

## **A MULTIMEDIA NOVEL? – NOW’S THE FUCKING TIME!**

What does the term “multimedia novel” mean? Is it still literature, or an experiment in which the literary element loses significance? From my position as an author that uses this label, please allow me to explain how I perceive this term while presenting my own application and concept in the attached extracts from the first and second volume of my trilogy. I will admit openly that I see myself as a reader who prefers absolute quiet that allows me to concentrate while reading. However, I compared my inner feelings evoked by the effects of music to those that I experience while reading a book or watching a film until I gradually reached a form of expression to which I apply the label “multimedia”.

The internet is a platform for my work; the criteria which I have internally established are not aimed at deprecating the quality of the literary work. On the contrary. I insist on the demands that are placed on a classic work of literature – a story and characters that one can identify with. The active internet links function as a new element – non-verbal building blocks that I use to support the written word. The internet has significantly influenced our possibilities of media expression and to spread information. Can this statement be applied to literature? Is the written word able to keep pace while using its existing tools? Or is it lagging behind the headlong developments of other categories of art and media?

I have attempted to find an answer to these questions by first linking poetry with music in my novel and incorporating the works of famous artists into my stories so that they are in harmony with the plot. Encouraged by the effect I had reached, I subsequently expanded this concept to images, video and film. By doing so, I had given myself new questions to answer: Can noise, clamor, or a film recording be a part of the novel? It is a means of expression or just a backdrop? My answer is “both”. My novel covers roughly 1,100 pages and my aim is not to add a list of the main character’s favorite music and films to the book, but to accomplish a more complex sensation during the reading itself, thus giving the novel a dimension that is missing in the written word.

From the reader’s position, different feelings arise inside me while I am reading than when I am listening to music; I have, however, attempted in my novel to link both experiences into one whole. My experiment is also based on this principle. While creating music with a story, I make use of the wide palette of experiences that music evokes in the listener. In select moments, I do this intentionally to strengthen the reader’s emotional experience and I assume that listening to music will free up their thought and open a window to new horizons. Just as film uses the subliminal effect of musical accompaniment to increase tension and dramatic moments or to strengthen sentiment, I use selected compositions to stimulate the reader’s imagination and commence a specific type of communication of consciousness, which is often complemented by an image or film clip.

Every link, be it musical, textual or in the form of video, therefore has its own significance and opens a new dimension to the novel. My efforts are not aimed at teaching you, the readers, how to listen to music and read simultaneously. I will leave this up to each person’s individual preference. However, the readers should know the composition, because it is echoed in the novel, and it is wholly adequate if the song is recalled subliminally during reading. My vision is to create for the reader a compact “package” containing an e-book with e.g. mp4-format versions of selected tracks and film clips while complying with the copyrights of the authors used.

My primary motive for adding music links into the text is to change readers’ mood in relation to the message that emanates from the track. By applying this in the novel, it is easier for me as the author to depict the same feeling in written word. Thus, via the music’s lyrics or through poetry, we unintentionally enter the world of the original authors’ ideas. In the example of the link to the musical work Carmina Burana I acquaint you with the assumed world and thoughts of individual original authors in the extensive passages of the first book. With surprise and wonder, I realized that the thoughts and feelings hidden in the poems of our ancestors are still up-to-date in our present, technology-flooded

age. The following is a sample of the linkage of music and story to evoke a desired atmosphere. I used this link as the background to the first volume of the trilogy.

### O FORTUNA

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNWpZ-Y\\_KvU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNWpZ-Y_KvU)

<p>O Fortuna velut luna statu variabilis, semper crescis aut decrescis; vita detestabilis nunc obdurat et tunc curat ludo mentis aciem, egestatem, potestatem dissolvit ut glaciem.</p> <p>Sors immanis et inanis, rota tu volubilis, status malus, vana salus semper dissolubilis, obumbrata et velata mihi quoque niteris; nunc per ludum dorsum nudum fero tui sceleris.</p> <p>Sors salutis et virtutis mihi nunc contraria, est affectus et defectus semper in angaria. Hac in hora sine mora corde pulsum tangite; quod per sortem sternit fortem, mecum omnes plangite!</p>	<p>O Fortuna like the moon you are changeable, ever waxing or waning; hateful life first oppresses and then soothes as fancy takes it; poverty and power it melts them like ice.</p> <p>Fate – monstrous and empty, you whirling wheel, you are malevolent, well-being is vain and always fades to nothing, shadowed and veiled you plague me too; now through the game I bring my bare back to your villainy.</p> <p>Fate is against me in health and virtue, driven on and weighted down, always enslaved. So at this hour without delay pluck the vibrating strings; since Fate strikes down the strong man, everyone weep with me</p>
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I strengthened the direct role of music in the story by rewriting of the lyrics of rock songs composed by famous artists. I intentionally combine my rhymes with those of the original, thus creating a collage that involuntarily weaves the used song into the story while often preserving the message of the original work in the text. In general, I view the poetry of rock n’ roll lyrics (and of other genres) as a strong source of my own literary inspiration and to me the poetry of song lyrics is a full-fledged literary category. The recent awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Bob Dylan is a confirmation of the validity of my path. I demonstrate my experiment with two brief samples from the first volume. I have used the composition Sympathy for the Devil as a sample of the free combination of the content of musical lyrics with a story; the storyline of the lyrics is later projected onto the story. In another place, I substituted the lyrics of Karmacoma by Massive Attack with my own rhyming version of the text and by doing so achieved the effect of a combination of my story with the lyrics of the original.

First and second sample:

## **Circus Babylon or Sympathy for the Devil**

### [Excerpt 1 Intro](#)

## **Koba in Coma**

### [Excerpt 2 The Wedding](#)

By using the two samples above, I have added a secondary meaning to the text of my own written narrative. In the introduction, I use this as a tool to introduce the narrator, and later the figures and plot twists from the song Sympathy for the Devil by the Rolling Stones appear in the actual story. I furnished the song Karmacoma by Massive Attack with my own lyrics “Koba in Coma” in order to use this in the novel as a tool of expression that depicts Stalin’s strengthening paranoia. In his mind, Stalin is tormented by an unknown song from the future that is driving him mad. Through this presence of music from another time, I intentionally achieve an absurd contrast by which I strengthen the extraneous nature of the whole situation, as a song from the end of the century actively intervenes in a plot situated in the course of the Second World War. I assume that the accompanying images on YouTube will evoke the same feeling.

As the author, I possess roughly 1,100 pages of story. This aggregate of written word to me represents a pure literary unit that I animate via elements from other media. I emphasize this fact because it is an abstract boundary of the dimension I am working with. I mean an area of text of the whole trilogy, which in its verbal extent takes in these otherwise foreign elements and does not become congested by them via samples of music or films. On the contrary – upon repeated reading, this complement becomes a natural part of the plot, like a distant echo with a subliminal reference to the significance of an image or word that is sung. The whole project does not lie in the mere writing of a novel. A rock musical is intended to be an accompanying expression – the Jesus Smart Superstar opera, the script and choreography of which I am creating as a subchapter to the book.

Framing the first volume into circus scenes allows me to breathe the atmosphere of a circus performance into the novel. The link to Jeff Beals’ composition from Carnivale is a reference to this TV series, model film with a certain trick effect I would like to achieve in my own written story. In the attached sample of the second volume Chaos, I document another level of the novel’s multimedia format, in which I make use of the connection between spoken word, music, written text and film stories. I achieve this effect by incorporating the original film screenplay into a discussion between the characters of my novel. In practice, I am applying my own concept of intertextuality and expanding it with music and imagery, which allows me to link often ambivalent feelings initiated by listening, reading a text, or by viewing an image.

The third sample from the second volume is again provocative thanks to the inappropriateness of the selected time. I intentionally use the name of This is Not a Love Song – a hit written by the post-punk group Public Image Ltd, which first came out as a single in 1983. In the context of the plot of the trilogy, the song is introduced on the day that the whole nation attends the compulsory mourning of recently deceased Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. I do, however, use an updated version from 2013, by which I point to Smart’s occasional ability to see future events.

Third sample:

## **Johnny Rotten 1982 alias John Lydon 2013**

### [Excerpt 3 This is not the Love Song](#)

In the fourth sample of my presentation, I document the fusion of novel and film by using well-known catchphrases to ease the plot and evoke a humorously absurd situation. I situated this plot twist in Prague at the time of harsh normalization. The moment Smart begins to communicate with Renton is meant to bring about a feeling of broken time, as the action is taking place behind the Iron Curtain sometime in 1982, while the character Renton is from the film *Trainspotting*, which takes place in Edinburgh, Scotland in the 1990s. It is meant to add supertemporal tension to the atmosphere of Smart's discussion with Parasol. The confrontation of the world of thought of the two heroes, whose meeting is purely fictitious, provides the chapter with a dose of absurdity and allows me as the author to view the contemporary problems of the time through the lens of today's free era. In addition, it is an expression of my homage to British author Irvine Welsh. In the novel, I present Smart as an individual with the gift to see the future; due to his harsh rock n' roll character, however, he only sees the future of punk. The contiguous areas in an artificially conjoined discussion between Smart, Renton and Parasol in combination with the burning generational issues of the various decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century strengthen the timelessness of their testimonies. All of this is given extra color by a lively Iggy Pop track, which is a part of the trailer. A part of the scene is freely available on the internet.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjvsmVipSE4>

In the same chapter, I expand the sample of combined film screenplay and plot with excerpts from the screenplay of the Polish film *Psy* (Pigs). I lead my readers into the building of the Czech State Secret Police, going back in time again to the period of normalization in Prague. The scene links up with Smart's previous act, when he decides to create his own photographic archive of members of the Secret Police. Wholly openly and without hiding, the first agent he takes a picture of is Lieutenant-Colonel Antonín Krásný. Beside himself with rage, Krásný returns to the station after an unsuccessful chase and begins to plan his bloody reprisal on Smart. This combination of connecting the novel to film allows me to link well-known catchphrases from the film to the plot. The Polish film *Psy* (Pigs) was made in the beginning of the 1990s. The lines from the film have since become a part of Polish folklore and today live their own lives on the internet – advanced by folk creativity – without having any connection to the original work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwZVnNxXCso>

Rambo Kurwa=What the f..k!



or:

a short summary of scenes from the movie Psy mentioned above. I used slogans from this movie to demonstrate the marriage of music, film imagery, and film screenplay by inserting famous lines from film into the mouths of the heroes of my story:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdbcBBKNBzc> (Pigs, What the f..k! = Co to kurwa jest?)

The final sample shows you an extract from the 1<sup>st</sup> book with links to Wikipedia as a source of historical facts combined with film recordings. You may in fact see the enclosed story as a short example of my own interpretation of events that impacted the whole world and finally led to the Cold War and the long-term separation of countries that were violently grouped into the freedom-less and ransacked formation called the Eastern Bloc:

<http://www.databook.cz/data/6/f/1505737356.zaggabirozzi-the-100th-anniversary-of-the-1917-revolution.pdf>

I have conceived the conclusion to my essay in an experimental manner. As I have already stated, the primary motive for combining text with other media elements is my desire to expand the readers' consciousness by adding a non-literary – i.e. verbal and visual – element. Using a model excerpt that is not in any way linked to my novel, I plan to present the application of a new media element, which I use in the novel to hypothetically interlace a reference to a sample of the film Kill Bill 1 by Quentin Tarantino into a situation in the book where tension escalates and thus, from the position of author, disrupt the heavy silence of the written word. Using this effect, I provide a general relief for the reader and, for those acquainted with the film, I invoke a subliminal feeling of a victorious situation and the determination that is linked to the triumph of O-Ren Ishii, the heroine of the film. I then proceed to

present to the readied viewer-reader the culmination of the plot of my own written story, which ends, for example, in the main hero's unexpected victory. In a figurative sense, this active web link serves a similar function as the mechanical device in ancient theater used by antique dramatists to solve seemingly unsolvable situations – *Deus ex machina*. This film insertion has the same function as a text bubble for a comic book hero.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= UODI4ViJ8w>

Thus, I have outlined my own concept of the multimedia novel that is built upon the combination of situations that are close in terms of genre, the shape of which has already been created by another author in film or other form. For these purposes, I have taken a liking to publicly available film trailers, as they often humorously express the message of the whole film in an economical format. Screenplays for films published online serve the same purpose to me. I accept the argument that this is borrowed and unoriginal. To explain, however, I will say this: In terms of inspiration, I would compare this method to that of a DJ, who, not feeling bound by the original, moderates a mix of music that he or she presents. You have the opportunity to judge yourselves as to how well I have done in creating these styles of collages. It is now up to you, dear reader, to make your own judgment on whether this literary experiment, which carries the epithet of multimedia, interests you.

Hynek Mařák

Author

<http://www.databook.cz/marak-hynek>

**Note:** As the person, I am aware of the fact that using others' screenplays and film excerpts is likely subject to copyright. I have already solved this issue in regard to the first published volume. As concerns the planned and second volume, this essay is also meant as a basis for a legal assessment of the obligations stemming from the excerpts used before their actual publication to avoid entering into conflict with the authors whose works I myself respect.

As the author, I tend toward the simple approach – I do not care. I want to use whatever is available on the internet with no regard to copyrights or possible financial liability because, from the artist's point of view, I have no boundaries.