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Readerly Freedom from the Nascent Novel to Digital Fiction: Confronting Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and Burne's "24 Hours with Someone You Know" (1996)

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ABSTRACT: This essay compares two novel forms that are separated by more than 250 years: Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, published in 1742, and Philippa Burne's hypertext fiction "24 Hours with Someone You Know," copyrighted in 1996. Using narratological, pragmatic, and cognitive tools and theories, the confrontation of the two distant texts aims to highlight that while "the ethics of the telling" is congruent with the "ethics of the told" in both stories (Phelan, *Rhetoric*), the texts differ in the pragmatic positioning of their audiences and the freedom that they seem to grant readers, thereby emphasizing the evolution of the author-reader relationship across centuries and media. The article shows to what extent digital fiction can be said to invite the active participation of the reader via the computer mouse/cursor. Meanwhile it exposes a paradox: although *Joseph Andrews* is a highly author-controlled narrative, guiding the reader's ethical interpretation of what is told, it seems to leave more "space" for the actual reader, while Burne's participatory framework, conveyed through a second-person pronoun that blurs the line between implied and actual audience, requires some "forced participation" (Walker) via the "virtual performatives" that hyperlinks represent. Finally the specificity of "you" digital fiction as opposed to its print counterpart is theorized in two contrasted models of audience.

Keywords: reader-author relationship, second-person pronoun, digital fiction, actual audience, pragmatics, cognitive stylistics, ethics of the told, ethics of the telling

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Introduction: Towards readerly participation?

Conceiving, like James Phelan (*Rhetoric* 56), of literature as a "communicative event," that is, "a rhetorical action in which an author addresses an audience for some purpose(s)." I'm interested in the author-reader relationship as it is distributed in two fictional pieces that were published more than two centuries apart: (1) Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), among the first novels in the English language, which tells the adventure of a young footman going back home from London with his mentor, the absent-minded Parson Abraham Adams, and (2) Philippa Burne's hypertext fiction "24 Hours with Someone You Know" (1996, henceforth

“24 Hours”), which belongs to the first generation of digital fiction,[1] based on a simple HTML structure reflecting the internet technology available at the time of creation. It features a protagonist who comes for the first time to an unfamiliar neighborhood to pay a visit to his (?)[2] cousin named Jess, only to be told by Jess’s housemates that they do not have a clue about where Jess has run off to.

There are three reasons for choosing these two particular works: First, because both fictions, two centuries apart, emerge against the contexts they were written in. Burne’s postmodern digital fiction uses the affordances of a new medium made available in the 1990s. The new genre that Fielding was helping to create,[3] the nascent “novel” form, appealed to the reader’s feelings in an unprecedentedly intimate and proximal way, as opposed to the preceding Romances featuring grandiose heroes the reader could hardly identify with. So these two works can be brought together in the sense that they both emerge at the beginning of a new era (a new way of doing literature, either in print for an extended readership with the rise of literacy in the eighteenth century or via a new medium at the end of twentieth century). The second reason is that they offer good comparison material regarding the new reader participation framework they construct. Fielding is setting up a conversational mode that is characteristic of the first novels in English; Burne is appealing to the reader’s participation in the direct way that the digital medium makes particularly possible. Furthermore, in both fictions, what Phelan calls the ethics of the telling (how the author relates to the audience through diverse means) and the ethics of the told (“stemming from the ethical dimensions of what is represented through those means”) are shown to be congruent in a way that will be demonstrated in the next section using a pragmatic and cognitive framework (*Rhetoric* 56). Indeed, the different “rapport management” (Spencer-Oatey, *Managing Rapport in Talk*) of the author/audience relationship in the two novels highlights the “place” that is made for the reader and the “polite” attention paid to her “faces” (Brown & Levinson), as well as the cognitive guidance through the story world that is offered to her. This focus on the “ethics of the telling” enables me to delve into the degrees of readerly freedom in the two works. These considerations will more broadly emphasize the relation between the “authorial” and “actual” audience in each case.

At first glance, moving from one fiction to the next seems to make a complete shift from an author-controlled narrative (in Fielding’s case) to a reader-oriented perspective (as adopted by Burne). For the hierarchical relation set up in *Joseph Andrews* by the (implied) author’s resorting to a learned narrator (denoted by “I” or “we”) communicating to a passive audience (marked as “the Reader,” “Reader,” “you,” or “thou/thee”), Burne substitutes a de-centered perspective through the use of the second-person pronoun that masks the narrating origin and obscures clear reference, blurring the clear-cut boundaries between narrator, protagonist, and (authorial and actual) reader; here are the first lines: “You stand on a corner looking up and down the street. This is not somewhere you normally find yourself. Looking at the piece of paper in your hand you turn left and walk, away from the trams, the cars, the noise.” In *Joseph Andrews*, the authorial audience (and the actual readers) are clearly kept outside the realm of fiction as “out of frame eavesdroppers” having no access to the “self-enclosed, make-believe realm,” to use Goffman’s terms (139). The readers are indeed kept out of the diegetic field by an omniscient narrator, who guides them through the story from a multiplicity of perspectives and characters. In “24 Hours,” one could say that the reader’s participation reaches the level of “en-action,” that is, physical participation through the hyperlinks that the reader needs to choose from and click on, which seems to create more freedom and call for more engagement on the part of the actual reader. However this essay intends to demonstrate that the reader-centered perspective of Burne’s digital text (as opposed to Fielding’s author-controlled one) needs to be put into perspective, as the appeal to the (actual) audience’s active participation in constructing the story world paradoxically creates depersonalization in “24 Hours,” self-reflexively mirroring the de-personalized communication between the characters at the diegetic level. The third section will indeed show to what extent the apparent freedom of the reader in Burne’s fiction and its seeming absence in Fielding’s need to be questioned, as the second-person pronoun engenders “forced” participation via the hyperlink (Walker), but also tends to flatten the diversity of potential readers acknowledged by Fielding’s narrator. A model of audience is then proposed in section 4 to account for the reader’s participation in both print fiction and digital “you” narrative.

Pragmatic and Cognitive Differences in building the author-reader relationship

Spencer-Oatey uses the notion of “rapport management” in her pragmatic study of interaction, as she is concerned not merely with the “content component” of an exchange but also the “relationship component” involving both self- and other presentation and the consideration of face wants and needs of all the speakers present in a dialogue (*Culturally Speaking* 1–2). Although rarely applied to fictional communication, I will use it to analyze Fielding’s polite treatment of the reader. In *Joseph Andrews*’s novel form, the narrator’s attempts to persuade the reader of his ethical assessments of his tale’s (good or hypocritical) characters clearly take into account the “relationship” component, paying attention to the face of all the participants present (narrator and reader alike), that is their self-image and how they would want to be perceived. The very overt and wordy narrator’s metafictional comments on his way of telling the story constructs, through discourse, the ethos[4] of a reliable narrator who is keen on telling a truthful tale. By doing what he announces in chapter titles, he respects, in Grice’s terms, the maxims of manner (be relevant) and quality (say the truth and only what you have proof of) in his cooperative writing:

> And in these Inscriptions [the Contents prefixed to every Chapter] I have been as faithful as possible, not imitating the celebrated *Montagne,* who promises you one thing and gives you another; nor some Title-Page Authors, who promise a great deal, and produce nothing at all. (*Joseph Andrews* 77)

The narrator projects the image of an able and competent teller, enhancing what Spencer-Oatey calls his “quality face,” which corresponds to our “fundamental desire” to be positively evaluated “in terms of our personal qualities, e.g. competence, abilities, appearances” (Spencer-Oatey, *Managing Rapport in Talk* 540). Projecting the image of a learned man who knows his Classics, the narrator sometimes blames his readers for not being as learned (although in some lowered-voice confidence), especially when he anticipates some criticism of poor Adams fleeing a pack of hounds:

> and if there be any Modern so outrageously brave that he cannot admit of Flight in any Circumstances whatever, I say (but I whisper that softly, and I solemnly declare, without any Intention of giving Offence to any brave Man in the Nation) I say, or rather I whisper that he is an ignorant fellow, and hath never read Homer nor Virgil nor knows he any thing of *Hector* or *Turnus*. (206)

These whispered words could embody what Chen calls a Self-Face Threatening Act (95), as the Speaker risks that his utterance will be interpreted as an arrogant assertion of superiority. However, this posture is counterbalanced at other times by tactics of modesty when he confesses gaps in his memory, for instance: “I would quote more great Men if I could: but my Memory not permitting me, I will proceed to exemplify these Observations by the following Instance” (148).

In his attempt to win the reader over, the narrator also resorts to strategies of negative politeness[5] as studied by Brown and Levinson, consisting in not assuming the reader's willingness to comply with his observations through hedges such as the recurrent use of modalized expressions ("I hope" combined with the modal "will"):

> *we hope*, therefore, a judicious Reader *will* give himself some pains to observe… (29)
> the Ladies themselves *will we hope*, be induced /…/ to bridle their rampant Passion for Chastity (33)
> [about the alleged death of Parson Adams's son through drowning] in which *I hope* the Reader *will* sympathize. (271; my emphasis)

He also mitigates the imposition some advice to the reader—concerning, for instance, the necessity to slow her pace of reading and make pauses in between chapters, just as a stage coach would rest in an inn before resuming its journey—could represent using negations ("would not"), hedges ("a little"), and admissions of impingement ("I take the liberty"):

> a consideration which *I take the liberty to recommend a little* to the Reader (76)
> I *would not advise him* to travel through these Pages *too fast* (76; my emphases)

Flouting the maxim of quantity when indulging in digressions, he admits the invasion of the reader's "territory" and asks for forgiveness: "And now, Reader, I hope thou wilt pardon this long digression" (137).

The reader's own face is paid attention to when the narrator makes sure never to insult the reader with information she may already have: "*It would be impertinent to insert* a Discourse which chiefly turned on the relation of Matters already well-known to the Reader" (56; my emphasis). This strategy is in line with the narrator's attempt to bring the reader on his side as a worthy co-participant, dividing the competent from the less competent reader: "not necessary to mention to the Sagacious Reader" (31). Furthermore, the use of the inclusive form "our" or "my" acknowledges the narrator's care for the reader's role: "Our more intelligent Readers will doubtless suspect … and to be honest with them, they are in the right" (242). Granting qualities to the reader is a means to position her as member of an in-group, enhancing her face in the process. This face-flattering act is also performed through less explicit means. Fielding's ironical remarks leave it up to the reader to get the "mismatch"[6] between his characters' words and actions or between their encyclopaedic knowledge and the situational context. I will only give a blatant illustration with the interpolated tale of the young Leonora who throws off her first fiancé Horatio for a rich new French gentleman, Bellarmine, who arrived with a Coach and six horses. But when Horatio mortally wounds him, Leonora is advised by her aunt to make up with Horatio should Bellarmine die. In the following answer to her aunt, Leonora seems to express scruples regarding Bellarmine's condition, which she feels responsible for, but the parenthesis serves as an implicit ironical answer to her question:

> 'Can I ever bear to contemplate my own Face again?' (With her Eyes still fixed on the Glass) (99)

The condemning parenthesis brings ironist and addressee together against the target (the fickle woman) (see Booth, Stockwell, Black, see also Simpson on *Satire* for the triangular relation between satirist, satiree, and target). The reader is gratified in her ability to understand hypocritical behaviour in *Joseph Andrews*, which is likely to procure her what Lisa Zunshine calls "social pleasure": "an illusive but satisfying confirmation that we remain competent players in the social game that is our life" (165). Being placed in the accomplice position as part of the ethics of the narrator's telling, the reader is brought to condemn vices and hypocrites by perceiving them from this ironical distance.

This kind of rapport-enhancing management is to be contrasted with the one built into the late twentieth-century digital fiction of "24 Hours." The conversational relationship seems to be achieved through a very ambiguous "you" that does and does not address the reader (see the final section). The characters take charge of the narration through dialogues in a majority of lexias. The reader, who does not know more than the protagonist, enters the story in medias res as no omniscient narrator helps her decide where the character is or who the different characters are. As exemplified in the following extract describing the strange neighborhood, the narration is kept to a minimum as verbs accumulate in a tertiary rhythm, giving the impression of successive snapshots (in a negative mode), making cognitive descriptive short cuts, onomatopoeia echoing the sounds rather than commenting on them:

> No jungle, no Holden, no beaten up sofa on the front verandah. Non-descript.
> Nothing. No clues.
> You have another look down the street and watch some boys kick a football. Thump. Boomp.

Underlined words at the end of each webpage invite choosing between different narrative paths. This narrative mode can be said to be quite elliptic, the hyperlinks being implicit forms of suggestion or invitation (see final section). In "24 Hours," the reader is not coaxed into following a diegetic path; her desire is taken for granted. The only way forward is to click: "We'll be at the house if you wanna come by" or "Come on, let's go and see what the rest of those bums are doing." This more direct way of addressing the reader is the recurrent mode of more interactive fiction, especially video game-like fiction (see Bell et al., *Analyzing Digital Fiction*). We can think of *Clues* by Robert Kendall, where the reader is asked to find out who has murdered whom; when the reader makes interpretative mistakes, in a trial and error manner, she is met with not so face-enhancing remarks:

> Failure of Imagination!
> You want to put a good face on it, personify your aspirations, so you grasp at characters. But this is poetry, goddammit. You ignore the faint out-of-the-way signifiers at your peril. You missed the pure symbols, the unmitigated glyphs, the naked icons unafraid to mean anything but themselves. Why must things be spelled out for you only in letters you understand?

—unless this is a teasing way to poke into her pride and have her start again (Niesz and Holland 121–22).[7]

The disappearance of politeness formulae in favor of more direct forms of address can be connected to today's solicitations of viewers/readers in the limited spaces of news feeds on screens, which often adopt the most direct means to attract people's attention in the imperative mood ("learn more about…," "follow…," "read the blog," etc.).

This divergent consideration of the reader in the two works is also pragma-cognitively reflected in the different ways the reader is left to process what is narrated

In Emmott's contextual frame theory, reading consists in building complex and dynamic mental representations of the text drawn from textual cues. These mental representations are stored in various parts of the brain, as reading relies on memorizing and inferencing. The reader is guided by different degrees of narratorial directions through linguistic signals enabling her to understand who is present in the scene and who is not (Emmott 118). In *Joseph Andrews*, the reader is indeed led from one scene to the other, the narrator specifying when he leaves one frame to access another, the very verb "leaving" almost physically transporting her (in mind) from one contextual frame to the next:

> They [a Coach and Six with a numerous attendance] were now arrived, and the Reader will be contented to leave them, and repair to the kitchen, where *Barnabas*, the Surgeon, and an Exciseman were smoaking their Pipes over some *Syder-and*. (65)
> As we cannot therefore at present get Mr Joseph out of the Inn, we shall leave him in it and carry our Reader on after Parson Adams. (81)

In sharp contrast, "24 Hours" does not do much to help the reader through the different lexias she clicks through (the few photographs added in the left-hand-side corner can hardly be said to be helpful visual clues here). The links point to where the scene will take place in the next lexia, but once there, she has to look for clues in the text to find out who is who and who speaks. A few examples will show the stark contrast between the different cognitive demands made to the reader in the two texts:

> 'Know much about politics?'
> You shake your head.
> 'No. Me neither. Fucking waste of time. Like this'll make a difference.'
> 'You cynical bastard.'
> You both turn towards the voice. ("24 Hours" from 'the pub' lexia)[8]

"You cynical bastards" is presented as coming from the protagonist in the strict order of the cues but in fact the reader must read the last sentence to figure out that the utterance must be attributed to the voice that comes from a third character behind them.

Fielding, by contrast, never loses sight of his reader, making sure she makes connections between contexts through explicit reminders—"which the Reader can scarce have forgotten" (107), "for you may remember, Reader, that…" (267), or "the Reader may please to recollect" (298)—or by anticipating the reader's cognitive reading process—"the Reader may perhaps wonder" (42), "as the Reader may suspect…" (82), or "as the Reader may perhaps guess" (101). In "24 Hours," the hyperlinks create expectations, with the reader drawing from cognitive schemata in order to guess what the link will lead to and interpret subsequent text (see Bell, *Schema theory*). For instance in the first lexia "You turn and knock on the door," "knocking on the door" evokes a schema (Schank & Abelson) or a scenario (Sanford & Garrod, Sanford & Emmott) drawing on the reader's generic experience, according to which this action usually implies somebody answering the door. This is what happens in the lexia clicked into: "'Yeh?' A guy stands in the doorway, track pants, no shirt, feet bare." Once inside, the reader must rely on linguistic clues to try to visualize how many people are in the house, as no reported clauses—no narratorial interventions—are here to help. When reading "will you two shut the fuck up," the reader understands there is a third person, but no names are given. The reader gets that there is a lot of tension going on between the housemates, though. The presentations are made later, with "Gestures around the table: 'Ned, Kate, Sam, Dave. And I'm Polly,'" which tells the reader how many of them are there but makes it difficult to infer who is who. Sometimes, in one contextual frame, the reader can infer how much time has elapsed; in the following example, the elliptic comparatives reveal that they are all still in "the pub" but later on in the evening: "the crowd has thinned and the music has got louder."

The protagonist's attempt to find out information about his cousin is met with uncooperativeness and withholding. The interjections and reactions of the others do not tell much linguistically but are pragmatically heavy with unsaid meaning.

> She looks you up and down.
> 'Sylvie. This is Jess' cousin.' Polly raises her eyebrows as she introduces you.

> 'No shit.' Sylvie looks you up and down. You feel uncomfortable. (from the 'You go to the rally with Polly and Ned' lexia)

The repetition of the same expression ("looks you up and down") seems to have different pragmatic meanings before and after the revelation of the protagonist's identity. Another meaningful echo is to be found across two lexias:

> Polly sits down and sighs. 'Something's gotta give though. Maybe Jess had a point in doing a runner!' She shakes her head, 'I can't believe I said that.' (From the 'come in' lexia)

Later on in the pub, Rick and Ned are talking about another friend, Marty:

> 'I thought Marty was in Sydney.'
> 'Got back last night. God knows what he's been doing up there, came back without even the bag he left with.'
> 'Probably had to do a runner.'
> 'Yeh. Dumb bastard.' Rick glances at you and you scowl back. (from 'the pub' lexia)

The narrator's function is very much reduced as the author-character-reader channel is mediated through the characters' exchanges (Phelan, *Rhetoric* 66), and more specifically through the repetition of the word "runner" across lexias and the character's paralinguistic attitude (Rick's glance at "you," measuring the impact on Jess's cousin of this implicitly laden word that seems to apply to the missing cousin). But the exchanges do not go one step further in helping the protagonist get an answer. Most of the time, silence falls and people walk away, opting out of the conversation even when the protagonist formulates his question in a most clear manner:

Commenté [SAD1]: Character's or characters'?
Character's

> 'Nope.' Kate grabs your arm, 'But this is Jess' cousin.'
> The guy stares at you, 'Hi!' He smiles and shakes your hand.
> 'I am actually a person too, you know. Not just Jess' cousin!'
> He laughs.
> 'Sorry!' Kate puts her hand over her mouth, 'We've all been introducing you all day as "the cousin".'
> 'Well it is something amazing to be.' The guy is still laughing.
> 'Why.' You stop moving with the music and stand still in the middle of the heaving crowd.
> 'WHY?' What the fuck did Jess do to you people? Is anyone gonna tell me or what?'
> Kate and the guy exchange looks.
> 'Bye. Good to meet you, not-just-Jess'-cousin.' He bows and disappears into the crowd.
> (from the 'come with me' lexia)

The infringement of the cooperative principle occurs at the level of the diegesis and across it (as the difficulty of retrieving information about Jess's cousin matches the cognitive reading efforts asked of the reader). There is indeed "rhetorical concord at the level of both character-character and author-audience interactions" (Phelan, *Rhetoric* 61).

Thus in the two works, the ethics of the telling concur with the ethics of the told. In Fielding's case, the audience are brought to share the narrator's ethical evaluations of unethical characters through a narrative that guides the reader's interpretation in a much controlled way. The lack of ethical guidance in Burne's case does not render her work less ethical but brings the reader to arrive at an ethical evaluation of what is (not) going on by herself, such as an implicit conception of the internet as conveying only superficial information rather than allowing thorough information-searching, which seems to be shared with the (implied) author. The two authors' respective choices concerning the ethics of the telling has an impact on the degree of freedom that is granted the reader, as the next part will point out.

Readerly freedom

In *Joseph Andrews*, despite the polite forms used by Fielding's narrator to attenuate the force of potentially face-threatening acts, the interpretive freedom of the reader seems rather constrained. Although the narrator repeatedly concedes that the reader is free to make her own opinion, he generally does so after having firmly exposed his own point of view. Here is an example: Unable to borrow money to pay his dues to surly Mrs Tow-wouse, an inn owner's wife, Adams and his friends are delivered by a poor peddler who offers everything that he has. The narrator starts with his ethical comment on the situation before conceding freedom of interpretation to the reader:

> And thus these poor people, who could not engage the Compassion of Riches and Piety, were at length delivered out of their Distress by the Charity of a poor Pedlar.
> I shall refer it to my Reader, to make what Observation he pleases on this Incident: it is sufficient for me to inform him, that after *Adams* and his companions had returned him a thousand Thanks, and told him where he might call to be repaid, they all sallied out of the House without any complements from their Hostess, or indeed without paying her any. (149)

This strategy could be compared to modern selling tactics as highlighted by empirical socio-psychology's studying the techniques of the behavior manipulation: telling the client "but you're free to do as you want" has been shown to considerably increase the chance of selling the product (Vincent-Joule & Beauvois). This illusory freedom gives the client the impression that her choice is hers alone when it has always been under the seller's control.

By contrast, in "24 Hours", if interpretation is constrained by the Text, it depends on the reader to a higher degree: the reader is not (ethically) guided in any way. Besides, in hypertext fiction, the actual reader has a say and can have the story go the way she wishes, depending on who she is and what she wants: she can be an adventurous person and go with the other characters to the "political rally," to the "party" or the "pub," or else choose to stay at "the house" to find clues about the cousin's disappearance. The actual reader's singularity and preferences thus seem to be fully acknowledged. In Burne's fiction, the hyperlink serves as a metaleptic device whereby the actual reader intervenes in the narrative by clicking on the link of her choice to have the narrative take a path in a certain direction. Bell adopts the term "interactional metalepsis" to emphasize the specificity of metalepsis in ergodic fiction (*Interactional Metalepsis* 297), as ontological transgressions take place not so much across different planes within the story world but across the virtual/actual divide. Digital fiction relies on the reader's using hardware (the mouse on a computer screen) to navigate the screen. The reader becomes materialized in the text through the cursor on-screen—Bell speaks of the "reader-as-cursor" (*Media-Specific Metalepsis* 29). If in Burne's piece, contrary to what takes place in video game fiction for instance, the protagonist is no "avatar" of the reader (see Juul, Ryan), the reader is nevertheless made present in the text and active through the activation of the diverse hyperlinks: although the protagonist is not some incarnation of the reader, he can only "go on" in the story world thanks to the actual audience's clicking on hyperlinks; he can therefore be said to be some diegetic counterpart of the reader through the interactive interface. Thus situated both in the actual world (via the use of software) and in the fictional world as represented by the protagonist, the actual audience is uniquely doubly present in digital fiction, engendering what Ensslin calls a "double-situatedness" of the reader in the dual ontology that is part and parcel of digital storyworld (*Respiratory Narrative*).

This "double-situatedness" seems to offer the "real" reader more freedom, or at the very least a more explicit, recognized existence. Yet this impression can be challenged, as will the received wisdom that an eighteenth-century print novel gives less freedom than digital fiction.

Readerly freedom needs indeed to be qualified in “24 Hours.” First because whatever choice the reader makes, she is systematically brought back to the house: it is indeed the central focus that the reader is brought back to whatever the narrative paths taken. So the “cybernarration” (Ciccoricco) precludes any rhizomatic wandering in its tree-like organization of the narrative, betraying authorial control of the reading process. Furthermore, the second-person pronoun that can potentially refer to the actual audience (especially in the hyperlinks, see next section) is paradoxically both what calls on the reader’s personified participation in the story and what engenders some de-personalisation, as evinced further down. By contrast, although Fielding’s authorial reader seems to be a fixed actant, the implied author does consider a wide diversity of readers in terms of age, sex, marital status, or specific disposition:

> This shyness [Fanny’s shyness when Parson Adams speak of the one she loves, Joseph Andrews] therefore, as we trust it will recommend her Character to *all our Female Readers*, and not greatly surprize such of *our Males* as are well acquainted with *the younger part* of the other Sex, we shall not give our selves any trouble to vindicate. (126)
>
> Since without the Assistance of a single Hint from us, *every Reader of any speculation, or Experience, though not married himself*, may easily conjecture…(75)
>
> and indeed [commenting on Fanny’s beauty], *Reader, if thou art of an amorous hue*, I advise thee to skip over the next paragraph; which to render our History perfect, we are obliged to set down, hoping that we may escape the Fate of Pygmalion. (132; my emphasis)

Fielding’s narrator has a plurality of different readers/narratees in mind, even allowing some (of a tender “hue”) to skip chapters, for instance. It must be noted that readers of Burne’s digital fiction are not granted this possibility: “24 Hours” does not afford forward reading, as the hyperlinks have to be followed one at a time. Besides Fielding’s sexualized reader becomes a neutralized “you” in “24 Hours,” resembling the “mass individuated you” of the twentieth-century addressed in advertising (Mucchielli 96), which makes the reader believe she is uniquely addressed and fakes an intimate, singular address while reaching the greatest possible number of addressees. Even at the diegetic level, the cousin’s gender is left obscured: we are never told whether Jess is a boy or a girl. In the following exchange, the subject that should have been a gender-specific personal pronoun is elided:

> “Jess left”
> “Oh”
> “You a friend”
> “Cousin”
> “Didn’t even leave an address” (from the “You turn and knock on the door” lexia)

Likewise, the protagonist is never “individuated” through a proper name, that is, in Kripke’s terms, a “rigid designator” that would firmly anchor his identity. In Fielding’s comic structure, by contrast, all the mixed identities are resolved at the end of the book.

This paradoxical neutralization of potentially different readers and the de-personalization of the protagonist through the de-centred “you” in “24 Hours” are reflected in the de-humanization stylistically portrayed in the narrative: objects and inanimate beings occupy subject positions of animate material processes, backgrounding human agency. Here are a few examples:

> *Trams clack* past; *cars jerk by*, stopping, starting. /…/
> *Sculptures sit* on corners and *hang over* shop doors. *Posters fill* their spaces on pillars and walls advertising bands and readings and political action. *Cafes and clothes racks spill* onto the pavement, immersed in car fumes.
> (from the "leave" lexia; my emphasis)

In the "bookshop" or in the "candle shop" lexias, the same oppression makes human beings victims of the outside world's pressure: "You feel the words pressing to get out and into your head"; "The smell of incense hits you in the back of your nose, working its way down to settle raspingly in your throat." The second-person pronoun thus often occupies the object complement position in these utterances leaving subject placement and agency to inanimate or nonhuman beings. Humans are only mentioned metonymically: "Learnt stares of contempt meet glances of curiosity."

If the (actual) audience is active through choice making and link clicking, they are granted no agency (this seems diegetically the preserve of surrounding entities). Furthermore, in "24 Hours" the protagonist keeps being asked to make decisions: as soon as he gets involved in a conversation/contextual frame, another character asks him to be on the move, never leaving time for any deep communication. The vulnerability of communication in "24 Hours" is underpinned by a pronoun that is itself "vulnerable" (Sorlin, forthcoming)—a particularly appropriate pronominal choice for the ethical message that seems to be conveyed here by the implied author about the illusion of communication and information-gathering in the digital medium.

Conversely, in Fielding's text, the (plural) audience is closely monitored. However it is always possible for the (actual) reader to refuse to occupy the place the narrator assigns her. To use Lecercle's term, the reader can "counter-interpellate." I contend that this interpretative play is made possible by the "epistemic space" that surrounds the Reader actant in the different footings[9] she is placed in. Indeed the audience is assigned slightly different places depending on the mode of address chosen by the implied author. Sometimes the reader is placed in the bystander's position when the narrator apostrophises another inanimate being, for instance:

> [O Vanity] I know thou wilt think, and that whilst I abuse thee, I court thee, and that thy love hath inspired me to write this sarcastical Panegyrick on thee, but that art deceived, I value thee not of a farthing; nor will it give me any Pain, if *thou should'st prevail on the Reader* to censure this Digression as errant Nonsense: for know to thy Confession that I have introduced thee for no other Purposes than to lengthen out a short Chapter; and so I return to my History. (60; my emphasis)

This "fictionalised horizontal address," in Herman's terms (381), to some other personified thing not present in the scene emphasizes the triangulation of positions (as mentioned above when referring to the triangular placement in ironical utterances), bringing the reader to choose her side. But more vertical addresses to the (multiple) readers can take different forms: the first one is a third-person reference to the reader's status through the recurrent noun phrase "the reader" (e.g., "it would be very entertaining to the reader" (139)) or, more intimately "my/our reader." But the reader can also be taken as witness to the narrator's amazement or narrative difficulty in describing strong emotions; the vocative is then the mode of address: "O, Reader, conceive if thou canst, the Joy which fired the Breast of these Lovers on this Meeting" (234). Lastly, the intersubjective communication between the I/we→ you/thou dyad can occur without any mention of the status of the reading co-participant:

"suppose what you will, you never can or will suppose any thing equal to the Astonishment which seiz'd on *Trulliber*[10] as soon as *Adams* had ended his speech" (145).

The two texts thus display paradoxes regarding readerly freedom: the narrator in *Joseph Andrews* clearly offers hierarchical guidance to the reader, but this ethical positioning paradoxically leaves the actual reader free, as the plurality of audiences Fielding constructs (see next part) still makes it possible for her to navigate between these positions and feel addressed or not. In Burne's piece, on the contrary, the actual reader seems to be granted "freedom of response" by the author in the story-making, as her preferences are taken into account (she can click on the lexia of her choice), and yet paradoxically, this digital fiction embodies what Walker calls "forced participation" (19), or what Ensslin & Bell call "actualized (directive) input/output" (*Click=Kill*; rephrasing Walker's phrase to underplay the negative connotation of "forced"). I will stick with the "forced participation" formula because the readers cannot not activate the links if they want to read on ahead. These paradoxes will be reflected in the last part, where I offer two audience models for each type of fiction.

Two different models of audience

At the end of the twentieth century, Burne's second-person fiction modifies the narrative communication, as the use of "you" conflates several traditionally separated entities, making it difficult to establish for sure the reference of the pronoun. This is a common feature of "you" narratives that has been well documented regarding print literature.[11] The destabilization of narratological boundaries is however accentuated by the medium of digital fiction in a way that I will now demonstrate. In between the first and third person, the second-person pronoun leaves it unclear who mediates whose voice: in "24 Hours," the "you" could be a self-addressed "I" by virtue of what Margolin calls a "deictic transfer" (*Dispersing*); but it could also be that the narrator in "24 Hours" addresses the protagonist-narratee with "you." The indeterminacy of the narrating origin is here in keeping with the instability of identity and communication in the storyworld mentioned previously.

Besides, there is also some "double deixis" involved in the hyperlinks (Herman 387), that is, a potential superimposition of addressees: the virtual character and the actual reader. Indeed the actual reader's input in the narrative is bound to blur the line between the implied reader as inscribed in the narrative and the actual reader actualizing these implications through specific choices or actions via the cursor. For instance, the following utterances are clearly addressed to the protagonist, yet by their being underlined also embody "irresistible invitations" to the reader (Kacandes 139):

> Polly laughs and turns to you, 'So, are we having fun yet?'
>
> You wait for her not sure if you really want to go back to the house or not. But you will; you've got nowhere else to go.
>
> You do the same and follow them out.

"So, are we having fun yet?" or "But you will; you've got nowhere else to go" can reflexively refer to the reader's engagement in the plot. Apart from hitting the off button, the reader "will" continue for she has indeed "nowhere else to go."

The effect of some hyperlinks such as "you do the same and follow them out" can be compared to "virtual performatives" as used in the context of new media performance on, for instance, Twitter. Virtanen defines "virtual performatives" such as *sings myself happy birthday* or *dances around the room with my cat* as "self-referential stand-alone predications in the present tense through which users perform virtual action and by extension, virtual emotion, just by typing in the action or emotion" (248-49). The hyperlinks can be said to be "virtual performatives," in a slightly different sense though, for if the real agent "following them out" is the protagonist in the story world, the "virtual agent" is the reader, as she is the one who activates the link: activating the link thus amounts to *virtually* performing the action for the protagonist. So readers perform virtual action by clicking on the link. Virtanen's definition must thus be adapted to fit the virtuality of the performance in hyperlinks: hyperlinks are reader-oriented, stand-alone, present-tense predications or noun phrases through which readers are brought to perform virtual action for protagonists by clicking on action links (e.g., "you go to the rally with Polly and Ned") or, by extension, emotion links that may here apply both to the diegetic agent and the virtual agent ("Are we having some fun yet?"). Hyperlinks such as "Polly's room" do not contain present-tense verbs of action but still remain implicit performatives: to click on it is to perform the action of going there.

The following model illustrates this: if the reader can feel "irresistibly" addressed by the "you" personal pronoun in the diegesis (whose reference remains ambiguous as the first line of Figure 1 evinces) and can thus self-ascribe as addressee on reading/hearing "you" (Wechsler 2010), the reader cannot *not* feel interpellated by the addresses through the hyperlinks. The actual audience is called upon to make a contribution (whether she wants to or not) through the hyperlink activation that is required of her. On the right-hand side, some form of porosity therefore occurs between the fictional world (first level) and the actual world (second level), the dotted line reflecting the flesh and blood reader's virtual participation in the narrative (the participation is even stronger in computer game and interactive fiction when the reader is asked to input responses, for instance). This frontier transgression can be perceived as giving the actual reader some existence in the writing process, sharing it, so to speak, with the author, but it can also be construed as a form of paradoxical "forced freedom."

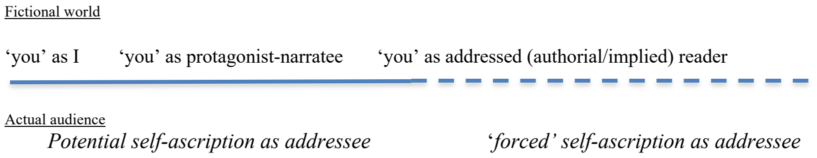
Fictional world
'you' as I
'you' as protagonist-narratee
'you' as addressed (authorial/implied) reader
Actual audience
Potential self-ascription as addressee
'forced' self-ascription as addressee

Figure 1: Blurring the lines between implied and implicated reader in digital fiction

Vertically, across the storyworld/actual world divide on the right-hand side of the model, the actual reader has *no other choice* but to fit in the authorial/implied reader position, through the activation of the links that are designed for her.

As intimated above, Fielding's actual audience on the other hand has the choice not to exactly fit in the reader position created, by virtue of the plurality of narratees mentioned in the text. Indeed readerly freedom seems to arise from the fact that Fielding's communicative channel is multi-level. While the digital fiction tends to level out the potential audiences, Fielding's print fiction distinguishes them. In *Joseph Andrews*, the (implied) author chooses an extradiegetic first-person narrator that is, in Genette's dichotomy (*Narrative Discourse*), one that does not take part in the story—note however that this extradiegetic narrator is also a homodiegetic narrator in the sense that, as he repeatedly tells the reader, he has been in contact with the characters from whom he has obtained the testimonies related, thus attesting to the truth of his story. Here is an example: "I am sufficiently convinced of his innocence, having been positively assured of it, by those who received their information from his own mouths" (Fielding 61).

Following Phelan's rhetorical theory underlying his Author-Resources-Audience model (*Somebody Telling Somebody Else*), the narrator—one of the resources used by the (implied) author—addresses a plurality of narratees in *Joseph Andrews* (that is, the audience addressed by Fielding's narrator in the storyworld), and these narratees are themselves overheard by the narrative audience (that is, an observer-reader position within the storyworld that "regard[s] the characters and events as real rather than invented"), and in turn these explicit addresses to these audiences are overheard by the authorial audience (that is, the "hypothetical group" outside the storyworld who are aware of the fiction being a construction; see Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else* 7). The communication channel in *Joseph Andrews* makes it possible for all the audiences to feel addressed ultimately, although how each actual reader is affected by the "you" address is left up to her ultimately. The following figure illustrates the multi-layered audience model in Fielding's novel, with the actual audience as ultimate recipients:

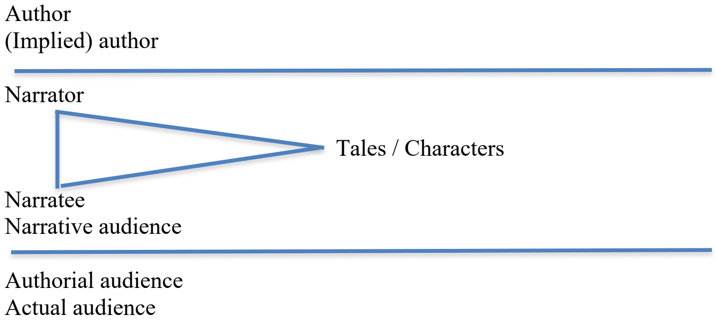

Figure 2: (Hierarchical) rhetorical model of the multiple audiences in Fielding's print fiction

If the "you" address in Burne's fiction has a pulling-in effect on the reader, making her a "co-observer" of the scene along with the narrator (see Sorlin, forthcoming), *Joseph Andrews* is less subversive in its more "top-down" traditional communicative configuration, assigning the authorial and actual audience the more "external" role of eavesdropper to the fictional scenes. In this multi-level, hierarchical model, the conversation between (implied) author and actual audience is mediated by a narrator who, telling the tales of characters, strongly leads the reader to concur with his ethical assessments. Yet the actual audience is free to navigate between the different narratees that Fielding constructs, as the author expects his authorial audience to recognize that his narrator is aware of this plurality.

Conclusion

This article has chosen two extremely different examples, distant in time, but both published at the start of new ways of "doing literature." I have demonstrated that the freedom that is granted the audience was not what it seemed to be at first. Paradoxically, *Joseph Andrews*'s highly author-controlled narration proves to envisage a plurality of readers where the neutralizing "you" pronoun in the hypertext "24 Hours" tends to level them out. Through the new medium, Burne's reader-centered narrative engages the actual reader in some virtual participation that turns out to be forced onto her, leaving her little space to refuse the position that is assigned to her (except by switching off her computer).

I have also pointed out the concord between the ethics of the telling and the ethics of the told in both fictions, as Fielding intends to denounce unethical characters whose actions betray their words by positioning the audience as an accomplice at a critical distance from which those characters' ethical failings can be perceived. In Burne's digital piece, the vulnerability of the "you" pronoun is a particularly appropriate form to mirror what the (implied) author seems to perceive as superficial exchanges and information-searching on the internet. The information the protagonist can gather remains scarce until the end. Not only does the referential instability of the pronominal form mirror postmodern, unstable identities (nothing is resolved at the end, we do not know more about the identity of the protagonist or of his cousin), but it also self-consciously reflects on both the liberty that the medium gives (any reader can participate) and the illusion of real communication it conveys.

Lastly I have proposed two different models of audience for each type of fiction: in the model applied to the digital fiction, the author does not feature explicitly, as it seems hidden behind the "cybernarration," and authorial disclosure is left to characters most of the time, with the reader not receiving much narratorial help. The "you" address has been shown to be a merger (of referents and of worlds) in "24 Hours," while the addresses in Fielding's text are directed to a wide variety of audiences (narrative audiences, narratees, authorial and actual audiences) in a multi-level hierarchical author-narrator-reader channel that I have shown to be paradoxically less constraining than the digital piece's.

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[1] DF is fiction whose meaning cannot be dissociated from the digital context that gives birth and support to it (Bell et al., *A Screed*). If the first generation was marked by a link-lexia structure (links to be clicked on to have access to new lexias), a second generation rose with the advent of much more sophisticated technologies including sounds, (dynamic) images, movements, etc. (for a historical background see Hayles, *Writing Machines*; *Electronic Literature*, Bell et al., *Analyzing Digital Fiction*).

[2] The protagonist's gender is never clearly mentioned. I'll assume he is a male character.

[3] As mentioned by the author himself commenting on his work in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*: "Having thus distinguished *Joseph Andrews* from the Productions of Romance Writers on the one hand, and Burlesque Writers on the other, and given some few very short Hints (for I intended no more) of this Species of writing, which I have affirmed to be hitherto unattempted in our Language; I shall leave to my good-natur'd Reader to apply my Piece to my Observations, and will detain him no longer than with a Word concerning the Characters in this Work".

[4] To be understood in Aristotle's sense, that is the trust that the writer's *discourse* inspires (*La Rhétorique* 1356 a 4-7). Ethos is a discursive effect, not an inherent quality of an orator/writer.

[5] "Negative politeness is characterized by self-effacement, formality and restraint, with attention to very restricted aspects of H[earer]'s self-image, centring on his want to be unimpeded. Face-threatening acts are redressed with apologies for interfering or transgressing, with linguistic and non-linguistic deference, with hedges on the illocutionary force of the act, with impersonalizing mechanisms that give the addressee an 'out', a face-saving line of escape, permitting him to feel that his response is not coerced" (Brown & Levinson 70).

[6] I'm using Simpson's definition of 'irony' as the "perception of a conceptual paradox /…/ between two dimensions of the same discursive event" with two sub-definitions:

> Sub-definition 1: Irony is a perceived conceptual space between what is asserted and what is meant.
>
> Sub-definition 2: Irony is a perceived mismatch between aspects of encyclopaedic knowledge and situational context (with respect to a particular discursive event). (Simpson, *That's not ironic* 39).

[7] "Two elements which contribute toward making interactive fiction a challenge for readers are entrapment and the author's taunts. Nothing is quite as frustrating as knowing that you have just permitted yourself to fall into one of the author's traps and experiencing the unmistakable feeling that he is laughing at your expense. Feelings of frustration and humiliation are therefore quite common in one's initial encounter with interactive fiction, and they become important motives in response, impelling her to continue until she has, as it were, tables on the author by ferreting out all of the hidden secrets or conundrum of a given work" (Niesz and Holland 121-2).

[8] Which means the lexia one gets access to by clicking on "the pub" hyperlink.

[9] That is the different (shifts in) alignment of the participants as determined in the mode and frame of conversation (see Goffman, "Footing").

[10] Parson Truliber is a greedy clergyman whom Adams asked for money to pay for his inn bill.

[11] For more see Clarkson; DelConte; Gibbons and Macrae; Fludernik; Hantzis; Herman; Hopkins and Perkins; Kacandes; Margolin; Morrissette; Prince; Richardson; and Sorlin.