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# The Long Tale

By Giorgio Agostoni

Web 2.0 relies heavily on identikit forms of self-representation and sociability. Parallel to the 'authentic', self-promoting personae of MySpace, multi-user virtual worlds such as Second Life (SL) appear to offer a more malleable, playful version of life online. But as the imperatives of commercial exchange penetrate deeper into the networked imagination, is the gap between RL and VR what it used to be? Giorgio Agostoni reverse engineers material from across the net to construct a fictional readymade suspended between self-reinvention and self-management

## 1 Research

Robert Helmerich <[helmerich88@...](mailto:helmerich88@...)> wrote:

>I have recently been gathering material for an  
>article that attempts to chart some of the  
>projections and influences of science fiction  
>upon current MMO platforms like *Second Life*. My  
>aim is to determine if the abstraction of IT  
>fetishes, and divergent visions of personal  
>identity can be seen as a sign that a kind of  
>technological schizophrenia is reconstituting the  
>boundaries of daily life in the framework of a  
>complex evolutionary context.

>

>Having now posted in several online groups  
>concerned with technology, RP and fiction, I  
>have been taken aback by the scope and depth of  
>the speculation. As an outsider, I sometimes  
>have great difficulty penetrating the tight,  
>shifting fabric of unique signs, associations  
>and coded images that arise within groups with  
>private languages.

Any opinions are only as good as the biases that form them. If you're new to this group then you won't even know what those biases are likely to be for any of us. I may rave about the character designs, but deep down, perhaps it's just that I'm a sucker for cute sullen girls in furry costumes. But my review wouldn't tell you \*that\*.

As a bibliophile, the intertextuality of the series may be jerk-off material for weeks. To someone else, it may be pretentious name-dropping; a shallow attempt to lend some credibility to an otherwise weak plot-line. Then again, maybe we just like to haze newcomers, in our own elitist way.

>I was wondering if any of you would be available  
>and willing to comment on the series in relation  
>to my research?  
>(outlined above).

>

>Thanks in advance for your replies.

>

>Robert

The series draws from some very esoteric references: John C. Lilly is not very well known outside of certain circles; neither are Ted Nelson, Vannevar Bush, Cordwainer Smith or Tim Berners-Lee. VR, while a cultural staple, is still a technology covered by Clarke's Third Law. And the idea of virtuality overlapping deep reality is still a fantasy to most of the world.

Hope this helps. Have a look at the abridged archive too.

seawebb

2

**Morgana Aubret** Sep 23rd 2006

[permalink](#)

I have a number of alts, some of which are unverified. In some ways they express different facets of my personality. In other ways, they are a method of dealing with the inadequacies of SL – lack of privacy, need for them to make groups and test permissions, backup repositories in case the asset server freaks out, etc.

In real life, most people do have multiple identities. The way they behave in front of their mother is different than the way they behave with their buddies at the bar is different from the way they behave at work. SL just makes it a lot easier to separate that out. Is that a good or a bad thing? In a world where you literally have no privacy – when anyone can contact you at any point via IM unless you are in busy mode – it is an essential thing.

Morgana is my good girl. She's the nice, polite, helpful businesswoman who is always ready to lend a hand. She tries hard never to be unduly cross with people, never to tell someone they have to figure out the rest on their own, and never to let anyone down. For someone who is highly introverted and antisocial IRL, it's impossible to be her all the time. I have to be able to not respond to the flood of people wanting my attention sometimes.

The downside is that people can use alts to game their friends and enemies. I don't. No one knows all of my alts except me, but when people do know my alts to any depth, I tend to reveal to them that they are my alts. I'm not interested in mind games. As for trusting others, I'm not a terribly trusting person IRL, although it is nice not standing next to some random person in line and not having to worry that they are the neighbor who secretly hates you. I find most people who have alts ISL tend to end up revealing them sooner or later. Little things give people away.

I have spoken on the phone and met SLers IRL. None of my alts do anything I wouldn't do. Would I disappear if all mine were revealed? Nope. Would I have a brand new alt immediately? Yep. (And I wonder how they would actually find all these links between multiple payment methods, multiple people in my household, and multiple computers used. How would they know who was whose?)

One thing I find very interesting is speculating about revealing the links from alts to mains. But what defines the 'main'? Is my 'main' my original SL account, the one with the biggest friend list, the one with the biggest 'name' ISL, the one that makes the most money? (All Morgana for me.) Is my main the one I prefer to be, the one most like me IRL, and the one I tend to reserve for my closest friends?

(Not Morgana for me.) Is it the one in which I spend the most time? (Which tends to shift over time.) How would you define it?

**Kristian Ming** Sep 25th 2006

[permalink](#)

I admit my alts to LL because I don't want them coming back and punishing me for whatever reason down the road. It also gives me pause, because I will stop and ask myself if I really want the Avatar or is it just an opportunity to get a clever name.

Most of my Avs are for Roleplay, and not in the Fur/Age/BDSM sense. I've got my Anime CatGrrl, my 'Tyler Durden', and numerous others.

One thing I will say, it's awfully nice to have some genderbent avs, because the selection of stuff for male avatars STINKS compared to women.

[My Blog](#)

**Karl Herber** Sep 27th 2006

[permalink](#)

I agree about the hair for men sucking. Really short hair for men is next to impossible to find, and tends to come as part of a skin. Now I'm VERY happy with my skin, it's a good photorealistic one, and I'm not keen to change that for a lesser-quality skin just for the sake of a crew-cut hairstyle.

Curiously, a female friend of mine who plays SL and other MMORPGs always creates male characters instead of female ones, and told me it was because she got tired of being chatted up and propositioned for sex all the time.

**3**

**abandonedstudio**

**Current mood::** pensive

**Posted::** May 26 2006 15:15

**Subject::** Origins

\*\*\*WARNING: SPOILERS BELOW\*\*\*

The story begins at Tachibana Labs, where the enterprising scientist Eiri Masami is working on an innovative internet protocol. This IP (IPv7) is closely patterned after Ted Nelson's Xanadu system, and is designed to be the ultimate method of accessing and sharing information across the Net.

While this is Tachibana Lab's intention, Eiri Masami believes that Protocol 7 will allow humans to connect to the Net without devices. If we enter the Net without devices, we can potentially lose our sense of self. Good or bad, total connectedness also implies total loss of ego and identity.

Having studied the data on the KIDS project (aka the Kensington Experiment) and on the Schumann Resonance, Eiri goes on to secretly embed code into Tachibana Lab's latest internet protocol (IPv7) thus allowing device-less mass communications.

The effect of Eiri's code in IPv7 is to transform the collective unconscious (as described by Jung) into collective consciousness. It is interesting that in the story, Tachibana Labs 'succeeded in analysing the molecular structure of the human genome' (layer 11 'INFORNOGRAPHY'). That Tachibana Labs were able to do this may have provided the means for Eiri to create IPv7.

When Tachibana Labs discover that Eiri has embedded device-less protocols into their software, they terminate his employment, as there would be no business or market for their products in a world with device-less mass communications. Eiri, however, has mastered the ability to communicate within the collective unconscious, and commits suicide, believing that he is the first to evolve into a deus ex machina, and plans to recruit other humans to join him.

Perhaps out of greed, or perhaps out of guilt for unleashing Eiri's protocols into the Net, Tachibana Labs create a daring counter-measure to combat this influence. This counter-measure is Rein. A sophisticated bio-organism or 'homunculus by artificial ribosome' which can interact in the 'real world' as a human being. She is created as a middle-school girl and the Iwakura family is assigned to 'raise' her.

It is Tachibana's hope that through Rein, Eiri's code can be overwritten. Their feeling is that if software can learn the importance of existence on a material plane, people will be prevented from following Eiri into the Net. Later, when Eiri confronts Rein, he tries to convince her that he is her creator in a ploy to enlist her to his side.

Randell Lawrence

15:15 PM | [0 Comments](#) | [0 Kudos](#) | [Add Comment](#)

### **Wolfie**

**Posted::** May 26 2006 17:34

**Subject:: Re:** Origins

Nice interpretation Randell

It can be argued that Rein is deterring people from reaching both extremes (real and virtual), but I don't think Tachibana Labs could've done that. They didn't know Rein's specifications, they just sensed that she was different. Something's amiss.

I still believe that Rein came from elsewhere... Tachibana Labs were more interested in her than they were knowledgeable about her. But indeed a good teaser interpretation. More should be pondered on Rein's identity and origin.

Wolfie Toutoumouchan

17:34 PM | [0 Comments](#) | [0 Kudos](#) | [Add Comment](#)

**Grego**

**Posted::** May 27 2006 13:01

**Subject:: Re:** Origins

Show quoted text

That is an interesting idea – the real world as virtual memory.

So that's why it sucks that much... it's never been defragmented!

We took care of that with the upload of Reality 2.0, but it looks as if the file system drivers need some work.

13:01 PM | [0 Comments](#) | [0 Kudos](#) | [Add Comment](#)

**James London**

**Posted::** May 28 2006 13:22

**Subject:: Re:** Origins

**Would you shed your body for life on the Net?**

13:22 PM | [0 Comments](#) | [0 Kudos](#) | [Add Comment](#)

**Arakume**

**Posted::** May 28 2006 14:27

**Subject:: Re:** Origins

I'd settle for one that wouldn't change neurosis mid-life. Granted, moving is traumatic for everyone. But if I can't get away from the noise and the constant demands for cuddles and attention, why shouldn't I?

-Arakume-

14:27 PM | [0 Comments](#) | [0 Kudos](#) | [Add Comment](#)

-

**jinxie**

**Posted::** May 28 2006 14:52

**Subject:: Re:** Origins

On this topic: My VP of technology gave me an article to read from Business Week the other day – about Second Life. The massively multiplayer world, geared towards individual creativity. All content in the world is created by users – not game developers.

After letting my City of Tedium account expire, I decided to give it a try, drawn mostly by the \$9.99 one-time subscription and free client download... well, I've been known to spend more on less. It sounded intriguing, perhaps the closest thing yet to Neal Stephenson's 'Metaverse', a place to just hang out in the shape of an av, meet new people, and even conduct business. This is a very short recap

of my first impressions, as I've just finished the tutorial, created a character, and wandered around a little.

In Second Life, I am Mika Sismondi (after Rein's sister, – the one who goes crazy). I have yet to pay any money to the SL folk but I'm starting to have lots of fun there. I bought a nice outfit, which took me a while to figure out how to get out of the box. I've teleported all over the place, and trespassed dozens of people's personal homes, looking at all their stuff.

It's always a little surprising to non-gamers that people would spend so much time doing virtual things. SL estimates that the programmer time required to build the world that exists there now would cost something like a billion dollars, if you paid for it. While this seems kind of bizarre, to me sports is the same thing. I just don't get sports. I have never been able to understand how people can spend so much time and money on a totally unproductive activity – watching sports. MMO worlds are not any crazier to me.

I was thinking I might play around with it occasionally. I don't know where I would find the time? Between blogging, working, taking care of various life needs, and studying – where could I find time for SL? I was thinking thought that it would be fun to build a house where CR people could meet as avatars. Perhaps we could exchange recipes? Sit and chat? Maybe we can make fake food and pretend to eat it.

14:52 PM | [0 Comments](#) | [0 Kudos](#) | [Add Comment](#)

### **Wolfie**

**Posted::** May 28 2006 15:11

**Subject:: Re:** Origins

Talk about shedding your mortal coil for life on the Net... Have a look at the article below... :-  
Wolfie Toutoumouchan

### POST-MORTEM SOCIAL NETWORKS

By FRANCESCA M. MARI

The Harvard Crimson Magazine

Wednesday, May 01, 2006

Unlike Facebook.com, MySpace.com does not delete profiles of the deceased. In fact, another site called MyDeathSpace.com exists solely to catalog them.

Launched in December of 2005, MyDeathSpace.com displays a MySpace.com user's cause of death and any related news articles alongside a picture of the deceased linked to their MySpace.com profile.

Because MySpace.com is most popular amongst people college-aged and younger, the deaths are usually tragic (suicides, automobile accidents, and murders) or completely abnormal (a kid killed by a rare cancer, two teens found dead with their heads inside an 8-foot helium balloon).

According to the site's founder, Mike Patterson, there are more than a thousand deceased listed. 'It's supposed to be an eye opening experience,' Patterson says. 'You're supposed to be shocked by what you see.'

The site, he adds, receives about 20,000 unique visitors a day, and each visitor clicks on average between 10 and 15 times.

In his spare hours, Patterson enters into the site the new deaths, 99 percent of which he says are submitted to him through his website.

‘It just seems that’s where everything in life is going—online,’ Patterson says. ‘If a friend dies, you’re not going to be able to go to the cemetery and leave flowers for him or her. It’s a lot easier to do it online, whether it be going to their MySpace account and leaving comments or creating a memorial profile.’

When asked about Facebook.com’s policy to delete profiles of the deceased, Patterson says, ‘The friends of the deceased obviously want the deceased person’s profile up so they can remember them and leave comments on the profile to mourn them. I’d be pissed if my friend died and didn’t have a MySpace profile. I’d be kind of sad.’

15:11 PM | [0 Comments](#) | [0 Kudos](#) | [Add Comment](#)

#### **4 Self-replicating objects**

When the first self-replication attacks occurred, the contingency was to incorporate code to turn off simulators (sims, the 256x256m segments of land which make up the grid) in order to stunt the growth of the attacks. This countermeasure helped contain the outburst of the virus, much like amputating a foot to save the leg. But the real weakness lies in the underlying model that has informed the architecture from the beginning, which is based on valuing real-estate as the sole element of the world that is metered and charged for. This has had a curious effect – it means that the world does not naturally charge users for processor usage and storage space, and means that a self-replicating script is hard to detect. To fully address this problem, assets would need a strong sense of ownership and would need to be charged for, like real estate. This would make scripts naturally accountable.

However it wasn’t until more recently that the ‘Grey Goo Fence’ was incorporated, which uses a formula to decide how many objects and how often they can be ‘rezzed’ (loaded into the world) by a resident on a per sim basis. This should manage to stunt the lightning-speed spread and allow more time to react to an outburst. But as the defenses become more elaborate, so do the weapons, and there are now more distributed attacks which send the self-replicating objects to other users. Upon receiving these objects, they lie dormant in the residents inventory and only if the resident chooses to rez this object can it continue its spread. The defense for this at present is an attempt to educate residents not to accept objects from people they don’t know.

In a worst case scenario, self-replicating objects will get you banned. Usually because they can bring down simulators and/or harass other players. Self-replicating objects that are an annoyance of any fashion are against community standards. So far, every noticeable case of uncontrolled or excessive self-replicating objects has resulted in threats of banishment. Except in the latest instance where the users were referred to the F.B.I.

#### **5 Hardware**

**From:** 'abc def' <donuselinux@...>

**Posted:** Wed Jan 9, 2006 6:43 pm

**Subject:** NAVI

Show quoted text

I don't remember anything sexy about Rein (except perhaps when she stripped down to her camisole to avoid static when she worked on her system, which I found attractive). I don't know, I really liked the bear-suit she often wore. It seems like years ago now that someone wandered through here, wondering just what she was wearing UNDER the bear-suit...

Reply | Forward

**From:** DRAGON W <dragonstar3014@...>

**Posted:** Wed Jan 9, 2006 7:07 pm

**Subject:** Re: NAVI

Note: Mr.Konaka wrote three Rein characters:

- 1) Childish "Rein" (The Rein we first see)
- 2) Advanced "Rein" in the Net (The Jungian Shadow or Freudian Id)
- 3) Evil "Rein" in his scenario (Her 2<sup>nd</sup> half in a split persona)

Consequentially, Rein's bear pyjamas would be a winning shot to impress some fans who enthuse over nymph-like characters. This particular novelty may be important in the genre.

(Rein's cross-hair detainment was Mr.Abe's idea, but the producer decided the asymmetrical hair-style for Rein.)

Konaka:

The bear pyjamas are Mr.Kishida's idea. The bear pyjamas in my works were so abundant that I opposed them at first. Mr. Kishida didn't say why he made Rein wear the bear pyjamas. However, Supervisor Nakamura said "Kissy (Mr.Kishida's pet) always wore sunglasses." So, I understood that it is like a shield for Rein. Finally, she wore the bear pyjamas when she cocoons from the outer environment and when she talked with family.

Reply | Forward

**From:** Ilya V. Vasilef <Ilyavv4evr@...>

**Posted:** Wed Jan 10, 2006 6:13 pm

**Subject:** Re: NAVI

What do you guys think, or have you already talked about something like this perhaps?

Basically as far as I could tell, all NAVI's have clustering ability built-in, and it looked like Rein's local network connections were getting faster (to the point of being practically sci-fi) and she was adding more computers all the time.

I noticed that the connections evolved very quickly from thin cable (probably something like thinnet or Cat-V) to much larger cables, probably something similar to FEC with Cat-V bundles.

Rein was probably over-clocking some of those machines too, given the insane cooling systems needed. I think it was in layer three where the motherboard was glowing due to the clock speed... no wonder she went full immersion cooling. <grin> she might be using the experimental Cat 7 cable; The same size as regular Ethernet cable, but can do some insane speeds of 7 or 8 gigs per second. I just always assume that SE takes place in another 5 years, because I don't think any over clocker today would be able to get enough processors going at any speed to need carbon cooling. Maybe it was Inert Fluorocarbon cooling (Fluorinert TM?) I recall one documented over-clocking experiment which used just this... they were using a heat exchanger bathed in liquid nitrogen.

[Reply](#) | [Forward](#)

**From:** Wendigo (107 Porn Bots Tagged & Bagged) <wendigo@...>  
**Posted:** Wed Jan 10, 2006 10:55 pm  
**Subject:** [Re: NAVI](#)

Yah, by the end it seemed like there was so much condensation water that she was running a steam powered computer! I'd definitely have to agree with you. One thing that always got me was how Rein's computer system gets bigger and bigger. It reminds me of my own system, how first it was only just the monitor and cpu. Then comes the printer, scanner and cable modem. Then the web-cam and mic, and later on the joystick and external disk.

[Reply](#) | [Forward](#)

**From:** Arakume <arakumechan@...>  
**Posted:** Wed Jan 11, 2006 01:06 am  
**Subject:** [Re: NAVI](#)

my liitle nihonshu ippai, wouldn't it more straight forward and effective to move ourselves into the abstract realm to be with what we want?

<dreamy>

If only I were more clever. Just as soon as I kick the shoes off and let my hair down, something unwanted comes crashing through.

<brow furrows>

Perhaps a taller fence is in order.

-Arakume-

[Reply](#) | [Forward](#)

Giorgio Agostoni <g.agostoni AT gmail.com> is an artist. He makes disjointed texts and readymades