moment offers great possibilities to rethink old and create new beliefs about/affordances given to text.   She (2003) writes: "This opportunity is powerfully present in the implicit juxtaposition of print and electronic textuality.   The game is to understand both print and electronic textuality more deeply through their similarities and differences relative to one another" (280).

Looking at the ways participants in the Longest Tattoo Project represented their relationships to the quotes they received illustrate a range of practices that are currently circulating in digital environments.   The photographic representations of the tattoos powerfully juxtapose print and electronic/digital texts in a way that helps us see the ways that these kinds of practices impact our readings of and thinking based on print-based texts and provide the stage for new engagements with classics like Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.

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