

Social Media Narrative:  
Issues in Contemporary Practice

hosted by The Rutgers Camden Digital Studies Center and Judy Malloy  
and the Rutgers Camden DSC Class in Social Media Narrative:

Lineage and Contemporary Practice  
Facebook, November 16 - 21, 2016

## Transcript: Rob Wittig



**Rob Wittig**

November 17

So... this is the Facebook page I was telling you about in my last livestream: the Digital Studies Center at Rutgers-Camden.

Can you see it?

Let me just, let me move the camera.

There it is, see?

This Facebook page here is being used right now by the amazing and history-making creative force they call Judy Malloy and her lucky lucky students. Lucky students because I'm sure Judy is blowing their minds and giving them a great vision of the creative possibilities of words-in-media.

I'm flattered to be asked to participate with so many cool creators. A '“Whois” Who' (airquotes) (pun intended, get it? the WWW “whois” unix command?) of soc med auths. Sounds weird when I say that out loud, doesn't it? That's one of my things these days: saying written abbrevs out loud.

It's one of those ways of pointing toward the materiality of language, I guess I'd say, with my literary scholar hat on.

See? Here's my literary scholar hat. Kind of an academic Tam-'o-Shanter with the tathel alwayth getting in my mouth. Pfffft!

And here's me, writing my opening statement thingie for Judy's “Social Media Narrative: Issues in Contemporary Practice” panel.

Writey write-write.

Typey type-type.

Yeah, I'm fast. I earned my living for my first ten years of experimental online writing as a typesetter.

I look pretty professional at the keyboard, don't I?

Pausing to stare out at the courtyard-waiting-for-snow in a pensive pose. See?

I guess there are two things I really want to start out writing about to the folks on this Facebook page.

But before I do, here's me inelegantly wolfing down my chicken Caesar salad from the Northern Shores Cafe right as I'm writing. Pretty professional-writerly, eh? Here's me picking up shredded cheese off my desk. Throw it in the garbage can? Naw, on the floor. Just kidding, just kidding. In this napkin. And ball it up.

And that makes three things.

The first thing is about how I adore how writing in social media constantly allows... encourages... material explorations of writing. Writing in ways we haven't before. New strategies. New orthography. New locutions. Including parts of our mental verbal flow that had been excluded from other styles. And not always because of any kind of necessary technological affordance. No, often just because of novelty. Never underestimate novelty!

They never include enough Caesar dressing with these salads. Look at this! Here's me gokking on dry lettuce at the bottom of the bowl!

The second thing is the idea of crowdsourced creativity, which I've been in love with ever since the early early days of Invisible Seattle, when we built the Novel of Seattle, by Seattle by dressing as Literary Workers and walking up to people on the street and saying "Excuse me, we're building a novel, may we borrow a few of your words?"

Here's me "Bing"ing (not binge-ing, Bing-ing as in the search engine Bing, the lonely forgotten, wistful, sad, hardworking, distant second search engine Bing...Here's me doing my sad, sad puppydog face, airquotes "Poooooor Bing!") What I'm Binging is a couple of Invisible Seattle links for you.

Invisible Seattle: The Novel of Seattle, by Seattle (crowdsourced creativity):  
<https://vimeo.com/34445620>

Invisible Seattle: Notes for a New Medium (early online literary collaboration):  
<https://vimeo.com/34272072>

When we did the Novel of Seattle, by Seattle, we used to say: "We write novels the way they used to build cathedrals." The whole community volunteering skills toward this one, towering, breathtaking total THING in the middle of town that you could see on the horizon for a whole day as you walked to medieval Paris.

Crowdsourced creativity is what I still find super-exciting every day when Mark Marino and the Featured Players (friends around the world) and our beloved Players (whom we don't know yet) do netprov projects!

Meanwhile Netprov Studio — Play a character, join a story!  
<http://meanwhilenetprov.com/>

Instead of being the airquotes "authors" and saying look at me, look at me, look at me — we have the opportunity to LISTEN in all caps to people and say how can we help support your creativity? Can we do the boring part of structuring a big-picture narrative so that you can do the fun part — the roleplaying, cracking people up, cracking yourself up, learning-about-the-world-by-mimicking-it part?

Can we create something where we write WITH people, side-by-side?

I used to want to be a great writer, now I want to be a great reader, a great listener, a great encourager.

Where's my napkin?

Have I had that on my chin this whole time?

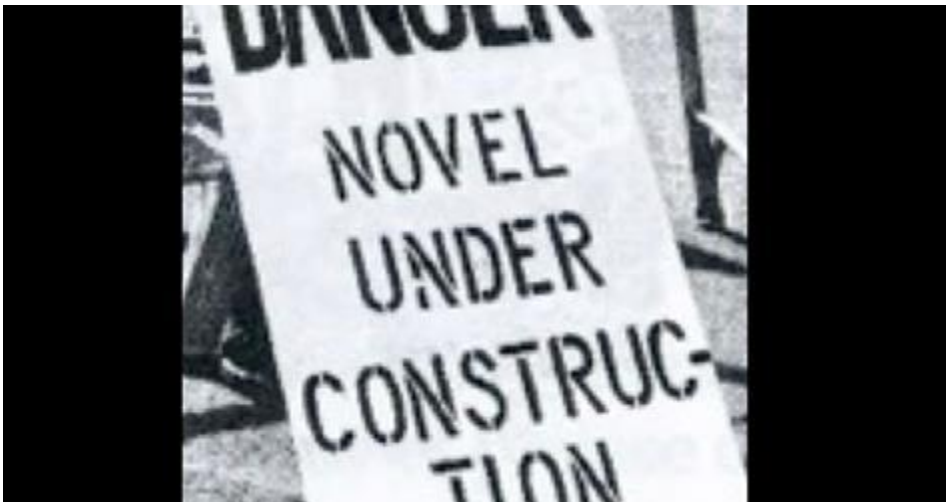
The third thing is an airquote “novelist’s notebook” observation I’ve been making lately about how many creators, like me, do their work self-funded in the margins of their money-earning jobs. This cramming in creative work late at night early in the morning IS the creative locus of the 20-teens. I’m talking to YOU, filmmakers of the future!

O, ye filmme makers of ye future!

Remember ye that creative social media art folk of our ilk and time did not so much lounge in houses of coffee having earnest TV-show-style conversations nor sprawl across their designerly couches in jeans and t-shirts striking Reality-TV unposed poses, but rather they hunched over laptops at odd hours in guilty neglect of their paid duties and to the consternation of loved ones, spilling Caesar salad on their keyboards.... and airquotes “snuck” their creative work in stolen time.

So that’s what I’m writing to these people’s Facebook at Rutgers-Camden. Thanks for watching!

Uh-oh my camera is running out of



<https://player.vimeo.com/video/34445620?autoplay=1>

#### Comments



**Jeremy Hight** mmm salad...

November 17 at 4:20pm



**Deena Larsen** Word salad--but a bit borrowed.



Judy Malloy Welcome, Rob!

Netprov originator Rob Wittig teaches in the Departments of Art and Design and Writing Studies at the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

Visit

<http://www.narrabase.net/socmedianarrative.html#rob>

to find out more



**Rob Wittig**  
Meanwhile... Netprov Studio  
Netprov Runner  
Minnesota, USA

November 17 at 4:26pm



**Jeremy Hight** 😊 kind ..humble and brilliant

November 17 at 4:27pm



**Judy Malloy** Hi Rob, whose work has spanned many decades of social media narrative, great to see you here!

November 17 at 4:35pm



**Claire Donato** Rob is the loveliest human! His ❤️ is XXXL x infinity. Hi Rob!

November 17 at 5:25pm



**Dene Grigar** Mad scientist of the net

November 17 at 8:53pm



**Mark Marino** Rob nails the core poverty of contemporary SNSs, namely, I can LIKE his Caesar Salad even though I cannot yet taste it.

Like November 18 at 4:18am



**Deena Larsen** Rob--do you see any differences in this face-to-face interaction than with the social media interactions? What qualities come through f2f that don't in social media--and vice versa?

November 19 at 8:45pm



**Rob Wittig** I definitely think we as a culture are over the idea that "this replaces that" – over an attempt to create electronic communications that aim to be a full replacement of face-to-face communications. Real communications practice now is mostly a combination of face-to-face and digital communications. We're with a group of friends and we all take a break to sit together and communicate on our phones. Or we're cuddled up with a loved one watching a TV drama and talking AND are both on our phones reading and writing messages from time to time. That hybridity is a really interesting thing that's going on right now. **Mark Marino's** thoughts and curriculum about selfies have great insight into this. Selfies are this intersection between real-life performance and social media. The thriving culture of videos of folks narrating their own game-play is poised to become a genre of folks narrating their own lives 24/7, which is super interesting to me. The internal monologue captured and cultivated by modernist writers 100 years ago is about to become a real-life performance art. "As I walk down this street it reminds me of my walk to school in 3rd Grade... Oh, hi, Lisa!... That's Lisa, everybody... In 3rd grade I had to lug a huge bag..." etc.

November 20 at 1:38pm

**Rob Wittig** One more specific answer to Deena's question: **Mark Marino's** and Hayley Steele's and Cathy Podeszwa's and my recent foray into blending Live Action Roleplay with Netprov in the project Thermophiles in Love showed us how eager people are to stand up and move around and play a real-life roleplaying game alongside their digital interactions. I'm seeing more and more electronic literature projects that include a live performance aspect. People crave a bit of embodied play these days. <http://markmarino.com/til/index.php?p=>

[Thermophiles in Love](#)

A 5-Gender Dating Site for Micro-Organisms  
[markmarino.com](http://markmarino.com)

November 20 at 1:35pm



**Deena Larsen** **Rob Wittig** --I think this melange of f2f and digital may well explain the Pokemon phenomena last year. I wish that more locative art would have that same appeal!

November 21 at 6:37pm



**Judy Malloy** Thanks **Rob Wittig** for joining us here! And particularly thanks for your evocative chicken Caesar salad intertwining of the real and the virtual in your statement.

Thanks **Mark Marino** and **Deena Larsen** for contributing to and emphasizing this issue so clearly!

"Real communications practice now is mostly a combination of face-to-face and digital communications," Rob responds.

We've talked a lot in Social Media Narrative class about building community as a part of social media narrative, and some students -- Aly Steered Straight and Alphanumu Ptk Vicky forinstance -- have created community for their social media-based works in innovative ways that involved RL community -- for instance creating collaborative literature with friends; merging graphic design skills with a partner's images; involving family in online reactions to their work.

And you, whose work has involved RL interaction since the Invisible Seattle days -- also point to "Thermophiles in Love" noting that "People crave a bit of embodied play these days".

It has been a pleasure to have you on this panel!

November 23 at 4:50pm ·