Space, Imagination, and Story: Understanding how contemporary interactive stories are told

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Abstract

Storytelling is one of the foundations of humanity and a shared experience between humankind. However, at times, storytelling has resulted in an alienated audience that are treated as passive beings. This passive audience could be seen as part of a mass audience collective to whom authors could feed stories for mass consumption.

I argue that contemporary interactive storytelling enables the audience to have more power and control over the stories with which they engage. Here, the audience has a choice of which stories they wish to consume, an approach that requires further research. In this thesis, I examine how contemporary authors create and tell interactive stories. My research question is: *How do authors utilise relationships between space, imagination, and narrative within contemporary interactive storytelling?*

To answer this question, I conducted a close reading of the York-based project, *People We Love*, selected for its particular engagements with my chosen themes of space, imagination, and narrative. I collected further qualitative data via interviews with personnel closely associated with the *People We Love* project. I also conducted deductive literature research on topics related to my research question and explored secondary case studies of correlated story projects.

My findings present a new appreciation of the author as a creator not so much of a specific story, but of a platform on which the audience may interact to create unique story experiences. My findings also showcase how a reader or user may feature in a contemporary interactive narrative as an individual rather than within a mass collective. These findings boost further understanding of the authorship of interactive storytelling and how stories may be told between complex relationships of space, imagination and narrative.

Keywords

Agency, Audience, Authorship, Imagination, Interactivity, Space.

List of contents

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as references.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The concept of storytelling has existed since prehistoric times, as seen from examples of French cave drawings dating back to 30,000 years ago, or orally presented narratives such as myths, legends, and fables (National Geographic Society, 2022). Storytelling has been widespread all throughout human history, but it was not until the creation of mass media, arguably from the invention of the Gutenberg Press, which revolutionised printing in 1450 (Gunaratne, 2001: 473), that storytelling was able to sustain a wider reach in society, whereby a single story could be mass-produced for mass consumption. As Hiebert and Gibbons (1999: 12) state: "Gutenberg's invention marked the beginning of mass communication", building to the 20th century as the "mass media century". Through the outreach of mass media, society arguably achieved mass storytelling.

However, through the 20th century, mass media storytelling was primarily via exclusive media channels, which tended to be monopolistic environments, such as cinema, newspapers, magazines, radio, and television stations. There was a separation between the narratives' producers and their audience regarding who influenced and controlled media content creation. In this regard, Lessig (2007: 1:49 – 2:17) describes a "read-only", "top-down", and "owned" media environment where "creativity is consumed, but the consumer is not a creator" and where the "vocal cords of the millions had been lost". This exclusive media environment arose primarily due to the high cost of production and publication, which meant those not involved in these media channels had little to no access to their platforms and technology. This exclusiveness effectively kept storytelling via these mass media channels out of reach of the "imaginative public" (Moloney, 2012), who were then unable to tell their stories to the same levels of outreach as those in positions of power in these media channels. The exclusive media owners were, therefore, able to monitor and censor mass storytelling. Mass storytelling thus diminished ostensible levels of authorship and freedom from more individual platforms of storytelling, like the aforementioned cave drawings or fables. Less prominent or even amateur authors seemed insignificant by comparison.

In that respect, storytelling from the late 20th century onward is arguably undergoing a renaissance with the "staggering number of new developments and innovations in the field" (Miller, 2014: preface xvii), particularly in light of technological innovation and openness to different approaches to storytelling. The clearest example of such technological innovation is the development of the Internet, and more specifically, The World Wide Web (WWW). As the first royalty-free, easy-to-use server network system, the WWW allowed anyone with access to a computer and Internet connection to create, post, and share content in an interconnected network of systems. The development of the wider Internet also led to the creation of accessible social media platforms, such as YouTube or TikTok, creating a "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006a), where users may take active roles in creating and spreading narratives with minimal production expenses. Shirky (2012:np) likewise describes this phenomenon, labelling it the "end of the audience". He describes a shift from the audience role as just being a consumer to becoming a producer and distributor as well.

Advancements in technology also allow further access due to decreases in costs of production, such as data storage. For illustration: in 1954, the first ever computer hard drive, which stored

5MB, cost US$50,000 (US$10,000 per MB) (Harley, 2013). Today, a standard USB stick storing 16GB costs £9 (US$10.85, less than US$0.01 per MB) (tesco.com, 2022).

Another example is purchasing a HD digital video recording camera for less than US$100 (amazon.com, 2022). Lessig (2007: 12:06 – 12:23) describes these technological changes for greater access as a "democratised" media environment, where anyone with access to any level of these "tools of creativity" can produce their desired content. In short, "the people previously known as the audience" (Rosen, 2012) may now take advantage of these opportunities to achieve broader outreach for their stories and different ways of storytelling.

1.2 Thesis Research Question

Against these changes, I seek to understand how the modern-day interactive storyteller utilises the dynamics of space and imagination, through a uniquely active and engaged audience, to present new methods of storytelling that involve such broader and more democratised outreach. I argue that it is important to recognise contemporary interactive platforms that facilitate user agency, invoke imagination, and utilise space alongside established media counterparts, such as books or cinema, as viable platforms of storytelling.

Thus, my research question is: *How do authors utilise relationships between space, imagination, and narrative within contemporary interactive storytelling?*

In this thesis, I will answer my research question as explored across three themes:

1. The **authorship** of a story – who are a story's authors; what are their levels of agency (section 3);
2. What the story **asks of its audience** – how an author designs their story to invoke the audience's understanding, imagination, and interactions (section 4); and
3. The relationship between **virtual and physical** spaces with regard to storytelling - how an author uses these spaces for user interaction and combines them to maximise the user's narrative experience (section 5).

The thesis' value is in presenting an understanding and appreciation of an interactive, audience-focused and more accessible storytelling landscape. With the rise of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006a) and audiences having more evolved roles in storytelling, it is important to understand the relationships, spaces and engagements between audiences, authors and story.

1.3 – Methodology

1.3.1 Case Study of *People We Love*

My primary research methodology is to use the art installation *People We Love* (hereafter "*PWL*", with its variation exhibited in Pittsburgh referred to as "*PWL: Pittsburgh*"; see also section 1.4) as the main case study from which to construct my argument. Crowe et al. (2011: 1) state that the "case study approach is particularly useful to employ when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, […] or phenomenon of interest, in its […] real-life context." I thus chose the methodology of a central case study to ground and explore the

abstract concepts of space, imagination, and authorship in relation to storytelling in a real-life context.

PWL is an ideal case study due to its focus on the audience's agency and involvement in its storytelling as ideas central to my thesis. I establish this focus in three ways. Firstly, *PWL* centrally questions authorship as a key concept to explore storytelling. Specifically, their producers KMA describe the work as one that "seeks to engage with and provoke the broadest of audiences, whilst asking complex and prescient questions about where the aesthetic of the work can be located, who makes it, and who owns it" (kma.co.uk, 2020: np).

Secondly, *PWL* challenges its audience during its storytelling. As I will explain, *PWL's* artist creator Kit Monkman designed the work to test its audience's expectations, interactions and responses to the presented tasks. Monkman analogises this aspect of *PWL* to the mystique of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (1503-1506). Whilst some interpret the painting as just a woman's face with a blank expression, many consider it to contain a story that exists through the audience's active imagination. In that respect, Monkman (2021: np) describes *PWL* as being able to "live within the gap between the users' inner thoughts and the thoughts of others," furthering the idea that the audience's agency builds the story rather than that they passively receive the narrative.

Thirdly, *PWL* specifically explores the interactions between the user and the story and in the process, it scrutinises the value the active user brings to the story.

My study of *PWL* as a case study proceeded over three parts.

The first is a close reading of the work as inspired by the methodology described by Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) in their close reading of the game *Mass Effect 2*. To "close read" is to perform a "detailed observation of a work" in which the reader can "immerse" themselves in the work via "repeated viewings], supplemented by the systematic notation of relevant details, leading to an explication and higher order analysis of the work" (Bizzocchi, Tanenbaum, 2012: 395). I immersed myself in *PWL* by visiting the installation at least eleven times between 15 October to 11 November 2021 while it was on public display. Most visits lasted approximately an hour, with some up to two hours. On some visits, I drafted handwritten notes of my thoughts, observations, and questions about *PWL* (see Appendix 1). On other occasions, I observed and interacted with the work as a visitor. I also took photos and videos of the installation for reference (see Appendix 2 for a sample of the photos).

I then analysed *PWL* by collating my notes, observations and materials into a cohesive narration of first-hand experiences of the interactions. I further analysed its narrative process to bear out the thesis' thematic framework of authorship, imagination and spatial relationships to support and ground my argument on contemporary storytelling.

The second part of my study of *PWL* is to consult various paratextual sources, consisting primarily of blog posts and introductory videos by Monkman and members of the York Mediale (*PWL* having first exhibited as part of the 2021 York Mediale – see section 1.4). As with my close reading, I used these sources to legitimise and showcase practical examples of the theoretical concepts discussed in the thesis.

The third part was to interview personnel related to *PWL* via Zoom or email. My interviewees consisted of Kit Monkman, Renee Piechocki (producer of *PWL: Pittsburgh),* and six

participants who had volunteered to be filmed for *PWL: Pittsburgh*. I used a semi-structured interview format for the interviews over Zoom, and a structured format for email interviews. Using these interviews, I obtained data about the projects and their intended modes of storytelling. After recording and transcribing the interviews, I analysed the data using thematic analysis (Braun, Clark, 2012), breaking down the data into "themes" as derived from "codes" which "identify and provide a label for a feature of the data that is potentially relevant to the research question" (Braun, Clark 2012: 61; see Appendix 3 for my table of themes). I obtained all relevant ethics clearances for the conduct of these interviews (see Appendix 4).

I then combined these three parts of my study of *PWL* to create a comprehensive catalogue of information to understand *PWL's* storytelling and provide a deeply informed and grounded example to answer my research question.

1.3.2 Secondary Case Studies

I also analysed other digital stories to constitute secondary case studies to further support my thesis argument. I chose these works through my readings and recommendations by my interviewees. These secondary case studies are:

- Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern's *Façade* (2005)
- Delphine Fourneau's *Sacramento* (2018)
- Candy Chang's *Before I Die* (2011)

Façade and *Sacramento* are interactive works that are downloadable or playable online. I analysed them by completing multiple playthroughs of both, each time making notes and observations of their narratives and interactions. I also consulted relevant literature and paratextual sources, such as interviews with their makers.

Before I Die (hereafter "*BID*") is an art project which relies on audience participation contributing answers on billboard-sized chalkboards to the prompt, "Before I Die…". There were no active walls in the UK during the time of writing, so I researched the work through relevant literature. Similar to *PWL* as the primary case study, I used these secondary case studies to create a catalogue of information on interactive narratives to support the arguments in my thesis.

1.3.3. Research on Literature

My research on the literature included consulting peer-reviewed journals, books, videos, blog posts and news articles. I obtained sources through keyword searches on the university library's search resources, Google Scholar, and Google in general. Examples of searched keywords are "interactivity", "space", "audience" and "imagination", expanding into more focused searches such as "narrative space" and "virtual space". I also followed my supervisor's and interviewees' literature recommendations, and citations from well-regarded scholars. I placed relevant sources into a search repository organised into relevant themes for reference through my research. I also separated my research into interactive and non-interactive narratives to explore their similarities and differences.

My approach was "deductive" (Bernard, 2011: 7), in that I held a hypothesis that interactive storytelling utilises space shared between user imagination and the physical space of the narrative to create personalised story experiences. From my "confirmatory research" (ibid),

principally out of my case study of *PWL,* I argue that authors create interactive narratives through utilising relationships between space and imagination in the following ways: Firstly, the author facilitates the audience's interactivity in their physical consumption of a narrative, either via an input system such as a controller or by partaking in a physical space in relation to the narrative. Secondly, the author allows for narrative flexibility and curates their stories to allow the audience to utilise virtuality by way of cognitive ability (or imagination) to impact the narrative for unique storytelling opportunities. When combined, I argue that physical and virtual spaces allow for a heavily engaged and active user who uses both spaces (see section 2.3.2) to impact a story in their own way.

There are limitations to this method of research, primarily in the form of "confirmatory bias" (Simkus, 2023), which can result in a researcher seeking out, or preferring, information that supports their pre-existing beliefs. To counter such bias, I collected a wide array of academic with different perspectives on space, audience theory and authorship for evaluation in the Literature Review (see section 2), so as to enable me to create an unbiased and informed argument.

1.4 – *People We Love*

People We Love (2020-2021) is an art installation by KMA, created by artist Kit Monkman (founder of KMA). *PWL* initially exhibited in November 2020 at the York Minster, in association with the York Mediale, for three days before closing due to Covid-19 national lockdown regulations. It reopened on October 15, 2021, until November 11, 2021. A version of the exhibit ("*PWL: Pittsburgh*") also opened in Pittsburgh, United States, in collaboration with the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP). This exhibit ran from April 9, 2022, until June 6, 2022.

PWL in York featured five pillars arranged in a broad semi-circle (see Appendix 5 for selected images). A spotlight at the top of each pillar indicates to the user where to stand. The user may engage with or stand before any pillar they wish. Besides an information panel that briefly introduces the product (the same information found on the York Mediale (2021) website), the users have no other information about the work. Each pillar had a built-in 55" LED screen which presented a showcase of people's faces. Each person's face remains on screen for about a minute and a half before it fades out, with another person's face replacing the prior. These people were volunteers for the project. To a meditative music track played to help the volunteer feel comfortable, KMA filmed them in a blacked-out studio setting, looking directly at a photo they had supplied themselves of a person they loved. *PWL* featured eighty volunteers in total.

PWL: Pittsburgh is essentially the same project, with some variations: The location of the project was in a building with a window front, so it was visible 24/7 from the street; it had seven screens instead of five; and it had a larger volunteer pool with 150 participants (see Appendix 6 for selected images).

1.5 – Thesis Breakdown

The thesis will proceed as follows. Section 2 is a literature review on the ideas of authorship, audience, interactivity and space which underpin my argument.

Section 3 – "Authorship" – will explore the new dynamics of authorship in interactive media. This section will also discuss the creation of a platform by the author for their audience.

Section 4 – "Tasks/Asks of the Audience" – will evaluate how the expectations of the audience have changed, as well as explore the audience's agency.

Section 5 – "Virtual vs. Physical Spaces" – will discuss how an author combines the space of a narrative with the immersion, agency, and imagination of the audience to affect the story.

Section 6 will conclude and summarise the thesis and provide insight into the research's future directions.

2. Literature Review

In this section, I review the literature on the following themes:

- Authorship: What is the purpose of an author? How does the changing role of the audience affect the concept of authorship? How does an author potentially utilise their audience as co-authors? (2.1)
- Audience theory: How an audience exists in and uses narrative space; and the concept of the audience as a character to the story (2.2).
- Narrative space and the relationship between the physical and virtual space (2.3).
- Frames and boundaries of media (2.4).
- 2.5 concludes.

2.1 Authorship

2.1.1 The Importance of the Author

The author is significant as a creator or cause of a narrative. For the purposes of this thesis, a creator may be more pertinent to the authorship of interactive media by way of creating a user-oriented platform to facilitate the user and story (see section 3).

Scholars highlight the significance of the author as an authoritative controller of a work. In relation to cinema, Sarris (1962) devised the term "Auteur Theory" from the work of Bazin's "*la politique des auteurs*" (1985, 1957)[1], which states that the film's director and their creative decisions are what create the story. Of course, a team invariably creates a film, including a cast, producers, writers, editors, etc. Yet, to Sarris and Bazin, the director is the true author, with authority and controlling power. They ultimately make the major decisions about the authorship of the work.

Similarly, Foucault's "What is an Author" lecture (1969; 1984: 101)[2] explores whether a text requires or is assigned an author. Furthering the idea of the author's omnipotence, he describes the function of an author as being "to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (124). He also notes the importance of the author's existence to maximise a narrative's reach, arguing that if audiences like a specific credited author, they will likely engage more with their work. For example, if a reader found out Shakespeare had not written a particular sonnet, it would change their perceptions of both the

work and the author (Foucault, 1984:106). Therefore, the author holds credibility and value to the narrative. They are not simply just a name attached to a work. Foucault thus focuses on the author as an authoritative figure who holds status, attention and value.

To this end, critics perceive Foucault's description of the author as one which removes their humanity. For instance, Nehamas (1986: 685) critiques how, to Foucault, "the author is not a person at all, but a 'function' or 'figure'". This critique is in relation to Foucault's further argument that the author does not simply put words to a page. Instead, authorship works as an "author function" as "a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears" (1984: 102). That is to say that the author provides a question, idea or context to their work that gives meaning to what they create. They create the space for what Foucault (1984: 101-120) calls "discourse", or the discussion to which the audience adds their own contributions. In this respect, Foucault lists four characteristics of this "author function":

> 1) The author function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses; 2) it does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilizations; 3) it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but rather by a series of specific and complex operations; 4) it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects—positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals (1984: 113).

Authorship is thus the creation of the space and context to its discourse, rather than just presenting discourse. Per Foucault's provocation: "an anonymous text posted on a wall probably has a writer—but not an author" (1984: 108). In this sense, Foucault argues there is no author because the text has no context or space to have any value for its audience. It is, therefore, meaningless. The text only has value if it has an established author who can provide the space which holds meaning for their chosen discourse. Of course, this position becomes blurred with the creation of AI-generated digital stories and content. However, even with a Large-Language-Model, such as *OpenAI's ChatGPT-3.5* (2023), the user must still present the context and meaning behind what the AI will then generate. Hence, there is still a need for context to be provided by an author for the story to have meaning. Similar to *Façade*, authorship remains shared between the human provider and creator of context and the AI system and its generated outputs.

2.1.2 The Shift of Authorship to the Audience: The Death of the Author?

Conversely, scholarship acknowledges the audience's influence in the story's creation. A critical theory on these changing ideas of authorship is Barthes's "Death of the Author" (1977) essay, in which Barthes argues that the author is not the authoritative figure of the text. Meaning does not arise from the author's intent. Instead, the reader's interpretation builds the meaning of the story.

The role of the audience as an author is applicable in Sterne's volume 4 of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1761). Here, Sterne (147) provides the reader with the platform to assume the role of the author within one singular page of the work, nicknamed "The Blank Page" (Monkman, 2020: np; hereafter referred to as "*Blank Page*"). Sterne asks the reader to paint their image of "beauty" on an empty page at a point in the story describing the protagonist falling in love. This interaction allows each reader to create their vision of

beauty however they choose. Whilst the final narrative remains unchanged, each reader's experience of the story becomes unique to what they drew and envisioned.

Concomitant to the spotlight on the audience in an authoring role, modern media theory also suggests that audiences are active rather than passive (Hall, 1973) – i.e., they engage with a narrative rather than sit idle to it. Hall, writing about television, argues that an author will "encode" messages that the audience will, in turn, actively "decode" in deciphering the narrative. Similarly, "Uses and Gratification" theory, originally developed in the late 1940s (Katz, Bulmer & Gurevitch, 1973, 1974), suggests that an audience are more active in their selection of media works and consume them to achieve a form of gratification from the media they consume. Katz et al. (1973: 512-13) divide audience gratification into four categories: "escapism; personal relationships; identity and surveillance". Here, the audience can choose to interact with media for whichever purpose suits their needs.

However, other scholars argue that audiences are passive and susceptible to influence and manipulation. For instance, Moody (2017: 46) states that "there is an inherent passivity in the nature of watching cinematic stories, and this is something that many viewers will want to continue" (2017: 48). The "Hypodermic Syringe" theory – a theory originally developed in the 1930s, during the Nazi party's propaganda push – argues that narratives "inject" passive audiences with subliminal messages and manipulation during their idle consumption of the media. These messages would then shape the audience's attitudes and ideas in ways desired by media producers and governments (Curran, Gurevitch, Wollacott, 1982). Many of these historical passive theories are now disputed as they over-generalise the audience without taking into consideration the modern audience. Moreover, theorists like Shirky (2012: np) argue for the position of an "end of the audience", instead advancing that developments such as social media platforms have created a default active audience.

Other binary frameworks characterise the agency of audiences in terms of their individuality. Webster argues for an audience to be either "Audience-as-Mass" (1998: 192) or "Audience-as-Agent" (1998: 194). The former categorises an audience as a mindless collective (passive). For the latter, the audience are individual participants that constitute a diverse collective of people actively engaging with the media (active). An audience can also be both.

Likewise to Shirky's arguments of the 'end of the audience', interactive stories most commonly treat the audience 'as-agent' and thus an active individual, such as the *Blank Page*, to which the reader acts as an active definer of beauty. "Choose Your Own Adventure" stories (e.g., Packard, 1979) also involve an active reader in making choices of the story path they wish to pursue. Of course, these choices are still made within the framework of an authored structure and are limited on the extent in which these choices can affect the narrative. However, the audience's actions create their choices and therefore effect the narrative, regardless of the extent. This relationship between audience choices and narrative structure is a prominent feature of the later discussion on authorship and how much authorship can be given to the audience by the author.

Interactive performances such as pantomimes, performances as described in Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974) and the idea of the "spect-actor" (Shawyer, 2019) similarly treat the audience as active entities who contribute to the performance. Likewise, environmental theatre (Schechner, 1973) does not separate the performers and the audience. Instead, they share the same space, with the latter as active as the former.

A further example of the audience 'as-agent' is interactive cinema which enables viewers to be active agents who choose their desired narrative paths. As Hoguet (2014: np) states, "without choices, the story does not advance". Therefore, by making choices, the audience are active and directly progress the story. For example, *Mr. Sardonicus* (dir. Castle, 1961) and *Kinoautomat: One Man and His House* (dir. Činčera, 1969) used audience votes collected through physical signs to determine the narrative branch with which the film should proceed.

However, as it is the majority vote which decides the plot, individuals may not have achieved the narrative they individually desire. With less individual power, they are conceivably, rather, an "Audience-as-Mass" (Webster, 1998: 192). Nevertheless, more recently, the streaming service Netflix is streaming interactive cinema examples, such as Black Mirror: Bandersnatch (2018, dir. Slade) and *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Kimmy vs. the Reverend* (2020, dir. Scanlon). In turn, they interact with the story individually. In these cases, with more individual power and control, they arguably act "as-Agent" (Webster, 1998: 194). In this sense, interactive cinema fits Ryan's third level of interactivity of "create[ing] variations in a partly pre-defined story" (2011: 44; see below), whereby it can be argued that they begin to assume levels of authorship over the narrative.

In this sense of active or passive interactivity, Ryan's *Peeling the Onion: Layers of Interactivity* (2011) categorises the different types of interactions the audience can have. In the process, it discusses the extent to which they may assume authorship. These interactions are categorised into five levels. Level 1 is the simplest form of interaction focusing on user controls, such as a scrolling function on a user interface (2011:37). Level 2 only furthers this slightly to allow for these interactions to change the order in which the narrative is displayed (2011: 40).

However, Level 3 presents the user's interactivity as having a more significant influence on a narrative. Here, "the user" assumes the "role of a member of the storyworld" and has "freedom of action." But the "user's agency" can only "progress along a fixed storyline, and the system remains in firm control of the narrative trajectory." Regardless of the users' interactions, the narrative ultimately appears in a fixed structure (2011: 44). Thus, the user can choose paths in storytelling out of a list of predetermined outcomes. While the user has more agency and choice, Ryan believes that a Level 3 author limits the extent of the user's interactivity and the authorship they can assume.

Levels 4 and 5 are similar to each other. Level 4, "Real-Time Story Generation" (2011: 48), refers to how "stories are not predetermined but rather generated on the fly from data that comes in part from the system and in part from the user" (2011: 48). Ryan purposefully expands on Level 4 to create Level 5 as the more theoretical, "Meta-Interactivity" level. The term "meta-interactivity" refers to user involvement which might include "writing and patching up source code, rather than by using tools internal to the game". With these final classifications, Ryan claims that the audience cannot affect the narrative unless they establish either level 4 or 5 of interactivity that enables them to change the narrative in 'real-time' or by having the ability to change the source code. These levels will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.

In response to the audience having more control of a narrative, Taylln et al. (2005: 179) believe that creators try to "persuade" and "guide" users during their interactions to maintain creative control. Such persuasion may come from providing more rewarding outcomes to influence the audience's choices. Another technique is directing various narrative branches to a single

ending to avoid losing control over the story. The creator may even design "narrative voices" (182) that provide suggestions to the user. As such, while users might think they are experiencing more freedom, authors are actually "trying to overtly persuade or guide players to follow the designed action" by "setting the player specific goals to achieve" (179). As such the author remains in control as an authoritative figure that gives audiences the illusion of power.

Of course, not all theorists think authors see interactivity as something they must control. Hoguet (2014: np) describes interactive storytelling as "the art of telling stories enhanced with technological, social or collaborative interactive features to offer content adapted to new behaviours in a rapidly changing cultural ecosystem." Here Hoguet alludes to the benefits gained by authors that provide the audience with interactivity and freedom, as opposed to Tallyn's descriptions of needing to control them.

2.1.3 The Audience as an Author

Section 2.1.2 discusses the changing nature of the audience in how they share authorship with a story's creator. Separately, audiences may also become sole creators of content, such as by way of being contributors or producers via social media and the Internet. In this sense, they become prosumers, a phenomenon also reflected as the rise of "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006a; Fuchs, 2014). Fan-fiction content, blogs, YouTube videos and AM Radio are all instances of such a more audience-led creative landscape. For instance, Star Wars Theory's short film *Vader: Episode 1: Shards of the Past* (2018) on YouTube illustrates how fan-made content can thrive on participatory platforms. This self-funded short film amassed over 28 million views and received positive critical reviews, with a sequel currently in pre-production. Notably, Lucasfilm (as owners of the rights for the authored storyworld of *Star Wars*) permitted the creation of the film and the usage of its copyrighted material as long as *Vader* was not monetised.

This example shows the power of the prosumer to create their own stories based on the pre-existing stories. In doing so, the fan base (or amateur creators) of these stories can expand the narrative worlds that they love and share their creativity with other fans.

"Convergence culture" – whereby narratives can "circulate across different media systems" (Jenkins, 2006b) – presents more opportunities for authorship by the audience. Jenkins (2007) also discusses how modern creators are trying to expand their storytelling abilities by creating "transmedia storytelling", or the ability to "uniquely expand your story narrative across each platform you utilise". With transmedial storytelling, one media turns into another, such as novels that also become television shows, games, or movies. One example of transmedial storytelling is the *Harry Potter* franchise (2001-2011, Rowling, Warner Bros) which takes its story across multiple platforms and media forms, from its original books to film and video game adaptations such as Warner Bros. Games's *Hogwarts Legacy* (2023) that continue the narrative of the Harry Potter universe beyond its original platforms.

By utilising platforms to expand and/or create fan-made or participatory content, transmedial and convergent storytelling boost the audience "as-Agent" (Webster, 1998: 194) in being authors. Of course, platforms are not equally accessible. For example, the wealth of Warner Brothers enables them to stretch the Harry Potter franchise across multiple platforms and grassroots creators may not have as large of a budget to operate across many different platforms.

2.2 The Audience

2.2.1 The Audience in Narrative Space

An audience can experience a narrative space– i.e., the setting and environment of a story – in various ways (see 2.3.1). These experiences may further their understanding of the story and its meanings.

One understanding of how an audience may experience this space is through Herman's "Positioning Theory" (2007: 314), which argues that audiences "make sense of [their] own and other minds through positioning". Herman clarifies that "positions are selections made by participants in discourse" (ibid). Users can thus understand and uncover the narrative by making choices within narrative space. Herman focuses on stories that present to the user in-narrative dialogue through characters. The user then makes their own choices in the narrative through the influence of this dialogue.

With different technologies, the audience's bodily movements through physical space can also control narrative choices. For example, the video game *Until Dawn* (2015, Supermassive Games) has a feature that relies on the user physically keeping the console controller as still as possible. If they fail, their in-game character will die. Hence, audience members can position themselves to influence the narrative through their physical actions (or lack thereof).

Another understanding of audience experience in narrative space is through "cognitive narratology", defined as "the study of mind-relevant aspects of storytelling practices, wherever—and by whatever means—those practices occur" (Herman, 2007; see also Jahn, 1997). Such narratology studies how audiences use their cognitive abilities to interpret and make sense of the stories they consume. Cognitive narratology enables understanding of why an audience are more active in their interactions with one story and not another, and what engages them.

2.2.2 The Audience as Character

In an interactive story, an audience may take on the role of a character. An example could be a "choose your own adventure" book that focuses on the audience's choice as a character in the story. Morse (2019: np) describes these books in the formula of "all protagonist POV [Point of View], all the time". They focus on the user becoming the lead protagonist of the story. Then, as the character, they can push the story forward by choosing plot path selections.

Likewise, digital narratives allow for similar POV opportunities. For instance, first-person-designed video games enable the user to assume the physical representation of the protagonist. Virtual Reality (VR) allows the user to be sensorially enclosed in a virtual environment while controlling their character's movements and space using their own body and actions.

However, some theorists argue that audiences weaken digital interactive narratives by assuming the role of a protagonist. By becoming the protagonist, the user replaces a character in the narrative world and removes the ability to learn and understand the story through their actions, which may make the story less understandable. Herman (2013: np) differentiates between audience and characters, by stating that "interpreters [i.e., the audience] make sense of the narrative worlds (or storyworlds) evoked by narrative representations or artefacts, and the cognitive states and dispositions of characters in those storyworlds." In other words, the

audience is an interpreter that uses, observes, and learns from the story's characters to help understand the narrative world. Therefore, when the audience assumes the role of a character, they replace the character they could observe and learn the story from.

To solve this issue, many narratives provide alternative solutions, with one being "cutscenes" in between the user action to provide "cinematic narrative development" (Říha, 2014: 661) so that the user still can observe and learn from other characters. Another method is to include "narrative game mechanics" (Dubbelman, 2016: np)
into the gameplay, that act as the limitations or "rules" (49) for the user to follow. Examples include a "move-mechanic" or a "shoot-mechanic" (42). These 'rules' "influence the behaviour of agents" (either the player or non-player characters) in the game world (43). These game mechanics operate alongside the other narrative solutions to help support the issue of POV stories taking away from learning and observing from characters.

This audience perception outlines the relationship between character and protagonist, thus presenting a debate on whether the audience can be the main focus of a narrative by becoming its main character. I will explore this argument within the thesis in sections 3 and 4 in relation to the audience's levels of authorship in interactive stories and the expectations and tasks of an interactive audience.

2.3 Space

2.3.1 Narrative Space

"Narrative space" is "the space (and the places) providing the physical environment in which the characters of narrative live and move" (Ryan, Foote & Azaryahu, 2016: 3). It refers to all the geographical factors within the narrative that affect it. Narrative space also includes "all the spatial frames of a text" (Caracciolo, 2013: 428) in terms of how the environment in the fictional world can impact understanding of the story. For example, a reader's understanding of the environment's setting or how the setting can remind users of real-world places to evoke their emotions as perceived from those places.

Brasher (2017:1) further describes narrative space in terms of its "capacity for layering and textualization at varying scales and its role as a universal or particular feature of the plot". He contrasts space as a strategic method to affect the story directly and be a pillar for deep-rooted emotional connections to provide the foundations of the narrative. For example, he discusses how landmarks can be meaningful and pivotal aspects of a narrative, such as the use of the World Trade Centre in Coulter's film *Remember Me* (2010), where the North Tower is important for inciting character drama within the story and is the basis of the film's ending. Authors can also use location to create emotional connections to the story, such as Avildsen's film *Rocky* (1976), in which he ties the landmarks of Philadelphia, such as Liberty Hall, to key emotional scenes of Rocky's training and journey to defeating his opponent.

Brasher also notes that narrative spaces do not always require prominence to be effective. Narrative space can work in the background but still influence the story. For example, an un-named American city is the backdrop of the film *Se7en* (1995, Dir. Fincher). That it is a city is essential for the story's exposition due to the city's association with crime. However, the narrative never specifies which city it is, and its identity does not contribute to the narrative. Similarly, Buchholz and Jahn (2005) argue that authors may only use narrative space "to

supply a general background against which the action takes place, something to be taken for granted rather than requiring attention" (551).

More specifically, Ryan (2012: np) breaks down narrative space into five aspects as different references of scope within the narrative world:

- "Spatial frames" – The smallest scoped aspect, i.e., "the immediate surrounds of events" or "the shifting scenes of action", such as characters moving between the rooms of a house.
- "Setting" – The geographical location of when things take place. For example, the setting of New York City in 2001 for *Remember Me's* narrative.
- "Story space" – "Consists of all the spatial frames plus all the locations [in] the text that are not the scene of actually occurring events", i.e., the collective build-up of the smaller narrative scopes.
- "Narrative world" – The "story space completed by the reader's imagination on the basis of cultural knowledge and real-world experience". An example is how *Sacramento* utilises its audience (see 3.1.2).
- "Narrative universe" – The entire collective existence of its story, including the "beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, dreams, and fantasies" (ibid) of the characters in the story world. These details of the "narrative universe" also contain capacity for "layering and textualization" without necessarily directly altering the story. An example is a character's backstory to provide realism and detail to their character arc, such as Rocky's religiousness (in *Rocky* (1976)) which adds to the detail of his character but has minimal effect on the story.

In summary, narrative space is vital for adding integral depth to the narrative. This addition of space can be a major involvement, such as a location being a crucial aspect of the theme, as discussed with *Rocky*. Or it can be a background aspect of the narrative for subtler use, such as creating subliminal messaging to users or building atmosphere. Creators may also deliberately omit location in their narratives to change the dynamics and meaning of the story entirely, as I shall subsequently argue via *PWL* (see section 5.4).

2.3.2 Physical and Virtual Spaces

Physical Space

Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu (2016: 4) discuss how "narratives not only describe space, they [also] involve storytellers and audiences who are situated in physical space." In this thesis, I refer to the physical space of a story as the tangible reality of the actual world, namely, the objects the audience can touch, the world in which they physically exist and, in the case of interactive narratives, the world in which the audience's physical interactions can affect the story. In this respect, I take Ryan's (2012: np) position that physical space is not just the "spatial objects" (2012: np) of the narrative, namely, the "dimensions of height, width and depth" of "all things [that] exist". Physical space also includes "real-world space", i.e., where the user is situated in their actual reality in relation to the space that displays the narrative.

In media such as books or films, their stories' physical space presents the narrative's "frame" (Ng, 2020; see also section 2.4), through which users can read or watch the narrative. For example, in their physical space, audiences can interact with a story by turning the pages of a book or looking at a screen. However, this interaction is limited to the physicality of the frame – one can only read the words on the book's pages, or see the images within the screen's boundaries. Conversely, in interactive narratives, the user as "situated in physical space" (Ryan et al. 2016: 4) can engage with the work to directly affect the story within its 'frames' with their engagement (see 5.1).

Virtual Space

In this thesis, I focus on virtual space as the space in which the user's imagination, agency, or any other non-physical action with regards to the story takes place. These cognitive actions thus constitute the user's 'virtuality,' following Pearson (2005: 1112)[3], who uses Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1991) to categorise virtuality into "virtual perception, virtual action, and virtual memory". In this sense, the term 'virtuality' may confusedly be associated with digital technology, such as Virtual Reality (VR), but this digital association is not in the purview of this thesis. Rather, 'virtuality' is a direct implication of the perception, action, and memory of the audience. Alternatively, I will also use 'imagination' or 'cognitive thinking' to refer to this space. Hence, virtual space in this sense is the idea of one's inner self, of utilising one's cognitive abilities of thought, imagination, and choice to maximise or interact with a story. As with virtual space, such 'virtuality' is real and significant. As Thomas (2004, as cited in Manu, 2006: 47) states, "imagination [an aspect of Pearson's 'virtuality'] is what makes our sensory experience meaningful, enabling us to interpret and make sense of it." This imagination allows audiences to "[produce] mental imagery, visual and otherwise." Therefore, the audience can "think outside the confines of [their] present perceptual reality" (ibid). In this sense, virtual space thus also contains reality, as does reality also exist in physical space. As Deleuze (2014: 275)[4] states, "the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself", further supporting the idea of the virtual space constituting its own significant space against the concepts of the physical space.

Besides Pearson's 'virtuality', i.e., the audiences' abilities of imagination or cognitive thought, virtual space can also include "digital space" in terms of a "computer-simulated place or environment with which users can interact via an interface" (Burgess, King, 2001: np). By definition, "digital space" fits within the framework of "virtual space" as the former is a non-tangible simulation or abstraction of reality and is therefore unable to be categorised as physical space. For example, Virtual Reality (VR) is digital space by virtue of the digital technology used to code its non-tangible simulation of abstractions of the real world. Yet it is also "virtual space" because it is not tangible or concrete, yet the user exists within it with affordances akin to the physical world (e.g., moving through a totalized world with images, colour, light, sound, haptics and so on).

However, I have chosen to define "virtual" and "digital" spaces separately as not all virtual space relies on digital technology. For instance, I argue that *PWL* utilises the virtual space of the user's imagination, but not digital space (see section 4). For other examples, such as *Sacramento*, I argue that its virtual space includes both the virtual game environment created for the narrative as well as the user's imagination and cognitive thinking to drive its narrative (see section 3.1.2).

Physical and Virtual Space

Physical and virtual spaces may co-exist. For instance, such co-existence can be understood in the design of walking simulators, which are video games that focus on gradual exploration and discovery of a place or space through observation rather than relying on plot-based action (Muriel, Crawford, 2018: 40). The user's interactions with keyboard and mouse inputs in the real-world physical space are important they control the user's observations of, and "movement" in, the digital world (Ng, Carter, 2022: 3). As well as interactions with "spatial objects" (Ryan, 2012: np), the users need to engage with the digital space of art, animation, audio, and mechanics that help create and build the narrative world. Part of this engagement is to use their imagination and memories to create emotional responses that facilitate the narrative experience (see 3.1.2). Typically, the narratives of walking simulators do not focus on plot-based action set pieces and are instead controlled by "environmental factors" of the digital environment (Ng, Carter, 2022: 3), namely "perspective; movement; and environmental design". In effect, these factors summarise how interaction, rather than plot, can facilitate and focus a narrative. This interaction is achieved through both the user's 'interaction with spatial objects' to move the character around the virtual world, but also their use of imagination and cognitive thinking to give that movement and exploration its meaning. In this way, physical and virtual space combine to accomplish alternative methods of storytelling.

Ultimately, by requiring the user to interact with the story through exploration and movement, they are asked to use a variety of different interaction methods that intertwine the physical, virtual, and sometimes digital spaces. Through the authors using these different interaction methods in creative combinations, they can create complex narrative experiences that reward the user for engaging in these different spaces. For example, *Sacramento* is a walking simulator with the audience using their imagination and personal experiences to help build its narrative. But this imagination and cognitive thought can only be facilitated by their use of spatial objects to control their movement within the digital world and present the context of the narrative. Therefore, walking simulators present story worlds in which a narrative asks a user to engage with both the physical and virtual spaces.

2.3.3 Physical and Digital Spaces

Theorists have differing opinions on the relationships between physical and digital spaces. Some argue that digital spaces take over the physical and replace them. Others argue that digital spaces enhance physical space, presenting new interaction methods. Hurley (2016: np) discusses how he believes in a combination of such spaces to create a "mixed reality" that "[bridges] the virtual and physical spaces together". Gelernter (1991: 3) also explores how digital worlds, as "mirror worlds", could reflect physical worlds. Kelly (2019: np) continues Gelernter's ideas by arguing how digital "mirrorworlds" could emulate or replicate the physical world in digital forms, which constitute "digital twins". Besides "digital twins", he further argues that embedded digital footprints, such as web hyperlinks, could be found in physical spaces (ibid). These visions further entwine the relationships between physical and digital spaces to show how the actual, tangible world can influence digital environments into which users are put.

Other technologies also bridge digital and physical spaces. For example, Niantic's *Pokémon GO* (2016) uses Augmented Reality (AR) to allow users to view Pokémon characters on their phone's screens as situated in the physical world. Similarly, Magic Leap Studios' animated

film, *The Last Light* (2020), allows users to project the film into their physical space using AR. Users can then view their film in a 360-degree environment as presented in three dimensions on their device using AR space.

There have also been developments in the creation of "Mixed Reality" (MR; not to be confused with Hurley's use of the term), which aims to combine the abilities of AR and VR into one system. Whilst this technology is still in development, it has the potential to integrally combine digital and physical spaces. If "*Pokémon Go"* were to add "MR capabilities, the Pokémon character would be able to climb a real [physical] set of stairs because the digital character would be aware of its physical surroundings" (Wigmore, 2018). While this technology has yet to be fully realised and used to create stories, it shows the storytelling capabilities that will be possible through combining digital and physical spaces and how the digital space may be used to alter the physical space.

To Jaron Lanier, a decorated pioneer of VR technology, the twin worlds of the physical and the digital may simulate one another. However, he notes they are also distinct. The "synthetic world" (Lanier, 1992: 163) reinforces our perceptions that virtual reality is not physical reality, regardless of how closely the technology attempts to replicate the latter. Lanier states: "the first time I came out [of VR], I noticed the individual rainbows in the weave of the carpet on the floor" (ibid). He speculates his more focused attention derives from how users will "notice that sort of thing because you sort of adapt to a lower level of detail when you're inside a synthetic world." This understanding is important as it shows the transactions between the physical and digital spaces and how they are separate, regardless of how they may also exist together.

As previously introduced, some theorists further argue that digital and physical spaces cannot co-exist at all, namely, one may replace the other. Andersson (2011) bluntly claims that "software is eating the world". He argues that society seems fixated on accessing more of virtual reality to replace the physical, rather than simply having it mirrored. For example, Meta (rebranded Facebook) claims that their metaverse will allow people to "work and collaborate from home without feeling remote" (about.facebook.com), revealing their aim to digitally replace the workplace. Rauschnabel (2021: np) agrees with Andersson with his counterclaim: "Augmented reality is eating the real-world!" These catchy headlines show the lively debate of the conceptions and ideations of space in media. Perhaps with the advancement of technology, our understanding of the relationship between the physical and digital space will change (see also section 6.1).

2.4 The Boundaries of Story Space

Boundaries of stories and the scope of their influence are also important when considering physical, virtual, and digital spaces. In this respect, Ng (2021: 30) describes a story's physical boundaries or "frame" and their importance to the user in how they "direct attention, provide meaning, include and exclude, allow and withhold access". Ng further discusses the difference between the onscreen, as "a signified reality visible to the audience" (i.e., what is displayed to the user visually) and the offscreen, as "not visible to the audience" (or the elements of the narrative that are not shown to the audience). She describes this relationship between the onscreen and offscreen as functioning "as a yin-yang dialect" (31), meaning that both rely on one another to complete the narrative. This 'onscreen'/ 'offscreen' relationship shares many likenesses to the expectations of the relationship between the physical and virtual space and how authors use these spaces together to create a narrative.

However, Ng takes the idea of the on/off screen a step further to posit the "post-screen" that shares an "ethos of no more screen" (Ng, 2021: 48), describing how stories can extend beyond the traditional understanding of the 'frame' and its limitations. Instead, the story immerses the user into a space which forgets about the frame entirely, merging the user into a new reality. In a sense, this 'post-screen' ethos could be applied to the idea of physical and virtual spaces and the creation of a narrative that situates the user seamlessly in between both spaces and removing the frame between them.

As one illustration of this idea of the 'frame' and scope of story, Mexican film director Alejandro G. Iñárritu (2017: np) states his intention with his VR film experience *CARNE y ARENA: Virtually Present, Physically Invisible* aka. *"Flesh and Sand"* (2017; hereafter "*CyA*") was to "experiment with VR technology to explore the human condition in an attempt to break the dictatorship of the frame." *CyA* is a six-and-a-half-minute solo experience that allows the user to physically walk and interact with a tangible room of sand while seeing their virtual environment and story in VR. He claims that, conventionally, "things are just observed" within the frames of a story. Instead, he aims to "claim the space to allow the visitor to go through a direct experience," which, in the context of this narrative, is "walk[ing] in the immigrants' feet, under their skin, and into their hearts" (ibid). This narrative intertwines the physical and virtual spaces in such an immersive way that the frame becomes blurred. In that sense, the user interacts with both spaces simultaneously, away from the frame and sharing the 'post-screen' ethos. Keogh (2015; 257), in relation to how users exist in a videogame world, otherwise describes this phenomenon as "co-presence across worlds and bodies", meaning that the frame that divides the user and the game environment is forgotten as the user is immersed between the two spaces.

CyA thus exemplifies Ng's theoretical concepts of the frame and the ideas of the 'post-screen' as well as embodies Keogh's ideas of 'co-presence'. Instead of focusing on what is or is not visible in the frame, Iñárritu focuses on providing the user with a platform in which they can exist and experience the narrative, both visually and physically, in a space that immerses themselves beyond the frame. The work further showcases how authors can use physical and virtual spaces to enhance one another. Celant (2017: np) claims users are in an "exchange between vision and experience" in VR where they go through "a process of osmosis in which the duality between the organic body and the artificial body is dissolved". *CyA* shows how a story can exceed the boundaries of the 'frame' to reaffirm how authors like Iñárritu challenge prior theoretical frameworks to how a story can be consumed by its audience. In particular, the thesis will analyse this concept of the 'frame' in relation to space in the case of *PWL* and other case studies (see section 5.3).

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, interactive storytelling has shifted the frameworks of understanding narratives and facilitates new ways of telling stories. From these changes, the author and audience roles have evolved, with the author taking on the role of a creator or facilitator of a story and the audience using their agency to assume some of the authorship over the story. In doing so, the audience also takes on a more important role in the story, at times becoming a story character or by making choices that directly influence the narrative. In other examples, the audience can become a prosumer and use their agency to create their own stories from existing intellectual property and distribute them on participatory platforms.

With respect to authors, by assuming the role of creator, they can focus on the world and spaces they provide to their audience, creating ways for their audience to interact with and consume their narratives. These spaces can either take shape in the physical real world, or in the virtual, artificial, or digital world. In most cases, authors combine these spaces to create complex interaction methods that provide a unique storytelling experience. Furthermore, by exploring these spaces and the relationship they share, the concept of the narrative frame can be expanded upon and unlock new understandings about how audiences can interact with a story.

These author and audience roles facilitate new possibilities and opportunities for different storytelling experiences, particularly in terms of how stories use space. The constant innovation of storytelling means narratives remain flexible and authors are able to explore new storytelling opportunities. With the rise of interactive storytelling, creators and the audience should be open to these new possibilities.

3. Authorship

In this section, I argue that the contemporary interactive storyteller is an author that creates a storytelling platform specifically for the audience's input of agency and imagination. This platform serves what Monkman (2022a: np) calls a "blank space" (see 3.1.1) for the audience's engagement. I combine this concept with that of Foucault's "author function" (see section 2.1.1) to coin the phrase *a contextualised canvas* on which the audience can create unique narrative experiences within the framework of the author's context.

As such, the story offers an openness for the audience to present their interpretations and values to create unique storytelling experiences. The author holds less authoritarian or absolutist control over storytelling, instead ceding some authorship and control to the audience.

This description of the interactive author is not to diminish their importance, as their work of presenting the narrative's platform and contextualising its discourse is still vital so as to create a platform with enough meaning to tell their story. They need to present the user with either physical or virtual spaces that facilitate interaction and assist the viewer in using their imagination and thought to create their narrative experience. As such, they fulfil the "author function" role (Foucault, 1984: 113; see section 2.1.1) by creating a space for discourse. In the rest of this section, I will discuss this 'author function' in relation to *PWL* and other works.

3.1 The New Authorial Role: Platform Creation

3.1.1 Platform Creation in *PWL*

As my central case study in illustrating contemporary interactive storytelling, I read *PWL's* (see 1.3.1) authorship as one expressly in building such a platform so that its audience and participants can affect its narrative, if not create a new one.

In *PWL's* case, I argue that this platform is its collection of screens, as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2 (below; more images are available in Appendix 2); the context that comes from these screens is the assortment of faces displayed to the audience. Monkman's authorship of the platform is as follows. First of all, Monkman created the project's infrastructure of screens. More importantly, he created the context for the project, namely the relationship between

"imagination and empathy" (Monkman, 2022a: np) as presented by the faces on the screen. Monkman bestows value on the project's audience and its participants using imagination. The audience's engagement with the subject of love generates the narrative using their imagination and empathy to understand the emotions of the faces on screen and what their stories are. As the project's tagline puts it, this use of imagination is also the "invisible transaction of love" (yorkmediale.com, 2020: np) that underpins *PWL*.

Figure 1 (left): PWL York Exhibition wide shot (@https://www.kma.co.uk/people-we-love)

Figure 2 (right): PWL York Exhibition close-up (@https://www.kma.co.uk/people-we-love)

In this respect, I argue that Monkman's building of this context of imagination and empathy in *PWL* resonates with Foucault's (1984; also, section 2.1.1) sense of the "author function". The meaningfulness of *PWL's* authorship lies in the space in which a discourse can be had by its audience, rather than in the singular or straightforward attribution of a text. Monkman (2022a: np) echoes this point. Inspired by Sterne's *Blank Page*, he states that he "wanted to create a blank space" that allows the audience to create something by building from the space provided. But importantly, Monkman (2022a: np) notes that "a blank space that's not contextualised sort of becomes […] fairly purposeless", meaning that this space needs to hold context for the audience to use it meaningfully. Without the original author and their context for the platform, the space would have no purpose and would be meaningless. There would be nothing for the audience to add to the space. By designing his context of empathy, imagination and the transaction of love, Monkman provides substance across his platform of PWL's screens that allows for discourse by the audience that engages with it. Imagination, understanding and empathy of human emotions for their loved ones and the value of all those inner processes shape this discourse. Therefore, the phrase *contextualised canvas*, as mentioned in the introduction to this section is more applicable. Instead of a completely "blank space" with no meaning or context, the audience are given a canvas that holds just enough context for them to engage with.

PWL's interactivity, compared to other non-interactive stories, comes from two key factors. While there may appear to be little interactivity in the work, that is only in the sense that there are no physical devices that need to be manipulated by the user. Instead, the work solicits interactivity from users' bodily positions and how they interact with the physical space of the exhibit. This interaction is highlighted by the spotlight, which rather than focusing on the artwork (i.e., the faces on the screens of the pillars), such as art you would find in a gallery, it focuses on the user, positioning them to be the creator of the narrative. The second factor is the context provided with the *PWL* exhibit (see Appendix 7), which asks the users to imagine the stories behind the faces on-screen and to "reach out and understand" these stories. This

context is designed by Monkman to explicitly invite the audience to be an active focal point of the narrative. His invitation, in turn, generates the work's interactivity.

In turn, two further groups of people are active components to the interactions with this platform/ these screens and their faces: the *subjects* (participants); and the *viewers* (audience).

Subjects

Firstly, the *subjects* (Figure 2) are involved through their volunteering for the filming process (looking at a photograph of a person they love) and being the faces presented on the screens. They are the content with which the viewer interacts. For *PWL*, this dynamic of the participants' interaction is an important factor in its authorship. Renee Piechocki (2022: np) expressly states that "the platform is authored by Monkman, but *the artwork is authored by all of the participants*" (emphasis added). Her statement reinforces the idea of the platform and its separation from the narrative's shared authorship.

In turn, the subjects presented their unique representation to the provided context. Their reactions to seeing the picture of the person they love within the meditative state, as described in section 1.4, are each an individual presentation of discourse to the context Monkman presents with his platform. For example, Reaves (2022: np), one of the subjects for *PWL: Pittsburgh*, discussed how they felt the platform "encourage[d] thoughtful dialogue, and an appreciation for cultures, ideas, and experiences". They described the project as taking themselves "inward", whilst evoking emotions such as "reverence, honour and appreciation" for their loved one (ibid). Here, their reactions focused on expression and emotion toward their loved one, following Monkman's assumed expectation of the participant's involvement.

In contrast, Timsina (2022a: np), another subject for *PWL: Pittsburgh*, discussed how they "knew" their "community in Pittsburgh" – the Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh – was "large but doubted participation from anyone from within" it. They "felt the need to represent the community" (ibid). Due to this decision, their reaction held a different narrative focus that had a wider scope than simply the transaction of love between themselves and the picture. Instead, it focused on the love between their local area and their community.

These two examples of how the subjects' interactions change *PWL's* story also show how the subjects can shape authorship. Decisions, reactions and responses that were authentic and wholly out of the provided context enabled the project's scope, diversity and inclusivity to extend. As Piechocki states, Monkman "didn't create their [the subjects] responses or reactions"; their reactions "come from the person". She concludes that "they [the participants] are the authors of their reactions" (ibid). These extensions of authorship were beyond the control of Monkman and Piechocki. Instead, the subjects' participation controlled their decisions.

Notably, the participants of *PWL* still recognise Monkman's authorship of the platform and the importance of his role. Timsina (2022a: np) acknowledged this notion by thanking Monkman for "creating" a "unique project". Equally, Timsina B. (2022b: np) praised the "project organisers and hosts" for providing a "wonderful experience" for them to express themselves. Their comments show that separation still exists between the participants and the author. They appreciate the platform Monkman has created for them with which to interact, whilst still understanding the value of their own contributions to its creation via their participation.

Hence, the platform of *PWL* is significant in how the participants (and the viewers – see next sub-section) influence the creation and execution of its narrative by creating the content within which the experience exists. The screens' content – the participant's reactions to looking at the image of the person they love – results from the context created by Monkman for the project.

Viewers

Secondly, the *viewer* (Figure 2) interacts with *PWL's* screens by approaching them, standing within their spotlight (see section 1.4), and gazing at the screen's contents. Significantly, they further build *PWL's* narrative – and play their part of authorship – by using their imagination and curiosity invoked in the absence of any other information (bar the minimal introduction to the project, as transcribed in Appendix 7, that provides context to the canvas or 'space' in front of the user) to gaze on the subjects and thereby channel thoughts and empathy to realise the stories behind their faces (kma.co.uk/people-we-love). They might wonder, for instance, who these faces might be and who it is that they love. Per Monkman's (2022b: 10; emphasis in original) statement of his intention, "it [the narrative of *PWL*] is whatever *you* [the audience] make of it." He describes these intended interactions as being through "staring and probing, questioning the changing features of a stranger's countenance, watching every twitch and blink for signs of the story beneath" (11). His artistic intention is thus to place the viewer in a position to help create the narrative via the project's platform and context. Through their interactions with the screen content and their imagination and thoughts, the intended result is for the audience to be authors in forming their unique narratives and interpretations.

Through these two groups' interactions, I thus argue that Monkman (as the creator of the platform of screens (and their contents)) shares the authorship of *PWL's* story with its audience and participants.

Value

Moreover, there is value in such co-authorship. This value is two-fold.

Firstly, by treating the audience as active (rather than passive consumers/ receivers), Monkman directly gives value to their interaction, meaning they themselves hold such value, power, and importance to the narrative. Secondly, I argue that the narrative is more accurate as authored in this way in the provision of genuine responses to his question of understanding 'the invisible transaction of love' from the audience directly. Hence, the value of his narrative increases by the authenticity of the discourse generated by the context – it is true and genuine.

In these ways, both Monkman and the audience benefit and gain value from the other's involvement. With respect to the former, while Monkman is responsible for curating the overall collection of all the faces that showcase the "cultures, ideas and experiences" as discussed above, he did not create them. Nor did he have any direct influence over them other than the filming setup. As Piechocki (2022: np) asks rhetorically: "the project doesn't exist unless people participate, right?" In other words, even though Monkman authored the platform, the platform would not have any value without participation, both in terms of the participant filming and audience engagement. With respect to the latter, through the platform, the audience gains power, and importance in their engagement.

But how much influence can an author wield over their platform to still allow the active audience (and/ or participant) to retain their engagement within the space it provides? In this respect, Monkman (2022a: np) discusses the balance of the "relationship" between "how much context you build around the question or the empty space," and still giving the audience the freedom for their input. He further asks: at which point does an author influence the platform too much? Or in his words: "where this question of authorship becomes obscured and becomes the artist once again saying hey, look at me, listen to my story" (ibid). In this sense, if the author provides too much context to the platform with their own arguments, discourse and thought, then there will be no space left for the audience to do so. Therefore, Monkman specifically wanted to ensure that he shared authorship between himself, the participants, and the audience to create a balanced discourse. For example, he places a spotlight on the viewer in a likeness to a performer on stage, and in doing so tells them they are a part of the narrative. The stage is the platform of the screens, of which the participants created the content, and the audience becomes the performer by using their imagination and experiences to create their narrative interpretations. Thus, the authorship of the product is shared, and the three parties all play a vital part in the narrative's creation.

In turn, this balanced discourse challenges our understanding of authorship, story, and interactivity by utilising the audience to generate the story rather than presenting a predetermined narrative. It situates the author, participants, and audience in an intertwined position of storytelling that scrutinises the understanding of the basic author-audience relationship. Furthermore, due to its use of participants, there are not simply characters to further push the narrative, but instead free-willed people who act on their own accord, adding a third dynamic to the author-audience relationship.

3.1.2 Platform Creation in Other Works

Besides *PWL*, other art-based interactive works share similar models of platform creation as authorship. For example, Candy Chang's *BID* aligns with Monkman's idea of a "blank canvas". *BID*'s platform is literally in the form of an almost blank wall-sized chalkboard on which the audience can write their answers to Chang's "before I die, I want to ___" prompt. The platform created by Chang is thus the entire collection of wall-sized chalkboards made in each location (which featured over 75 countries (candychang.com)). To avoid the platforms being "purposeless" (Monkman, 2022a: np), she provides themes of ambition, hopes, life and death as the context for discourse. As with *PWL,* Chang creates the platform, but the audience creates the content for the platform through their engagement with the context above. In turn, the audience assumes both the role of the participant and viewer as they write all the things they want to do before they die, while also viewing the aspirations and dreams of other contributors.

A difference to *PWL* is that Chang posted online instructions as to how communities can create the walls in their local area, and also provides an online space for them to share their answers to the prompt so that they can be seen by audiences who cannot view their wall in person. Therefore, whilst Chang had creative influence over the audience, they could assume further responsibility, as compared to *PWL,* by becoming the co-creators of the local walls (by building them themselves).

However, as the original creator of *BID,* Chang made the collective assortment of people's responses from her context, original platform and instructions for people to facilitate and build

their own walls. Therefore, like Monkman, she remains the author responsible for the shared discourse that comes as a result of the audience's engagement with *BID*.

Fourneau (also known as "Dziff*"*), the creator of 2016's *Sacramento,* is another example of an author who creates a platform for audience engagement. Dziff created *Sacramento's* platform as an abstract digital version of an unnamed place in the USA, in a likeness to digital "mirror worlds" (Gelernter, 1991: 3; see 2.3.2), comprised of "flashback moments" that she had "gathered on sketchbooks over the years" (dziff.com: np). The main influence of these flashbacks comes from Dziff's own experience of a train journey (Carpenter, 2016), that, due to its namesake, was presumably in the Sacramento/ California area. Dziff set the abstraction in a void of white space featuring hand-drawn water-coloured assets that remind her of the actual world and physical space of her journey. The primary context she applies to this platform is the "captur[e of] fleeting memories before they fade" (dziff.com: np). She describes her intention to get "the player" to use the work's platform and game environment she had created and then "project [their] own story and memories" into the narrative environment (Carpenter, 2016: np). In other words, Dziff aims for users to enhance *their own* experience within the platform she had created. Hence, the platform of *Sacramento* allows the user to add their own experiences and memories to the digital environment using their imagination and agency (see also section 5).

These examples thus show that the concept of the platform can work across a range of media. *PWL, BID, and Sacramento* are abstract narratives that allow the audience to author/ co-author the works using their inner lives, imagination and thoughts. The narratives have no pre-determined endings and leave much open to the audience's interpretation. In contrast, *Façade's* platform has a more rigorous design. *Façade's* creators, Mateas and Stern, use Artificial Intelligence (AI) storytelling to create the platform for telling the story of a dinner party in a high-rise flat with the story's two characters, Trip and Grace. They place the user in a situation where they are required to add their own actions and inputs into the narrative, with the AI responding accordingly. If the audience meets enough criteria through their interactions, one of seven specific endings will trigger. In this sense, *Façade* and its two AI characters, Trip and Grace, become the platform for the audience's interaction. Ryan's "*Interactive Onion*" theory (2011) discusses how *Façade* fulfils the theory of "real-time story generation" (48; see section 2.3.3). Here, the user's involvement is a clear factor in the narrative and shows that they must assume an explicit level of authorship in the narrative experience to influence the story in real-time.

With Ryan's theory and the way Mateas and Stern approach storytelling, not only do the audience and the authors share responsibility for the narrative, but the AI itself facilitates some levels of authorship, too, further reducing the authoritarian role of the author. Nevertheless, by directly changing the narrative in real-time depending on the reactions of the AI characters, the audience has more control over the narrative. Whilst Stern and Mateas created the AI characters, they do not control their exact responses. So, in this situation, the authors have limited control over the story and its narrative path, which is controlled exclusively by the AI and the audience. Therefore, the audience gain an increased level of authorship and utilise the platform so that they can use their cognitive thinking and imagination in the narrative in 'real-time', away from the influence of the author's control.

However, as Jenkins (2004: 120) writes "game designers don't simply tell stories; they design worlds and sculpt spaces". Hence, even if the authors have less authority over the narrative, they still control the game world and the greater context around the narrative. Therefore, while

Façade has a more rigorous narrative design than compared to the other narratives, with authorship being shared between the creators of the game world and the AI that builds the narrative responses, it also facilitates the audience to assume greater levels of authorship.

Hence, these works show how the author benefits the audience in terms of how much control, influence and power the audience possess in storytelling by creating a platform for them. The works also demonstrate the importance from the author understanding their role and power. By taking a step back to allow the audience to assume more creative powers, the author can benefit by creating a more truthful and genuine narrative that accurately reflects its audience. These works also show how the audience's agency and their willingness to engage with these platforms can benefit the narrative in terms of the unique storytelling experiences that come from the user's imagination and cognitive thought.

3.2 The Audience's Relationship with Authorship

The audience are becoming "more powerful" allowing their voices to be "heard" (Dwivedi et. al, 2021: 3). Particularly for interactive stories, the audience are agents with more freedom and creative control. Livingstone (2002: 1) describes the changing nature of audiences specifically as "from the mass audience to the interactive user," showing an active shift in interactive storytelling to an individual/ "as-Agent" (Webster, 1998: 194) approach. *Sacramento* and *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* (2018), are examples of the audience as such an active individual (see section 2.1.2). In these examples, the audience are an "agent" (Webster, 1998: 194) and therefore holds a level of individuality and agency within the narrative. The audience takes an active role in the story via the platform, and their interactions control how they engage and create the story that they experience.

PWL further shows the audience as an individual, rather than a collective entity. Monkman designed the project to be an intimate, personal, one-on-one experience in the minds of the individual, thus approaching the narrative with the outlook of the audience "as-Agent" (1998: 194). For example, each screen has one singular spotlight, inviting an individual user to stand in front of it, with 5 screens allowing 5 users to interact at once. Even during my observations, I was aware of the individuality of the narrative's experience (Appendix1: 9). With this approach, Monkman understands the power that an active user has as an individual in what they can bring to the narrative. As individual 'agent[s],' the audience thus has more intrinsic value in terms of how much responsibility and influence each user can have in their engagement with a story. Hence, they are individually more valuable and noteworthy to the narrative than if they were treated "as-Mass" (192), where the mass audience's needs and gratifications would need to be met.

The crux of this 'as-agent' and 'as-mass' distinction has potential implications on a story's success. For instance, Moody (2017) claims that a successful narrative across a large audience requires the audience to have a shared experience. Hence, where the audience are 'agent[s]' in individually natured narratives like *PWL*, Moody's argument is that they are "without the guarantee of another viewer being able to witness and discuss similar phenomena" (47). So, whilst an active 'agent,' the audience perhaps lose the ability to share their experiences with their peers. Therefore, the story "does not have the potential to succeed with a mass audience" (ibid). Moody's position means that on a larger scale, narratives like *PWL* will be less successful with mass audiences, and the individual will be alienated by their freedom.

Nevertheless, I argue that the platform created by the author on which the audience can share their individual emotional experiences facilitates the collective discourse that comes from the narrative. For example, *PWL's* narrative is unique to each user and their own interpretations and experiences. However, the platform creates the space for thought, reflection, and discussion as to the emotions it provokes. Furthermore, by having these individual experiences, the audience create a more open and complex discourse that considers differing understandings of the narrative and its context. The experience of interacting with *PWL* is an emotional one and puts the user in a vulnerable position. Thus, the mass audience will share the experience of being in this emotional state together. In this sense, the platform is still facilitative of the shared experience and by having this shared experience, the platform can maintain and be successful with a larger audience, whilst being interacted with individually by its users. Perhaps the individualistic nature of the storytelling encourages the audience to be even more active in ensuring they are a part of the discourse to create the mass experience. It is up to them whether or not to do that.

Another issue of the audience being an "agent" is the extent of their agency, which changes key dynamics in storytelling potential. Ryan (2011) argues that even an active audience cannot change the narrative enough in terms of how their interaction affects the narrative's outcome. Hence, the audience's interactivity cannot impact a narrative sufficiently to reach an overarching level of authorship (see 2.1.1). Rather, Ryan (2011) argues that for the audience to truly be a "co-author" (50), they would need to reach a level of "meta-interactivity" (59; see section 2.1.2).

However, I disagree. As an 'agent,' the audience commands more from a story. In *Sacramento*, for instance, the audience use their internal memories, values, and experiences to create a narrative of reflection, thought and imagination that is true to themselves. The only authorial "limitation" with respect to the audience is that the author facilitates the platform for them. Hence, the audience creates their narrative which I argue is a sufficient form of 'co-authorship.' Additionally, as per Barthes's "Death of the Author" (1977), the meaning of the narrative comes from the 'reader', or in the case of a video game, the user. In this sense, the user assumes authorship by creating the value and meaning of the story through their interactions, imagination, and choices, directly contrasting Ryan's arguments that in this level of interactivity the audience cannot assume 'co-authorship'.

Furthermore, the idea of 'meta-interactivity' is unpractical. Examples of 'real-time story' generation, such as *Façade,* feature the user's engagements which change the story to produce different endings in real-time. Even the *Blank Page*, which lets the user directly write or draw within the pages of the book, changes the micro-narrative of "widow Wadman" (1761: 146) in the reader's alterations of her character's resemblance. Whilst the overall narrative is not different, this confined moment in the story is unique to each audience member. I argue that this level of change is sufficient for co-authorship. However, via Ryan's ideas of 'meta-interactivity' for co-authorship, these examples would not suffice, even if the narrative has changed to some extent due to their interaction.

However, the question remains as to whether a predefined number of endings, such as in *Façade* (as Ryan's example of "real-time story generation" (48)), can render the users as co-authors, even with the use of AI and random user input?

I argue that the answer comes from considering the author's role and how they approach the creation of their platform for the audience. The difference between *Façade* versus *PWL* or

BID is that *Façade* has a clearer ending, whereas the *PWL* and *BID* allow users to engage indefinitely with their imagination and cognitive thought. This indefinite use of imagination and thought means that the audience of *PWL* and *BID* are free to use the platform until they are satisfied by the narrative experience they create. This narrative experience is open-ended and controlled only by the audience. In contrast, *Façade*'s narrative, whilst separate from the author during the interaction (see 3.1), is restricted by predetermined endings created by the authors. Notably, the audience is still able to use their imagination and interpretation for the story of *Façade*, hence they are still authors to some extent. However, those outcomes are still restricted by the work's limited number of endings. Furthermore, these endings should not mean that the audience does not assume authorship. As previously mentioned, the user interactions occur away from the author's control and are created by the user's imagination and cognitive thinking in response to AI-generated prompts. This means that even though there are a limited number of endings the user can achieve, they have done so entirely through their own actions and therefore are the author of such actions. Therefore, the authors of *Façade* provide a similar level of freedom to the users of *PWL* and *BID*, however, they just facilitate and frame the narratives differently by having a restricted ending as opposed to an open-ended one.

3.3 Summary

The role of the author is evolving. The "Author-God" (Barthes, 1977: 145) is no more. Rather, the audience assumes some of their power. However, the author also becomes a creator of a platform that oversees and facilitates the user as they create their own story experiences.

As such, in terms of interactive storytelling, the author's role is concerned with situating the audience in the most facilitative environment for them to actively engage with and find their interpretation or understanding of a story. For the audience to do that, they use imagination and space to create their own unique experiences. Therefore, the contemporary author is more of a creator of a platform for storytelling rather than an authoritarian figure. This does not mean that the authoritarian author is extinct. Rather, it is not as prevalent with regard to interactive platforms, particularly in the case of *PWL*, *Façade,* and *Sacramento,* and the way those works utilise their audience's interaction.

In line with this evolving role of the interactive story's author is also the need to appreciate the growth of the audience. Rosen (2012) appreciates that the "people formerly known as the audience" will assume a more active and engaged role. For example, in PWL, the audience needs to assume an active role on Monkman's platform to acquire the full extent of the narrative. Of course, not every audience member will be active and take on this role. But many do. Cover (2006:139) names contemporary and digital narratives as having an intertwined "author-text-audience" relationship in which both the author and the audience influence the text. He further describes this relationship as "push-and-pull" (2006: 153) between the creators and the interactive audience. This outlook shows that the relationship between the author and the audience has no binary answer. Their role is no longer as straightforward. Authors must now balance their own desires, ideas, and creativity with the expanded role of the audience and their needs.

4. Tasks/ Asks of the Audience

In this section, I argue that, via their story's platform (section 3), the contemporary author of interactive stories facilitates a more active and engaged audience in their narratives by presenting them with a more involved role that asks for their agency. In doing so, the author changes the facilitation of the wants and needs of the audience, as well as also the audience's expectations in how they may engage with the narratives. In turn, this activeness of the audience enables a relationship between themselves and the author that increases the audience's level of authority and responsibility. This new relationship alters the dynamic of storytelling from the exclusiveness of a mediated structure to one in which the audience can have more influence over story creation.

In this regard, Monkman (2022b: np) discusses this change in the role of the audience across two models. The first model is a linear author–product–audience dynamic (Figure 3) that allows audience engagement via a feedback loop to the creator (such as via critics and reviews). This is the "original" dynamic of a story created through exclusive authorship. The second model is a revised relationship of authorship for interactive stories in a triangular form (Figure 4). This model features the author/ creator and audience as having shared importance, where they each assume equal authorship. In this model, there is no separate feedback loop as the audience and author collaborate to develop and improve the story via the "artefact/ thing" (i.e., the platform; see Figure 4).

Figure 1: Diagram of original author-audience dynamic (Monkman, 2022b: 3).

Figure 4: Diagram of new author-audience dynamic (Monkman, 2022b: 4).

The change between the two models is that, in Figure 4, the audience is allowed even equity in the narrative process instead of being the final step of storytelling. As such, they are a valid and equal aspect to building stories as a creator. This dynamic allows for a more fluid relationship within the storytelling process, with each having a major impact on the narrative. The question mark symbolises the "space in the middle" (2022b: 4) as the potential narratives that may occur due to the relationship of these three components working together.

I argue that this outlook into a more audience-led media space for contemporary interactive narratives creates new expectations for the audience and their role in storytelling. As discussed, the role of authorship has changed to allow for expanded user roles. But other factors have led to the audience having different expectations as to how they will interact with a story. For example, digital technologies allow audiences to utilise new interactive methods to consume narratives, and these heavily change how audiences approach how they engage with media.

This section discusses how authors facilitate their relationship with the more active audience. Section 4.1 first aims to understand the various methods of interaction to facilitate an active audience. Section 4.2 then explores the imagination of the audience and how they use their

imagination to consume and influence the media. In this greater facilitation also lies the central issue of trust between the author and their audience (4.3). Finally, this section asks why audiences interact with narratives and what the author might do to gratify them (4.4).

4.1 Interactions of the Audience

Authors must plan how the audience will interact with their narrative to ensure a smooth narrative experience. This planning is essential as narratives can utilise various interaction methods within their storytelling, such as via a controller, keyboard input or tracking of physical movement. These methods change audience experience and affect issues such as ease of use.

Before their work for *PWL*, Monkman and KMA explored utilising the audience and their interactions for the story in their other projects, *Flock* (2007) and *Congregation* (2010). *Flock* (2007) presents a story inspired by *The Swan Lake*, a ballet by Tchaikovsky (1967). Instead of having ballet dancers perform the dance, the audience takes the role of the performer. *Congregation* (2010) follows similar interaction with a focus on the audience's bodies and movements to explore the idea of "the individual vs. togetherness" (kma.co.uk, 2010: np). Unlike *PWL,* these projects rely more on the audience's collective bodies and physical movement to create shapes and movements. Conversely, *PWL's* utilisation of the audience is the complete opposite, asking for internal and private interactions that rely on the individual's imagination (see section 3.1.2), rather than a collective effort.

How these narratives use both collective physical interactions and private virtual interactions, respectively, carry different levels of control and influence on the users as they engage with the narratives. *Flock* (2007) and *Congregation* (2010) provide the user with less choice and control over the narrative, as other factors influence them in their engagement with the story. These factors include other participants' actions and movements, or lighting and audio cues as they move in the physical space. On the contrary, most of the interaction in *PWL* occurs within the audience's imagination (though also see section 4.3.2). This internal interaction is more complex for the author to influence and control. As such, the audience can assume more freedom in their interaction.

The project *Façade* balances these two methods of physical and internal interactivity. Its interactions are based on physical inputs on the user's computer keyboard. However, its creators also rely on the user's inner thoughts and emotions to drive the story in ways unique to their experience. Nevertheless, the authors of *Façade* influence users' experiences via audio and visual cues aiding, perhaps even influencing certain decisions, in a likeness to Tallyn et al.'s descriptions (2005: 179; see section 2.1.2). For example, the authors can play to the user's morality. If the user's inputs are mean or vulgar to the AI characters, then the characters will respond sadly, perhaps by crying, or become angry, possibly even shouting, and ultimately presenting a morally bad outcome, such as triggering the ending of one of the AI characters storming out of the apartment. Whilst the user can continue to be mean or vulgar, the responses ostensibly aim to make the user reflect and apologise, instead opting to be more respectful. Whilst the code itself has limitations and will only be able to work with recognisable inputs, it is built from a complex "Drama Manager" (Thompson, 2020) that balances tones and phrases to have a general understanding of the users' inputs and thus create the appropriate response. This implementation means that while users are free to input what they wish, they will still be constantly presented with feedback that will challenge and influence their inputs.

Therefore, even though there are different narratives which utilise different interactive methods, they are all interactive in giving greater levels of agency than that of non-interactive narratives (Klousis, 2002). While the user may respond differently due to how the narrative implements its interactivity, they are still actively engaging with its narrative through their various interactions, albeit physically or virtually.

4.2 Imagination of the Audience

Tasking the audience to use their imagination is an important aspect of interactive storytelling. By imagination, I refer to the vivid pictures readers create in their minds whilst engaging with the narrative. Imagination is a key aspect that draws people to storytelling. Hence, when engaging with or creating interactive narratives, this notion remains integral. Imagination is also essential to the theories of virtual space (see 2.3.2 and 5.2) in terms of the space occupied by this cognitive process. It is important, for the author to get their audiences to engage and use their virtual self within their interactions with the story.

PWL relies heavily on the user accessing virtual space and engaging with the narrative cognitively through their thoughts and imagination. The York Mediale describes how the narrative of *PWL* presents "the people we love, [as] absent, and [they] can only be conjured into existence through an act of imagination on the viewer's behalf" (yorkmediale.com 2020: np). This description highlights *PWL's* reliance on audience imagination to aid the storytelling and specifies that imagination creates the narrative.

As discussed, Monkman (2021) likens his creation to the Mona Lisa painting (1503-1506). To Monkman, both products "live within the gap between the users' inner thoughts and the thoughts of others" – this is the virtual space of the audience. Monkman focuses on this aforementioned 'gap' as a key to *PWL*. He states: "if the work [*PWL*] works, it is in each one of those private, individual acts of imagination, of daydreaming, and of empathy, that its beauty and its value lies" (Monkman, 2021: np). This increase in interactivity and user agency allows a more accessible platform for users to perform these acts of imagination, daydreaming and empathy. *PWL* shows the value with which the virtual space provides the user and how it changes the ways the audience may interact with a story. But it is key to note that Monkman heavily relies on the audience to understand each task and ask they face in order to accomplish the narrative aims of the project.

As discussed (see section 3.1.1), the audience and participants can affect *PWL* in multiple ways. For instance, the project's participants are not the direct creators, but rather, volunteers led by their curiosity to participate in the project. Andrews (2022: np), a participant of *PWL: Pittsburgh*, describes the experience as "an emotional" one, in which they had to "sit in a quiet space and think about someone that [they] love". Spruill (2023: np), another participant, adds that it was "a silent reflection" that was "dependant on [his] thoughts, as reflected in [his] facial expressions." – Similarly, Timsina (2022a: np) describes "reflect[ing] on the memory [of a family member] who passed away". The project prompts these participants to use their imagination as evoked from their memory. It is a separate debate as to whether imagination and memory are distinct from one another. However, Hopkins (2018: 47) describes memory as "imagination controlled by the past", meaning that *PWL* directly relies on both the audience's and the participant's imagination. The participants provide their vulnerability and create the responses that help build the narrative by accessing their past and using their imagination to present the empathy and love with which the audience engage using too, their own memories and experiences to shape their interpretations of the narrative.

As such, imagination for the creation of *PWL's* narrative also comes from the audience's intuition and curiosity by trying to understand, and empathise with, the history of the faces on screen and who the person they love might be. KMA specifically states that users must "imagine who they [the participants] love" (peoplewelove.online). KMA also instructs "visitors […] meet the gaze of each portrait and wonder about the story behind those loving eyes" (ibid). The narrative focuses on love and empathy, which KMA describes as starting from an "act of imagination" (ibid). The cognitive process of user imagination is key to *PWL's* storytelling.

An interesting discussion point is how imagination is incited. Monkman (2022b: 11) expressed his wish to do so without the influence of "literature" or "words". The *Blank Page* is an example of a narrative which uses words to motivate imagination. However, *PWL* has no words or audio cues to influence imagination. Instead, it must come from the user interacting with the faces on screen. As I observed (Appendix 1: 18), there was no literature or words in the work with which to influence the user. I had initially questioned this absence as a limitation or weakness to the storytelling in *PWL*. However, as I engaged with *PWL*, I realised its purpose was to force the user into using their imagination not only to uncover the stories behind the faces, but also how best to approach that interaction. More explicit instructions or influences would de-personalise the experience by nature of the stricture, rendering the experience less personal and less intrinsic, and ultimately requiring less imagination and interaction from the audience.

Façade's solicitation of its audience's imagination and thought are a by-product of words and literature. For *Sacramento,* imagination comes from non-literature-based prompts in the form of audio and visual cues, similar to that of *PWL's* functionality. As Dziff discusses, her virtual environment is inspired by the actual world; she expects users to connect with the place and to add their own imagination and agency to its context. As such, imagination can also be solicited for interactive storytelling through various strategies.

4.3 Trust

Trust is a key component for the author to enable the audience more power within the narrative experience. This trust must emanate from the author or creator to acknowledge the audience's active engagement to enable the story. Equally, the audience and the participants of the narrative must also trust the author.

4.3.1 Audience Trusting the Author

Due to its uniquely minimalist storytelling approach, *PWL* requires a level of trust that most narratives do not. It relies on both the audience as well as the participants to engage with the platform and its context. Whilst some participants were volunteers or associates of the creators, a large part of the process involved finding volunteers on the street. As Piechocki (2022: np) described her experience: in some cases, she "knew them, and they trust[ed] [her] already, so they respond[ed] [to volunteer]", such as Spruill (2023: np) who reflects that he "trust[ed] her implicitly", or he "would not have participated". But surprisingly, she also found that people on the street were willing to trust her out of curiosity about the narrative. She describes that "curiosity [came] first" and the "trust, [was] built later" (ibid). She claims that they found between "40 to 50" of the 128 participants of *PWL: Pittsburgh* using this method (approximately 1/3 of the participants; ibid).

Regarding the curiosity of the volunteers, Piechocki describes that people are just "curious in general" (Piechocki, 2022: np). Hence, authors can place trust in people to try to be involved in the experience, out of that curiosity. There is scientific evidence to support this claim. As humans, we have a "lifelong level of curiosity […] that is a behavioural characteristic of neoteny" (Stafford, 2012: np), where "neoteny is the retention of the juvenile features in an adult" (Grandin & Deesing, 2014: 30). Humans are inherently curious even into their adulthood. Authors thus rely on this curiosity to ensure at least some level of engagement with their narratives.

After the filming process, the participants relied on Monkman and Piechocki to present their image appropriately and respectfully in ways that appreciate them. The participants trust the author to honour and do justice to their feelings, insecurities, vulnerabilities and emotions they have given to the narrative. In this regard, *PWL* and *PWL: Pittsburgh* were successful in participants being satisfied with their representation. Only one participant requested to have their video not presented (Guggenheimer, 2022). Another example of participants' trust in the author is BID, where the participants showcase their dreams and ambitions, opening themselves to the project. Here the participants and audience must feel comfortable enough to present their contributions to the overall narrative.

4.3.2 Author Trusting the Audience to Interact

The authors also need to trust the audience to engage appropriately with their work. As discussed, audiences are 'curious in general' and therefore can be relied on to at least try engaging the narrative. This trust from the authors in the audience's engagement also showcases the former's expectations for the latter.

Specifically, for *PWL,* Piechocki (2022) states that the narrative will "capture people's imagination" and thus trust that they will intently engage with the product. However, she acknowledges that some "simply won't connect" (ibid). My observations (Appendix 1: 17) also bore out this intention. Many users did engage with *PWL* for a reasonable amount of time, with even one lady watching those engaging with the work before they gave it a go themselves (Appendix 1: 18). However, others just simply passed by or became disinterested after a short amount of time. Therefore, as part of the storytelling process, authors must balance the idea of users not engaging with trusting that other users will engage. Monkman states that a creator needs to be aware that "it's impossible to create something that engages everybody in that starting place, whatever you do" (Monkman, 2022a: np). Interestingly, Monkman describes that he believes the "noisy, demonstrative, clamorous works" that "ask for our attention" perhaps get more engagement – albeit he notes that *PWL* is not one of these projects.

Hence, in *PWL's* case, Monkman believed there to be an issue of needing to "persuade people" into consuming the work (ibid). In this regard, *PWL* encourages user interaction through its setup and design. By presenting the user with five (or seven for *PWL: Pittsburgh*) screens, the audience can choose which objects – and how many – for their interaction, rather than a binary choice of whether or not to interact. Mochon (2013) calls the last "single-option aversion". In his study, he relates that aversion to the option of buying DVD players. When presented with the option to buy a DVD player, purchases were at 9%. However, when presented with the opportunity to buy one of two types of DVD players, the consumer purchasing percentages became 32% (DVD player A), 34% (DVD player B) and 34% no purchase. This experiment saw a change in results from 9% purchasing a product when only given one option, to 66% buying a product when given more than one option (557).

This perspective can likewise be applied to consider *PWL's* engagement methods. By having a choice of either five or seven screens, users should be more likely to engage with at least one of the screens. Some argue that this wider choice creates a "paradox of choice" which will confuse audiences who into choosing not to interact at all (Thompson, 2013; Schwartz, 2004). However, Mochon (2013) reassures that these choices as limited to a controlled number of options actually help consumers be more confident of their choices.

There are also other more minor details to influence the user as a demonstration of the author's trust in them to engage. For instance, each pillar of *PWL* holds a spotlight directed at the floor next to each screen. As discussed in section 3.1.1, the spotlight is a representation that the user is the focal point of the interaction. But it also acts as a visual cue for the audience of where to stand, gravitating the audience toward the work. Once they are up close to the screen, the creators' intention is for that proximity to draw the audience emotionally into the narrative. Whilst this could be seen as a form of manipulation and control by the author, it does not affect the narrative experience. Rather, it only affects the engagement from its audience, meaning it has no bearing authorship of the audience in the narrative.

4.4 Gratifications from Audience Interaction

This level of openness for both audience and participants should surely result in benefits for both from their engagement. As well, "Uses and Gratification theory" (Katz, Bulmer & Gurevitch, 1973, 1974; section 2.1.4) posits that the audience either expects or hopes to receive gratification from their engagement with these narratives. Due to the higher expectations in the tasks and asks presented to the audience by the authors, this notion of gratification is fundamental within interactive narratives.

PWL asks for an emotional audience, both in terms of those who view it and those who participated in the creative process. Monkman (2022a: np) describes his perception of needing to "repay" the audience for their "commitment and concentration". Adams (2022: np), a participant who also visited the work, reflects on their experience with *PWL* where "in this age of over-demanding technology and instant gratification, we rarely are allowed or encouraged to just sit with our thoughts and see where they take us". The work asks for the audience to personally and emotionally experience its narrative by utilising thoughts in meditation to achieve gratification over sustained interaction. The focus of this slower, meditative process is one of the biggest motivations behind the creation of *PWL.* However, in that respect, it inherently relies on its audience to conjure up emotion and memory. This focus shows the commitment and vulnerability that the audience give to Monkman essentially for free.

However, Adams (ibid) further describes their experience with *PWL* as "freeing" in that they could interact with their loved one in ways that would not be possible without the platform presented by *PWL*. Adam's experience thus showcases the transaction of the audience and participants to not only give but also receive gratification from their interactions.

The audience may also achieve more profound levels of gratification from *PWL,* such as in the form of voyeurism. Mantymaki & Islam (2014) [5] write: "The voyeur obtains information and hence learns from others by watching them… In doing so, the voyeur places him/herself in a superior position in relation to the ones he/she watches" (3). Here, Monkman's use of space and imagination in building his platform aims to facilitate the audience's self-

gratification of voyeurism. By creating the platform for this experience, Monkman, as the author, trusts that the audiences would express their voyeuristic curiosity and engage in the work respectfully, by looking at these faces on the screens and attempting to understand them. Spruill (2022: np), describes their voyeuristic experience in saying "the most moving part was to sit in the presence of someone and reflect on what it must have meant for that person to experience what I did as a participant". So, in this sense, they received gratification by empathising with and by being curious to other participants and the shared experiences they would have had in being so emotional and open about their love and feelings. They then describe that from this voyeurism and experience of watching someone else that they could "put [themselves] in the position of feeling loved by someone else when you [stand] in front of them".

Monkman also explicitly aims to provide gratification to his audience. He understands the value provided by the audience and their emotion toward the work. In this respect, Monkman seeks to create an environment of "shared humanity, however painful and frightening those stories [are]" (Monkman, 2022b:14), which he hopes can empower his audience. He states: "perhaps that's a place [the shared humanity of *PWL's* story] that can recognise and encourage the power of imaginative thinking and values the artist within us all" (ibid). Monkman thus had a clear aspiration to build a balanced transaction between the audience and the author within *PWL,* relying on audience engagement during the narrative and aiming to repay that engagement.

In conclusion, audience gratification is not a new concept. Katz, Bulmer and Gurevitch wrote their theory in 1973 (see section 2.1.2) when interactive narratives were niche and uncommon; even non-interactive media gratifies its users. However, due to the increased demands of interactive narratives and the more demanding tasks and asks that audiences face when engaging with these narratives, the audience correspondingly requires more value gained from their transactions with the story. *Sacramento* and *Façade* similarly provide gratification to the audience, whether that be the exploration of space and one's self in *Sacramento* or the entertainment-based escapism of *Façade*. The audience receives value in return for interacting with these narratives. However, I argue that *PWL* remains the subtlest example of gratification in demanding the most amount of vulnerability and emotion from its audience, therefore providing the most gratification to them in return. In my own experience, I found the piece to be overwhelming. I further noted that I would "miss [viewing/ interacting with] *PWL"* (Appendix 1: 16) once the installation closed. I noted that I will miss the "intimacy and passion" that the project provides, stating that "we simply cannot get [it] in regular life" (ibid). From my own experiences with *PWL*, I received a lot of gratification. Admittedly, I engaged with the work much more than most audience members would, and therefore probably gave more vulnerability and emotion than most will. However, I do believe that in doing so, I was provided with the most gratification in return.

4.5 Summary

As active and engaged audiences, their expectations from interactive work have greatly changed. Responding to this changed audience, authors give the audience more influence over narratives and, as discussed in section 3, assume some level of authorship to a narrative. These narrative design choices come with an understanding from the author that not everyone might engage. As Piechocki puts it, they understand that some audiences "simply won't connect" (Piechocki, 2022: np).

How the audience interacts with a story has also changed. This change is more obvious for digital examples. These examples require direct physical interactions that alter movement in "narrative space" (Ryan, Foote & Azaryahu, 2016: 3; see section 2.3.1) or, in some cases, change the narrative itself. Even if interactive storytelling infers the engagement of an active audience, authors must still pursue strategies to ensure their appropriate engagement. A large component to ensure this engagement is the relationship of trust between both the audience and the author. This trust builds the author-audience relationship, or perhaps even creates the 'co-authorship' dynamic. Other methods, such as Mochon's (2013) "single-option aversion", also ensure that the audience engages rather than solely relying on their curiosity or activeness. These methods also showcase that the audience are not entirely free from the author, who still holds some authorial power to ensure that the audience engages appropriately with their work.

Changes in the audience expectations also lead to an increased engagement with their imagination or an increase in cognitive thought from interaction with story. This engagement or interaction exists across a spectrum of mediums, from the *Blank Page*, which offers limited use of imagination, to *PWL,* which uses almost unfettered imagination as its primary interaction method.

Furthermore, due to increased interaction, authorship and imagination, the audience's expectations of gratification from interactions also increase. This phenomenon is not new (see section 2.1.4 for the 'Uses and Gratification' theory). However, within the context of interactive narratives, the user presents more emotion, vulnerability, and effort to the narrative. They, therefore, expect greater return. But *PWL* carries an important focus. Monkman (2022b: 13) aims to create the idea that audiences can gain more value from narratives "if we [the audience] trust and believe in the true value of our interior imagination." He aspires that they will take these values from the project into the rest of their lives.

5. Physical and Virtual Space

Space is a complex narrative component. It dictates where a narrative exists, influences its limitations and scope, and controls how users interact with the narrative. In this section, I argue that interactive narratives allow the author to utilise different spaces, as compared to their non-interactive counterparts. The author uses these spaces to facilitate the user's physical affordances, imagination, and cognitive process for the story's interactivity. In some cases, the author must also facilitate different interaction methods that different technologies provide.

The section proceeds as follows. In section 5.1, I discuss how physical space affects and/ or contains the boundaries of the narrative with which the user interacts. However, as the role of the audience evolves (see section 3.1), the presence of virtual space grows with greater focus on individual narrative experiences (section 5.2). Physical and virtual spaces thus allow users to interact with narratives in various ways – section 5.3 will explore these spaces and their relationship with one another, and discuss how the authors use these spaces alongside their audience's interactions to maximise the effectiveness of their storytelling. With the rise of interactive narratives, stories focus on utilising both spaces in unison, increasingly intertwining the spaces. By using both spaces, the narrative can further immerse the user, creating a more impactful and emotional experience for the audience within them. Section 5.4 concludes by examining how authors can use an absence of narrative or physical space to add

different meanings to their narratives and change the way in which the audience may interact with them.

5.1 How does Physical Space Affect the Narrative?

In *Façade* and *Sacramento,* the audience use physical keyboard and mouse interactions as "spatial objects" (Ryan, 2012) to engage in the digital world's space in the narrative. Such interactions are conventional in relying on the user to interact with the story by controlling movement, direction, or dialogue inputs. With interactive cinema, the user also interacts with the narrative in the real-world to affect the story by moving a mouse to selected buttons on the screen, such as for *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* (2018), or via controller inputs like for CtrlMovie's interactive-film-based video game *Late Shift* (2017, dir. Weber). For earlier examples of interactive cinema, such as *Kinoautomat* (1967) and *Mr. Sardonicus* (1961), the audience's physical reactions in their physical space changed and interacted with the narrative.

Other interactive narratives demonstrate more innovative uses of physical space beyond just 'spatial objects.' For example, *BID* uses 'spatial objects' in "real-world locations" (Ryan, 2012) for interactivity via chalkboard walls built by communities in local areas with which the users interact. In this sense, the work bounds its narrative to these confined local areas. Each city or town that builds an interactable wall thus creates its own narrative space within the boundaries of the city or town's physical space. As it turns out, over 75 countries participated in this project, building over 5,000 walls on which a collective narrative across these locations emerged (candychang.com).

Similarly, 'real-world locations' have a direct influence on *PWL*. In York, the York Minster was the real-world physical space for the project. This location directly affects the narrative as the religious symbolisation and connotations associated with the Minster, as well as the grandiose nature of its interior, present an atmosphere of reflection, spiritualisation and meditation that complements engagement with the project's narrative. As Monkman (2022a: np) describes his intention of engagement for the project, the Minster was a "contemplative space" that only really allowed for "one way of engagement", which was to be "silent, contemplative," and "very direct". The audial environment of the Minster, sometimes consisting of chimes or organ music, or otherwise the ambient sounds of a contemplative religious space, also becomes part of the narrative.

Interestingly, Monkman also highlights the limitations of the physical world. He notes that due to *PWL* being contained inside the Minster, it was "only going to be seen by the kind of people who felt comfortable going [inside of the Minster]" (ibid). In contrast, *PWL: Pittsburgh* was in an open-front building that audiences could view 24/7. This openness enabled more accessible physical space for users to access and engage with the work. During the interview, Monkman clarified that he had "no regret" over either location for the two projects. Despite their differences, the locations were essential to the project and vital in their different ways to the narrative process.

In her interview, Piechocki (2022: np), describes her role of "creat[ing] an environment" and "present[ing]" the "platform", as discussed in section 3.1, including "where it's [*PWL*] located, what it looks like" and "how accessible it is". All these factors are subcomponents of physical space and relate to how the audience will interact with the platform. An example she cites is the deliberate addition of two extra screens from five to seven. Monkman and Piechocki, "didn't want people to have to wait so long" (ibid) to engage with the project. Too

many people in the physical space would also affect their engagement with the story's virtual space. Thus, their decision streamlined the experience to improve the overall narrative.

Another example of real-world physical space being used to tell a story is *Congregation* (2010), again by Monkman. This work requires the audience to stand within an individual circular spotlight that appears at each of their feet through heat-sensitive cameras. All the individual spotlights are joined in a larger circular shape that tracks each spotlight. The light is controlled by the user's heat signature and follows their movements. Monkman's expectation is for the audience to then engage with the spotlight by moving in their physical space within the real-world, enjoying the interactivity with the light. However, "what they [the audience] didn't realise… was that the [collective] circle was very gradually shrinking, bringing them all [in] closer contact with one another" (Monkman, 2022b: 7). Collectively, the audience of potentially up to fifty or sixty people would move within their spotlights until the circle became uncomfortably tight. "Then, for a full two minutes […], the interaction stopped. There was nothing to do… During these silent, awkward, contemplative minutes, the participants, sharing time, space and purpose, truly became a congregation" (ibid). These moments of silence also facilitate cognitive thought or contemplation, showing how authors can utilise the audience's act of contemplation to connect to physical space and create a story from the combined spaces. Here the direct use of physical space and movement in the project's manipulation of light united people into a collective to create an enriched story.

These examples show three methods of using physical space within interactive narratives. The first is a form of interaction with 'spatial objects' to control elements of the narrative, such as movement. The second is utilising physical locations to enhance the storytelling. The last is to use distance in the actual world as a method of interaction to control or influence a narrative.

5.2 Virtual Space and Virtuality of the Audience

As discussed in section 4.3, *PWL* uses the audience's virtual space of cogitation and imagination as its primary method of interaction. Piechocki (2022) describes the reason for her involvement – and wanting to help bring Monkman's creation, *PWL,* to Pittsburgh – in terms of how it intends to cultivate "empathy," "curiosity and imagination" (np). These qualities are not tangible. They are emotions and feelings from within oneself. Yet, they are the foundations of *PWL* and what makes the project possible. In this sense, *PWL's* physical attributes act as "a visual mechanism that encourage[s] thoughtful dialogue" (Reaves, 2022: np). The audience creates their stories in their virtual spaces, as kickstarted by the physical space of the York Minster, the Pittsburgh building (see 5.1) or the platform of *PWL* (see 3.1.1).

While the platform of the story occupies the physical space and therefore its "frame" (Ng, 2021: 3), one might think that the story is limited to its 'frame'. However, as Ng states, this may not be the case. Specifically, Monkman states he designed *PWL* to exist beyond the frame and asks the audience to "conjure" the story "in [their] mind." At the same time, he appreciates that "the image [i.e., the frame in the physical space] is in front of you [the audience], but you're asked to think imaginatively about that image" (Monkman, 2022a: np). This cognitive ability to hold imagination and use our memories to create thought is what constitutes the project's narrative from the faces on screen, as discussed in section 4.2. Monkman's inspiration for such utilisation of virtual space emerges from his idea that "out of all species, perhaps uniquely so, it's exactly the capability to wander imaginatively through alternatives that allow us [humans] to mentally untether ourselves from our narrative and imagine what it is like to walk a path entirely different from our own" (Monkman, 2022b: 8). This use of

imagination and empathy also means the story can be unique to each user, as it is a private and internal cognitive process.

Similarly, *Façade* is also a work designed for users to engage with their virtual space of cognition in how they input their ideal responses into the work in response to Trip and Grace's interactions. Compared to *PWL*, *Façade* presents more control of the narrative in terms of how much freedom, choice and opportunity is given to the audience and how much this freedom can change the narrative. Limitations in AI coding in 2005 meant that not all inputs work in the game. As such, the user will receive no response from the AI characters until they input a new prompt that can be recognised. However, the user still has to engage with, and interpret, the AI-generated scenarios and input their responses from their imagination, past experiences, and memories. They must actively use their own subjectivity and cognition to achieve any one of the narrative's endings.

Conversely, as with *PWL*, users use their virtual space of thoughts, imagination, and self-exploration to build the narrative of *Sacramento* (see section 4). As with *PWL*, it is not limited by its inputs or endings. Equally, both *Sacramento* and *PWL* are individual experiences, and their narratives exist within each user's subjectivity.

Finally, *BID* is different to both examples, as its narrative comes from the collection of individual audience answers to the prompt, rather than being an individual experience. The primary purpose of *BID* is to see a global mass response to the prompt, analysing and comparing the answers to better understand humanity and empathy. Therefore, the collection of answers from all its audience are needed to shape the entire discourse of the project. In this project, the virtual space is still important for the narrative, but it is the collection of the users' virtuality and cognitive thinking that builds the narrative, rather than an individual narrative being built from the user's virtual space.

5.3 The Physical and Virtual Spaces Together

I argue that there needs to be greater understanding of different ideas of space and how they are used together. Collective theories of "narrative space" (see 2.4.1) limit the extent and reach of a story by only discussing how fictional space affects the narrative. However, how physical space can directly affect a narrative via its influence on digital objects, such as in "mirror worlds" (Gelernter, 1991: 3; see section 2.3.2), also needs to be considered. With interactive narratives that rely on audience participation, the combination of physical spaces and the user's virtual space collectively produce the story. Transactions between these two spaces affect the narrative presented to the audience.

The relationship between space (physical and virtual) and the user's engagement with the story has a unique dynamic in *PWL*. As discussed in section 4.2 in regard to the imagination of the audience, the user interacts with the narrative via their virtual space of imagination and cognitive thinking. However, whilst the audience stands in the physical space of the exhibition, that space influences them (see 5.1) in their imagination and creation of *PWL's* story. This imagination is not a result of the interaction with the platform of *PWL* but rather, it *is* the interaction for the platform. In other words, the interactions of *PWL* have spilt beyond the work's original "frame" (Ng, 2021: 30).

Monkman (2022) describes how he unintentionally experienced this phenomenon during the creation of *PWL*, while only intending it for the viewers and participants. It is important to

note that he acknowledges his position as the "artist" or creator and that his role is to collect, view, organise and display all the video footage of the participants faces. That means he spent lots of intimate hours rewatching the footage before it was displayed. He stated the following regarding this process:

> When I take a break [from his role as the artist setting up *PWL*] and go outside, I walk down the street, and I look at the faces walking past me with renewed curiosity and compassion, wondering about the stories behind those purposeful faces. It's a shift that only strengthens my belief that empathy begins as an act of imagination (12).

In this sense, he achieved the "post-screen" ethos (Ng, 2021: 48) through his experience of creating *PWL*. Monkman (2022: 9) further describes how this phenomenon supported his initial hypothesises about humanity, curiosity and empathy, and also legitimised his intentions of exploring the relationship "between 'in here' and 'out there'", where "here" refers to the cognitive thought of oneself, and "there" refers to everything outside of oneself (8). As such, his interactions with *PWL* have changed his engagement with the actual world. The narrative escapes the physical boundaries of the product's frame and spills into Monkman's regular life, both physically and virtually. From his experience, he hopes his audience will have similar takeaways from their interactions with *PWL* and that its story will blend between the frames of the audience in their lives.

This concept of the 'post screen' shows an alternative outcome of the relationship between physical and virtual space where storytelling occurs outside its narrative space. This outcome is that the story can go beyond just the narrative experience and the location where the user accessed the story. In that sense, the story perhaps already exists beyond the "frame" (Ng, 2021: 30); thus, it is conceivable to continue the experience outside that 'frame'. Just as in *Sacramento,* its designer Dziff aimed to allow the user to input their own experiences and memories of physical and virtual space into the game environment to boost its narrative space's effectiveness.

Conversely, *PWL* triggers storytelling in virtual space, i.e., narrative space exists within the user's virtual space. In a sense, the "frame" of the narrative is the user's mind. The "invisible transaction of love" (York Mediale: np) therefore occurs between the user's mind in the virtual space and the content of the screens in physical space and together, they create the narrative experience. Using Ng's arguments of the 'post screen' and going beyond the 'frame', it can be argued that the frame of *PWL* is transportable, and thus Monkman experienced the phenomenon of its narrative even when he wasn't interacting with it.

This understanding of the relationship between these spaces is important when discussing the transaction between the virtual and physical spaces, as there must be active engagement from the user in both spaces to give value between the two spaces. Such engagement could take the form of *Façade*, where a lot of the story relies on interactions with 'spatial objects' in physical space, but these interactions would have no value without the virtual use of cognitive thought and imagination.

Furthermore, with an active perception of the audience, there is a shared level of engagement and value between the audience and author in the physical and virtual space. In this sense, both discussions of individual physical and virtual spaces per 5.1 and 5.2 remain true. However, by combining these spaces, the user can input their imagination and agency to the platform and engross and immerse themselves in the narrative, creating a unique and complex

narrative experience, that further creates an authentic discourse from their engagement to the author's context.

5.4 An Absence of Space

While *PWL* utilises both the physical and virtual space, as discussed above, it also purposefully chooses to lack narrative space within the physical bounds of the project (see 2.3.1). An example is the design choice of the contents of the screens on *PWL's* pillars or wall (Appendix 5 and 6). Each face sits on screen with a completely black background – void of all narrative space and location.

This lack of space perhaps is so that the users can apply their imagination and cognitive thinking, without being influenced by elements in the narrative space. For example, *Sacramento* uses an abstraction of space to facilitate the user's imagination. Its environment is conceptual, predominantly white, and vague in its definitions, allowing for lots of interpretation and also for the user to use their imagination and experiences to "project" their "own story and memories" (Carpenter, 2016: np).

As discussed, physical space is a significant component of *PWL* in York and Pittsburgh. The people from these places, their backgrounds, experiences, and culture are all vital to the expression of the narrative. In my observations of "Pittsburgh day" – when York swapped the faces of York's volunteers for those from Pittsburgh, I observed some differences (Appendix 1: 8). I found that the faces from Pittsburgh were more expressive and willing to express their emotions. This observation perhaps represents Pittsburgh's culture being more expressive and open than the people from York. But again, this only comes from the volunteers' reactions and faces. The project itself presents these faces on a black canvas and therefore they remain the focus of the narrative.

This absence of space is important. It symbolises the shared humanity of love and curiosity. Monkman describes how the black background allows audiences to "hone" their "focus" on the interaction between the two minds [themselves and the participant] (Monkman, 2022c: np). In a sense, the context of *PWL* is the "foreground" (ibid), and any "narrative space" (Ryan, 2012: np) would be a "distraction" (Monkman, 2022c: np). But, perhaps more than this, *PWL*, in doing this lack of space, presents a real-time "mirror world" (Gelernter, 1991: 3). It emulates the audience standing in the darkness illuminated by a spotlight, looking at the person in the frame under the same setting. Because of this mirroring, they "[share] the same space" (Monkman, 2022c: np). Namely, "[t]he space is kind of replicated on both sides of that divide," making the platform's space go "beyond the screen" and the "frame's" limitations (ibid).

Furthermore, this absence of space has no physical limitations to accessibility, so that anyone from anywhere can see it, thus eliciting emotional responses that bond the humanity together. For example, *BID,* whilst anonymous, has a language barrier. This language barrier constricts accessibility and shows how physical space/ geographical location can affect the narrative. Therefore, someone from a different country may be unable to engage with or even understand the audience responses, and therefore be unable to understand the narrative. In contrast, *PWL* has no linguistic boundaries. It has no sound or language barriers. The narrative space is not limited by physical or virtual space. By omitting physical space in the frame of the project itself, *PWL* expands its reach, impact, and inclusivity – while further proving its primary objective of showcasing the invisible transaction of love as something with which everyone can associate.

Another interesting outlook on the absence of space is that the project is not permanent – it only runs in specific locations for particular durations. This lack of permanence can be due to a variety of human-caused reasons. For example, funding opportunities, accessibility, contracts, licences and even the human error of maintaining artwork. However, *PWL* exists for a limited time, and being purposefully transient, emulates and mirrors the humanity it tries to explore and represent. "Everything dies, things are temporary" (Piechocki, 2022: np). Within my observations, I, too, noticed this theme. The people we love, our connections, and our lives are not infinite. Giving *PWL* its life cycle in its respective locations, albeit in York, Pittsburgh or wherever the project may be on display in the future, speaks much about our lives and loved ones. If *PWL* existed online, as a website, app or even a permanent installation, it would lose some of its truth and power. Therefore, by increasing the amount of narrative space displayed, or by having it exist longer in physical space, the narrative would be less effective and weaken the context of the platform and the narrative's message.

Of course, love can live on throughout generations where bonds between friends and family continue to subsist, but the ability to express this love with these people can be lost. The only time when this love and expression can be recreated are in these moments of meditation, such as those which *PWL* solicits from its users, where one can reflect and appreciate that love and the transactions they have, or have had, with that person they love. In this same sense, *PWL's* message is to let that meditation and reflection continue throughout the user's life and away from the space of the exhibit, meaning that the individual story for each audience member will continue even after the exhibit is closed.

5.5 Summary

In summary, space is vital for interactive narratives by facilitating interaction and enhancing the story's effectiveness and meaning. Depending on the aspirations of the creators, these narratives can focus on each space in different quantities and, at times, avoid the use of space entirely.

Physical space is the more conventional space and a continuation of interacting with the "frame" (Ng, 2021: 30) of non-interactive and interactive narratives. But there have also been advancements in this use of space that use physical location, place, and movements to maximise storytelling.

Virtual space relies on how the author perceives their audience. Of course, the user has always had imagination, creativity, and curiosity. However, authors did not always treat their audiences as active individuals. As audiences grow more active, authors expect them to use their imagination and thought in more significant amounts and meaning. Virtual space thus features commonly within interactive narratives.

Authors can use spaces to create complex and interactive narratives that facilitate the audience's cognition as interactions on a contextualised platform. This design choice is reliant on the author being well-versed in ensuring the narrative works using the physical space. The author must also provide a successful balance of the "context you build around the question or the empty space," so as to not "obscure" the audience's ability to act for themselves (Monkman, 2022a: np).

There are still developments within this space that authors and scholars alike are yet to fully grasp. Technology and digital space have opened even more possibilities for storytelling,

emulating the physical world and making more connected virtual-physical space with "mirror worlds" (Gelernter, 1991: 3). But this technology is still developing, and the standard these spaces can achieve will soon be outdated. Newer expectations will grow from those developments.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the thesis has explored how authors in contemporary interactive narratives can tell stories by utilising space, story, and user imagination. The thesis has further summarised the new authorial role in these interactive narratives as a creator of a contextualised platform, rather than of a specific predetermined story experience. As Ryan (2011) discusses, this change in storytelling as a platform, is not to say that an interactive story cannot follow a set path or branching arcs. However, the experience of that story will vary depending on the audience's interactions. For example, *Façade* follows a branching story with multiple endings. But the narrative relies on the audience's approach to its situational narrative, and each user has an option for a unique experience based on this.

From my case studies and research, I have concluded the author's platform can exist in either physical or virtual space, and act as a canvas for engagement. Depending on the author's desires and intentions, they can shape the platform so that users can interact with it in various ways. For example, *BID* asks primarily for physical interaction in the physical space, with the user's virtual interactions solicited only to answer its prompt. *Façade* and *Sacramento* ask for physical inputs alongside more complex levels of the audience's imagination and thought to push the narrative. *PWL* focuses explicitly on using cognitive thought and self-actualisation as its primary interaction, using the physical space to prompt this cognitive interaction, creating its narrative. From these examples, the platform of each narrative enables individual audience members to interact and experience the story alongside various levels of their agency, thus creating their own narrative via this agency in the virtual space.

Furthermore, the author's views of their audience is important. If the author treats their audience "as-Mass" (Webster, 1998: 192), they treat them as a passive collection of idle users. Therefore, the authorial work will not be to create a platform, as the author will not expect the audience to use their imagination or agency. Instead, they create a narrative to be passively consumed. If this is the creator's approach, the narrative will not be interactive, as the narrative will not facilitate the user's agency. When creators treat their audience "as-Agent" (ibid: 194), they present them with more opportunity and engagement in the narrative. The expectations of the audience's interactions also increase in expecting a more engaging and complex narrative that relies on the audience's curiosity to engage with it. It does not matter the extent of interaction or the choice of media. As seen from the *Blank Page,* Sterne (147) viewed his audience as active and therefore chose to facilitate them by allowing them to interact with his narrative using their imagination.

However, such a view of the audience can create polarising results in terms of engagement. Users may not participate in the narrative due to its complexities or high demands. It also seems that there are greater gratifications for the audience as a result of their engagement with a narrative. Authors are also aware of this correlation, as seen in Monkman and Piechocki's interviews (see section 4.2.2), in which they appreciate that not all audiences will engage with the work, and equally that they must ensure they gratify those that do. This gratification means that the author must ensure that their platform can facilitate and reward their audience.

Monkman is clear about his intentions with his platform of *PWL*, and that he views the audience as curious, active beings that want to interact and use their agency to explore and create stories. With this intention, he created *PWL* as a platform and designed it to ensure that the users must interact with the narrative using their virtual space and cognitive values. Otherwise, they would not be able to experience it in any valuable way. Monkman assumes Foucault's idea of "the author-function" (1984: 113; see section 2.1.1) to present a contextualised discourse that the audience can add their agency to and, therefore, gain more meaning and immersion from, as there is more weight to the narrative transaction.

The authors acknowledge a much freer audience by giving them more power, responsibility and presence in a narrative. Rosen (2012: np) describes this audience as the "people formerly known as the audience". There are, of course, limitations to this freedom and power. The actions of the audience can be impacted or influenced by either the platform of the story, or the story's creator itself, meaning the audience is not entirely free of authorship, but rather a product of that authorship which allows them to be freer. However, in this role, the audience can assume more creative power regardless, and therefore experience a much more intimate and individual storytelling experience. It is also important to note that the author–audience divide is still present. The author is vital to create the platform, and this notion separates the author from the audience. However, the author cedes some of their power to facilitate the active audience and their imagination, making their relationship closer than that of non-interactive stories.

This research has evaluated contemporary interactive narratives and how they rely on different factors than non-interactive narratives. In doing so, the thesis perhaps changes our perceptions of the author-audience relationship. It opens our eyes to the different spaces influencing a narrative and maximising its audience's engagement. The thesis has shown, across the case study of *PWL,* my observations, interviews, other secondary case studies and academic research, that scholars and creators should recognise audience-driven, interactive storytelling alongside its more established media counterparts as a form of storytelling. This interactive narrative focus on authors and audiences respectively (alongside other factors, such as increased technology, more accessibility, and higher media literacy) has meant that the one-sided, monopolistic control of storytelling as seen in the early 20th century has faded. Audiences have more creative power to create, or engage with, the stories they desire and gain more gratification from these engagements with contemporary interactive stories.

6.1 Further Study

The main question from the results of this study is how digital technology will affect the dynamic of space. Before the advent of digital technologies, there were only two spaces of engagement: physical space where the audience exists; and the virtual space of the reader or viewer's imagination. With the rise of computational technology, digital space also grows.

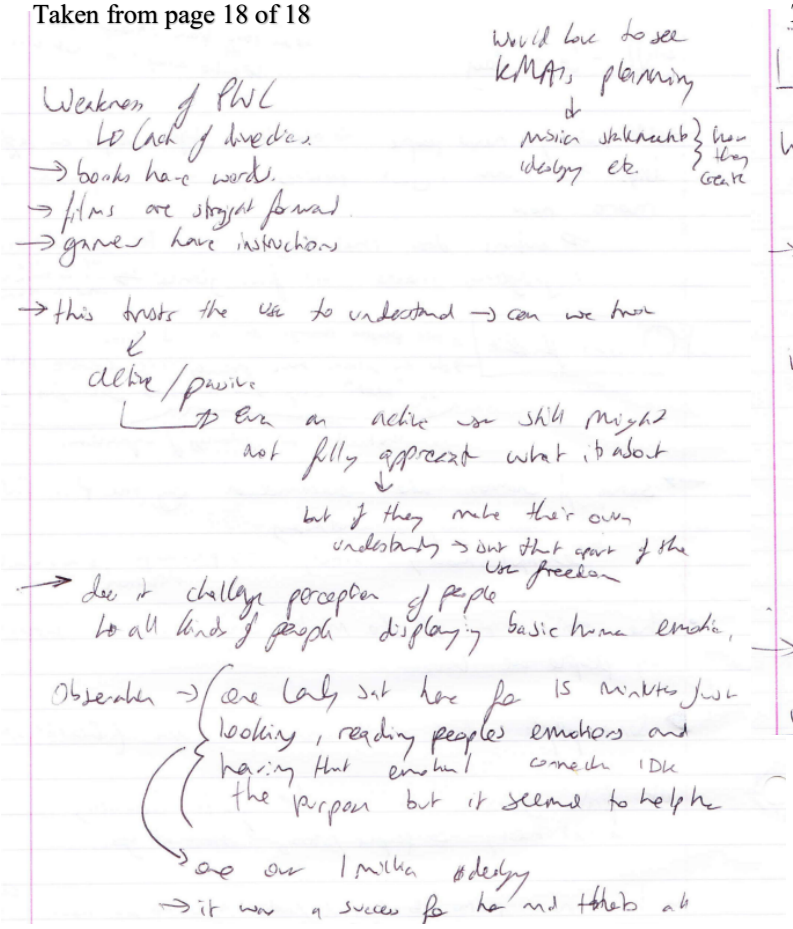
Modern examples of digital space focus on digital immersion, which aim to encapsulate the users with digital technology. This level of immersion is rapidly advancing with the rise of Metaverses, such as "Decentraland" (Decentraland Foundation, 2020) or Meta's plans for its own completely digitalised Metaverse (facebook.com, 2022). These technologies provide new opportunities for storytelling that have not been present before.

Hypothetically, digital technology could further the freedoms of the audience and provide them with more agency and ability to utilise their imagination and cognition within this digital space. However, perceivably, as these digital 'mirror worlds' (Gelernter, 1991: 3) develop and become more real, they will consume or replace the physical space and create a whole new dynamic between the author-text-audience relationship and interactive storytelling. This potential technological development could diminish the audience's agency, creativity, and imagination as more realistic and immersive non-tangible worlds are used in storytelling.

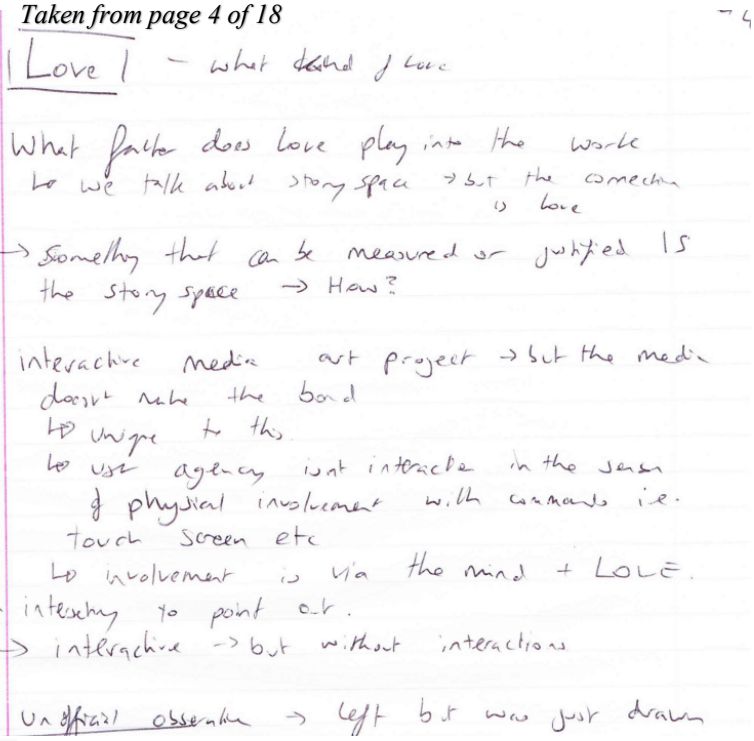
However, the full extent of this space is yet to be realised beyond the limited understanding of its current capabilities. As these technologies develop, digital space's true potential will be realised beyond what can already be achieved using it.

Appendix 1 – Extracts of Handwritten notes:

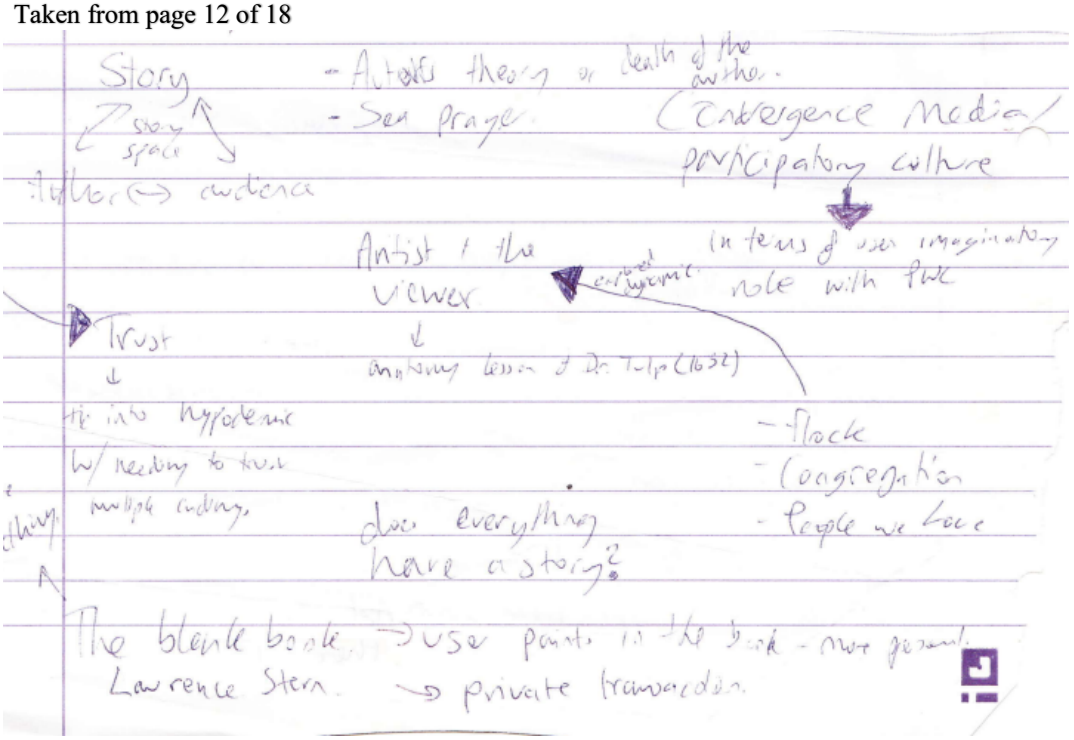
Taken from page 18 of 18



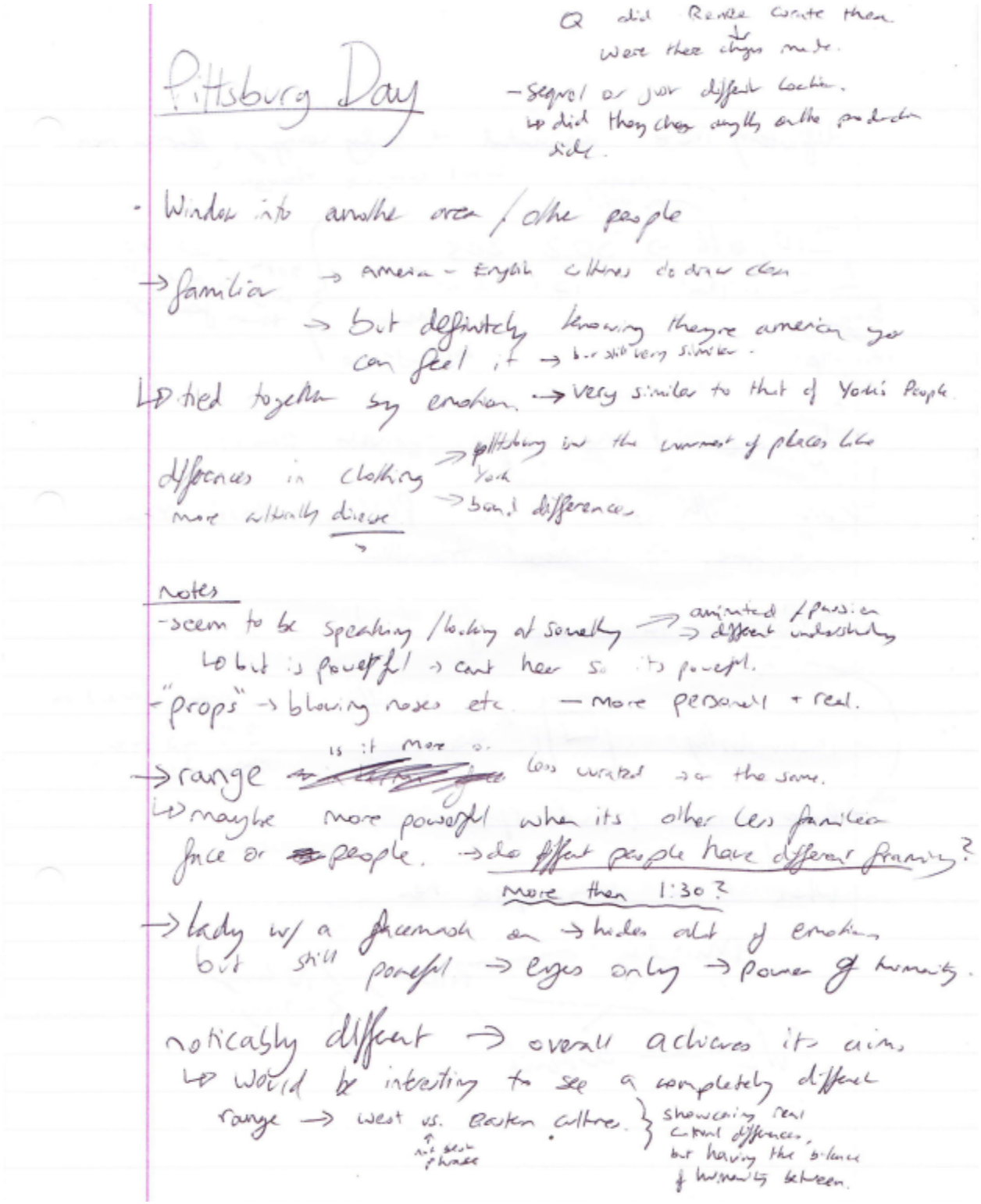
Taken from page 4 of 18



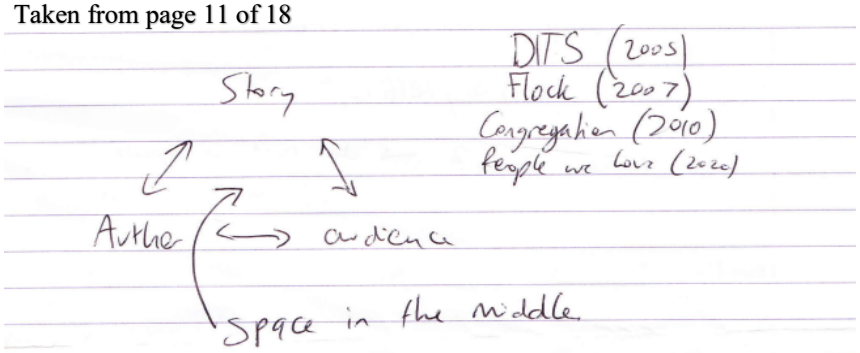
Taken from page 12 of 18



Taken from page 8 of 18



Taken from page 11 of 18



Congregation → performers are the space.
↳ see pattern - but make your own space.
(group)

ancestoral history -> groups coming together to share
↳ collective + feel involved
ancient + new.

- Art installations -> do they have story.

flock 2007 → Swan Lake inspired - music + performance.
↳ after when people would swap + people watching.

all would clap
- who is what?

metaphors are the narrative.

Taken from page 16 of 18

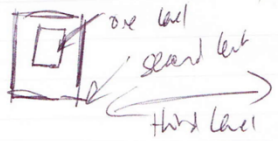
→ will I miss PWL → yes, very much so.
↳ It provides a level of intimacy + passion ~~intimacy and passion~~ that we simply cannot get in regular life

Taken from page 17 of 18

Some people don't trust / understand in (observation)

- at first glance it can be quite daunting
↳ just having 5 people / strangers stare at you.

→ here no name / background / other info → but have a connection ~~Connect~~



this is the story space of PWL and is what is important to the us.

Taken from page 9 of 18

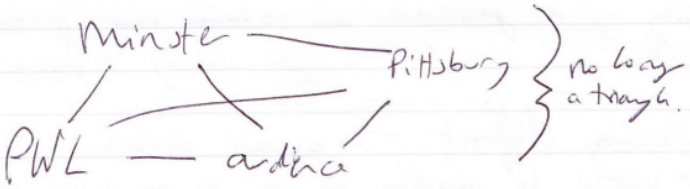
→ Portal to another (parallel) world.

individually → remains the exact same → looped 20-25 maybe 30

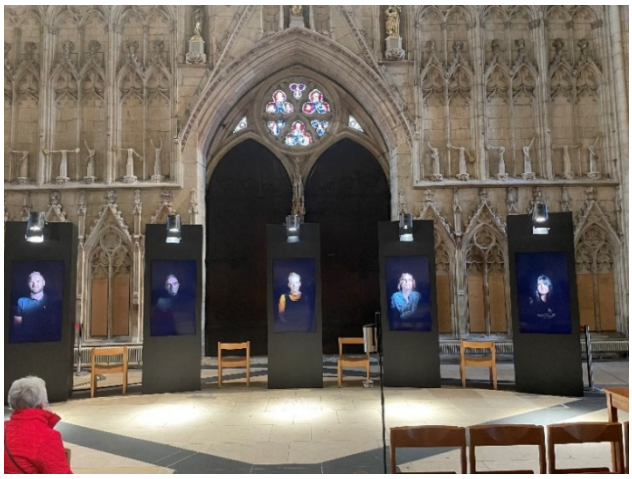
enter a new cultural space

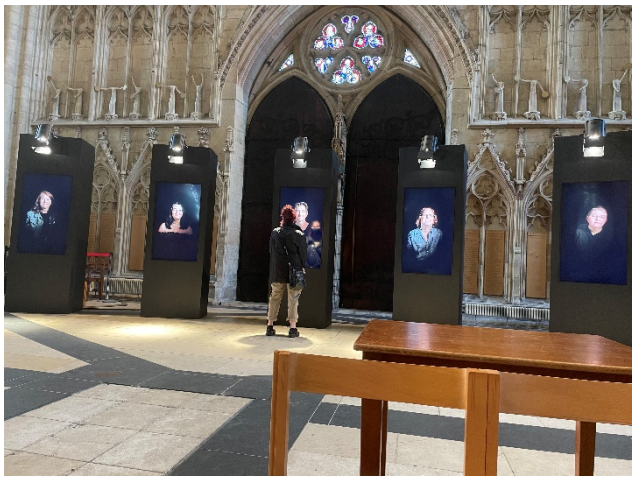
↓

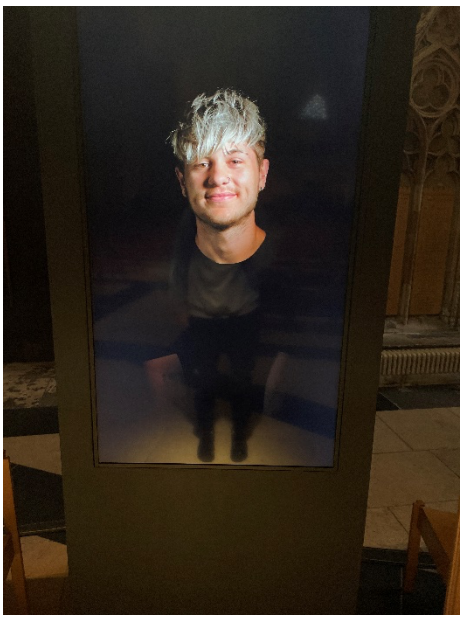
where is the story space here



Appendix 2 – Photos/ Video collected during visitations:







Appendix 3 – Table of Themes for TA:

Theme	Subtheme	Discussed by	Examples of Data
Authorship	The Platform	Piechocki	**1.** There are some types of projects, and people we love is one of these projects, where an artist has created a platform for other people to participate in, but the project doesn't exist unless people participate right? **2.** It has developed a system for our participation **3.** The platform is authored by Kit, but the artwork is authored by all the participants.
		Monkman	**1.** I wanted to create a blank space, but obviously a blank space that's not contextualised sort of becomes you know, fairly purposeless. **2.** That relationship between how much context you build around the question or the empty space and how much do you know? Are you in danger of filling in too much to the point where, as you say, this question of authorship becomes sort of obscured so that it becomes the artist once again saying hey, look at me. **3.** If we can make something that feels like a meaningful experience and a profound experience, and the artist isn't part of that other than having as we described made the context. Then it kind of forces the participants to think about it and to recognise that.
	Audience-as-author	Piechocki	**1.** Kit didn't create their responses and reactions, right? **2.** They're the author of their reaction.
	Need for the 'creator'	Timsina B.	**1.** "Thank you" to the project organizers and hosts. **2.** I am thankful to Renee Piechocki for informing me about this great project, and to Kit Monkman for creating this unique project People We Love".
	Impact of Audience assuming authorship	Timsina K.	**1.** I took the invitation for two reasons, one, to remember my days with my dad and second, to represent my community in the project. **2.** I felt the need to represent the community even when doing something very personal
		Spruill	**1.** I did have some power over how I chose the person on whom I reflected, and some limited control over how I responded to the prompts during the actual recording (though, not knowing what the prompts were, there may have just been the illusion of control). However, the way that the images were curated for presentation, and the presentation itself, were outside of my control or influence.
	Co-Author	Monkman	**1.** That's the context, and the concept is as simple as that, and I think the authorial storytelling in terms of the display of the work is done by the viewer. Yeah, but clearly there's an authorial sort of friend, college entertainers and that sort of voice in the imagination of the sitter too.

			2. So there are kind of there's a double authorship, I think of the experience, but it's predominantly on in my mind, on in, in the eyes and mind of the viewer.
Tasks and Asks of the Audience	Cognitive Interaction (inc. imagination, curiosity, memory)	Piechocki	**1.** I feel like people had genuine experiences and were willing to let the project take them. **2.** It interesting to think about like the things that humans do to amuse ourselves.
		Reaves	**1.** This project took me inward. **2.** It evoked reverence, honour, and appreciation for the many sacrifices and pain that my great, great, great grandmother Sarah had to endure.
		Spruill	**1.** People We Love was a silent reflection on someone whom I love, so the output was dependent on my thoughts as reflected in my facial expressions, rather than via the words I chose to do so. **2.** I was intrigued by the opportunity to reflect on a person in this way.
		Andrews	**1.** It was an emotional experience to sit in a quiet space and think about someone that I love.
		Timsina B.	**1.** It brought back all the memories…
		Monkman	**1. W**hen you sit for the piece you're asked to conjure up in your mind, to think imaginatively about that image. And so that is an active kind of conjugation on the part of the sitter. **2.** Practise empathy on the whole with inanimate objects. So, whether it's a stuffed toy or a or whatever, but we project a kind of sense of care and love and invest a sort of imaginative life into and onto these inanimate things and I think that throughout our lives the relationship between the singular lives we live as kind of beings trapped inside our own skulls and the collective life we live as social beings dependent upon each other is kind of mediated by imagination. **3.** There was really only way one way to engage with it, which was as this kind of silent, contemplative, very direct.
	Lack of Interaction	Piechocki	**1.** There's certainly going to be people where the projects too slow for them. You know, like it moves too slowly.
		Monkman	**1.** It's impossible to create something that engages everybody. **2.** We live in a world where noisy demonstrative clamorous work, kind of is always asking for our attention and *People We Love* is none of those things. It's very kind of passive and quiet and it you know it feels like slow art. In that sense, I mean you know, I, I don't think there is any way in which you can get a round of that other than by talking about the work and trying to persuade people that it repays some level of commitment and concentration.

	Trust in Audience/ participant engagement	Piechocki	**1.** Out of the 128 people we have who participated in Pittsburgh at least 50/40, at least 40 were through that approaching someone on the street system. That's kind of interesting, right? **2.** For people who say yes to any of those ways, they're already predisposed to being curious people who will take risks. Whether it's because I knew them and they trust me already, so they respond to my email or they see something and they're like, oh, OK, I would do this. They're curious. Or I'm a stranger on the street and they get a vibe off of me that doesn't feel creepy, and they would be willing to go into an antique store front would be filmed to do this very vulnerable thing. Like so to me like it kind of like how that trust is built. **3.** I think curiosity comes first in a way the trust. **4**. So the trust, actually, I think, is built later
		Monkman	**1.** There's two very simple things we tried to do in the piece. One was to put a spotlight on the viewer. You are recognised as a kind of participant in that. **2.** The other thing that felt really important was having multiple screens because if you put one screen in front of somebody it feels like you are saying there is value in this that you should be looking at this right now and you should be getting that value in return. **3.** This is a choice
	Audience/ Participants trusting author	Piechocki	**1.** Like what sense of obligation do they have to that person?
		Timsina B.	**1.** I am happy to be a part of the project
		Spruill	**1.** I did, or I would not have participated. As Renee asked me if I would be willing, and I trust her implicitly, I had no concerns that my participation would be used in any untoward way. **2.** It was deeply moving to see other people's reactions to the images which they selected, whether the broad smiles or open weeping that can come from deep memories. **3.** The most moving part was to sit in the presence (virtual) of someone and reflect on what it must have meant for that person to experience what I did as a participant.
Physical and Virtual Space	Physical Space	Piechocki	**1.** I'm involved in making sure that we create an environment. **2.** That the presentation platform where it's located, what it looks like, how accessible it is. **3.** One of the reasons why we added two extra screens was because we didn't want people to have to wait so long to see themselves.
		Andrews	**1**. Pittsburgh is a city built on human relationships, and now that many of us are back out in the world I hope we can prioritize reconnecting with people we love.

	Virtual Space	Piechocki	**1.** It's a project that cultivates empathy, imagination and curiosity. **2.** It will capture people's imagination.
		Timsina K.	**1.** I had the opportunity to participate in the People We Love and am happy to state that it was a great experience, a solemn and blessed feeling to reflect on the memory of my father who passed away about four months before my participation in this project.
		Adams	**1.** In this age of over-demanding technology and instant gratification, we rarely are allowed or encouraged to just sit with our thoughts and see where they take us. **2.** It was freeing to be able to sit and sort of meditate on my relationship with a loved one.
		Monkman	**1.** I am very interested in the relationship between imagination and empathy. **2.** But there isn't much value in imagination, and I think that's you know a massive problem that we have. **3.** And so that really mattered to me. I think it really mattered to try to do that and to create a piece that explored imaginative depths of people and the kind of empathic response.
	Physical and Virtual	Adams	1. In my case, the experience encouraged me to reach out to my loved one and tell her just how much she means to me.
		Monkman	**1.** I think maybe sometimes we don't look and think hard enough about that bridge between the kind of mind in here and the minds out there. And I wanted to try to. **2.** Allowing them a kind of freedom to be and do what they needed to be and do within that space.
Medium	*PWL* and *PWL: Pittsburgh's relationship*	Piechocki	**1.** Personally, I don't see Pittsburgh or... I don't see York as a prequel. I don't see Pittsburgh as like a follow up right. I see it as a as an Organism that's growing right? It just happened to start in York right for whatever circumstances 'cause it was convenient 'cause the festival, 'cause of money like all these other things, right?
	Morality of art	Piechocki	**1.** There's not an end, I think open ended video that doesn't have an ending and is non narrative is unusual for people who are used to like. **2.** We are really bad at maintaining artwork.
	The technology of *PWL*	Reaves	**1.** Utilising photography as a Public Art medium has the power to intensify a deeper meaning by emphasizing our similarities and connectivity to each other. **2.** Photography has the power to change the atmosphere, it ignites conversation, and humanizes an environment.
	Design choices	Monkman	**1.** We included everybody. There's no, there's no curation of the face is the only times we didn't include somebody was when we kind of basically screwed up.

	Future of *PWL*	Spruill	**1.** It would be wonderful to see it in more places, and presented in a way that others outside of the markets where it took place in person could see and appreciate it as well.
Sources to follow up on	Platform/ Audience-led art	Piechocki	**1.** Tom Finkelpearl: What we made and what it looks like, Dialogues and Public Art. **2.** Candy Chang Before I Die…
	Tasks and Asks/ Physical and Virtual	Monkman	**1.** Rembrant, Anatomy lesson of Doctor Tulp. But I think what I find really interesting about it is not only that the picture seems infinite, well, incredibly clever in that that the audience who stand in front of the painting sort of join this collective around the body with these faces from 1600s. But that actually what's really interesting for me is that these faces become so much more than portraits staring out into a world because we show their what they're looking at.

Appendix 4 – Ethics Information (first: Project Information Sheet, Second: Blank Consent form):

UNIVERSITY of York

Department of Theatre, Film, Television and

Interactive Media Ethics Committee

Participant Information Sheet – Non-Anonymous Interviews

Project background

The University of York would like to invite you to take part in the following project: Space, Media, Imagination: The Story Space of People We Love.

Before agreeing to take part, please read this information sheet carefully and let us know if anything is unclear or you would like further information.

What is the purpose of the project?

This project is being performed by Kieran McConaghy (kpm508@york.ac.uk), a MA in Interactive Media student at the University of York. This research is being undertaken for a project funded by XR Stories. The project is being supervised by Dr Jenna Ng (jenna.ng@york.ac.uk).

The work that is being performed for the research is being conducted according to restrictions that have been subject to approval by the TFTI Ethics committee. The Chair of the TFTI Ethics committee can be contacted on TFTI-ethics@york.ac.uk.

We are interested in understanding the methods and techniques used to tell stories in KMA's *People We Love* (*PWL*) -- https://www.kma.co.uk/people-we-love -- as well as any personal insight that can be given from your experiences being involved with *PWL*. Your participation in this project will either involve an audio and/or video recorded interview, or an email interview, with me where we will discuss your involvement in the development/ creation of the *People We Love* art project. This interview will help to provide us with information on storytelling in *PWL* which we can then use to understand storytelling more generally within all interactive media. This interview will take from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Please note that to comply with the approved Ethics requirements of this work, we do not intend to discuss sensitive topics with you that could be potentially upsetting or distressing. If you have any concerns about the topics that may be covered in the research study, please raise these concerns with the researcher.

If you wish, we will provide you with access to the final thesis, that will include quotes taken from the interviews. If you would like to receive access to these, you can indicate as such on the consent form.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you have experience working within interactive story space and storytelling, and more specifically having a direct contribution to the development of *People We Love*.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is optional. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records and will be asked to complete a participant consent form. If you change your mind at any point during the research activity, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason. To withdraw your participation, you need to contact Kieran McConaghy (kpm508@york.ac.uk) as soon as possible via email to ask to have your data removed from the project.

Will I be identified in any outputs?

Yes. Your participation in this interview is non-anonymous and therefore you will be identified in the following outputs:

- Name assigned quotations within arguments of the thesis.
- Description of involvement to the project (e.g subject).
- Your name, quotations or involvement to the project may be included at any points within the thesis, where relevant to the argument being made.

However, if you do not consent to being identified, your participation in this research activity will be treated anonymously and you will not be identified in any outputs.

Privacy Notice

This section explains how personal data will be used by Space, Media, Imagination: The Story Space of People We Love at the University of York.

For this project, the University of York is the Data Controller. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. Our registration number is Z4855807.

What is our legal basis for processing your data?

Privacy law (the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018) requires us to have a legal reason to process your personal data. Our reason is we need it to perform a public task.[1]

This is because the University has a public function, which includes carrying out research projects.[2] We need to use personal data in order to carry out this research project.

Information about your health, ethnicity, sexual identity and other sensitive information is called "special category" data. We have to have an additional legal reason to use this data because it is sensitive. Our reason is that it is needed for research purposes.[3] All research projects at the University follow our research ethics policies.

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[1] This refers to UK GDPR Article 6 (1) (e): processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller

[2] Our charter and statutes states: 4.f. To provide instruction in such branches of learning as the University may think fit and to make provision for research and for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge in such manner as the University may determine.

[3] This refers to UK GDPR Article 9 (2) (j): processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes in accordance with Article 89(1) based on Union or Member State law which shall be proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject.

How do we use your data?

Your data will be collected and stored onto audio recording devices, where they will be stored in SD cards. This data will be transcribed into usable data for my thesis, most commonly into direct quotes. The data may also be used in publications arising out of my thesis.

Who do we share your data with?

I will only be sharing your data with my supervisor, Dr Jenna Ng.

The following third parties may also have access to your data: XR Stories and the University of York.

As well as this, we use computer software or systems to hold and manage data. Other companies only provide the software, system or storage. They are not allowed to use your data for their own reasons.

We have agreements in place when we share data. These agreements meet legal requirements to ensure your data is protected.

How do we keep your data secure?

The University is serious about keeping your data secure and protecting your rights to privacy. We don't ask you for data we don't need, and only give access to people who need to know. We think about security when planning projects, to make sure they work well. Our IT security team checks regularly to make sure we're taking the right steps. For more details see our security webpages.

How do we transfer your data safely internationally?

If your data is stored or processed outside the UK, we follow legal requirements to make sure that the same level of privacy rules still apply.

How long will we keep your data?

The University has rules in place for how long research data can be kept when the research project is finished. For this project, data will be kept for 1 year, i.e until 30th January 2023.

What rights do you have in relation to your data?

You have rights over your data. This sheet explains how you can stop participating in the study, and what will happen to your data if you do. This information is in the section 'Do I have to take part?'

If you want to get a copy of your data, or talk to us about any other rights, please contact us using the details below.

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about how your data is being processed, please contact the producer Kieran McConaghy (kpm508@york.ac.uk) or the project supervisor Dr Jenna Ng (jenna.ng@york.ac.uk).

If you have further questions, the University's Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@york.ac.uk or by writing to: **Data Protection Officer, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD**.

Right to complain

If you are unhappy with how the University has handled your personal data, please contact our Data Protection Officer using the details above, so that we can try to put things right.

If you are unhappy with our response, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. You can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office by post to **Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF** or by phone on **0303 123 1113**.

UNIVERSITY of York

Department of Theatre, Film, Television and Interactive Media
Participant Consent Form – Non-Anonymous Interviews

Thank you for your interest in this project. The objective of the research is to explore and evaluate how authors utilise relationships between space, imagination, and narrative in the digital age of storytelling.

It aims to explore, in conjunction with academic theory, how existing story projects make this impact, specifically *People We Love*, a screen-based project by KMA (see collaborator details) which premiered in York, UK on October 16th – November 11th, 2021. From April 9, 2022 - June 6, 2022, a version of People We Love ran in Pittsburgh, USA. Your interview will provide important professional knowledge on the creative process of *People We Love* and assist arguments made in this thesis.

Please read the following statements carefully and tick the appropriate box:

	YES	**NO**
I have read the information sheet about this project		
I agree to take part in this project		
I consent to being interviewed for this project		
I consent to the interview being audio recorded (not applicable to email interviews)		
If the interview is conducted on Zoom (or any other video communication software), I also consent to the interview being video recorded (not applicable to email interviews)		
I understand my right to withdraw and/or destroy my data from this project at any time		
I consent to be identified by name in the outputs from this project (if "NO" your data will be used under a pseudonym).		
I am over the age of 18		

Participant Name:

_____

Researcher Name:

_____

Participant Signature:

_____

Researcher Signature:

_____

Date:

__/__/_____

Date:

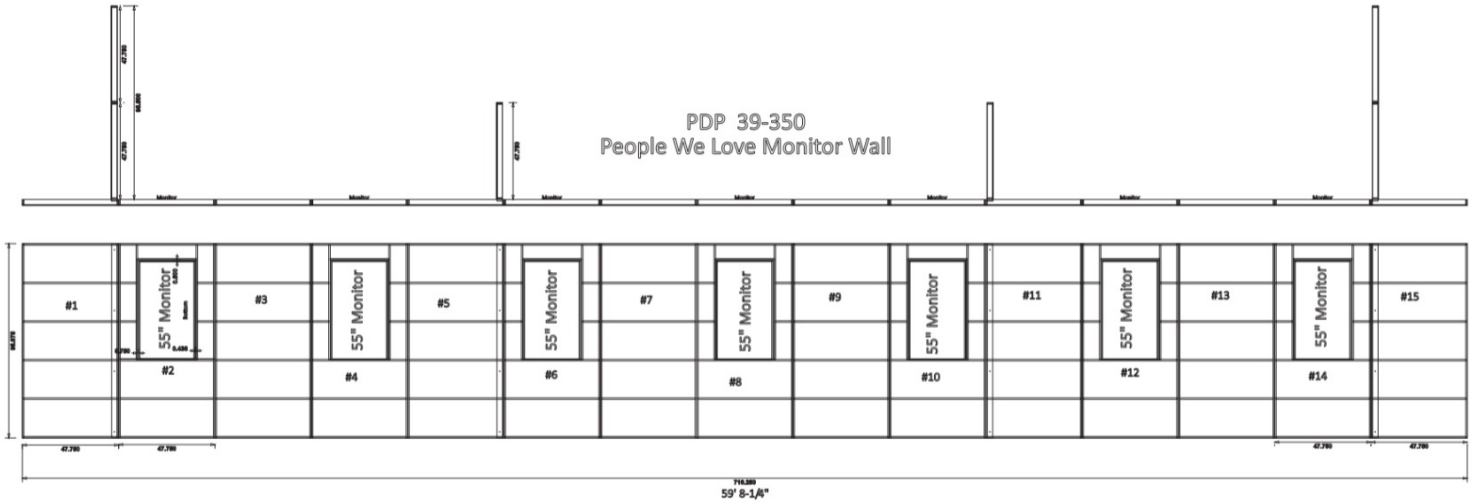
__/__/_____

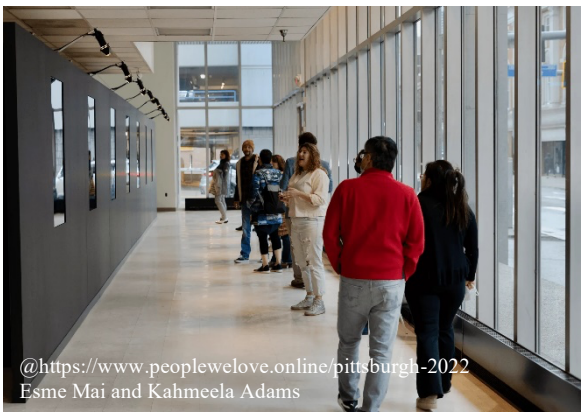
If you wish to be informed about the outcomes from this project, please provide your email address:

_____

Appendix 5 –Pictures of *People We Love*:

Appendix 6 –Blueprint of *PWL: Pittsburgh* (Provided by Renee Piechocki):





Appendix 7: Transcription of Information Provided by York Mediale for *People We Love*

Beautiful, moving and timely, **People We Love** (emphasis in original) explores the invisible transaction between a person and a piece of art, using that invisible thread that binds us all… love.

Each portrait gazes at a picture of someone they love. We will never know who they are looking at, but each expression gives clues to a story of joy or tragedy, or both.

As we stand and meet each person's eye, we try and understand each silent story. Because, that's what we do every day isn't it? Try to reach out and understand what's going on behind the eyes of another.

**The information presented above is slightly different to the information provided by the York Mediale and KMA online. This can be viewed at <https://mediale.org.uk/events/people-we-love-2/>. People We Love Pittsburgh's introductory panel also differs slightly; however, I was unable to observe this event in person and so cannot comment on the differences. **

List of Abbreviations – in order of first appearance

PWL *– People We Love*

PWL: Pittsburgh *– People We Love: Pittsburgh*

BID *– Before I Die*

Blank Page – Page 146 of volume 4 of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*

CyA – *CARNE y ARENA: Virtually Present, Physically Invisible*

Endnote

[1] Bazin's work was originally written in 1957. In 1985 it was translated from French and published in "Cahiers Du Cinema The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave" by Jim Hillier.

[2] "What is an Author" is a lecture on literary theory given at the Société Française de Philosophie on 22 February 1969. The Foucault Reader is a collection of Foucault's ideas, including previously unpublished work and also Foucault's What is an Author theory from page 101 onwards. The book was edited by Rabinow in 1984.

[3] Pearson uses Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1991) and Deleuze's *Différence et repetition* as a focus of his work.

[4] Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* was originally written in 1968 as *Différence et repetition*. It was translated into English by Paul Patton in 1994. I use a version produced by Bloomsbury from 2014.

[5] It is important to note that this use of voyeurism is separate to the theory of sexual interpretations of voyeurism (often termed as scopophilia) by Freud in 1905 in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Mantymaki and Islam follow Calvert's 2009 study "*Voyeur nation: Media, privacy, and peering in modern culture"* in which he explains modern voyeurism doesn't need to include discussions of sexual behaviour.

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