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From cultural islands to popular sites. Semantic sequences typifying museum descriptions on the Web

1. Introduction

Socio-cultural institutions evolve over time. In order to remain relevant and to fit into the experiences and needs of society, they have to change their focus and introduce different elements in their programming. The forces that can encourage change might derive from educational, socio-demographic, economic and political needs.

Like many cultural institutions, museums are expected to provide not only new experiences for their public, new technological opportunities and increased accountability, but also contribute and help to create shifts in aesthetic taste. Museums are thus attempting to respond to these and other changes in their societal environment by popularising themselves, that is, by shifting toward a less elitist audience through the creation of websites. Websites allow to address a wide heterogeneous public on a one-to-one level with simple narratives and a combination of different sign systems providing diverse reading paths which can enhance interaction between museums and their browsers.

Despite growing interest in the effects of new technologies on written communication (Boardman 2005; Posteguillo 2003), genre (Garzone 2007; Askehave/Ellerup Nielsen 2005),

promotional discourse (Samson 2010, 2007; Bamford/Salvi 2007; Janoschka 2004) and visual communication (Kress/Van Leeuwen 2001), museum websites have to date received limited attention (Bondi 2009; Samson 2009, 2010). This paper therefore investigates the use of semantic sequences (Hunston 2008) in Museum Descriptions, Collections and Exhibitions Webpages which form three sub-corpora of a Corpus of Museum Websites (CMW henceforth). Specifically, the study adopts a corpus driven approach integrated by qualitative analysis to understand how semantic sequences typify popularisation in the webpages of the CMW. This study also investigates whether meaning sequences vary across the corpus, and if the medium impacts on the sequences as well as on the web-writer/browser relationship across the corpus.

2. Museums and the public: from Enlightenment to plural interpretations

For many years museums have been viewed as heterotopias, that is, spatially isolated places that juxtapose incompatible objects and discontinuous times with “the role of creating a space of illusion that denounces all real space, all real emplacements [...] as being even more illusory” (Foucault 1998: 184). Museums have also been defined as “sepulchres for dead objects” (Adorno 1981), or “examples of historicity of death” (Merleau-Ponty 1993), since they engage in a double paradox: they contain infinite time in a finite space, and they are both a space of time and a timeless space accessible to few people (Lord 2006). In other words, museum juxtapose objects of different periods of time, attempt to present the totality of time in isolation, as an entire space, to normal temporal continuity.

Indeed the core of any museum is its collection in which material evidence is not simply exhibited but also collected, preserved and studied. In the Enlightenment perspective, this led to a new conception of museums, which were seen as cultural authorities, repositories of authentic

knowledge, or truth purveyors attempting to reach “newly-liberated citizenry” (Harrison 2005). Later in the nineteenth century, further rationale was attached to museums which acquired the role of public educators. This has been critically viewed as the exercise of state control reinforcing social structures of power (Foucault 1998), even though museums rarely lived up to their egalitarian mission, predominantly catering to small, already well-educated sectors of the population.

More recently, as a result of economic pressure, museums have relied less on collecting objects which are geographically or functionally similar (Lord 2006; Belting 2001) and have, by contrast, based their displays on the profound difference between objects and concepts (Lord 2006), their prevalent concern being to underline diversity in interpretation. Interpretation is the relationship between things and the words used to describe them. Without interpretation an institution would not be a museum but a “mere warehouse” (Lord 2006). Thus, nowadays many museum collections and exhibitions encourage visitors to consider how objects are related to concepts and categories, even when placed in social or cultural orders which diverge from the original. This highlights a socially and culturally inclusive learning for museums which encourage visitors to autonomously relate things to concepts in multiple ways, even when their interpretation might be framed within social or cultural orders which diverge from the artist’s (Lord 2006). This multiplicity of critical interpretations or voices, as Hooper-Greenhill (2000) terms it, are encouraged to be ‘heard’ since museums are increasingly expected to become active learning environments rather than simply telling the public what it needs to know (Barry 1998:98).

3. Museums between marketization and popularization

The need for museums to enhance visitors’ personal interpretations is closely related to the call for more interaction between the museum and the visitor. This is part of the process of marketization in

the public sector where the distinction between economic and cultural activity is becoming blurred, as Dicks (2003) claims. One of the main effects of marketization is an increased pressure on museums to engage in marketing activities closely directed by what the customer/visitor wants. This is evident from the flourishing of museum websites, the higher integration of interactive technologies, as well as from the emergence of inviting exhibition layouts and new management policies. The museum product is aligned to all kinds of simultaneous experiences, including education, recreation, sociability, aestheticism and celebration. It is assumed that all of these can be catered for by creating secondary products that facilitate consumption of the core activities (Kotler/Kotler 1998). As a result, most museum communication is overtly promotional through web-related genres and visual communication and it addresses the public as consumers or clients. So much so that traditional museum duties such as collecting and exhibiting artworks, are now being replaced by new concepts such as ‘access’, ‘social responsibility’ or ‘community involvement’ (Samson 2011). This change, as Barry (1998) argues, is linked to museums becoming a consumer product to be marketed in order to beat their direct competitors as well as a wide array of attractions such as audio-visual shows, multimedia programmes, or theme parks. In order to pursue their aim, museums are therefore starting to popularise themselves by disseminating knowledge outside what have long been viewed as “cultural islands” (Samson 2009), i.e. communities that produce, and to a certain extent seem to own, cultural knowledge.

But being able to do so is not a simple matter which recalls the narrative shift between professional scientific articles and popularizing articles well defined by Myers (1990):

The professional articles create what I call a narrative of science; they follow the argument of the scientist, arrange time into a parallel series of simultaneous events all supporting their claim, and emphasize in their syntax and vocabulary the conceptual structure of the discipline. The popularizing articles, on the other hand, present a sequential narrative of nature in which the plant

or animal, not the scientific activity, is the subject, the narrative is chronological, and the syntax and vocabulary emphasize the externality of nature to scientific practices (1990: 142).

Moreover, as Parkinson/Adendorff (2004: 388) state, research articles attempt to persuade readers of their knowledge claims while popular texts function as narratives of research, reporting on new knowledge claims not yet endorsed as fact by the research community. As a result, academic texts focus on theories and methods whereas popular articles focus on people and what they say and think. Popularisation can therefore be viewed, drawing on Giannoni (2008) as disseminating scientific findings outside the community that produces and, to a certain extent, 'owns' knowledge (in this particular study art is disseminated to the public outside museums). In doing so, popularisation helps to maintain a vital relationship between researchers (museums) and the general public.

These features imply another prominent difference between popular and academic texts, that is to say their attitude towards agency. The difference is associated with how objectivity is established. Parkinson/Adendorff (2004) claim that academic texts rely heavily on passivisation and nominalisation whereas in popularised texts objectivity is achieved by attributing ideas and utterances to specific agents. This different approach to personalisation is further accompanied by differences at an interpersonal level. Academic texts appear to be detached from the reader through elements of formality (i.e. technical language, nominalization, passivisation, impersonal tone and citation of references). Popular texts, by contrast, interact with the reader informally and by treating the scientists as personalities being interviewed, by providing their names and affiliations, by using humour (Parkinson/Adendorff 2004: 389). Parkinson/Adendorff (2004) also argue that readers in popularized texts can be involved by the author in a number of ways, such as by showing enthusiasm for the topic, using the narrative form or by means of humour. As a consequence, power relationships between writer and reader tend to be more symmetrical in popularised texts. These

forms of popularisation are mainly related to scientific and academic genres, but are they equally present in web-related genre/s, specifically museum websites?

4. Web-related genre/s: a brief overview

To increase their number of visitors, museums are significantly changing their communicative approach by following the example of many companies in creating websites to represent and promote a less elitist image of themselves (Samson 2007, 2009) to under-served segments of the broader society. Among the challenges museums are facing is their capacity to attract and interact with their web users in the simplest, most dynamic and persuasive way.

As various web-related genre studies indicate (Garzone 2007; Askehave/Ellerup Nielsen 2005; Shepherd/Watters 2004; Finnemann 1999, among others) websites and their webpages include the co-presence of multilinear, multimodal and multisemiotic content which leads to what Ravelli (2006) defines as the process of intersemiosis, i.e., the combination across different sign systems which produces discourse complexity. Complexity is also affected by hyperlinking interactivity which allows website users to pick up searched information and go to another page or section thus determining a non-linear reading path (Lemke 2005). This allows browsers to connect textual chunks or informational nodes within a text, or to link a given text to other texts through external links. This functional system, on the one hand, helps authors meet their rhetorical or communicative purposes as it enables them to overcome the space constraints of conventional print texts and contributes to form a unified whole (Santini 2007; Kwasnik/Crowston 2004). On the other hand, the hypertext linking system represents a limitation to the authors' communicative authority (Caballero 2008), since browsers can suddenly decide to jump from one textual chunk to another by

interrupting a traditional print text reading process. Indeed, the linking of hypertexts activates two diverse reading processes: ‘reading-as-such’ and the ‘navigating mode’ which are related to two different cognitive capacities and types of behaviour when shifting from reading to navigating and vice versa (Finnemann 1999).

Consequently, the study of any web-related genre (with specific reference to popularisation in this study) requires an approach that goes beyond the content, situation, context and communicative purposes of print genres (Bhatia 2004; Devitt 1993; Swales 1990) to include the attribute of functionality in understanding how features of the electronic medium shape web-related genre/s (Caballero 2008; Garzone 2007; Askehave/Ellerup Nielsen 2005; Kwasnik/Crowston 2005) and subsequent web-based discourse practices. Functionality underlines the importance of Bhatia’s (2004) argumentation in favour of a multi-perspective model of analysis which integrates the textual, socio-cognitive, socio-critical and ethnographic perspective in genre analysis.

Popularization has been studied over the last twenty years in pedagogical genres, newspapers, popular science magazines, and scientific journals (Giannoni 2008; Corbett 2006; Paul 2004; Shinn/Whitley 1985). Linguists have compared popularised texts with their source texts, with texts from different disciplines (Cianpuscio 2003; Varttala 1999; Dubois 1986) or from a single discipline – the doctor-patient relationship being one of the most researched one (Gallardo 2005; Meyers 2003; Caffi 1999). By contrast, popularisation in museum webpages still awaits closer investigation.

In the light of the above, this paper attempts to shed light on popularisation in specific museum webpages by analysing the semantic sequences that characterise popularisation across the sub-corpora forming the CMW. The investigation will specifically explore the impact of the hypertextual and functional elements on the recurring patterns of meaning, their possible variations, and the interaction between browser and webwriter emerging in the semantic sequences characterizing the CMW.

5. Corpus and Methodology

The data consist of a small specialised corpus, the CMW, selected and downloaded from museum websites on the Internet. The CMW includes approximately 75,000 tokens related to an existing Business to Consumer Website Corpus previously created (Samson 2007) by downloading specific webpages from the Internet¹. The corpus is formed by three sub-corpora:

SUB-CORPORA	TOKENS/WORDS
museum descriptions	29,180
museum collections	22,390
museum exhibitions	12,433

Table 1: Sub-corpora forming CMW.

Each sub-corpus includes the English version of Italian museum websites referring to museums located in three Tuscan towns – Florence, Siena and Prato – and the English versions of South African museum websites of museums in Cape Town and Pretoria. The corpus includes museum websites of two countries which, although very different, share a concern for popularizing knowledge through the representation and description of their museum collections and exhibitions whilst attempting to reach audiences with diverse needs and interests. The choice of including Italian and South African museums in the corpus was made on grounds of:

¹ The study presented in this paper is part of a wider Italian interuniversity research project on “Sense of space and identity in private and public communication across time” sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Universities and Research.

- the similar type of sponsorship these institutions receive, i.e. they are sponsored by the Ministry of Arts and Culture which excludes private funding;
- a similarity in presenting culture in the three sub-corpora;
- a link between cultural representation and variation in the semantic sequences across the museum sub-corpora.

In creating the corpus, the focus was on the linguistic features that characterise the main body of the descriptive webpages forming the CMW. For this reason, images and any other graphical elements were excluded from the corpus, together with any texts organised by lists of links or scattered around the main body.

The analytical approach followed was a combination of quantitative (corpus driven) and qualitative analysis. The quantitative search started by using Wordsmiths Tools (1999) to create Word Lists of each sub-corpus – museum descriptions, museum collections and exhibitions – followed by Keyword lists related to each sub-corpus. These were obtained by comparing the wordlists with a reference corpus DATA of 4,092,924 words. The Keyword Lists allowed to search semantic sequences on the basis of the clusters emerging from the Concordancer statistical counts per 1,000 tokens in the CMW. The qualitative analysis consisted in the investigation of the semantic sequences forming meaningful units in the three sub-corpora.

Drawing on Hunston (2008), I refer to semantic sequences as recurring sequences of words and phrases that may be very diverse in form and which are therefore more usefully characterised as sequences of meaning elements rather than formal sequences. Semantic sequences may be observed in each case taking a lexical word as the ‘core’ item. The sequence will consist of the core word, the pattern associated with that word and a number of phrases occurring before the core word which are, in spite of being diverse in form, consistent in terms of meaning (Hunston 2008: 271).

6. Findings

As previously mentioned, keywords provide a useful way to characterise a text or genre, as they are words significantly more frequent in each sub-corpora against a reference corpus. The results of the Keyword searches across the three sub-corpora are listed in Tables 2, 3 and 4 below:

N	WORD	FREQ.	%
1	THE	735	7.23
2	AND	424	4.17
3	<i>OF</i>	417	4.10
4	IN	267	2.63
5	TO	221	2.17

Table 2: Italian-South African Museum Descriptions Keywords.

N	WORD	FREQ.	%
1	THE	406	6.52
2	AND	266	4.27
3	<i>OF</i>	238	3.82
4	IN	137	2.20
5	COLLECTION	129	2.07

Table 3: Italian-South African Museum Collections Keywords.

N	WORD	FREQ.	%
1	THE	1,097	8.27
2	<i>OF</i>	572	4.30
3	AND	514	3.86
4	IN	322	2.42
5	TO	228	1.71

Table 4: Italian-South African Museum Exhibitions Keywords.

A comparison between the data in Tables 2, 3 and 4 shows similar words are included in the three sub-corpora. Preposition *of*, in particular, has the relative highest frequency in all three keyword lists which turns it into a key-key word, following Scott's (1999) definition. However, the comparison of the three keyword lists indicates a variance in the relative high frequency per 1,000 tokens of preposition *of*. In Table 2 (Museum Descriptions) preposition *of* (4.10%) has a relative higher frequency than in Table 3 (Museum Collections) (3.82%). By contrast, in Table 4 (Museum Exhibitions) the preposition *of* has a relative higher frequency (4.30%) than in Tables 2 and 3.

The grammatical word *of* can be considered a core item (Hunston 2008; Groom 2007; Gledhill 2000), as it is an element which associates grammar patterns and meaning. Hunston (2008) argues that prepositions are the best starting point to identify semantic sequences in specialised corpora because they identify what is being said in the corpora. This is demonstrated by grammar patterns and the non-random association between such patterns and the groups of words that occur with them. As a result, *of* can help to classify semantically the lexical words with which it frequently occurs and forms an integral part of semantic sequences (Hunston 2008) in the CMW.

6.1. Museum Descriptions Sub-Corpus

After the initial keyword frequency counts (see Tables 2-4), semantic patterns were identified in each sub-corpus to uncover further layers of meaning, since different patterns form meaningful units and thus senses of words (Römer 2009). As a result of this, the following semantic sequence *N/V+AREA (PART)+OF* emerged, as shown in examples (1), (2) and (3):

- (1) Already in 1978 engineer Attilio Mazzoni **had drawn up an urban plan in the eastern part of** the city aimed at “tertiary services”, located at the crossroads of the large avenues (Viale Leona [...])
- (2) The museum **occupies large part of** the former Vallombrosan convent dedicated to San Salvi and derives its name from the grandiose [...]
- (3) The Polo Museale of Florence **is part of** the State administration of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage. It is run by a Superintendent, who [...]

The pattern in all three above examples highlights one of the main functions of the descriptive webpages, that is, to inform the browser about the location of the museum. This is done by means of exophoric references to fixed external points (“in the eastern part”; “located at the crossroads of the large avenues”), hence linking a physical space to the virtual one. An exception is example (3), where the semantic sequence refers to an abstract place represented by the “State administration”.

Examples (1)-(3) confirm Hunston and Francis’s (2000) claim that a pattern can help us distinguish the different senses of a word within it. In this case, *of* means being established in, as well as being part of, a physical or abstract space. Thus, the meaning of the pattern varies according to the meanings of other semantically related words that occur in the same pattern. Examples (1) and (3), moreover, represent a typical symmetrical writer-reader relationship which characterises most popularised print texts. For instance, the web-writer in his/her narrative description of the museum refers to the name of the “engineer” in example (1), and to the “Superintendent”, in example (3) who runs the *Polo Museale*, thus leading to personalisation.

Examples (1)-(3) show how the browser is informed as well as directed to a physical or abstract site by a virtual eye which simultaneously allows ‘reading-as-such’ – in this case the written text within the webpage – and the ‘navigating mode’, entailing a shift from one descriptive museum webpage to another. Thus the browser with his/her decisional power can choose to link to another hyperlink in the webpage or ignore the verbal description provided by the museum and wander instead along a visual tour.

In examples (4), (5) and (6) the verbs – all static and in present tense – in the semantic sequence *N/NP+V+NP/PP+OF* direct the browser’s attention and provide tangible details of the area occupied by the museum:

(4) The **Museum is located in the Summer Apartments on the ground floor and on the mezzanine floor of** the Pitti Palace.

(5) The **Palatine Gallery occupies the whole left wing of** the first floor of the Pitti Palace, which was the residence of the Medici grand-dukes. In 1828, when Tuscany came under the [...]

(6) The **Uffizi Gallery occupies the top floor of** the large building erected by Giorgio Vasari between 1560 and 1580 to house the administrative offices of the [...]

The semantic sequences in (4), (5) and (6) have a deictic function as they point to fixed specific areas of the building (“in the Summer Apartments”; “on the ground floor”; “on the mezzanine floor”; “the whole left wing”; “the top floor”) and are framed within short, direct sentences which guide the browser through the museum’s space and which characterise popular and promotional web-related genres (Samson 2011).

Examples (4)-(6), as previous examples (1)-(3), reveal a symmetrical relationship between web-writer and browser when distancing themselves from the origins of the museums which are calendrically (Levinson 1983: 73) located in time (“in 1828”; “between 1560 and 1580”). References to time and space are typical elements that create a contrast and are used in promotional discourse to create the impression of ‘past still present’ in the attempt of “pulling and pushing”

(Dann 1996) website browsers to the museum. In other words, museum website browsers “pull” the information they demand for their needs, while museums “push” their products (collections, exhibitions, etc.) with the aim of attracting the museum website browser to actually visit the museum.

6.2. Museum Collections Sub-Corpus

The mix of simple narratives characterised by nominalisations, present tense, and impersonal short sentences stressing the importance and uniqueness of the museum collections, becomes even more frequent in the Museum Collections sub-corpus. In the latter the narratives are promotionally effective whilst they fulfill the Web medium requirements (Samson 2011). This is illustrated in examples (7)-(9) which display the following semantic sequence *NUMBER+OF+NPs/SUPERLATIVE*:

(7) **Two of the most famous** works in the rooms are by Gentile da Fabriano, considered **one of the greatest** Italian painters between the third and fourth decade of the fifteenth century [...]

(8) the entire collection make it **one of the foremost** museum collections for use in comparative studies and research in Iron Age archaeology [...]

(9) Hanging opposite the entrance to the room is the Tondo Doni, **one of the most famous** paintings in the Gallery, a youthful work commissioned [...]

Examples (7)-(9) highlight a concentration of repetitive sequences underscoring the high value of the art works preserved in the museums through the redundant use of superlative adjectives (Samson 2009). Redundancy, one of the rhetorical features characterising promotional discourse, is here expressed by short, highly evaluative terms which are meant to have a direct impact on the browser (Samson 2009, 2010). Furthermore, the narratives reflect the tendency on the internet to consider a generic, popular type of public not particularly interested in looking for specialised art

information (Samson 2009). As to this point, in (7) and (9), browsers are offered a verbal description of the rooms in the museum focussing on how paintings are located by using deictic macro reference (e.g. “in the rooms”; “opposite the entrance to the room”) instead of being provided with micro-reference, i.e. detailed descriptions of the works of art expressed through technical terms, as can be found for instance in print art reviews. Additionally, the macro reference is simultaneously integrated by the visual and virtual “navigating mode” of the content in the room. Hence, the textual reading of the information contained in each webpage is affected by the functionality of the medium while it attempts to satisfy the needs of an unsophisticated browser.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the web writer, pointing to the work of art and illustrating the historical importance of the painting might be seen as an attempt to establish a relationship with the browser. However, pointing in the CMW, as opposed to frames of reference (Levinson 1996) in print art reviews, does not have the function of building an image of a painting in the browser’s mind through the reviewer’s description. Thus, it does not lead to what Merlini Barbaresi (2009) terms “indices of intersubjectivity”. In CMW, by contrast, pointing seems to hold a limited metadiscursive guidance role, since the browser can ignore it by privileging his/her personal visual paths or navigating mode.

6.3. Museum Exhibitions Sub-Corpus

As Table 3 above shows, the relative frequency of the preposition *of* was highest in the Museum Exhibitions sub-corpus wherein the most frequent semantic sequence was *A SERIES+OF*:

(10) the aim of the exhibition is to bring together themes that link '68 to the present day. During the exhibition, **a series of** meetings complementary to the project will be held_in which high-profile personalities and intellectuals [...]

(11) Conceived as **a series of** mini one-man shows the exhibition itinerary which encompasses forty years of Italian art, will illustrate[...]

(12) The display begins with **a series of** installations/environments, or "exercises in architecture" which develop an idea of the environment by altering the [...]

Examples (10)-(12) indicate the main function of the Museum Exhibition webpages. Unlike the Collections webpages, they aim to introduce an exhibition by an operation of "ancrage" (Adam 1986), before looking at selected aspects of the exhibition ("meetings", "mini-one man shows", "installations/environments") to then qualify the object of the exhibition by implicit or explicit evaluation. Such presentations clearly combine a description with exposition based on comprehension. The description of the exhibition is structured around the reconstruction of the context and is based on the cognitive process of perception in time and space.

Similarly with the recurring semantic sequence *ONE+OF+SUPERLATIVE*, as shown in examples (13) and (14), the description of the exhibition is mixed with evaluation:

(13) he is **one of the most appreciated** at the international level. He has had one-man shows in many galleries and museums, [...]

(14) Donatello's bronze David (1386-1466) is **one of the most famous** and greatly admired works of the entire fifteenth century, but there is no documentary evidence [...]

The examples above highlight how the presentation of the exhibition's theme is overwhelmed by the highly positive evaluation of the artist as well as his/her works. Examples (13) and (14) indicate an attitudinal reaction to the object of the exhibition while contributing to create a valuable voice for the museum. Indeed this is emphasised further in the semantic pattern: *OF+THE WORK*:

(15) this show claims to be the most complete and detailed overview **of the work** of Loris Cecchini.

(16) The importance **of the work**, the delicacy of the modelling and the presence [...]

Both examples (15) and (16) reveal how the Museum Exhibitions sub-corpus, unlike the Museum Descriptions and Collections sub-corpora, is typified by highly evaluative discourse concerning the

exhibition, the work of the artist and implicitly showing the degree of expertise of the museum in the field of Arts. The recurring semantic sequences indicate a change in the relationship between web-writer and browser which becomes asymmetrical, similar to the relationships which characterise many academic texts.

7. Concluding remarks

The findings of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of CMW indicate a variation in the use of semantic sequences, with the preposition *of* as their core, in the three sub-corpora Museum Descriptions, Collections and Exhibitions.

In the Museum Descriptions sub-corpus the sequences have the function of introducing the website browser to the cultural heritage which the museum preserves. This is conveyed by impersonal, informative and descriptive narratives on the history of the museum characterised by exophoric references which direct the browser to a physical or abstract site. The purpose of doing so is, on the one hand, to convey information to the browser and, on the other, to persuade potential visitors to visit the museum by linking ‘past to present’.

In the Museum Collections sub-corpus the meaning sequences have multiple roles. They guide the browser through the rooms of the collections by pointing a virtual eye toward various specific parts of the space in the museum whilst evaluating positively the items of the collection. The evaluation is generic and does not focus on specific features of the artwork. The purpose thus seems to describe, inform and evaluate in a simple narrative for a generic public whilst promoting the Collections. This mix of popular-promotional discourses is further emphasized in the

Exhibitions sub-corpus wherein evaluative discourse prevails. The patterns of meaning express a positive evaluation of the artist, artworks and other complementary activities included in the exhibitions as well as the expertise of the museum itself. The highly descriptive and promotional message in these webpages impacts on the relationship between web-writer and browser which turns asymmetrical, thus recalling academic genres.

While it is important to underscore that popularisation in the CMW corpus presents some of the features which typify popularised print texts, the narratives in the museum webpages distinguish themselves for the mix of descriptive-evaluative discourses which are affected by functionality, hypertextual links and intertextuality. Browsers can choose between different 'reading' options, they can connect textual chunks or informational nodes inside a text (internal links) or link a given text to external links. This linking system helps to overcome the space constraints of conventional print texts, but it also limits the rhetorical and communicative authority of the author (Caballero 2008). For instance, the metadiscursive role of pointing is limited, as a browser can opt for a purely visual navigating mode instead of the traditional reading-as-such mode. As a consequence, popularisation in CMW distinguishes itself from print texts as it undergoes the effects of the medium with its particular communicative purposes and means. More specifically, the features of popularisation vary in the interaction between webwriter and browser passing from symmetrical to asymmetrical and/or vice versa across the webpages of the different sub-corpora. It would therefore seem more appropriate to consider popularisation in the CMW as a web-related genre sliding along a continuum between narrative and promotional discourse in which informative, descriptive and evaluative functions overlap and intertwine.

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