STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LXVII, 4, 2022, p. 165 - 186
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)
DOI:10.24193/subbphilo.2022.4.08

EXPLORING LIMINAL AESTHETICS: THE "GLITCHY AND DECAYED" WORLDS OF VAPORWAVE, SEMIOTIC ASSEMBLAGES, AND INTERNET LINGUISTICS

Oana Teodora PAPUC[1]

Article history: Received 31 July 2022; Revised 18 October 2022; Accepted 8 November 2022; Available online 20 December 2022; Available print 30 December 2022.

ABSTRACT. ***Exploring Liminal Aesthetics: The "Glitchy and Decayed" Worlds of Vaporwave, Semiotic Assemblages, and Internet Linguistics*.** The topic of online identity formation in the realm of computer-mediated communication is nothing new. However, what does stand out, especially in recent years, in the larger framework of Internet-based sociolinguistic practices (David 2010; Williams 2006), is a much-needed exploration of various new microcultural aggregates. Some of these niche-genres are frequently encountered on YouTube, while others are primarily short-lived Instagram or TikTok community-driven trends. In essence, this paper states the belief that it is precisely these relatively contemporary microcultural trends that manage to accurately take the pulse of a new, post-pandemic world. Moreover, since many of these forms of artistic self-expression can be understood through a Cultural Sociolinguistic lens (Cotrău, Cotoc, and Papuc 2021), a translation of their particular symbolic meanings can only help decipher the increasingly chaotic, hypersubjective, and "semiotic assemblages" (Pennycook 2017) that individuals seem to be inhabiting and creating. Thus, the current paper aims to offer an analysis that ties together an array of only seemingly disparate elements, namely: cultural economy, creation and consumption of online cultural artefacts, and an affective processing that ties real-life traumatic events to the creation of particular cultural trends - liminal aesthetics and vaporwave, paired with a fascination with all things "glitchy and decayed" (Loignon and Messier 2020).

Keywords: *online identity, sociolinguistics, Internet linguistics, multimodality, vaporwave, liminal aesthetics, semiotic assemblages*

[1] **Oana Teodora PAPUC** works as Junior Lecturer, at the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca, the Department for Specialised Foreign Languages and teaches the English for Psychology and English for Special Education practical courses. Her research interests include Internet-based sociolinguistics and subcultural trends, as well as newly emerging online micro-trends as part of so-called aesthetic forms of liminality (i.e.: vaporwave, weirdcore, traumacore, Y2K, synthwave). Most recent publication in co-authorship with Diana Cotrău and Alexandra Cotoc, *An Introduction to Internet Linguistics: The Cultural Sociolinguistic Take with Case Studies*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană. E-mail: oana.papuc@ubbcluj.ro.

REZUMAT. ***În explorarea esteticii liminalității: universul „inexact și degradat" al genului vaporwave, asamblaje semiotice și lingvistica internetului.*** Subiectul formării identității online în cadrul comunicării mediate de computer nu este neapărat unul inedit. Cu toate acestea, ceea ce se remarcă, mai ales în ultimii ani, în contextul mai larg al practicilor sociolingvistice digitale (David 2010; Williams 2006), este necesitatea explorării îndeaproape a unor noi și varii agregate microculturale. Unele dintre aceste genuri de nișă sunt des întâlnite pe platforma YouTube; iar altele iau forma trendurilor de scurtă durată, tipice comunităților utilizatoare de Instagram sau Tik-Tok. În esență, tema principală a lucrării de față sugerează importanța acestor trenduri microculturale contemporane, ele constituind exact instrumentele de analiză prin care se poate lua cu mai multă acuratețe pulsul unei lumi emergente, cea postpandemică. De asemenea, datorită faptului că multe dintre aceste forme de exprimare artistică pot fi înțelese prin prisma unei abordări cultural-sociolingvistice (Cotrău, Cotoc, and Papuc 2021), traducerea sensurilor particulare propuse de acestea poate doar ajuta în descifrarea „asamblajelor semiotice" (Pennycook 2017), tot mai haotice și hypersubiective ce par a fi concretizate și create, în mediul digital. Astfel, în cadrul lucrării de față se oferă o analiză ce urmărește să aducă laolaltă elemente doar aparent disparate, și anume: economia culturală, crearea și consumul de artefacte culturale online și o procesare afectivă ce face legătura între evenimente resimțite în viața reală ca având un impact traumatic și realizarea compensatorie de trenduri culturale particulare. Astfel, se remarcă în principal predilecția pentru estetica liminalității și genul vaporwave, alături de o vizibilă fascinație față de tot ce este „inexact și degradat" (Loignon and Messier 2020).

Cuvinte-cheie: *identitate online, sociolingvistică, lingvistica Internetului, multimodalitate, vaporwave, estetica liminalității, asamblaj semiotic*

Introduction

The purpose of the current paper is to lay the groundwork and frame new lines of research in the direction of exciting new developments taking shape in the field of Internet Linguistics (Crystal 2010; Cotrău, Cotoc and Papuc 2021). The digital realm itself has become embedded into our academic, professional, and personal lives to such an extent, that it is imperative to take the pulse of its emergent twists and turns.

These shifting patterns, the markings of what could be dubbed the living, breathing 'organism' that is the digital world, provide an array of clues for sociologists, psychologists, and sociolinguists to take the pulse of the current state of mind of its many dwellers and users. It is why I consider awarding crucial significance to analyses tackling an understanding of its many "digital tribes", as particular as they might appear at a first glance, not unlike Turner's (1974) early ethnomethodological work on processes of transgression and becoming.

Nowadays, in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, it seems particularly important to understand how the digital affects the biological, and how offline modes of thinking and being affect virtual output, in the form of subcultural trends. In fact, this bidirectional highway of interconnectedness between the real and the digital, between the organic and the artificially created resembles the cultural boom of the industrial revolution, when rural inhabitants migrated to the city and a host of accompanying results took precedence, in the form of anxieties and subsequent feelings of loneliness due to the abrupt transition to a multiplicity of roles and newly emerging identities. These literal, palpable changes in space and time (routines) gave rise to many of our modern tropes, motifs and discourse markers.

Furthermore, whether we deem ourselves "digital natives" or "digital immigrants" (Prensky 2001), we can arguably identify similar patterns of accomodation to the affordances of the digital realm (El Ouirdi, et al. 2014). So, by taking note of current manifestations of Internet-based niche-identities, analysing modes of self-representation and self-expression, it becomes possible to draw a map of the ins-and-outs of whichever 'virtual tribes' spark our academic curiosity. It is only through uncovering, step by step, localised forms of meaning-making, be it through the use of symbolic imagery, or text, sound, kinetic visuals, and soundscapes (Pennycook 2017) etc., that we might get slightly closer to taking stock of the social, cultural and psychological shifts unfolding while we're still producing them and concurrently, influencing and being influenced by them.

Thus, piece by piece, the larger puzzle of the overlapping networks and focal points of meaning-making creates a direct link between Internet-based cultural artefacts and its creators/users. Furthermore, the concept belonging to the realm of sociolinguistics that would perfectly fit the demanding task of creating a narrow enough category to encapsulate the distinctive elements of the various emerging digital micro-tribes, but empty enough to function as a scaffolding, fit to accommodate the structures of other digital trends is Pennycook's "semiotic assemblage" (2017). According to Pennycook (3), this concept should be understood as a complex amalgamation of meaning-making symbols, which goes beyond the classic choice of the written or spoken word, or that of visual symbols in the forms of images to decode and convey messages. Other elements included would be the frequency, function and type of code-switches in conversation, switches from one social persona to another, as well as the inclusion of geographical and physical elements that directly inform communicative exchanges. An example used by the same author are the types of fish available for purchase in one particular shop, as well as the particular smells that informed buyers' on-the-spot decisions for buying and therefore negotiating and completing a communicative exchange that was not only highly multilingual, but multicultural too, the shop itself being described as one node

in an overlapping map of sociocultural networked scripts. The shop was advertised as a "Bangladesh, India, Pakistani, Island, Lebanese, African & Asian grocery" while being located in Lakemba, a suburb in southwest Sydney (5).

Furthermore, Turner's concept of liminality (1974) would also be of significant use to better understand the vaporwave community. Since liminality largely refers to a transitional period in which one undergoes a process of transformation, from one sense of identity to another, it is a concept rich enough in its uses and various interpretations that it lends itself perfectly to the current paper's aims. Lastly, with the help of the methodological tool most suitable for assessing processes of net-based identity creation, namely the lens of Cultural Sociolinguistics, we might just be able to grasp the inner workings of various 'digital tribes'.

Why Internet Linguistics?

The abrupt unfolding of events that took place worldwide, since springtime 2020, up until what are arguably dubbed these postpandemic times, stands as proof alone that what is currently needed is a much better understanding of how offline and online worlds influence each other and their residents and users. The imposed social isolation had varying effects, ranging from a whole host of silly trends that seemed to mobilise entire groups of people into taking up bread-making as a hobby, to virally shared short-lived food trends on TikTok, to more serious effects. These harmful effects were ultimately related to individuals' mental and physical health, recent studies indicating a sharp rise in reported cases of anxiety and depression (Yuzulia 2021; Barrot, Llenares and del Rosario 2021). For many, these were pre-existing issues that merely got exacerbated due to the measures taken during lockdowns: the fear and threat of the newly uncovered disease, a sense of loss of autonomy, loss of family members, loss of income, to name the most common of categories (Hidalgo-Andrade, Hermosa-Bosano, and Paz 2021). For teachers and students alike, the forced transition to an online or hybrid mode of communication, teaching, learning, and assessment was equally difficult and anxiety-inducing (Lischer, Safi, and Dickson 2021).

Ultimately, what seemed to take place was an exacerbation of our ambivalent relationship to the Internet and technology itself (Blut and Wang 2020). On the one hand, we welcome and express the desire to fully embrace these foreign territories. On the other hand, moral panics have never really ceased to raise alarm to potentially bring about the most dystopian of futures whenever new technologies displace obsolete but familiar methods, routines and ways of thinking, akin to past reactions to the emergence of new attitudes and subcultures (Chaney 1994). For instance, Carr (2010) describes the fearful attitudes present even at the invention and proliferation of the printing press.

The fear was that of losing, in essence, an organic manner of acquiring, transmitting and reproducing knowledge. In other words, these processes were intimately linked to a particular sense of identity, one where knowledge had to be obtained organically, without the use of other tools, so the biological, what we immediately know and can recognise as an intricate part of the human condition was thought of as being almost sacred (Turner 1974). Additionally, the same fear can also be read as the anxiety felt in the face of the assumed threat of becoming unable to recognize counterfeit, "fake identities" of individuals only mimicking the status and cognitive capabilities of their great predecessors (Carr 2010, 90-91).

Comparatively, I believe we are still navigating a very similar push and pull towards the limitless potentiality of the digital space. This isn't necessarily a novel observation, but I do believe that much more serious attention should be awarded to the various Internet-based niche-trends that circulate online. Since these are the products of what results at the crossroads between online and offline identity, between artistic self-expression and cultural creation, between appropriation and novelty, it becomes imperative to take on the task of immersing oneself in the analysis of such spaces.

The Cultural Sociolinguistic Approach and Web 2.0

In order to attain the goals described above, the parameters in which identity unfolds on the Internet can be traced through a series of crucial markers - textual, multimodal (visual, auditory, kinetic) and semantic. Thus, by deconstructing the activities and patterns of usage uncovered in various net-based repertoires, an ethnomethodological and critical approach may be used to start drawing a map of the confluence of a few major domains in the vast field of sociolinguistics - the Sociology of Language, the Social Psychology of Language, Discourse Analysis and lastly, an Ethnography of Communication (Hernández-Campoy 2014, 12). Thus, the artefacts that these neotribes produce and then circulate, distribute between their members and then to individuals outside their immediate subcultural affiliation amount to significant clues. Therefore, any form of visual, textual, auditory and kinetic (image in motion) symbol they seem to use repeatedly in functional, meaningful ways constitutes the foundation from which particular identities can emerge. As such, the Cultural Sociolinguistic lens would appear to be the best fit for the task at hand.

Before highlighting the particularities of some very intriguing digital tribes, a brief description of the online environment and some of its most typical forms of usage are warranted. Thus, a tentative social media taxonomy, as envisioned by El Ouirdi, et al. (2014) can be compiled by following three dimensions: *users* (the active participants engaged in communication and other Internet-based activities and can be subdivided in micro-, meso- and macro-level users); *content* (which may appear in various forms: texts, images, games, audio and/or video clips etc.); *function* (refers to the purpose of communication).

Tellingly, the above authors identify "sharing, collaborating, networking and geolocating" (120) as the underlying functions explaining why and how digital communication takes place. Additionally, studies have also indicated that online communication patterns seem to mirror those taking place offline, in terms of existing obstacles in the face of securing successful communication (119). The same authors draw attention to the fact that not enough research has been conducted on the content of what is being produced and consumed, and quite curiously so, since it most likely is the purpose of these socially mediated acts of communication to begin with:

> We suggested an inclusive working definition for the ever-evolving concept of social media as a set of mobile and web-based platforms built on Web 2.0 technologies, and allowing users at the micro-, meso- and macro- levels to share and geo-tag user-generated content (images, text, audio, video and games), to collaborate, and to build networks and communities, with the possibility of reaching and involving large audiences (123).

The above definition helps delineate the Web 2.0, or in other words "the social web" (123), which is mostly driven by user-generated content, from the Web 1.0. This earlier version of the Internet was mostly designed to function unidirectionally, in terms of information creation and distribution, while its audience was primarily passively consuming snippets of information or content offered by web creators (123). Moreover, the phrase "User Generated Content" refers to "the sum of all ways in which people make use of Social Media" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 61). In other words, it's not necessarily that the Web 2.0 presents tremendously innovative technologies, but it allowed for social interactivity to occur much more easily, "amateur users" adding their own creative spin on the digital products that we so readily take for granted today: blogs, vlogs, tumblr pages, Facebook pages, live streaming, YouTube channels, etc. (61).

In essence, social media activity can be analysed through a sociolinguistic lens, taking into account concepts such as social presence, social influence, while deconstructing the semiotic landscape and cultural products resulting from online interactions. This process can be aided by correlating these micro-level instances of cultural production, consumption and distribution with their macroeconomic counterparts, using Bourdieu's (1986) take on the functions and influence of "cultural capital". Accompanying parameters to take into account when discussing online identities should differentiate the content creator from the content consumer. These constitute different social roles, according to El Ouirdi, et al. (2010, 121-122), that promote differing levels of engagement in Internet-based behaviour, ranging from the active (creation and distribution of content) to the passive (redistribution of content on various other platforms through sharing, retweeting, commenting, liking, and merely viewing).

Ultimately, some characteristics of online communication are influenced by these acts unfolding in a virtual environment, free from the usual bounds of geographical space. Naturally, this aspect affects communication patterns, while individuals themselves are bound by their "place-identity" in quite specific ways - the lack of limitations of physical space when using various online personas provides freedom from having to necessarily self-present through the usual markers affiliated to embodied, sensorily perceptive beings (i.e., ethnic, gender and physical attributes, alongside cultural and subcultural affiliations signalled through clothing, styling, gestures, body movements, emotional cues, etc.). At the same time, online individuals are bound by another type of physicality and spatial relationship - the one influenced by the very hardware which makes communication via social media possible, in the first place. So, both self-presentation and self-disclosure may be linked to the breakdown of the traditional self (Newman 2015), since our digital avatars may resemble who we present ourselves offline, as much or as little as we want.

To this layer of complexity, another crucial shift occurs - a change in our perception of time-relations. The usual time restraints of offline communication are partially suspended/altered in the digital realm, communication acquiring a different set of valences: encouraging instant gratification, seemingly perpetually entertained by countless actors (known to various degrees) (ibid.). In fact, many of these connotations have been retroactively awarded as recognisable identity markers delineating the so-called 'nature' of different generations of digital immigrants: millennials, Generation Z and generation Alpha. In other words, youth culture has been redefined mostly through the lens of "participatory culture" (Smith 2020). Communication processing for Gen Z is perceived as continuous, transitioning between the online and offline, seamlessly and habitually, since a significant portion of social relationship management is done via social media. Furthermore, Gen Zers are described as quite skillful in their creation and management of online content, as access to information is easily attainable. In fact, these online traces have become "a visual representation of the rituals and markers of youth" (ibid.), so much so that they are perceived to be less "fake" or "inauthentic".

One may argue that the rise of an online culture of authenticity is a corollary of living in an "identity economy" (Akerlof and Kranton 2000). The rise of "Influencer culture" seems to be a testament to the rise of "hyperindividuality" and the emergence of niche-/microcultural aggregates embedded in their own microcosms and linguacultures (Cotrău, Cotoc and Papuc 2021), as predicted by Chaney (1994), by Blommaert's concept of transmobility (2010), and as a backlash due to the rise of highly multilingual modes of communication and increased patterns of migration in recent decades. These tendencies have also been indexed in the literature with the introduction of "hypersubjectivity" (Hall 2014) and "superdiversity" (Jørgensen and Ag 2012) to more closely resemble the accelerated

patterns taking place at both macro (socially, politically, economically) and micro levels (the rapid switch from identity creation, communication management and socialising taking place on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, etc.). This transition could be explained by a growing preference for time engagement with social media apps to be shorter, the use of symbolic imagery seemingly gaining terrain over platforms geared towards primarily narrative modes of self-expression, that tend to be longer and quite verbose (Smith 2020).

Finally, the shift towards the so-called "tyranny of the subjective" (Finne 2018), the lamented loss of any semblance of objectivity in contemporary culture, is quite possibly an effect that grew out of the historical cult of personality, transgressing the boundaries of political discourse, infiltrating the media itself. This shift in culture has been seemingly taking place for decades, anticipated by its predecessors - reality TV and tabloids, the cult of the celebrity lifestyle being at its peak in the '00s (ibid). This cultural mutation translated into the final disintegration from a very sharp distinction being made between "popular culture" and "high culture" into a total collapse in "an era more profoundly organized by Big Tech than our own elected governments, the new culture to be countered isn't singular or top-down. It's rhizomatic, nonbinary, and includes all who live within the Google/Apple/Facebook/Amazon digital ecosystem (aka GAFA stack), (Busta 2021).

Online Niche-identities as Cultural Capital and Liminoid Phenomena: Vaporwave, Weirdcore, Traumacore and Ambient Back Rooms

Out of the varied forms of contemporaneous Internet-based subcultures, one in particular seems to stand out - vaporwave. It initially emerged in the online communities of the 2010s, as a rather specific brand of electronic music. It is usually accompanied by a host of symbolic imagery reminiscent of "early Internet days" (heavily pixelated texts and images, '90s videogame design, earlier versions of the Microsoft logo, Japanese iconography reminiscent of Japan's economic boom of the late '80s and '90s), mixed with images of Greek and Roman statues in pinkish, bluish hues, pastels or bright neon colours, and elements of corporate culture (logos, ads) from the '60s, '70s, and '80s. To these are added countless musical interpretations and reconfigurations of the genre, the general musical markers of vaporwave being largely dependent on virtually anyone's ability to sample and heavily slow down the tempo of older popular songs from the '80s, and to pair them with similarly repurposed elements from '80s and '90s smooth jazz, so-called elevator music, and elements of Japanese city-pop and '80s synths (McLeod 2018).

Due to the fact that the landscape of the vaporwave genre itself is so heavily linked to the use of elements of corporate and consumerist culture, both visually and musically (repurposing snippets of old Japanese and American

commercials, using elements of muzak and creating visual landscapes of abandoned malls), fans and critics alike seem to gravitate towards the idea that latter iterations of the genre are directly critiquing modern consumerism (Loignon and Messier 2020). This is suggested by the emotional charge that usually accompanies this specific musical and visual landscape - a paradoxical mixture of soothing dread, empty glamour, and the both liberating and entrapping mindless consumption tendencies of late capitalism, where "the commodification of the self" takes centre stage (Davis 2003).

Thus, vaporwave has been identified as a means to parody consumerism and corporate culture. Its visual markers however seem to have become ubiquitous in many campaigns, ads (i.e. Nike's Zoom Streak Spectrum Plus "Vaporwave" inspired 2018 products) and general online aesthetic trends, here included many of its offshoots. Therefore, some confusion exists as to the exact relationship between the origins of the genre and the different uses of affiliated microgenres - fashwave, labourwave, trumpwave[2]. These three examples of contemporary underground niche-cultures seem to have come together mostly for the purpose of spreading fascist or communist ideologies, under the appealing guise of vaporwave iconography. Naturally, these communities are much less popular and widespread as vaporwave, since such ideological revivals could only come from a place of a deep misunderstanding and lack of direct contact with the actual Soviet era, and would thus elicit plenty of backlash (as comments throughout YouTube and aesthetics.wiki seem to suggest). Perhaps the phenomenon itself could be considered indicative of a perceived collective sense of disillusionment with contemporaneous times - failure of capitalism and promises of becoming citizens part of the global village - the climate crisis, critique of fast fashion and the accelerated recycling of subcultural trends of the early 2000s as faulty coping mechanisms for the pandemic (Di Crosta, et al. 2021), the Afghan crisis, the war in Ukraine.

Ultimately, vaporwave has devolved into a parody of itself by being created and distributed entirely online. This is a subculture that makes use of "pre-existing graphics from old pre-millennial techno-culture that are often incongruously [displayed alongside] historic art or commercial images", giving it a "retrofuturistic" taint (McLeod 2018, 127). Hence, the vaporwave ethos is clearly DIY, and it capitalised on its nostalgic and hypnagogic inducing qualities, that it is virtually impossible to offer a clear definition of the genre. Furthermore, its classification is even harder to pinpoint, since it has been linked by musical theorists with older counterparts in the form of seapunk and hypnagogic pop, alongside a more recent iteration, in the form of synthwave (which has itself diffused in chillwave, simpsonwave, fashwave, sovietwave, signalwave, to name only a few), future funk, hard vapour, mallsoft, and lo-fi mixes.

[2] See "Laborwave", aesthetics.fandom.com, accessed October 15 2022.

Therefore, to acquire a better understanding of the core niche-trend under scrutiny in the current paper, namely vaporwave, and to then be able to grapple its subsequent offshoots, a general shift in the contemporary cultural discourse must also be addressed. This shift in our ongoing process of adapting to the rapid changes in our sociocultural, technological, and political landscapes is a consequential backlash of the pitfalls inherent to the Internet - anonymity, its extreme democratisation resulting in the effortless creation of so-called fake personas and their scrutinised artificiality.

This tendency has been counteracted, I believe, through a similar DIY ethos, militating for a return to "authentic" artistic expression. In other words, power is claimed by the individual repurposing cultural capital, and thus attempting to attack the status quo, or at least mitigate the damage created by the GAFA stack.

It is precisely this attribute that has also been used to perform analyses on the vaporwave phenomenon. In a video essay, titled *The Beauty of Degraded Media*[3], a very insightful take describes the primacy of "authenticity" (Finne 2018). The sensed artificiality, the constructed perfection of the digital world could perhaps explain some recurrent trends observable in different media in the form of motifs and themes. This gives way to the artificial embellishment of visual and musical elements with items seemingly countering the constructed perfection of the digital world, by intentionally incorporating elements meant to reflect imperfections, for the purpose of creating oxymoronically "authentic simulacra", "authentic hyperreality"[4].

Many of these embellishments give off the sense of watching "old VHS tapes" (ibid.), glitchy imperfections abruptly zapping their way through visual imagery. Disruptions in sound, image and movement are made deliberately to remember the days of "glitchy" analogue technology. Thus, as cultural capital becomes more complex in an environment oversaturated by hyperreality, to be a savvy consumer and producer of cultural capital, one needs to become a creative repurposer of symbols from a myriad of different genres and periods. The vaporwave genre allows for exactly that. In essence, vaporwave and its offshoots functioned as the liminal thresholds which helped process the emotional turmoil created by the increased visibility of uncertainty in our lives. Even though the pandemic arrived much later than the original emergence of the vaporwave genre, it successfully revealed that many of its effects were not necessarily novel, but simply got exacerbated by the pressures of coping with its sudden challenges.

Taking all of the above into account, what remains for this section is to highlight in detail how liminal and liminoid phenomena function in complex

[3] See "The Beauty of Degraded Media", written by Polyphonic, aired October 24 2019, on YouTube.
[4] "The Beauty of Degraded Media", id.

societies, to argue that the vaporwave genre fulfilled the same cathartic functions for its many consumers. According to Victor Turner (1974), in the transition towards complex, industrial societies, from tribal and mostly agrarian societies, our relationship to culture has changed dramatically.

For Turner, engaging with different forms of culture, ranging from ritualistic, shamanistic and ceremonial acts to which the whole community was obligated to participate, to the modern-day individual choices to partake in festivals, religious events, and varying performing arts (movies, concerts, fine art exhibitions, etc.) was one important signifier "whereby groups became adjusted to internal changes" (54). In other words, the primary function of immersion in the artistic experience, whether producing it or merely consuming it, fulfils crucially important functions, for both the collective and the individual. On the one hand, it allows for a cognitive and emotional processing of one's role in the socio-cultural hierarchy of residence, meaning, it has a cathartic role. On the other, it possesses a dual purpose - it reveals how chaos can be repurposed into (new) order, but it also capitalises on its potential for restructuration through the destruction of that which no longer serves the collective, or the individual, and which necessitates novelty, improvement.

The critical take on the deliberate use of these elements takes on two opposing viewpoints. One stance believes that vaporwave artists specifically captured the collective disappointment with "the soft promise of early corporate culture [that] has collapsed in the dystopian economic nightmare, the capitalist 'rat race'" (ibid.). Others believe these effects to be accidental.

Thus, perceived authenticity and meaningfulness, especially in the vaporwave genre, are given by imperfections, a sense of decay, an accentuated sense of temporality, the awareness of the finite. This is perhaps done to help mitigate a distrust of the artificial, the impossibly perfect machine and its constancy over time, caught in numerous iterations of the same processes, carried out in the same exact manner, ad infinitum.

Musically and visually, the vaporwave genre attempts to alleviate this tension, by provoking both dread and awe, in its liminoid soundscapes, "heavily rely[ing] on the creative manipulation of samples of mellow adult-contemporary pop music and Muzak that date from the 1970s, '80s and '90s" (McLeod, 123). This manipulation takes the form of dramatically slowed down tempos of sampled popular songs, to the point where the vocals and other identifying elements of these pop artefacts become almost unrecognisable (124). Significant similarities between these microgenres lie in either concept, or form, one particular unifying thread being their tendency towards self-referentiality and irony (McLeod 125).

In fact, the term "liminal" itself is used quite frequently by receiving audience in YouTube comments or the titles of the videos themselves. Highly engaging are also more recent iterations of so-called "liminal genres", in the

form of traumacore, weirdcore and liminal backroom series (Tiffany 2021). Weirdcore, or dreamcore and the liminal backroom series are a specific set of genres that play on the eeriness of abandoned spaces where human activity usually occurs - specifically abandoned malls, empty playgrounds, or school hallways, empty airport waiting rooms, etc. The backroom series were also apparently inspired by scenes accidentally created in video games of the '90s and '00s that were left slightly unfinished by their graphic designers (ibid.).

Many of the motifs used in the weirdcore genre are reminiscent of vaporwave, aiming to create both dread and peaceful relaxation, being aesthetically centred on low-quality photography that lacks contextual cues. This genre makes use of relatively amateurish-looking video graphics, reminiscent of the Web 1.0 (ibid.). The commentary that usually accompanies these digital displays suggests that what is felt is a sense of nostalgia, even for spaces or time periods that one never really experienced. In its more extreme versions, the sense of dread, even horror is amplified in traumacore, a pretty controversial offshoot of the genre that is characterised by a violent clash between images vaguely referencing themes related to a sense of loss of innocence, childhood trauma, and abandonment, with superimposed textual phrases over imagery of plush toys, kawaii anime characters, Hello Kitty, hearts, bunnies in pinkish, glittery hues, such as: "im so sorry i cant stop", "it keeps replaying in my head/please make it stop" "its ok i deserve it", "i loved you WE WERE BOTH CHILDREN forget forget forget forget forget forget/ why would you do that to me"[5]. Critics of this particular form of aesthetic draw attention to the fact that partakers in the microgenre should be careful to not devoid it of significant meaning, or to inadvertently glamorise trauma, or dissociative states, as opposed to those who use this form of self-expression, for the purpose of emotional processing, akin to a visual diary, as an alternative form of therapy. Basically, the fear is placed once again on the shoulders of determining that which is authentic from that which is not. Unfortunately, authenticity itself has been commodified by the Internet, due to the emergence of a complex relationship between identity and "self-commodification" in capitalism (Singh 2016, 205).

Essentially, so much more could be added to further detail the intricate ways in which these microgenres are interrelated and used to help their audiences process the effects of our increasingly computational world. It also seems likely that further research might uncover what is only an assumption at the time being, that one crucial function of these forms of artistic expression is to help its creators gain a sense of control akin to that of a coping mechanism by way of creating cultural capital. This is only possible in a world where these digital sites of creation resemble the structure of Foucault's heterotopias

[5] See "Traumacore", aesthetics.fandom.com, accessed July 31 2021.

(1984) – sites that "are capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several places, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (6). Such are the characteristics of both the Internet, as well as the vaporwave landscape. At the same time, these are worlds that have become available to each and every individual, due to the partial dissolution and contamination of high forms of culture with popular ones. Furthermore, the blurred lines between artistic consumption, creation, redistribution and identity creation in the digital realm, gives validity to the argument that these genres are particularly enticing since they get to fulfil the role of liminal and liminoid phenomena and act as powerfully cathartic instruments for making sense of and adapting to our ever changing online and offline environments.

Clearly, the success of these genres can also be made sense of with the help of Pennycook's definition of semiotic potential (2017, 2), by broadening the concept of "linguistic landscape", defined as:

> a study of 'the presence, representation, meanings and interpretation of languages displayed in public places" (Shohamy and Ben-Rafael 2015, 1) to include images, photos, sounds (soundscapes), movements, music, smells (smellscapes), graffiti, clothes, food, buildings, history, as well as people who are immersed and absorbed in spaces by interacting with LL in different ways (Shohamy 2015, 153–154).

To this definition, the concept of "boundary objects" is included, resulting in expanding the "semiotic potential" of meaning construction (Pennycook 2017, 6):

> [...] the mobile ideas, things or practices that are shared across different social, cultural, linguistic or geographical domains. Perhaps better called adaptable artefacts rather than boundary objects, they are sufficiently flexible to be taken up by different people in different contexts, yet also sufficiently robust to be recognisable as 'the same thing' across these different contexts.

This is in essence, descriptive of the cultural artefacts produced by vaporwave and its accompanying genres, as well as it manages to bridge the gap between the fields of sociolinguistics and Internet linguistics. The former has always analysed forms of language in a sociocultural context, while the latter expands this context to a multimodal one, which is inherent to any digital environment, where many other symbols beyond the mere use of text are made use of. In fact, the term "vaporwave" is a playful turn of phrase that was apparently inspired by the term "vapourware", meaning "a computer-related product that has been widely advertised but has not and may never become available"[6]. Ultimately, the term itself references absence and ethereal presence, all at the same time.

[6] See Merriam-Webster. com/Dictionary s.v. "vaporware", accessed July 31, 2022.

The concept of liminality holds the exact same space for ambivalence. The term 'liminal' comes from the Latin, *limen*, meaning "threshold", "margin", to "transition between" (Turner 1974, 57), referencing the middle phase of a 'rite de passage'. In tribal societies, the process of transitioning from an identity relegated to childhood and teenagedom, towards becoming and establishing oneself as a mature member of society was done quite noticeably, in the form of a ritual. In this ritual, Turner, building on van Gennep's work, differentiates between three distinct stages. In the first phase, the neophyte is clearly removed from within "normal", usual society, displaced from the usual "place-identity" and even "temporal identity" to a new space, one devoid of any markers of one's past identity. Concurrently, in the liminal phase of any initiation rite, the neophyte is equally distant from its identity-to-be. The state is one of pure potentiality, in the here and now, far removed from the past and removed from the future, as well. It is a sacred space that knows no bounds, the initiand being invested with sacred powers - the order of the world is turned upside down, or is distorted, chaos is invited to help purge from the restrictions of an orderly social life with little to no affordances. States become heighted, masks may be worn to call for becoming invested with the powers of varying gods, dance and ritual becoming displays of hyperbolized forms of embodiment, all of these elements revealing the underlying nature of the universe - the cosmic order and chaos. "Liminality is the temporal interface whose properties partially invert those of the already consolidated order which constitutes any specific cosmos" (73).

In Turner's view (1974), because the space of the liminal becomes the space for both destruction and creation, for both death and life, the neophyte is both dead to their former identity and yet to be born in the one prefigured by the limitless potential. It is only in the postliminal stage when the neophyte individuates and is reincorporated into normal life, in an enriched status. As such, liminality is invested with powerful symbolism, is chameleonic in nature, and can shape-shif to potentially serve as the "scene of disease, despair, death, suicide". It may suggest feelings of "anomie, angst and alienation", it plays with social bonds, distorts them, and in more extreme cases, perverts them, satirises them without necessarily offering compensatory solutions for its violent upheaval (78). In essence, the "germ of societal change" resides in the liminal (76) and it marks the boundary between 'normal' and 'aberrant', 'deviant'.

At the same time, experiencing liminality can be socially positive, since it activates what Turner (1974) calls a sense of "communitas" (78). It is the force that helps the neophyte individuate in the liminal stage of an initiation rite, so it encapsulates both sameness and otherness. It is the feeling and awareness that, in its purest of forms, shows up spontaneously between individuals "freely relating", despite social contexts or social rules. However desired this feeling may be

though, whenever structure tends to be legislated for the preservation of the particular, as well intentioned as it may be, it denatures subjectivity into objectivity, creating gate-keepers, rules, status, the sacrosanct becomes quotidian (78). A similar mechanism was also observed by David Chaney, in his book *The Cultural Turn* (1994), which exemplified the processes whereby mainstream culture relates to subcultures or countercultures.

In fact, Turner (1974) himself further details the process by identifying three types of communitas - spontaneous, ideological and normative. The first takes place unmediated between individuals, and it is felt as "a single, fluid, synchronised event" (79). It also fires up a cognitive awareness of relating on an even playing field with another individual and it may produce a "flow" like state (concept borrowed from the work of the Hungarian-American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi). In ideological communitas, the subjective becomes the object of analysis, of remembrance, it is the moment when the experience of flow has ceased and has given way to reflection, usually mediated through the use of language and cultural artefacts (79). Lastly, normative communitas describes an "enduring subculture or group which attempts to foster and maintain relationships of spontaneous communitas on a more or less permanent basis" (80). It is this third case which strongly exemplifies the tension between 'natural' and 'artificial', or better said 'artificially imposed'.

In fact, it is communitas that tends to be the foundation for metaphors and symbols, that later become "sets and arrays of cultural values", in other words, become legitimised, once a group's forces of economic, legal and political frameworks approve of its "socio-structural character" (81). Thus, the very forces that help both create and destroy entire sociocultural systems can be understood with the help of liminality. Moreover, this concept manages to capture an essential part of the human psyche, namely the fact that order must necessarily be accompanied by momentary periods of chaos when instinct is given free reign (in tribal societies, the neophytes were invested with the power to pillage and abuse at will during the liminal phases of the rite of initiation, being both constrained by the rules of the community and its obligatory rite of passage, but being allowed to subdue and make use of the community's resources, as desired).

These issues, however, are compounded in industrialised, complex societies, where the stark delimitations between work, leisure and play are so strict, that liminal phenomena have given way to liminoid phenomena. The religious and sacred have been replaced by the religiosity with which work is regulated, "organic rhythms" have been substituted with technological ones (84) and the figure and function of the shaman is somewhat imposed onto that of the artist. In essence, the sacred has been divided into varying sections between play, leisure and the arts, while the means of artistic production and the source for

experiencing flow have been relocated from the obligatory participation of the collective in rituals and ceremonies to that of individuals mostly being engaged in artistic means of production, regulating cultural capital (84). Turner (1974) further describes this landscape as one that is "plural, fragmentary, experimental in character", "idiosyncratic, quirky" and usually generated by "individuals in particular groups, schools, circles" (84). At the same time, the seed of novelty, of liberation from mainstream forms of regulation are, of course, explored apart from central economic and political processes, in the marginal, and this plurality of meanings depicts the rhizomatic form of organisation inherent to contemporary culture, no longer dominated by any central focal point, but by an array of variously overlapping networks of meaning-making.

Ultimately, the distinction between *liminal* and *liminoid* resides in the distinction between the division of labour and leisure in post-industrial societies and informs individuals with the capacity to experience "flow states", usually individually, through play (in all its forms) and art consumption, and to experience communitas, in a group, so "in structure". Essentially, the two are intricately linked - structure and destructuration, "flow" and "communitas", since it is in the first which resides the potential for "liquefying" (89) existing forms of structure. Finally, in Turner's view (1974, 1986), processes of communitas and flow become necessarily imbued with the symbols that either generated them, or which they generate, these processes of emergence and destruction, being perpetually intertwined. In essence, the "content" of the experience is dictated by these processes of meaning-making, as they are particular to different systems and different groups, this being an argument towards the crucial significance of analysing localised forms of meaning-making, under the guise of, for instance, the vaporwave genre and its subsidiary Internet-based tribes.

To further support the use of liminality as a lens through which vaporwave and its offshoots can be deconstructed, the work of Andrews and Roberts (2015) deserves our attention. Theirs is an analysis on the use of liminality as a concept in the literature, across decades. What results is a poignant indication of the manner in which liminality has been adopted in relation to: the field of the anthropology of experience and its connection to theories of the self (Turner himself having published a book on the topic), the relationship between liminality and tourism studies, and lastly, the emotional weight investigated in studies on the borders and transgressions of spaces and landscapes (4). Ultimately, it is due to the inherent ambivalent nature, both creative and disruptive, of liminality itself that the aforementioned connections could be made. The same can be said about mobility studies in general, be they about the permanent or temporary, since transitions from place to place, or stagnations in the so-called "in-betweenness" of "interstitial places" that forge links between larger areas, necessarily involve travelling across time, spatial and time coordinates indexing changes in identity, as well (12).

Lastly, the final grand piece of the puzzle that merits careful consideration is the metastudy performed on the relationship between liminality and consumption practices, by Darveau and Cheikh-Ammar (2021). Their theory-building approach to the concept of liminality constitutes the main lifeline which reveals the direct entanglement of the former with the vaporwave genre. In fact, the methodology of the authors' analysis manages to coagulate a firmer theory of liminality, which was thoroughly missing from the literature (1). Thus, four main directions are followed in their analysis - the connection between liminality and temporal, spatial, relational and finally, corporeal lived experiences. It is precisely these four parameters that help describe the emotional charge and the meaning-making artistic output specific to the vaporwave community.

Furthermore, the same study proposes going a step further into categorising liminality in such a manner that it provides a palpable analytical lens through which artistic processes can be more easily defined in terms of functionality, structure, type and reception by audience members via consumption practices. Thus, the first category references the existence of so-called "liminal products (or services)" (875). These products help the "liminars" (individuals undergoing liminal or liminoid experiences) transition into or out of liminal phases, according to these objects' internal or external liminal properties. Objects that are themselves ambiguous in nature, meaning that their use is not necessarily indexed easily by age, or social status in relation to consumption practices are relegated by the authors to the category of "intrinsically liminal" products (875). These are by definition difficult to identify since their use is heavily dependent on consumer perception, which automatically places a large emphasis on the particular emotional context of individuals caught in a subjective relationship being forged between themselves as subjects and their use of various liminal objects. The visual iconography affiliated to the vaporwave community could be relegated to this exact category, especially in its incipient phases, when the predilection towards the creation of visually striking juxtapositions between for instance, Roman or Greek statues in combination with early web iconography began to coagulate in the form of an aesthetic style. The extrinsically liminal objects have no liminal inherent properties themselves, but by simply being bound to liminal space and/or time, they become "sacred" (875).

Secondly, liminal consumption is identified by the authors as an outcome of repeated interactions with liminal objects, individuals undergoing many transitory phases throughout their lifetime - i.e., the transition from childhood to adulthood through adolescence, the transition from academic institutions to workplace environments, changes in social status, or shorter and less life-altering phases of transition such as going on holiday, participating in festivals, consuming art, etc. Clearly, the act of either consuming or producing art could be deemed as participating in an act of liminal consumption. In fact, this process is theorised and defined as "a restorative obscurity replete with [the] consumption

activities of those who are essentially no longer, but not yet" (Cody and Lawlor 2011, 214 in Darveau and Cheikh-Ammar 2021, 876-877). In this case as well, liminal consumption is invested with two potential functions. One is to help precipitate the transitory liminal phase to escape its ambiguity, so in other words, to help soothe the anxieties or negative associations one might attach to being "in-between", no longer their former self, but not yet fully fleshed out into a new identity. In this case, even eating (as a coping mechanism) can be awarded symbolic and liminal properties. On the other hand, liminars might specifically seek out entering liminal phases because of their inherent ambivalence, which can also elicit positive emotions. In such cases, consumption of/with the help of liminal objects is done for the purpose of enhancing liminality and the process itself becomes "sacred", to a certain degree. In this latter case, we might speak of Turner's "liminoid phenomena", phases that are intentionally sought out, liminal space and time being invested with a sense of playful, creative escapism, and since the practices of consuming and producing art share these properties, the artistic persona resembles in a sense that of the shaman in ancient rituals. The appeal of the ambivalence and paradoxical nature of the vaporwave genre speaks for itself.

Interestingly enough, Darveau and Cheikh-Ammar draw our attention to two other possible manners of interpreting consumption and liminality (878) - one can elicit or precipitate the other. In other words, liminality might be the effect of engaging in consumption, might be induced by it, or consumption might be an effect of having transitioned through liminal phases. "Consumption-caused liminality" (878) might be used for amplifying the positive associations with the transitory process, but in such a case, if done repeatedly, addictively to escape from one's reality, we can speak of a type of pathological liminality, one where entrapment is deliberately searched for. However, the opposite can be true as well, consumption of alcoholic beverages, for instance, might precipitate for teenagers the sensation of short-circuiting maturation by way of appropriating what are perceived as 'grown-up' activities. The specific ways in which engagement is done in the vaporwave community can, of course, fall in either of these categories, but since critics and fans alike have claimed that entering in this particular online landscape produces feelings of a calming dread, of a nostalgic escape into past worlds reimagined (McLeod 2018), the tendency would seem to be that of nurturing a desire to deliberately escape into the liminoid world of vaporwave and its dizzying array of subgenres. It is almost as if the act of entering into such worlds, could be described as consciously or subconsciously attempting to devour one's feelings of anxiety in the face of a world in turmoil.

Finally, consumption itself might be the intentional by-product of undergoing liminal experiences (879). One type of consumption might be performed for the purpose of delaying entering liminal phases, in the effort of

holding onto past selves, while consumption practices might also be used to celebrate liminality. In this case, the authors suggest that specific objects might become invested with souvenir-like qualities. All in all, due to this particular analysis, what is clear is that artistic output such as the one in the vaporwave community can be associated with "modes of liminality" (879). These modes should be understood as "unique structures of meanings", experiential, subjective and very diverse, specifically because they target "lived experiences of change" (879), which are intrinsically emotionally charged.

Conclusions

Nowadays, the Internet has become much more than a form of escapism, becoming intricately connected to the mechanisms of capitalist production and consumption, in an "identity economy". The liminal qualities of the liminoid genres of vaporwave and its numerous offshoots and their striking influence and online success manage to showcase two important processes. On the one hand, these artistic forms of self-expression help in processing and coping with the emotional traumas of our current postpandemic world. On the other hand, it seems that these forms of identity creation and online communication have been repurposed as contemporaneous forms of initiation rites, suggesting that our vision of the self ought to be reconceptualized, as well, in the form of "network(s) connected to other networks – partially overlapping, partially distanced" (Wallace 2021), better resembling our multidimensional selves.

The self thus becomes "an inclusive network, a plurality of traits related to one another. The overall character – the integrity – of a self is constituted by the unique interrelatedness of its particular relational traits, psychobiological, social, political, cultural, linguistic and physical" (ibid.), a definition that manages to parallel Pennycook's take on the need for expanding our understanding of a "semiotic landscape". Ultimately, what is being proposed, is redefining the self in line with a new change in paradigm - the relational view of the self as "embodied, embedded, enactive and [making use of] extended cognition" (ibid.), and to help us better understand these emerging selves, we might just consider taking a closer look at the manifestation of contemporaneous Internet-based micro-tribes and their language and culture.

WORKS CITED

Akerlof, George and Rachel Kranton. 2000. "Economics and Identity." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115, 3 (August): 715-753. https://doi.org/10.1162/003355300554881.

Andrews, Hazel and Les Roberts. 2015. "Liminality." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition)*, edited by James Wright. Oxford: Elsevier. 131-137. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.12102-6.

Barrot, S., Jessie, I. Llenares, Ian, and Leo S. del Rosario. 2021. "Students' Online Learning Challenges During the Pandemic and How They Cope With Them: The Case of The Philippines." *Information and Education Technologies*, 26 (May): 7321–7338. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10589-x.

Blommaert, Jan. 2010. "The Sociolinguistics of Globalization." In Special Issue: Languages in Motion: Multilingualism and Mobility in the Linguistic Landscape, by Máiréad Moriarty. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 18 (5) (September): 457-463. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006913484208.

Blut, Markus and Cheng Wang. 2020. "Technology readiness: a meta-analysis of conceptualizations of the construct and its impact on technology usage." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48 (July): 649–669. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00680-8.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "Chapter 1: The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John Richardson, 241-258. Westport, CT: Greenwood. https://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/bourdieu_forms_of_capital.pdf.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2013. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Busta, Caroline. 2021. "The Internet Didn't Kill Counterculture - You Just Won't Find It On Instagram." DocumentJournal.com, January 14. Accessed July 31, 2022. https://www.documentjournal.com/2021/01/the-internet-didnt-kill-counterculture-you-just-wont-find-it-on-instagram/?fbclid=IwAR2HefQUJlhHsbsmTu2JOBgL-Tx_IABQd4QkoNhm_Qo6GHcoc1CaqXrKFsg.

Carr, Nicholas. 2010. *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Chaney, David. 1994. *The Cultural Turn. Scene Setting Essays on Contemporary Cultural History*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Cody, Kevina and Katrina Lawlor. 2011. "On the Borderline: Exploring Liminal Consumption and the Negotiation of Threshold Selves." *Marketing Theory* 11 (2) (June): 207–228. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593111403220.

Cotrău, Diana, Cotoc, Alexandra, and Oana Papuc. 2021. "A Pledge for the Cultural Sociolinguistic Approach to the Domain of Internet Linguistics." In *An Introduction to Internet Linguistics: The Cultural Sociolinguistic Take with Case Studies*, edited by Diana Cotrău, Alexandra Cotoc, and Oana Papuc, 23-39. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

David, Crystal. 2010. *Internet Linguistics: A Student Guide*. New York: Routledge.

Darveau, Jessica and Mustapha Cheikh-Ammar. 2021. "The interplay between liminality and consumption: A systematic literature review with a future research agenda." *International Journal of Consumption Studies* 45 (March): 867-888. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12678.

Davis, Joseph. 2003. "The Commodification of Self." *The Hedgehog Review. Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, 5 (2). Accessed October 15, 2022. https://hedgehogreview.com/issues/the-commodification-of-everything/articles/the-commodification-of-self.

Di Crosta, Adolfo, Irene Ceccato, Daniela Marchetti, Pasquale La Malva, Roberta Maiella, Loreta Cannito, Mario Cipi, Nicola Mammarella, Riccardo Palumbo, Maria Cristina Verrocchio, Rocco Palumbo, Alberto Di Domenico. 2021. "Psychological factors and

consumer behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic." *PLoS ONE* 16 (8) (August). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256095.

El Ouirdi, Mariam, Asma El Ouirdi, Jesse Segers, and Erik Henderickx. 2014. "Social Media Conceptualization and Taxonomy. A Lasswellian Framework." *Journal of Creative Communications* 9 (2) (May): 107-126. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973258614528608.

Finne, Elizabeth. 2018. "The Tyranny of the Subjective." Medium.com. March 25. Accessed July 31, 2022. https://medium.com/arc-digital/the-tyranny-of-the-subjective-9a156c7b3ded.

Foucault, Michel. 1967. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." In *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, edited by Leach Neil, 330-336. NYC: Routledge.

Hall, Kira. 2014. "Hypersubjectivity. Language, Anxiety, and Indexical Dissonance in Globalization." *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 24(2) (January): 261-273. https://doi.org/10.1075/japc.24.2.06hal.

Hernández-Campoy, Juan Manuel. 2014. "Research Methods in Sociolinguistics." *AILA Review* 27 (1) (December): 5-29. https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.27.01her.

Hidalgo-Andrade, Paula, Carlos Hermosa-Bosano, and Clara Paz. 2021. "Teachers' Mental Health and Self-Reported Coping Strategies During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ecuador: A Mixed-Methods Study." *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*. 14 (July): 933-944. https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S314844.

Jørgensen, Jan Normann and Astrid Ag. 2012. "Ideologies, Norms, and Practices in Youth Poly-languaging." *International Journal of Bilingualism* 17, 4 (September): 525-539. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006912457275.

Kaplan, Andreas, and Michael Haenlein. 2010. "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons* 53, 1 (February): 59-68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003.

"Laborwave", aesthetics.fandom.com. Accessed October 15 2022. https://aesthetics.fandom.com/wiki/Laborwave.

Lischer, Suzanne, Netkey Safi, and Cheryl Dickson. 2021. "Remote Learning and Students' Mental Health during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Mixed-method Enquiry." Prospects, (January). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09530-w.

Loignon, Guillaume, and Philippe Messier. 2020. "Vaporwave Pedagogy: Multimodal Learning with an Internet Music Microgenre". *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 16 (3) (August): 1-23.

McLeod, Ken. 2018. "Vaporwave. Politics, Protest, and Identity." *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 30 (4) (December): 123–142. https://doi.org/10.1525/jpms.2018.300409.

Merriam-Webster.com/Dictionary s.v. "vaporware", Accessed July 31, 2022. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vaporware.

Newman, Sandra. 2015. "Possessed by a mask". Aeon.co, Aeon Media Group Ltd. Accessed July 31, 2022. https://aeon.co/essays/how-masks-explain-the-psychology-behind-online-harassment.

Pennycook, Alastair. 2017. "Translanguaging and Semiotic Assemblages." *International Journal of Multilingualism* 14 (3) (April): 269-282. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2017.1315810.

Prensky, Marc. 2001. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1. » *On The Horizon* 9 (5) (September): 1-6.

"Putting It in its Place." 2001. The Economist. August 9. Accessed July 31, 2022. https://www.economist.com/special-report/2001/08/09/putting-it-in-its-place.

Shohamy, Elana. 2015. LL Research as Expanding Language and Language Policy. *Linguistic Landscape*. 1 (1/2) (June): 152–171. https://doi.org/10.1075/ll.1.1-2.09sho.

Shohamy, Elana and Eliezer Ben-Rafael. 2015. *Introduction: Linguistic Landscape, A New Journal*. Linguistic Landscape. 1 (1/2) (June): 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1075/ll.1.1-2.001int.

Singh, Greg. 2016. "YouTubers, Online Selves and the Performance Principle: Notes from a Post-Jungian Perspective." *CM : Communication and Media* XI (38) (January): 205-232. doi: 10.5937/comman11-11414.

Smith, Alise. 2020. "'For You Page': TikTok as a lens for identity discourse in Western culture." Debating Communities and Networks XI Conference 2020 at Curtin University, May 11. Accessed July 31, 2022. https://networkconference.netstudies.org/2020Curtin/2020/05/11/for-you-page-tiktok-as-a-lens-for-identity-discourse-in-western-culture/.

"The Beauty of Degraded Media." Aired October 24, 2019, on YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEygho_j5j0.

Tiffany, Kaitlyn. 2021. "Cottagecore Was Just the Beginning". The Atlantic, February 5. Accessed July 31, 2022. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2021/02/aesthetics-wiki-cottagecore-tumblr-tiktok/617923/.

"Traumacore". aesthetics.fandom.com. Accessed July 31, 2021. https://aesthetics.fandom.com/wiki/Traumacore.

Turner, Victor. 1974. "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology". *Rice Institute Pamphlet - Rice University Studies* 60 (3) (July): 53-92.

Turner, Victor, and Edward Bruner. 1986. *The Anthropology of Experience*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Wallace Kathleen. 2021. "You Are a Network," aeon.co, May 18. Accessed July 31, 2022. https://aeon.co/essays/the-self-is-not-singular-but-a-fluid-network-of-identities.

Williams, J. Patrick. 2006. "Authentic Identities: Straightedge Subculture, Music and the Internet." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography.* 35 (2) (April): 173-200. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241605285100.

Yuzulia, Irza. 2021. "The Challenges of Online Learning during Pandemic: Students' Voice." *Wanastra: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* 13 (1) (March): 8-12. https://doi.org/10.31294/w.v12i1.