

# The Intermediality of Emotion

## Representations of Emotionality and Fear in YouTube Vlogs and Beyond

---

SILKE JANDL

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Showing emotions is a core component of successful YouTube vloggers' careers. The overt expression of emotions, i.e. emotionality that suggests to viewers that the expression of emotion is an outburst of authentic feelings, is a precondition for the intricate relationships viewers develop with YouTubers. Thus, conveying genuineness in displaying emotions in vlogs is a highly effective tool. Emotionality regarded as genuine in YouTube vlogs elicits higher view counts and generates an increased number of sympathetic as well as accusatory comments. Appreciative as well as derogatory comments ultimately translate into financial gain; this is especially the case on channels that normally produce content that is not centred on emotional outbursts. Perceived emotional authenticity aids in the fostering of loyal fanbases that are keen on consuming their content as well as building communities. The communities centred around YouTube personalities are often based on the emotionality that is frequently implied in vlogs, and as David Matsumoto claims, emotional expressions are fundamental building blocks of social interaction.<sup>1</sup> Even though bursts of emotion "[...] are often produced in a spontaneous and unintentional fashion, sometimes defying efforts of expression control or emotion regulations, they can be produced intentionally and strategically, often with the aim of bestowing greater

---

1 Matsumoto 2009: 175-176.

authenticity or naturalness to one's emotional display".<sup>2</sup> Encouraging the notion of authenticity certainly is of key importance and can determine a YouTube vlogger's professional success. However, the debate about whether or not emotions presented in a YouTube video are "authentic" or staged can already lead to the viral success of a video. Chris Crocker, for example, who became a meme after uploading an exceptionally emotional video defending Britney Spears,<sup>3</sup> gained fame and notoriety and continues to generate the ongoing interest of notable news outlets<sup>4</sup> following the viral and controversial success of his video.

Given the importance of displaying and/or eliciting emotions in building an online audience, I will investigate two separate areas of emotion(ality) in order to give an insight into the complexity of the issue in two interconnected media: YouTube videos and YouTuber books. Firstly, I will examine the emotions and emotionality linked to coming out publicly to an established audience on YouTube. Emotionality, as I will use the term in connection to coming out processes, refers to the overt expression of one or more "higher cognitive emotions".<sup>5</sup> Higher cognitive emotions, as outlined by Paul E. Griffiths, include, for example nervousness, embarrassment, pride, shame and excitement. As an illustration of how these emotions are depicted in vlog and book form, I will have a closer look at YouTuber Connor Franta. So called "basic" emotions, however, and how they are handled intermedially compared to higher cognitive emotions will be examined in a second focus, namely, on the specific basic emotion of fear. This will be illustrated with an analysis of British YouTubers' *The Amazing Book is Not on Fire: The World of Dan and Phil* and Jenn McAllister's *Really Professional Internet Person*, as well as their respective audiobooks. Distinguishing between higher cognitive emotions and basic emotions is of course only one attempt at better understanding emotions. When writing about emotions, the examples discussed below show that both kinds of emotion transform somewhat when transposed from the audiovisual to the written medium. Discussing basic emotions in written text, however, seems to invite plurimedial representations to a significantly greater extent than writing about higher cognitive emotions.

---

2 Scherer 2009: 11.

3 Chris Crocker closed his YouTube account in 2015; however, a re-upload of the "Leave Britney Alone" video is still available on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqSTXuJeTks> (30.01.2016).

4 Cf. for example, the *Daily Mail*'s article from February 23, 2016 (Jackson-Edwards 2016); or the *Independent*'s article published a day later (Blair 2016).

5 Griffiths 2004: 237.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The intermediality of emotions and emotionality in YouTube videos and in the books that YouTubers have published in 2015 will be tackled. Since late 2014, there has been a wave of YouTuber book publications that still continues. Significantly, almost all of the books written by “Big YouTubers”<sup>6</sup> have become instant bestsellers, nationally as well as internationally. Broadly defined, the theory of intermediality is used in contexts where the boundaries between two or more conventionally distinct media are transgressed.<sup>7</sup> In Werner Wolf’s typology of intermediality, he distinguishes between several forms of either intracompositional or extracompositional intermediality. Adaptation, or “intermedial transposition”, a form of extracompositional intermediality that deals with the transfer of meaning-making elements between media, will be a primary focus in the discussion below. “Plurimediality”, on the other hand, is a form of intracompositional intermediality and allows the examination of the interactive meaning making of several media within a video or book. Plurimediality has been termed differently by various scholars: e.g. media combination by Irina O. Rajewsky or multimodality by Lars Elleström. These terms all denote a media artefact that combines two or more semiotic systems to make meaning. Both intermedial transposition and plurimediality are integral parts of virtually all book publications by YouTubers and therefore warrant closer inspection. This tendency, furthermore, begs the question as to whether the visual design and the written text have equal capacity for meaning-making in contemporary book publications and whether authors will increasingly be required to consider paratextual elements when writing books.

The YouTuber books that will be of interest for this paper are primarily works of autobiographical non-fiction. Rather than independent artefacts, I argue that these books are adaptations, or intermedial transpositions, of the respective writer’s YouTube channel. In some cases, chapters in these books are in fact directly adapted from individual videos.<sup>8</sup> The omnipresence of adaptations that Linda Hutcheon sees in the contemporary cultural landscape, and which she asserts is “increasing steadily in numbers”, seems to be especially pertinent in the YouTuber book context and might well have to do with YouTube establish-

---

6 “Big YouTubers” are the best known, most visible, most influential because of their large number of subscribers, as opposed to the vast majority of creators with a mid-range subscriber base but more tightly knit community.

7 Cf. Rajewsky 2002 and Wolf 2011.

8 Cf. Franta 2015: 206-208.

ing itself as a new medium.<sup>9</sup> The new media that have evolved recently, Hutcheon argues, “have clearly fuelled an enormous demand for all kinds of stories.”<sup>10</sup> YouTube, and especially the vlog, have accordingly fuelled the need to tell and consume highly personal stories in particular.

A YouTuber’s main channel is typically intricately linked with their book in terms of content, style, narrative voice and aesthetics. While YouTubers’ channels or books can stand alone, the books’ content and success depend to some extent on the respective YouTube channel. Thus, the books YouTubers have published recently are perhaps best described as examples of transmedia storytelling. This concept, as popularized by Henry Jenkins, studies how narratives can be told via more than one medium and “[...] transmedia storytelling has been celebrated by media scholars as a narrative model that promotes collaborative authorship and participatory spectatorship”.<sup>11</sup> While transmedia storytelling in Jenkins’ sense<sup>12</sup> disperses parts of a story across several media platforms, with no hierarchy between the media, it seems more appropriate to look at YouTubers’ books as transmedia expansions, a branch of transmedia storytelling. Henry Jenkins emphasises the role of transmedia expansions when he says that “[t]he current configuration of the entertainment industry makes transmedia expansion an economic imperative [...]”.<sup>13</sup> Even though the books are for the most part effective publications in their own right, the frequent implicit and explicit inter-medial references to YouTube videos and the writers’ channels, as well as numerous “insider jokes” that have been established between vlogger and audience over the years, essentially make the books transmedia expansions of the YouTube channels they have grown out of. These non-fictional books can, thus, be seen as examples of this understanding of transmedia storytelling, as they also expand the personality brands that YouTubers have been building over the years through their videos (e.g. by trying to keep in tone with the videos and providing more – and frequently intimate stories – that have not yet been discussed on YouTube).

Given that portraying emotion(al)ity is a central element in conveying authenticity in YouTube vlogs, it will be of interest to explore how emotion transcends media boundaries. Are emotions at the core of YouTubers’ book publications? Can the portrayal of emotionality translate into the written medium? Has the discussion of emotionality the potential to elicit the perception

---

9 Cf. Hutcheon 2006: 4.

10 Ibid.

11 Scott 2013: 101.

12 As outlined in Jenkins 2006: *Convergence Culture*.

13 Jenkins 2007: “Transmedia Storytelling 101”.

of authenticity? In order to investigate these questions, I will be looking at anglophone YouTubers who vlog on a regular basis, and who have published an – at least partly – autobiographical non-fiction book in 2015.

### 3. YOUTUBERS COMING OUT: CONNOR FRANTA

2015 saw numerous “Big YouTubers” discussing their sexuality and coming out to their millions of subscribers. Since potential repercussions of coming out remain problematic, the stakes of doing so publicly are high. This, in turn, frequently results in an array of emotions being overtly shown on screen when a YouTuber comes out to their audience. Therefore, the emotionality depicted in coming out videos will be examined and compared to that in the book chapters on the topic, in order to illustrate how YouTubers present a myriad of emotions in either medium. This will be done by having a closer look at the example of American YouTuber Connor Franta.

Coming out videos have been an integral part of YouTube almost since its inception. This development has significantly increased recently, as was pointed out on the official YouTube blog in February 2015:

Coming out videos are a large and important part of YouTube culture: there are more than 36,000 videos related to the subject on the platform today, the sum of which have received more than 300m views. Last year alone, we saw ~9,600 coming out stories shared on YouTube – a 20% increase from the year before.<sup>14</sup>

Coming out on YouTube is extremely popular, as the number of views and comment responses clearly demonstrate, which consequently makes these videos financially lucrative. The obvious popularity of coming out videos has given rise to a rather problematic trend as well: gay-baiting. Especially around the time several Big YouTubers came out on the platform, others sought to emulate their success by insinuating, via misleading titles and suggestive thumbnails, that their videos might also reveal details about their own potentially non-hetero sexuality. Despite the increased attention and the financial benefits a coming out video promises, coming out publicly on the platform often entails a negative impact on the safety of YouTubers. Not only do openly gay YouTubers receive a larger number of negative, homophobic and offensive comments, but they often also

---

14 Lanning 2015: *YouTube Trends Blogspot*.

have to deal with an increased number of threats.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, those who have come out on YouTube usually describe the positive reactions they received, the affirmations of support and the gratitude of those who feel heard and represented because of the video. Joey Graceffa, for example, claimed that 99% of the comments on his coming out music video were positive and even encouraged anybody who needed support to turn to the comment section on either his coming out music video or his vlog.<sup>16</sup> However, the gender divide that most definitely exists on YouTube seems to favour male gay YouTubers over female gay YouTubers in this respect. As YouTube user MimiKitty Art observed in a comment on Franta's "Coming out" video:<sup>17</sup>

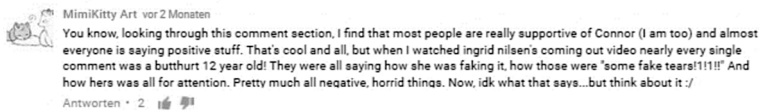


Figure 1: Screenshot of comment on Franta's "Coming out" video

Even if the comments are overwhelmingly positive and supportive, coming out publicly is always an emotional endeavour. The emotionality of the process is clearly discernible in Connor Franta's "Coming out" video. Connor Franta has been a YouTube vlogger since 2010. In five years of sharing personal stories and anecdotes about his life, however, Franta has only once addressed his sexuality. Because of the numerous accusatory and derogatory comments suggesting he was gay, in 2011 Franta uploaded a rather defensive video claiming, as the title said, "I'm not gay".<sup>18</sup> Only in December 2014 did Franta<sup>19</sup> come out to his more than 5 million subscribers. The video has since garnered well over 11 million views and seems to have encouraged other creators of the YouTube community to also come out to their audiences. In April 2015 he published his autobiograph-

15 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afaNnZKe2ZU> (2:24) (31.01.2017).

16 Graceffa, Joey 2015a: "Don't Wait" and Graceffa 2015b: "YES I'M GAY".

17 "You know, looking through this comment section, I find that most people are really supportive of Connor (I am too) and almost everyone is saying positive stuff. That's cool and all, but when I watched ingrid nilsen's coming out video nearly every single comment was a butthurt 12 year old! They were all saying how she was faking it, how those were 'some fake tears !111!!' And how hers was all for attention. Pretty much all negative, horrid things. Now, idk what that says.... But think about it :/'".

18 Franta 2012: "I'm not gay".

19 Franta 2014: "Coming Out".

ical book *A Work in Progress: A Memoir* in which Franta specifically discusses his coming out story.

The video “Coming out” and the book chapter “The Long Road to Me” basically relate the same situation and circumstances. Even though the coming out video preceded the book publication by several months, it is likely that the discussion of Franta’s coming out in both media was conceived almost simultaneously. This is highlighted especially if the temporal delay resulting from editing, revising, printing and distributing books is compared to the virtual immediacy of uploading videos to YouTube.

Despite the very clear similarities in content, medium specific affordances and limits certainly contribute to significant differences between the video and the chapter. One consequential difference between a vlog, which is presented as unscripted, spontaneous and immediate, and a published book, which is by necessity scripted and carefully planned out, is the level of sophistication. While elliptic sentences and mistakes are a common and accepted feature of vlogs, there is an expectation for published books to be more complex and to avoid including any orthographic errors. This increase in complexity can, for example, manifest in the inclusion of metaphoric language, as the following juxtaposition of a scene relating the confusion and anxiety triggered by unresolved issues with homosexuality shows:

“Coming out”	<i>A Work in Progress</i>
“I was up all night, for I can’t tell you how many nights, just thinking. Like looking at the ceiling, just thinking about this. And I was so scared of it, that I never told anybody.”	“Sleepless nights became frequent, and would carry on for years. I cast all my confusion up to the ceiling, staring, wide awake. Worse than that, the self-judgement and self-hatred kicked in for daring to think such taboo things.” <sup>20</sup>

As can clearly be seen, the same content is related, but with added metaphors in the book version. Thus, “looking at the ceiling” is transformed into “I cast all my confusion up to the ceiling”, thereby creating stronger imagery that seems less pertinent in a medium that is already dependent on visuality.

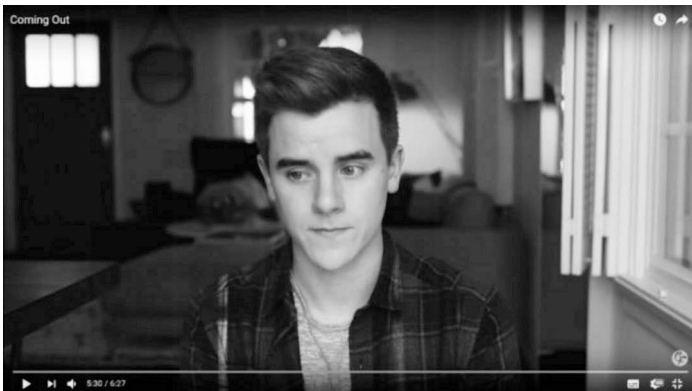
Moreover, the quote illustrates the refinement in emotional self-analysis. While Franta states that he was “scared” to reach out in the video, the book presents a more precise analysis of Franta’s emotional state by attributing the suppression of his sexuality to “self-judgement” and “self-hatred.” In a material

20 Franta 2015: 153.

sense, the increase in sophisticated, metaphorical language in the written medium is not only possible and expected, but also more easily included; after all, a vlog is typically between two and eight minutes long, as opposed to the average length of memoirs.

There are other changes that also occur due to medium specificity. When Franta talks about admitting his sexuality to himself in his coming out video, he says “one year ago, I kept trying to get myself to look in the mirror and say it.” The same struggle is also related in the book, but in the written medium it comes with a very specific time reference: “then on the evening of January 3, 2014, I actually said it.”<sup>21</sup> Due to the conventions of YouTube, “one year ago,” as opposed to “January 3, 2014”, is not significantly less specific, since audiences tend to consume YouTube vlogs immediately, i.e. within 24 hours of their release, and because the date when a video was uploaded is easily accessible as it is always visible right underneath every video.

Besides a more metaphoric way of expression and a higher degree of specificity in the book, one major difference between the media is that the audio-visual medium allows for the illusion of a face-to-face conversation. This results in immediacy as well as perceived authenticity and intimacy. As in actual face-to-face conversations, the viewer hears and sees the effects of emotion in voice, facial expressions and posture:



---

21 Ibid.: 157.



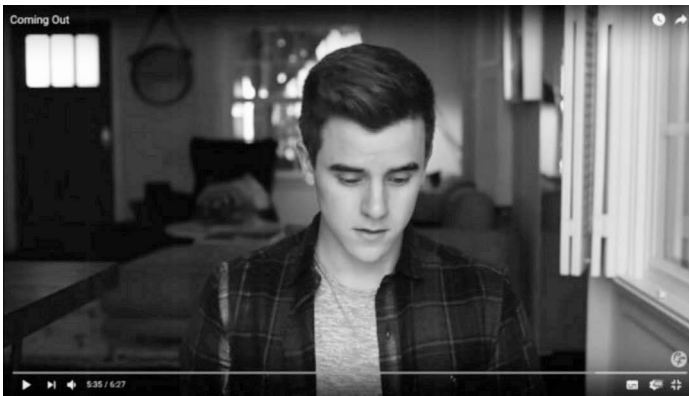


Figure 2-4: Screenshots of Connor Franta's "Coming out" video

These screenshots illustrate how a moderate outburst of emotionality in Franta's video – beginning with the pensive gaze down to one side, the composing glance down the other side, ultimately culminating in the revelation of teary eyes when he looks directly at the camera – adds to the emotional impact the video has on its viewers. David Matsumoto calls these bodily signs “emotional communication” and states that it “helps individuals in relationships – parent and child, mates, boss and subordinates – respond to the demands and opportunities of their social environment. They are basic elements of social interaction [...]”.<sup>22</sup> Seeing how particular emotions affect a YouTuber's body, and especially their face, also works as a warrant for authenticity and as an invitation for sympathetic responses. As Mark J.P. Wolf stresses:

22 Matsumoto 2009: 175-176.

Images can do many things that mere words cannot; they are sensually richer and more immersive, they can present a great deal of detail or information simultaneously and use complex compositions, and they have a more immediate effect on the audience's emotions, from foregrounded dramatic action to subtle effects involving atmosphere and mood.<sup>23</sup>

The effect on the audience is evidenced in the innumerable comments on the "Coming out" videos that express similar reactions to YouTube user Ello Ell:<sup>24</sup>

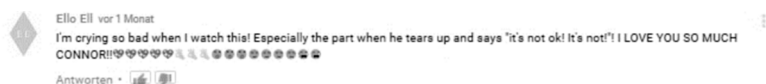


Figure 5: Screenshot of comment on Connor Franta's "Coming out" video

The commenter describes a profound emotional reaction that mirrors Franta's when he opines that fear of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion or sexuality are "not OK" in his video.<sup>25</sup> Franta's own teary eyes at this exclamation, as well as the rather inclusive statement, which most viewers will agree with, aids in eliciting such intense emotional responses. These emotions then, seemingly, need to be expressed immediately in the form of written commentary that addresses the impact the video had on the recipient (I/he) as well as a testimony of support aimed at the YouTuber directly (I/you).

Comments that exhibit the emotional reaction to a video or to other commenters are numerous. Writing comments most often means writing down immediate reactions, including emotionality that is often expressed mimetically in the form of emojis or emoticons. Such responses are in part due to the set-up of vlogs: vloggers typically film themselves talking to a camera, which means that what we see in vlogs is, so to speak, a permanent close-up of their face. Even though there are innumerable differences between television and vlogs, conventions derived from television have certainly also shaped how vlogs are perceived. Close-ups of faces are, thus, traditionally associated with the inner self. As Joanne Finkelstein says,

<sup>23</sup> Wolf 2012: 253.

<sup>24</sup> "I'm crying so bad when I watch this! Especially the part when he tears up and says 'it's not ok! It's not!!' I LOVE YOU SO MUCH CONNOR!!" followed by a long string of heart and crying face emojis.

<sup>25</sup> Franta 2014: "Coming Out".

Through the close-up, thoughts are made visible. [...] facial expressions transport the audience into the deep interior of the mind. The close-up uses the eyes as “the windows” to the concealed personality. Suddenly the interior becomes exteriorized; certain gestures and subtle movements – a tear, quiver of the lip, a slight smile – are signs from the interior of unmediated, true emotion. These fine facial movements caught by the close-up camera shot suggest authenticity [...].<sup>26</sup>

Given that the conventional association of the close-up is with the representation of “unmediated, true emotion”, and given the simulation of face-to-face conversation in vlogs, YouTubers’ emotional outbursts are often taken at face value. Audience members consequently tend to uncritically and vigorously defend their favourite YouTubers against those who question the sincerity of an emotional expression.

This need to defend a YouTuber against haters stems from the intimate connection many viewers feel they have with those YouTubers. Over the course of several years they have witnessed the YouTuber growing up, mature personally and professionally, go through relationships and share personal stories and feelings about a variety of subjects. This, in combination with the vlog format, provides viewers with a wealth of information and insight into the YouTuber’s life, which gives them the impression that they know them intimately. When she discusses emotionality and immersion, Marie-Laure Ryan states that “[...] we are also more likely to be affected by what happens to people we know than by the fate of strangers”,<sup>27</sup> and YouTubers who have shared their lives with their subscribers for several years in hundreds or, in some cases, thousands of videos have become more familiar than real-life acquaintances.

The emotions associated with coming out on YouTube – nervousness, embarrassment, pride, shame, excitement – are all “higher cognitive emotions” in Paul E. Griffiths’ sense. And as Dylan Evans explains, higher cognitive emotions “are fundamentally *social* in a way that basic emotions are not”<sup>28</sup> and they “have been designed by natural selection precisely to help our ancestors cope with an increasingly complex social environment. [...] [T]hese emotions may well be the cement that binds human society together”.<sup>29</sup> The overwhelming response to and popularity of coming out videos suggests that there is a need, especially amongst teenagers, to observe and react to emotional content, which is why even the promise of emotionality draws a large number of people to certain

26 Finkelstein 2007: 4.

27 Ryan 2001: 149-150.

28 Evans 2001: 20, original emphasis.

29 Ibid.: 21.

YouTube videos: through emotionality they offer a platform and, arguably, also an incentive to engage with one another socially and join the communities that might already have formed around the YouTuber in question.

## 4. WRITING AND DEPICTING FEAR: PLURIMEDIALITY

While higher cognitive emotions are clearly connected to coming out videos and also partly conveyed in book chapters, basic emotions, such as fear, also play a central role in YouTubers' content on- and offline. In this second part, medium-specific and media transcending strategies will be investigated that convey fear across different media, in order to show that writing about basic emotions, more so than than higher cognitive emotions, seems to invite the engagement of visual elements to augment the meaning-making process. The emotion of fear, as Evans points out: "is even older than this particular physiological expression [hairs standing on end]. In fact, fear is probably one of the first emotions ever to have evolved. It is likely to have been present in the first vertebrates, which appeared some 500 million years ago or more."<sup>30</sup>

### 4.1 Plurimedial Fear: Jennxpenn aka Jenn McAllister

Nineteen-year-old Jenn McAllister's autobiographical book *Really Professional Internet Person* relates a number of anecdotes – positive and negative – that she claims she was not prepared to share in vlogs. Among bullying and panic attacks, she relates the story of how she was doxxed.<sup>31</sup> Doxxing is an area of cybercrime in which hackers steal personal information and make it publicly available on the Internet. In McAllister's case, there were severe consequences as her and her family's credit card information, their address, their social media account passwords and their telephone numbers were all freely accessible online. This meant that all her family had to cancel cards, phones and eventually move to a different address. Many YouTubers have had to deal with doxxing incidents and threats. The fact that millions of subscribers are interested in their lives and seek a personal connection, for example by showing up at their homes or talking to them on the phone, makes them interesting and sometimes lucrative targets for hackers. Moreover, prosecution for doxxing and those who make personal in-

---

30 Ibid.: 31.

31 McAllister 2015: 117.

formation available online is often impossible, especially since law enforcement is often struggling to understand the crime at all.

Even though doxxing severely affects the lives of those attacked, many YouTubers who seem to share so much of themselves and their lives online have chosen not to discuss actual threats that result from doxxing. McAllister, accordingly, introduces the topic by explaining that she did not address the incident in her vlog, “because it was a really upsetting and terrifying period of my life. Of course, part of me wanted to share this with the Internet, but the other part of me was too afraid to even talk about it”.<sup>32</sup> Serious negative experiences, in fact, are often not discussed in YouTube videos at all. Most YouTubers expressly produce positive content on their channel because they are aware of their status as role models for very young viewers and because their explicit goal is to make their viewers’ day better with the content they put out. The transmedial approach to promoting the personality brand of a YouTuber via social media websites such as Twitter, Tumblr, Snapchat and Instagram creates the impression that YouTubers, and especially daily vloggers, share every little detail of their lives, and most of it is cheerful, uplifting and positive. Consequently, being a YouTuber has become the dream job most teenagers now aspire to<sup>33</sup> because the lives of Youtubers are often perceived as perfect and ideal, exactly because they often steer clear of negatively connoted incidents.

When Jenn McAllister talks about the fear she felt after being doxxed in her book, it is not only explicitly verbalized but visualized as well. The whole discussion of the incident is printed on a black background. The rest of the book is printed on a light grey, pastel pink or cork background, so that the white font on black makes the chapter “Life Hacked” a visually striking contrast. Consequently, McAllister’s autobiographical book utilizes a range of visual as well as written elements to convey a message, e.g. the differing backgrounds, the inclusion of numerous photographs, charts, screenshots and fonts. Because of the meaningfulness of visual aspects in the book, it can be categorized as plurimedial. Plurimediality is quite common in all YouTubers’ book publications, which is most likely due to the fact that multiple media are necessarily involved in making YouTube videos. The visual and the verbal, music, sound effects and written text superimposed on the image are the important media that characterize YouTube videos.

Deliberately foregrounding colour, or lack thereof, can be a significant marker intended by the YouTuber to trigger emotional responses in viewers. In fact, YouTuber Charlie McDonnell started a trend in 2012 when he uploaded a

32 Ibid.: 118.

33 Cf. London 2014; *Daily Mail Online*.

black and white video entitled “I’m Scared”,<sup>34</sup> which sparked innumerable video responses – by fans as well as fellow YouTubers – on the same topic, and also in black and white. Intuitively, the colour black as a visual marker for a frightening episode and fear in general seems appropriate: particularly bad days are often referred to as a “black day” in the news, and it is common to describe momentous and frightening events idiomatically, such as the initiation of the Great Depression historically being named Black Friday. On the other hand, black is of course also an iconic representation of a very common human fear that most humans have probably experienced at some point in their life: the fear of darkness and the unknown dangers that might be hidden therein.

## 4.2 Plurimedial Fear: Dan Howell and Phil Lester

The iconic representation of darkness through the colour black and the implication of unseen dangers is the predominant reason why Dan Howell and Phil Lester have chosen a black background for a chapter in their book. The two British YouTubers wrote the book *The Amazing Book Is Not on Fire: the World of Dan and Phil* together and it includes two chapters dealing individually with the two writers’ fears: “Dan’s Fears”,<sup>35</sup> and “Phil’s Phears”.<sup>36</sup> The visual concept of these chapters is different from McAllister’s simple black backdrop, as visual representations of some of their fears and phobias are embedded in the black background. In Howell’s chapter, for example, trees are visible in the background, which is an item on his list of fears. In Lester’s chapter the outlines of horses are distinguishable in the darkness, representing the first item on his list.

Similarly to Connor Franta, Howell also discussed these fears in a video prior to the publication of the book. Given the timing – the video was uploaded on 29 Oct 2014 while the book was released almost a year later – it is likely Howell was already working on the book when he decided to make the video. However, even if the video preceded the conception of the book’s chapter, the intricate intermedial links between them are undeniable. In the video “My Greatest Fear”,<sup>37</sup> he partially rationalizes his fear of the dark by explaining that it is an evolutionary fear of the unknown and the once very real danger of nocturnal predators. As Dylan Evans points out in *Emotion: A Very Short Introduction*,

---

34 Cf. McDonnell 2012: “I’m Scared”.

35 Cf. Howell 2015: 160–161.

36 Cf. Ibid. 162–163.

37 Cf. Howell 2014: “My Greatest Fear”.

“[t]he capacity for fear is very useful in a world where hungry predators lurk in every shadow”.<sup>38</sup> Lyons affirms Howell’s assessment when he says,

Thus fear of the dark may not be fear of the absence of light but fear of the absence of knowledge or, to put it more exactly, fear arising because one does not know what might be out there in the dark and because one thinks that there might be something to injure or startle one.<sup>39</sup>

Contrary to the comparison between Franta’s coming out video and book chapter on the topic, Howell’s video is more complex and sophisticated than the print version. In the book, fear is presented in a compact list of specific phobias, whereas the video engages with research on fears and phobias. When he explains the distinction between learned and genetic fears, for example, the video is rather analytical and presents a compelling and ultimately convincing argument. The list in the book, by contrast, is much shorter, light-hearted, and even sarcastic. This can be illustrated by the manner in which the fear of the supernatural is explained: “Poltergeists, witches, demons – you name it, if it’s a magically powered evil being that defies the rules of reality, I’m terrified of it. Which is funny because I do not believe that any of those things actually exist. 100%. Go figure.”<sup>40</sup> The aim of this clearly sarcastic exploration of this particular fear does not point to research on the topic. In part this is probably due to the fact that Howell and Lester anticipated the book would primarily be consumed by their fans, who would likely already be familiar with the theories presented in the video, in which Howell even attempts a scientific explanation of where his personal fears originate. This leads him to advise his viewers that analysing fears and where they come from “can help you overcome them”. He thus merges his research with his personal anecdotes in order to be helpful, which is a common feature not only of YouTube but quite clearly also of YouTubers’ autobiographical and advice books.

Almost all of the books YouTubers have published so far can also be experienced as audiobooks read by the author(s). Even though the physical books are often innovative and experiment with various forms of intermediality, the majority of these audiobooks are rather straightforward readings of, exclusively, the written text. This means that the plurimedial character of these books is not reflected in any way in their audio version. In their audiobook, Howell and Lester, however, have taken a different approach to incorporate the added mean-

38 Evans 2001: 25.

39 Lyons 1980: 75.

40 Howell 2015: 160.

ing conveyed via visual modes. The numerous photographs, collages, drawing etc. are adapted into the audiobook, either via dialogue or verbal description and commentary. Since not all of the visually based content could be adapted into an exclusively auditive medium, Howell and Lester have also made a pdf document available to those who purchased the audiobook. Thus, this audiobook exemplifies the direction audiobooks might take when dealing with the increasingly plurimedial books on the market.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Showing emotion on YouTube has an authenticating effect that suggests intimacy, immediacy and honesty. The combination of these features is expressed in a plurimedial way in YouTube videos but also in YouTubers' books. As adaptation of the YouTube content, these YouTubers seek to translate emotions, at least partially, into their print books. In accordance with medium specific affordances, Connor Franta's "Coming out" video shows bodily responses to emotion. The book, on the other hand, conveys the emotions connected to his coming out via elaboration on context and background.

As these books are also transmedia expansions, the upholding of a unified and coherent personality, voice and visual style are imperative to their success. Books by YouTubers are marketed and consumed largely as extensions of a pre-existing YouTube channel and thus the two media are inextricably linked. A YouTuber's personality and mannerisms thus become crucial components for the success and effectivity of the book. Key features of voice, style and video aesthetic are often deliberately transposed into the book medium to enhance the unity of the YouTuber's brand and to create an experience of familiarity for readers.

Intermedial strategies contribute to the experience of the books as transmedia expansions and adaptations. Plurimediality is often a way to link the aesthetics of the YouTube channel with the book, but can also serve to mirror the emotionality of a certain passage or story. Plurimediality can also be a key factor in making a traditionally monomedial medium like the audiobook into a more effective intermedial transposition of both the physical book and the online content. Thus, I hope to have shown how intra- and extracompositional forms of intermediality and transmedia storytelling can aid in the exploration of how emotion(al) transcends the audio-visual medium.

In conclusion, the earnestness and honesty of a public display of emotions on the part of the YouTuber is to a great extent dependent upon the audio-visual



possibilities of vlogs: quivering lips, shaky voices, flushed faces and watery eyes all contribute to the perception of authenticity that is so essential for a vlogger's career. Viewers, on the other hand, make use of the written commentary feature to immediately express their emotional reactions and share them with the YouTuber and their community. Transmedia expansions, such as books and audiobooks, however, can contribute to the coherence of these personality brands by providing additional information surrounding emotional biographical episodes or presenting problematic and negative incidents, thereby adding to the complexity of the YouTube personality in question. Beyond the coherence and complexity which the written content is advertised as providing, many YouTubers seem to value the design of their book – as a physical object for their fans to cherish and engage with but also as a lasting memento of their achievements – equally or higher than the written content. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm of YouTubers for writing and publishing books, as well as their viewers, zeal to buy, read and respond to them, attests to the continued importance of writing in general and writing as communication in particular.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blair, Olivia (2016): “Chris Crocker, star of ‘Leave Britney Alone’ video, responds to media reports about appearance”, in: *Independent* 24.02.2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/chris-crocker-star-of-leave-britney-alone-video-responds-to-media-reports-about-appearance-a6893266.html> (21.11.2016).
- Evans, Dylan (2001): *Emotion. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford/New York.
- Finkelstein, Joanne (2007): *The Art of Self Invention. Image and Identity in Popular Visual Culture*, London/New York.
- Franta, Connor (2015): *A Work in Progress. A Memoir*, New York.
- Franta, Connor (2014): “Coming Out”, in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYodBfRxKWI> (30.10.2016).
- Franta, Connor (2012): “I’m not gay”, in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4VvLJffmRA> (30.10.2016).
- Graceffa, Joey (2015a): “Don’t Wait”, in: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kcwo\\_mhyqTw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kcwo_mhyqTw) (30.10.2016).
- Graceffa, Joey (2015b): “YES I’M GAY”, in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1PoNhYb3K4> (30.10.2016).

- Griffiths, Paul E. (2004): "Is Emotion a Natural Kind?", in: Solomon, Robert C. (ed): *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotion*, New York, 233-249.
- Howell, Dan (2015): "The Dan and Phil 3D AUDIO EXPERIENCE (Audiobook Trailer!)", in: [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=audio+book+trailer+dan+and+phil](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=audio+book+trailer+dan+and+phil) (30.10.2016).
- Howell, Dan (2014): "My Greatest Fear", in: YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BIRcLhUGkE> (30.10.2016).
- Howell, Dan/Lester, Phil (2015). *The Amazing Book is Not on Fire. The World of Dan and Phil*, London.
- Hutcheon, Linda (2006): *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York.
- Jackson-Edwards, Phoebe (2016): "What the 'leave Britney alone' star looks like NOW: Photos of a 'hot and muscly' Chris Crocker sweep the web nine years after that very emotional video went viral", in: *Daily Mail* 23.02.2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3459979/What-leave-Britney-star-looks-like-NOW.html> (21.11.2016).
- Jenkins, Henry (2007): "Transmedia Storytelling 101", in: *Confessions of an ACA Fan. The Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins*. Blog: [http://henryjenkins.org/2011/08/defining\\_transmedia\\_further\\_re.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2011/08/defining_transmedia_further_re.html). (30.10.2016).
- Jenkins, Henry (2006): *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York/London.
- Lanning, Carly/Huang, Christine (2015): "YouTube Trends Explainer. Coming Out on YouTube", in: *YouTube Trends Blogspot*, <http://youtube-trends.blogspot.co.at/2015/02/youtube-trends-explainer-coming-out-on.html> (30.10.2016).
- London, Bianca (2014): "Forget footballer or actress, young Brits' dream job is a YouTube star (and judging by the teen vloggers' success, it's hardly surprising)", in: *Daily Mail*, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2777511/Forget-footballer-actress-young-Brits-dream-job-YouTube-star-judging-teen-vloggers-success-s-hardly-surprising.html> (30.10.2016).
- Lyons, William (1980): *Emotion. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy*, New York.
- Matsumoto, David (2009): "Facial Expression of Emotion", in: Sander, David/Scherer, Klaus R. (eds): *The Oxford Companion to Emotion and the Affective Sciences*, Oxford/New York, 175-176.
- McAllister, Jenn (2015): *Really Professional Internet Person*, New York.
- McDonnell, Charlie (2012): "I'm scared", in: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_56nx3eHK4c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_56nx3eHK4c) (30.10.2016).
- Rajewsky, Irina O. (2002): *Intermedialität*, Tübingen.

- Ryan, Marie-Laure (2001): *Narrative as Virtual Reality. Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore.
- Scherer, Klaus R. (2009): "Affect Bursts", in: Sander, David/Scherer, Klaus R. (eds): *The Oxford Companion to Emotion and the Affective Sciences*, Oxford/New York, 11.
- Scott, Suzanne (2013): "Who's Steering the Mothership? The Role of the Fanboy Auteur in Transmedia Storytelling", in: Delwiche, Aaron/Jacobs Henderson, Jennifer (eds): *The Participatory Cultures Handbook*, New York, 43-52.
- Wolf, Mark J.P. (2012). *Building Imaginary Worlds. The Theory and History of Subcreation*, New York.
- Wolf, Werner (2011): "(Inter)mediality and the Study of Literature", in: *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 13.3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1789>. (30.10.2016).

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1: *Screenshot of comment on Franta's "Coming out" video*. in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYodBfRxKWI> (30.10.2016).
- Figure 2: *Screenshots of Connor Franta's "Coming out" video*. in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYodBfRxKWI> (5:35) (30.10.2016).
- Figure 3: *Screenshots of Connor Franta's "Coming out" video*. in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYodBfRxKWI> (5:35) (30.10.2016).
- Figure 4: *Screenshots of Connor Franta's "Coming out" video*. in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYodBfRxKWI> (5:40) (30.10.2016).
- Figure 5: *Screenshot of comment on Connor Franta's "Coming out" video*. in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYodBfRxKWI> (30.10.2016).

