

## Emerging Configurations of Time in Facebook Prod-User Culture

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“We are that strange species  
that constructs artefacts  
intended to counter the natural  
flow of forgetting.” William Gibson (1984, n. pag.)

“This gives us the right and the  
duty to call this emerging society  
a utopia. It will no longer be  
found in any place or time but in  
imagined surfaces, in surfaces  
that absorb geography and  
history.” Vilém Flusser (2011, 4)

This study tackles the new concept of time that Facebook and social media have construed. Cybernetics sought to exit the traditional forms of existence inside a burdensome temporality where events slipped into a past that always left behind an existential quest for understanding its vicissitudes, and always activates open-ended hermeneutic exertions. The future, on the other hand, is eluded in cybernetics as the unknown and meta-physical. Facebook, as medium and digital form, has intercepted the gruesome division of the tenses by liquifying experiential time and formulating it as an epistemologically de-coagulated flowing ‘now,’ structuring, thus, a decontextualised/ing presentist culture instantly processed and prod-used as renewable information.

The digital medium’s establishment in everyday existence as well as its production of a new kind of everydayness invites Michel de Certeau's theory and methodology. It will serve here as an analytical tool to configure how culinary posts, memetic production and digital photo-pos(t)ing are expressive forms of this new prod-used everydayness different from pre-social media modes of subverting linear time flow. This ubiquity of a medium dealing with the everyday components of living has effectuated new mergers in terms of high and low

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*Cairo Studies in English* (2019-Summer): <https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/>

cultural spheres and paradigms that had come closer at the hands of popular culture theorists since the sixties in their notions of active consumption.

Today, new media, have transformed consumption into real production at the hands of the practitioners of daily life themselves, the prod-users. This has erased the high-low epistemic gap and almost rendered the whole concept obsolete nowadays. Technologies alter the space they penetrate, both material and conceptual space. They dissolve former binaries. In the hands of prod-users, new media reshuffle former conceptual structures and create revolutionary fusions that are today radically refashioning cultural contexts.

### **Cybernetic Time**

Time is among those concepts to have been majorly re-invented within the cybernetic re-conceptualisation of the individual as a potential transmittable piece of information and not a psychological thickness or an unfathomable interiority. The telematic goal was also to eliminate the temporal and spatial distance between desire and commodified objects, between occurrences and their representations. Real-time technologies thus collapsed the frictions of the real world.

Speed came to be the qualifier of time, not the real motion through real space in chronological time, but the simplification of reality in the form of data transmitted at the speed of light. This technology turned the negation of *durée*, terrestrial distance and physical constraints in geography, into revolutionary realities. Time no more signified outside the human mind but it emanated from networks and technologies within an algorithmic rationality of logic circuits; and post-war cognition was framed in terms of on-going experiments and processes, not final facts or conclusions (Halpern 2016, n. pag.).

The departure from futuristic notions to establishment in the everyday is the technological aspect that is culturally signifying and in need of researching. It is the area where technology and culture are converging in unprecedented ways reshaping our day-to-day living and creating new epistemological mental maps where time, body and reality are newly reconfigured concepts. The old linearity and causality that decreed things has, in cybernetic times, become characterised by the precedence of effect over cause, a notion that has strictly refashioned the world we inhabit. To put it succinctly, machines have refashioned time outside its linear(real)ity.

This techno-conceptual reversal of the Cartesian cause-effect binary sequence has transited the world of ideas from one epistemic form (where the *cogito* was the centre of reference) to another, characterised by its rhizomatic, capillary



structure(s) where *we* navigate virtual networks as recyclable pieces of information de-contextualised of the teleological here and now. This is “how we became post-human” in the words of N. K. Hayles (1999). This new virtual existence was described in William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* as existence inside “the matrix [...] bright lattices of logic unfolding across that colourless [spatio-temporal] void” (1984, 63).

### **De Certeau's Digital and Everyday Culture**

De Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) is a diffuse text elaborating an overall “operational logic” of everyday practices (Sheringham 2006, 213). Its non-linear form as well as its conceptual liberation of consumers from their panoptic entrapment by the images and representations which seek to manipulate them reflect the text’s tactical play with systems and disciplines. The book is concerned with a kind of “anti-discipline” in Sheringham’s reference to the relation de Certeau has to Foucault (2006, 218).

De Certeau conceptually isolates the everyday as cultural paradigm. His temporal concept materially weaves time with space in his distinction between tactics and strategies. The latter function through spatial domination and the former through productiveness in time, in reaping the opportune moment for action against controlling strategies. The everyday is regarded by de Certeau as “invent[ing] itself through countless forms of poaching” (1984, xxxvi). The subjects of everyday practice have tact, flair and aesthetic judgement and re-appropriate what is imposed on them with myriad forms of poaching and inverting strategies into tactics to re-appropriate meanings hijacked from them.

These tactics take the form of contingent utterances, textual poaching, ruses, spatial re-appropriations, jokes, inventing new languages, etc. In short, forms of creative linguistic performances ably undo the epistemological burden of controlling discourses by creating cracks and fragments in the system’s frameworks. De Certeau stresses the form of everyday cultural operations rather than their content (Sheringham 2006, 219). The linguistic productions of consumers are also ephemeral and tied to specific trending contexts.

Having said this, it becomes clearer why Michel de Certeau’s work is applicable in digital spheres and to the new technologies of information and cognition: “It is the fate of any important *oeuvre* to produce its own dissemination ... its themes and key concepts being able to ultimately circulate in close ways in different fields” (Maigret 2000, 511). *The Practice of Everyday Life* is a polysemic text *par excellence* with the possibility of being interpreted in divergent traditions, from analytic philosophy to empiric sociology, through the behavioural analyses of readers, tele-spectators and digital users, as well as



through questions pertaining to cognition, interpretation and action in our complex and culturally hierarchised society.

De Certeau's legacy is a methodology in ways of reading modernity in its plurality, in its turn towards consumption and *loisirs*, its derisory resistance in the face of panoptic forms. It serves this study that finds in its rich analytical mechanisms the theorising of digital users' daily operations and practices, their roles as witty social actors, and their relation to the structures that seek to discipline them. De Certeau compiled an inventory of those daily practices of the consumers of goods and meanings: inhabiting, walking, reading, going to the marketplace, cooking, etc.

He invested in the realm where the "weak" and the "dominated" could become authors and producers, in the area between the production of images and their uses, which are new productions. His is the realm of symbolic consumption where neither rules nor totalitarian logic prevail. Every time individuals work out ruses they are re-working meaning outside the rules that control it, reminding us that literal and imposed meaning is not received meaning. Consumption as production in de Certeau is equivalent to digital prod-usage. Social media have concretised these operations in cyberspace and in screen culture where user activities are productions and where many can be viewed as tactics in de Certeau's sense.

Sheringham's book *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (2006) is a rich study of the multi-faceted paradigm. It has informed this study substantially as to how to transpose the concept to Facebook and its everyday economy. The most important characteristic of everydayness, Sheringham concludes, is not its repetition nor its particular content, for it cannot be solely reduced to its content, but rather it is its variation and sedimentation which make it the sphere of invention (361).

### **Digital Everyday Life Prod-Usage**

The birth of a mobile culture and of an internet culture has altered the way we do things. They have allowed "the critique of the real by the possible" (Bakardjieva and Smith 2001, 81). The medium has seamlessly accommodated itself in the realm of the everyday after having been designed in its early stages for action in corporate and military decision-making. Digitised culture's heterogeneous forces are situated as much in everyday fantasies as they are in more specialised fields. Social media is today the realm where these everyday fantasies are being expressed and are shaping our new everydayness.



The intractable matter of the everyday which de Certeau's work foregrounded and conceptually mapped, today, finds itself mirrored in the activity digital users -- both televisually and textually -- produce on their keyboards and instantly transmit to other screens. His conceptually rich work, which juxtaposed the semantic and epistemological manoeuvring of enunciations and metaphors in intercepting monolithic meanings with the daily practices of people that secretly intend a similar goal, is clearly echoed through the digital forms of culinary posts, memes and photo-posing studied here. Prod-users practice their everyday lives today via these digital forms of expression and many others, where de Certeau's notion of daily tactics is applicable as a meaning-finding research tool.

The following will offer a study of these forms in the light of de Certeau's *tactiques traversières* or transverse tactics that he elaborates within a temporal vision of seizing the opportune moment to express oneself. On the conceptual level, it is a vantage point from which to destabilise the system and interrupt the habitual flow of normalcy with banal everyday acts and words, "trap-events" as de Certeau calls them (1984, 94); a reality the omnipresent digital medium made possible in real-time and at an incalculably large scale where users' inventive tactics metastasise by the minute around endless issues in the form of likes, comments, posts, links, memes, photos, etc. "Tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time -- to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organisation of a space ... to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms" (1984, 38).

The affordances of the everyday digital medium play a role of paramount importance in the way Facebook users intervene to produce digital tactics. Verhoeff's explanation of the notion of convergence in new media gadgets may help illuminate how users can re-act on the spot: "convergence is a useful notion to account for the other side of history, namely the momentary synthesis of a particular moment, a synchronic slice of time where different issues, possibilities and desires come together" (van den Boomen et al. 2009, 195).

De Certeau sees tactics as relative, plural, heterogeneous, contingent and oblique. They are operations or ways of doing things that display "heterogeneous multiplicity and metaphorical interchangeability" (Sheringham 2006, 222). Multiplicity stems from the contingency of interventions in the shape of successive singular occasions rather than "overarching strategies grounded in doctrine" (222). De Certeau emphasises the plurality of everydayness and its *manières de faire* in his use of images of teeming and swarming, and words like "pullulate" and "proliferate" (222). The power and efficacy of tactics, according



to de Certeau, lie in their discontinuity taking the shape of dispersed micro-activities that yield transversal and metaphorising pullulations.

These concepts apply to social media prod-usage where the digitalised speeded medium has enabled further multiplication and pullulation of dispersed meaningful tactics creating a new everydayness in need of fathoming and situating within the simultaneous temporal maps of modernity. The shape of this multiplicity is quantitative and qualitative in terms of its multiplied metaphorical productivity and prod-usage. Time is thus the receptacle of the new infinity of cultural production with the tools of daily diffusion. It is the container of a prod-used everyday that is suffusing with digital material and above all suffusing with meaning as each new post streams in cyberspace.

Digital prod-usage is today an established form of the daily practice of life. Each practice or posting works within a “strategic” order and creates its “tactical” inventiveness from within. The medium’s capabilities have revolutionised how we do things and in particular the forms we express them in, which is enabling users to generate new meanings, and mainly to prod-use new ways of neutralising the habitual and creating new tactics that are surmounting epistemic boundaries. The mobility, speed, intersected creativity and metastasising forms in which the whole process is happening has created a new media literacy that reaches out to the invisible structures shaping our perceptions and locating homologues at various levels of the everyday and of human experience, making culture today signify in completely new ways that which is complex to map or disentangle.

De Certeau theorised the daily practice of walking as opposing the organised city; speaking as the practice opposing the “scriptural economy;” reading as opposing the ideology of the book as a source of truth (Sheringham 2006, 223). These notions apply in their entirety to Facebook in the way it is also writing an alternative text. Like de Certeau’s book itself, it is bringing the previously undiscerned everyday into the light, in the ways technology and prod-usage are moulding it. Facebook reverses a sentence like: “escaping the eye’s imaginary totalizations, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface” (de Certeau, 1984, 142). Facebook has in recent times, together with other social media, brought the everyday to the surface of screens and created what is comparable to the multiplied story composed of the “moving, intersecting writings” of walkers in the city (de Certeau 1984, 141).

The walkers in cyberspace are reading and writing in new ways, but unlike the real city where w(alking)ritings have no author, reader or spectator (Sheringham 2006, 223), cyberspace has the multitude of prod-users reading and



writing simultaneously without the two practices being distinct one from the other. This digital activity, like de Certeau's walking, which he sees of the same nature as utterances, engenders a metamorphosis of daily life practices and the emanating cultural meanings which we prod-use, circulate, and are digitally immersed in as we articulate the dayliness of things.

Speaking and reading are the forms of daily practices de Certeau analyses besides walking. The former he relocates in relation to scriptural systems. Orality, speech and the vernacular are part and parcel of everyday life. The latter is not the receptivity of inert consumers. Reading is a productive act like writing. De Certeau develops the Barthesian definition of reading as the transformer of texts. Both reading and text remain at a reciprocal distance of meaning where none can monopolise the other nor create a hierarchical impasse.

In telematic culture, these notions have become epistemically more tangible and encrusted in everyday culture. Everyday life is typed away in the form of a digital orality and visuality on content-fluid screens, and acts of reading and writing happen simultaneously and speedily in the midst of torrential semantic and tele-visual digital turn-over; time matters in its femtoseconds as users are active feeding the medium by transpos(t)ing on it their lives as they are happening to them.

The historicity of the everyday in the digital world, as it also is in de Certeau, is rooted in doing things with meaning, rooted in presentist contexts, not obscured or distanced by discourses about these doings. In his comprehensive analysis of the everyday, Sheringham discusses de Certeau in relation to Maffesoli. He describes Maffesoli's everyday as an attenuation and an abolition of time, a haven from history (1984, 234).

This is not dissimilar from the time structured by social media where presentist cybernetic time materialises *par excellence*, in its simultaneity, speed, rhizomatic nets and fusions, multi-dimensionality and ephemerality. In the digital world, everyday users live the present on more than one level. Their digital ruses implode organised experience and knowledge from within creating in the process new channels that divert linear time into the multi-layered density of non-linear, mythic time.

Both Maffesoli and de Certeau have expressed the importance of everyday micro-stories that structure the present as a dense, polysemic and multi-dimensional ephemeral milieu that renews itself. This post-modern concept is perfectly emulated in digital production and in its weaving of an entirely new multi-layered, mythic temporality. The micro-stories of prod-usage navigate circuits of meaning, interfacing and separating in fragments. They are shreds of information exhausted at the moment of revelation to the world, constantly



confirming and confounding meaning at once. Meaning is also shortened in computerised leisure. Speed and instantaneity do not allow meaning to settle, and are cybernetically desired and designed accordingly.

The following is a review of a selection of culinary posts, memes and photos analysed in terms of the medium's real-time workings, everyday culture's digital erasure of boundaries between high and low realms, and cooking, memes and photo-pos(t)ing as daily practices-tactics generating new cultural meanings. Lastly, the construction of a presentist culture with transience and contingency at its core will be evaluated in light of the cybernetic paradigm that created it in the first place and which today reveals itself in the shape of social media like Facebook.

## **Time in Selected Culinary Posts**

### ***1. Real-Time Media***

Real-time culinary posts are digital structures originating from multi-dimensional architectures of connected media. They are fine-tuned to do things of the everyday, away from former notions of causality and chronology. Someone films a short culinary video in Australia, posts it, and it is instantly seen in a remote corner of Asia or Africa on one of the various global platforms such as Facebook, with television and writing instantaneously available to all users alike. In a very short span of time networks and circuits of exchange take shape, forming and un-forming simultaneously, creating a plethora of meanings around the original recipe.

Every recipe that is posted onto Facebook has its time of posting mentioned beneath it with the day and hour it was posted on, then when a week is completed its date settles. What is posted as "just now" becomes "8 hrs ago" becomes "yesterday", then it becomes "Wednesday", then, at last, settles on the precise date of its posting: "October 9, 2017 at 12.56 pm" as in Nigella Lawson's example studied here.

On the technical level, as one watches a video, the medium allows one to manipulate time by halting it or forwarding it with a simple touch of the playing line at the bottom of the video where a sliding finger can rewind or fast forward the digital recipe. Above the gliding finger, physically *moving* time, the screen-inside-the screen tells the seconds or minutes reached in playing time. The visibility of screened time and the ability to manage it formulates a previously unknown picture of the metaphysical category, more tangible and less imagined.

The link to the website where the recipe is found in written steps in a post like the tomato soup of "Recipe 30" contains a detailed description of the recipe's



preparation and cooking times. The video also specifies in casual font over the playing image the needed time for simmering the tomatoes and baking the puff pastry. This feature seems to matter to the page's users as evoked in their review of the page where they express their need for quick and made-easy dishes.

Users' comments also register their date of posting in the number of weeks that have gone by since they were written. The real-time medium allows instantaneous interaction once a recipe is posted. This contemporary digital form of being in the instant world is utterly different from previous forms of existence inside notions of linear chronology, passage of time, tangible spatial distance, etc.

The medium allows users to post the present as it happens. They are also sculpting the present with the content they upload, posting comments, and reacting with likes or emoticons. They actively partake in prod-using time. Facebook, like other contemporary social media facilities, is a digital parallel to the lived everyday registering it in its details in the form of photos, comments, likes, memes, etc. With its unprecedented extensive prod-usage, the lived everyday has fused with its virtual other and the two are becoming less and less distinguishable, happening simultaneously and prod-using a lived time unknown before social media's overtaking of our lives.

Real-time posting, seen in the totality in which it is embedded, forms a torrential data flow continuously overshadowing what has preceded it, forming consecutive waves of tangible "everydays," in the shape of a digital continuum of basic needs and common interests, of freshly posted recipes, memes, photos, etc. This quantitative characteristic and ultra-varied qualitative feature of Facebook has created a debate around its cultural value (where many view it as junk culture) and methodologies needed to approach its content.

The real-time medium also portrays time in its different seasonal happenings and festivities. This feature is most apparent on culinary pages where recipes mimic the time of year when Christmas is celebrated or summer is around the corner. A page like Nigella's provides recipes that contain ingredients when they are in season celebrating times of the year as in more traditional real-life cuisine. Culinary pages also celebrate specific culinary events like pizza day and pancake day in February.

Others, like "Tastemade", which exemplify the highly viewed pages that are most trending on Facebook, post tens of recipes per day, release dishes connected to yearly festive occasions, and also recipes supporting causes like their "rainbow cake". They epitomise Facebook pages that articulate a technophilic time and worldview, penetrating culture through the domestic sphere of the kitchen that was formerly deemed unworthy. Today, the culinary



sphere has been medium-revolutionised in terms of its everydayness and inventive, renewable content, both visually and temporally, articulating the new culture of speed and desired creativity that fills the hours and the days of onliners.

The “4 Easy *Make Ahead Meals*” video studied here epitomises speed in our contemporary fast-forwarded/ing culture. Such quadrupled screens fuel the everyday with its anticipatory, time-condensing content, dictating the future as the present is taking place, incubating one in the other, penetrating time’s limitation by digitally accommodating an ever-flooding creative content, the work of millions of networked prod-users. This digital time-image compression is so emblematic of our era. It configures the way we design our new world where media occupy the precedence carrying multiple compacted information diffused in speed.

“The rules that once sorted the universe into processes, concepts into judgements, are dissolving. The universe is disintegrating into quanta, judgements into bits of information [...] linearity is decaying spontaneously” (Flusser 2011, 15). This particular video, today a trending digital culinary form, presents its four recipes in “quanta”, thus dissolving temporal and epistemic linearity as cybernetics imagined its categories and designed their normative mutation.

## ***2. Cooking as an Everyday Digital Deconstruction of the High-Low Cultural Paradigm***

In the second volume of de Certeau’s *The Practice of Daily Life* (1998), his collaborator Luce Giard looks into cooking as an everyday practice that is the “locus of happiness, pleasure, and invention” (de Certeau et al. 1998, 214). Giard’s study situates gender at the heart of this daily practice and she insists on its origins being culture and not nature. She compares it to writing since both are everyday pleasures dependent on anonymity and ephemerality as activities women practice in private spaces. For Giard, the ordinary practice of cooking is a means of liberation, and not enslavement, for women, for its being the site of inventiveness thwarted in other dimensions of the social sphere.

Contemporary culture has come a long way in the signification and practice of cooking, breaking gender barriers, among many other conceptual boundaries melting down in times of fluidity and cultural porousness due to machines. It is today, more than ever before, the “locus of happiness, pleasure, and invention” according to Giard but at a much more globalised scale of techno-sophistication. It began with television cooking shows, and is today taking on new forms in the



digital world where it is one of the most sought after everyday areas of popular interest.

Culinary posts shape a significant part of Facebook feeds as users from different age groups show interest in following cooking pages. Facebook, and social media in general, have oriented cultural concerns towards everyday issues as in common need and basic interest pages such as culinary ones. The high-low cultural paradigm, which began its deconstruction since the second half of last century in the notions of creative consumption and more popular-prone definitions of culture, still undergoes today further deconstruction with the suffusing, inventive work coming out of new media.

The example of culinary Facebook posts sheds light on the intricate site of interaction of culture with technology, medium with meaning, in modern times, blurring borders between what was considered high and what was labelled low. Today, de Certeau's once invisible practices, have moved to the centre, streaming, sometimes even live, on our daily digital 'feeds' (pun here is pregnant with meaning). Practices that took place in the private sphere of the kitchen, today, can be attractively tutored, shared, commented on, critiqued, bettered through posting personal tips; formulating a new everyday sense of the flowing of time, the one experienced on screens, in the in-betweenness of other daily activities that never before have intersected, today occurring simultaneously and mutually enriching one another with meaning.

### ***3. Culinary Micro-Stories as Everyday Tactics***

Culinary Facebook videos, that today position an activity like cooking at the heart of everyday culture, formerly considered an unworthy and insignificant human activity, then gradually becoming a site where practices challenged systems and rules as in Giard following de Certeau, should be seen in the light of their overall revolutionising of cultural meanings. They are conceptualised in a way that weaves the medium's capacities with users' inventiveness, both culinary and technological, in times where digital technology is becoming in-built in life's private spheres deleting their formerly sealed borders and bringing them into screen visibility and networked transparency, and, above all, forging new intersecting human realms of interest investing and releasing the hidden daily fantasies at their core.

Culinary videos simplify the multi-dimensional reality of cooking. They bring the medium's original conception of disrupting the Cartesian and Euclidean worldviews into an untrodden everyday realm, the laborious activity of food-processing in the kitchen, and transfigure its temporal dimensions filtering out



its real length. The “Recipe 30” tomato soup video skips the tedious episodes of preparing the recipe like washing the tomatoes and peeling the onions and garlic.

The video alternates between real-life images at real-time pace and fast-forwarded sequences. The former evoke the joys of the kitchen, the beauty of the colourful ingredients and most of all beautify the whole experience. The latter skip the easier parts, like adding the tomatoes in the pan before roasting them, creating a special effects sense of overall time-compacting ease, a much sought need within modern-day multitasking and desiring to achieve more in less time. All along the video, the rhythmic whistling march accompanying the concocting of the soup reproduce the time of cooking as in music: warm, merry and burden-free.

The soup video, despite the sophisticated recipe it shows, simplifies a much longer task in the kitchen and, in the process, elaborates a contemporary cultural message bespeaking of new visions of time. Simplification is itself a ruse or tactic in de Certeau’s sense, digitally undoing an older worldview and constructing/cooking a new perceptibility, a new everydayness where the present is lived at multiple speeded levels, and where older forms are neutralised to be redesigned within their alternative potential allowed by new media.

The four-in-one “Tastemade UK” video is the one that most exemplifies new media production where time is compressed in what is known as time-lapse technique. It consists in compacting events speedily with preservation of their sequence creating the illusion of the possible, in other words, creating the simplification of reality cybernetics sought: “the critique of the real by the possible” as Bakardjieva and Smith described it (2001, 81). The 2-minute and 48 seconds video compresses four not-so-minimalist recipes. The cooking hands prepare the ingredients in a fast-forwarded fashion with again a quick-paced energetic jazzy beat to fine-tune the rapid action with the four resulting dishes. The video contains four time-lapse segments each relating the easy-rendered, cooking story of a separate succulent dish.

This type of video is today’s trending digital culinary form where time is manipulated to create the possibility of a made-easy culinary universe mixing pleasure with efficiency and deleting visions of tediousness and potential boredom connected with cooking. These digital forms exemplify Bakardjieva and Smith’s afore-mentioned notion of mobile gadgets allowing the penetration and alteration of the real via the possibilities allowed by machines of virtuality.

Nigella Lawson’s page, in comparison to former examples, seems to be without time since she doesn’t upload videos as her culinary posts and her dependence on still photography of home-made life-like dishes relates more to



the book tradition. If it is to be placed in a certain temporal framework it would fit in a certain linear vision of time and of writing since her words, heading each recipe, also refer to a classical, more traditional homely view of cooking.

Another Facebook page where time-as-tactic is constructed differently is “Tiny Kitchen” where videos present literal micro-stories. Real doable recipes are presented in the classical build-up form: adding, mixing and cooking ingredients in unspeeded time, yet in tiny kitchen containers and with minuscule tools, all happening in a tiny life-like kitchen with table, fridge and cooker. The smallness of the culinary per(form)ance relents time’s habitual rhythm and momentarily shrinks it away from its now normalised cybernetic speed. The Facebook page correlates with the “Tastemade” pages as a counter version of its characteristic speeded cooking, slowing down time exaggeratedly via the minute size of the utensils effecting a temporal digital lag of nostalgic re-turn to once-upon-a-time as in a child’s tale.

For example, as for an amateur video presented by a Palestinian contributor named Nadia, it is a tactical micro-story in every way thematically challenging the other culinary videos studied earlier. Time-wise it is a depiction of a real-life scene in the kitchen with minimal video editing. The video progresses at a normal pace with Nadia presenting the whole process in detail. A clock hangs on the kitchen wall in the background as Nadia passionately describes her culinary steps without rush. The reference to her Palestinian culture which she re-appropriates in her choice of the very typical *musakkhan* dish is what makes it a genuinely and unintentionally tactical video. Nadia refers to her family tradition of cooking *musakkhan*, to the savouriness of *sumac*, the Middle Eastern red spice, in preparing her rolls, to Syrian village bread, etc.

The everyday theme in Nadia’s video is very life-like in terms of setting, used utensils and her own casual, youthful presence and explanation in simple everyday language of the culinary steps to follow. The cultural message is subtly powerful in the video in the way that it depicts a normal kitchen with indirect Middle-Eastern details like Palestinian *bleu-blanc* pottery, Nadia’s silver ring with Arabic calligraphy visible to viewers as she cuts her onions. Palestinian culture is not shown in a folkloric apparel nor through regional music as would be expected. Everything in the video could be anybody’s, the allusions to a living Palestinian tradition infiltrate through normalcy and this is what makes it tactical and meaning prod-using in an authentic everyday-like sense in a globalised culture like the digital one.

Half-way through, Nadia dances in the kitchen very spontaneously, then returns to her chores. She uses the verb “fatfet” (Arabic for to piece) placing it in its rightful place in the English sentence creating what de Certeau explains as



linguistic tactics improvised to destabilise fixed meanings. Nadia's video epitomises contemporary globalised digital culture, the content material of hundreds of videos on social media where cultures have naturally fused without leaving out the ethnic elements that personalise each digital creation.

## **Time in Selected Memes**

### ***1. Real-Time Media***

Memes have originally been devised for the speed of their travelling as compact messages that are digitally open to visual and textual prod-used mutations accompanying the everyday in its interstitial parts and condensing today's culture in the meanings of its presentist framework. The medium's real-time technology operating in the networked realms of non-linearity and simultaneity exerted the need for such micro-structures telegraphically carrying messages of the everyday, narrating its multiple, denser, more mythic dimensions (Davison 2012, 120).

### ***2. Memes as an Everyday Digital Deconstruction of the High-Low Cultural Paradigm***

The establishment of social media in everyday life is the technological application of the cybernetic paradigm in our daily practices with all that it entails of a post-war culture with an alternative vision of time, space and the body. De Certeau's expression of the power inherent in minuscule daily ruses and in jokes as forms of creative play introduced in the rigidities of ordering systems, has today taken the form of memetic production in our digital prod-usage times. Memes are among the forms that are today confusing the boundaries between high and low, a trajectory that has been one of modernity's projects and where the work of technology has borne its fruits and is today playing a major part in cutting across what were strictly closed boundaries and hierarchies at all levels of the epistemic spectrum.

The multiplicity and metaphoricality of contingent practices de Certeau so eloquently portrayed in his seminal work apply to memes in their being daily semantic wiles in cyberspace. They are active forces that have the capacity to elude systemic control by exploiting lingual niches and gaps, altering and disrupting the systems within which they semantically venture and visually mock. They then mutate exporting other textual and visual meanings to challenge other rules, from other dispersed vantage points. Their organic and micro-digital nature is able to effect much in terms of mobile and fluid meaning-making suiting the times and the technology that invented them.



### 3. Memes: Micro-Stories as Everyday Tactics

De Certeau has laboriously explained the work of linguistic everyday ruses like contingent utterances and jokes that effect fissures and fragments in the system's epistemological and ideological frameworks to challenge normalised meanings. Memes are digital forms that perform exactly this. Facebook and social media prod-users create them as tactics that visually and textually expose and invert conformist ideas. They range from the most banal to the most serious and seek their originality in life's absurdist and untold stories. They have become a universal language today, exchanged on the Web, and evolving in form (today certain memes show a moving picture with a caption instead of the still image).

The Arabic "assahbi" meme tackles the present-time generational gap in terms of the tech-revolution that divides people. It ingeniously juxtaposes the digital natives with those who knew not how the television presenter entered the apparatus! The meme pokes fun at a whole generation, its implicit derision is mostly directed at those disoriented in the new times of ultra speed and virtual existence where new significations of the world do not accommodate them, and they, in return, are unable to assimilate their new meanings. The children of today are grown-ups, and adults are children in their digital ignorance; in times where cause, effect and sequence have been deregulated and may epistemically exchange places.



The "successful woman" meme exemplifies a feminist interruptive tactic of the strategic order, or an anti-story of the everyday. It fits what de Certeau explained with exactitude, his notion of the work of consumption being distortive and not duped and facilely receptive of literalness, in a modernity saturated with imposed meanings. New media have helped the production of this type of daily sexual politics by the practitioners of daily living themselves. What de Certeau sought in minuscule oblique practices like walking, reading and cooking, today, take alternative shapes in digital prod-usage in the like of memetic posting and sharing that deeply alter and erode recurrent metaphors (Sheringham 2006, 214).

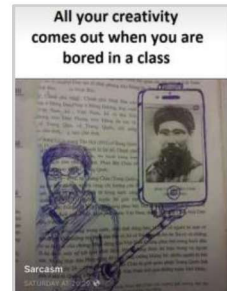


The "successful woman" meme, visually and textually, invests in the time-worn popular trope which originally settles on the sexist side of signification serving a certain vision of the world. It does that by repositioning roles to invert the biased concept and to cynically settle on coffee and a friendly dog as finale



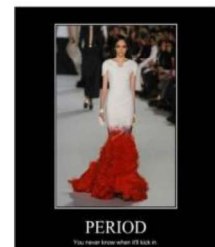
to the micro-story creating macro epistemic effect. Memes, despite their seeming simplicity and triviality as some insist, and because of their carefree, anti-discipline, comic guise, constantly remind us of the alternative cognitive potential of the digital world and its arrival at alternative meaning(s) from authentically manoeuvred routes.

The third meme named the “selfie” meme in this study is more of a visual tactic than a linguistic one. It has the allure of a Tibetan or Mongolese bored student’s class-room piece in the technological age critiquing old book form in education (old school educational systems), and fleeing with the imagination into a totally different register where (un)learning can be creative due to modern media tools; in other words, where consumption is reworked into conscious production or prod-usage via the possibilities inherent in new media. Both the form and the content of this particular meme are authentically creative and meaning prod-using.



This particular meme punctures myriad realities at once, inside its overlapping memetic micro-stories. It is set between two worlds: the old order and the new order, transfiguring one into the other; from class-room boredom to the ingenuity of a flat screen on a selfie stick, from a dull book page to an actual meme watched on real lit screens by hundreds. It is telling the story of burgeoning technophilic times happily colonising the old knowledge spaces, mobile technologies as the digi-mental wormholes on the new world.

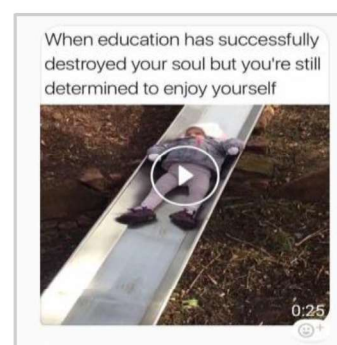
The “red and white” pair of memes from girls’ collections is a variation on the feminist theme from a very private angle. These types of memes create their tactical inventiveness from the medium’s potential to visually express subversive or, in this case, silenced meanings recently unearthed at the hands of more outspoken generations who dare challenge taboos. The memes are first and foremost jokes on an uncomfortable state of affairs only girls and women are acquainted with and which a specific color combination formulates into an explicit revelatory story.



The last in this study’s selected list, the “sliding baby” meme, was especially chosen for its innovative video form. It represents Facebook memes of the everyday type that ridicule different aspects of living, running the whole gamut of the human experience in any field and for all ages.



They play games with everyday meanings in terms of their witty combination of image with wording. Despite their simplistic appearance, they appeal to digital users for their relevance to certain contexts and to specific states of mind. They are daily fun-thirsty, routine-breaching memes, in the midst of life's hum-drum; but at their core, a deeper meaning always resides, flirting with life's satirical side and digging into a communal unearthed meaning.



This last meme's message is a joke on education. It critiques the long-standing idea of education as career-enhancer and soul-lifter. It is here an education that has “successfully *destroyed* your soul”. The meme, both televisually and textually, effects a rupture from what is thought habitual and weaves an alternative story. Just after the word “successfully” creates the impression of what to expect when education and success pair, the anti-climactic verb “destroyed” settles in to release the potential charge of cynicism re-modelling what has been normalised.

The heading sentence creates a disturbingly humorous effect by mentioning the destruction of the soul side by side with the human perseverance to still enjoy life despite hardships. A very common twenty-first century structure of feeling, in times of demanding educational effort and most of all the obsessive idea of success. Yet, in spite of this existential toiling after what might be illusive (both success and education), millennials (as well as pre-millennials) are adamant to stay happy, and one form to go around the woes of education, and work, and maybe even life as a whole, has become the production of such memes and their exchange to register determined states of mind. It is in playing such roles that memes are carriers of meaning crystallising millennial prod-user anxieties.

## **Time in Photo-Pos(t)ing**

### ***1. Real-Time Photography***

Among the many definitions of digital images, the following words seem relevant to this study: digital images are “time-bound and contingent, they are at odds with the durability of the printed word and photographed image [...] And like oral cultures, they seem to evade the preservation frameworks that we have put in place in our institutions of memory, built as they are around tangible media” (Van den Boomen et al. 2009, 128). Their immediacy and ephemerality construe the new typology of time that shapes our digitally non-linear, presentist lives and our dispersed but self-affirmative/ing modes of being in the world.



## **2. Photo-Pos(t)ing as an Everyday Digital Deconstruction of the High-Low Cultural Paradigm**

“By moving the image from the *permanence* of the analogical universe to the *ephemeral* digital world, the digital camera demands and proposes a radical, non-realistic ontology for photography. ... In allowing people to make, re-make, and un-make iconic representations of reality, the digital camera has produced a new *everyday* culture of photography” (Caron et al. 2007, 34). Digital photography is a distinctive sign of our times. It has accentuated the intensity of visual demand in everyday life. The image has become a medium to think the everyday. It has become a major unit or visual atom constructing the current mosaic-like architecture of our multi-structured everyday. Like all new technologies, digital images have immersed culture in new forms and new configurations surpassing the binary division of high and low, fusion being today the conceptualisation more suited to signify digital cultural forms.

## **3. Photo-Pos(t)ing: Everyday Micro-Stories as Tactics**

Photo-posing and posting is a popular daily practice of the digital existence of millions of users. The visual aspect of it as user tactic is what interests us in this part of the study, its visual stimulation of the lived instant. It translates users’ self-confirmation in the post-modern construction of the world as image (Vattimo 1990, n. pag.) or in the society of spectacle (Debord 1970, n. pag.) today further pronounced within digitalisation and the prevalent produser-consumer cultural logic.

Photo-posing in users’ pictures and their posting them are tactical operations in de Certeau’s sense for they metaphorically un-write the coercive laws socially inscribed on bodies (one form of the strategies de Certeau described). Through placing the body in the zone of screen visibility and digitally foregrounding it by posing, symbolic laws and confining strategies are tactically confronted in the screened everyday. In other words, the body, which mass culture outlines, gazes back by posing via the transparency of screens, empowered and unleashing symbolic constraints by sharing images that float in heterarchic cyberspace.

Besides real-life selfies and group photos, other types of digitally structured pictures circulate on Facebook, those with filters and visual tricks. They are produced within the affordances of the medium that is playing a role in users’ re-invention of the everyday self, or conceptualising for users how the machine sees them. They are digital medium-installed ruses that have metaphoric tactical significations. They may represent what was said earlier on Maffesoli’s vision



of the everyday, on how it attenuates time and abolishes it, maybe even mocks its rigidity by technologically transforming the posing body.

These examples, made possible by the medium's digital reconfigurations of reality, among a multitude of other significations, express a certain millennial zeitgeist, a desire to transform the self, to envision it outside the burdens of time, to experience a certain *jouissance* as spectacle. People pose for a photo, pose inside the screen frame, then exit the photographic virtual scene and return to real life. They pose for virtual happiness then revert to their real faces and normal body postures.

### Conclusion

To conclude this study on the emerging configurations of time in Facebook prod-used culture, it is relevant to make a last note on the signification of the presentist culture we live in in the light of the social media forms studied here. The articulation of the everyday within the cyberisation of time and within prod-usage have concretised newer forms of ubiquity, immediacy, non-linearity and the elusiveness of time at the level of daily practices which has radically changed the way we do things and think them. Users' digital tactics and ruses seem to proliferate around crystallising the presentist moment that technologically manages to escape ageing, death and history. The latter's burdensome accumulation is causing ontological lassitude with the meanings phenomenological time has imposed all along. The individual no more defines her/himself by what s/he has accumulated, but by what s/he *is* in the present moment and what s/he hopes *to become* and how they wish *to be seen* by others.

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