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Transmedia as a Strategy:
Critical and Technical Expertise
for Today's Media Galaxy

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Electronic Art: Modern Short Fiction Transmedia Storytelling in Japan

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ABSTRACT – Digital modern fiction in Japan is a relatively new concept in literary waters, having its roots firmly placed in the 21st century. In the course over the last two decades, this branch of literary fiction has developed into a widespread sensation. The trendy “mobile phone novels” or *keitai shousetsu* differ from the traditional printed literary fiction because of several factors. Among these, we can take into account the writers, the audience, the form, the structure and the particular syntax, as well as the means and place of distribution. The writers are young authors whose mobile phone novels often lure to readers of the same age. Their uploaded novels into virtual platforms confirms the shapeshifting ways in which messages are sent from the addresser to the addressee in this virtual and technological era. These novels are created in such a way that they be intriguing due to the fact that creators and recipients are involved. It is interesting to point out that there is a certain phenomenon of mirror imagery between addressers and addressees since the *keitai shousetsu* readers tend to the same age and gender as the writers. Statistically speaking, the 86% of high schoolers, the 75% of middle schoolers and the 23% of grade schoolers, read mobile phone novels. This paper argues that *keitai shousetsu* can be seen as transmedia structures because they can involve a larger complex storyland which is shared and distributed on different media platforms.

KEYWORDS – *keitai shousetsu*, mobile phone novels, storytelling, traditional literature, transmedia.

1. INTRODUCTION

A new era brings along technological changes as well as new devices. Many of these are meant to make people’s lives easier. Even though the majority of such gadgets are, nowadays, constantly being used as assistance in the completion of day-to-day tasks, they have, at the same time, become a means

for humans to aesthetically express themselves. Namely, a mobile phone is a device that is rapidly taking over the entire planet, notably when it comes to young people. This is due to its universal purpose and its comfortable hand-held size. Not only can mobile phones be used for connecting and communicating with others but also for taking photographs and video recordings of precious life moments. In addition to that, it can also be used for reaching out via permanent World Wide Web connection, and for all types of leisure time activities such as listening to music, watching different kinds of programmes, films and television shows, and reading.

This is where *keitai shousetsu* as a phenomenon comes in. The term *keitai shousetsu* can be translated as “mobile phone novel”, “mobile phone novel” or “m-novel” for short. As parallel virtual world platforms, mobile phones are able to offer electronic books for avid readers. A mobile phone novel is one of such creations and an epitome of intermediality where various media can be involved to convey the same message. However, *keitai shousetsu* can also be used in transmedia storylines in order to create a complex marketing structure. This article explores the appearance of “mobile phone novels”, their history and characteristics as well as the different forms of their expansion, including transmedia aspects.

2. BASIC FEATURES OF *KEITAI SHOUSETSU* AND THEIR CRITICAL RECEPTION

As a rapidly increasing phenomenon, mobile phone novels have caught the attention of experts in the field of literary fiction, education as well as inter-medial and transmedia studies. Although some scholars find these novels as potentially interesting, there are many others who view them in a negative way.

In *Cult of the Amateur*, Andrew Keen affirms that “democratization, despite its lofty idealization, is undermining truth, souring civic discourse, and belittling expertise, experience and talent. As I noted earlier, it is threatening the very future of our cultural institutions” (quoted in Galbraith 2008, n.p.). He then proceeds to speak pejoratively about both the readers and the writers of *keitai shousetsu*, naming them “yutori”. The term “yutori” makes reference to a young person who “cannot properly read or write, or think, because of the ‘slow education’ (*yutori kyouiku*) which was a system adopted in the 90s to reduce pressure on kids”.

Indeed, mobile phone novels use colloquial short forms with a predominantly dialogical structure, little lexical variety and very few descriptions. Most critics note that these novels also lack complex literary elements and only focus mainly around the main actions or events. The rapid publishing of so called first-drafts is also another cause of concern, since non-edited content is usually plagued with various errors. For instance, some critics affirm that “adults worry that mobile novel will hinder the growth of children’s vocabulary, and accelerate illiteracy” (Sorenson and Pollack 2009, n.p.) as well as adolescent’s ability to express themselves appropriately.

Although these kind of opinions on the mobile phone novels are prevalent, there are also those who think that the hyper-mediatic breakthrough of *keitai shousetsu* products accommodate contemporary trends in young adult’s fiction and non-fiction, helping young readers cope with everyday problems in a way which they understand easily. Some of them might not have liked to read prior the arrival of the mobile phone novels, yet reading novels produced by their peers, and being able to communicate with them and receive retroactive feedback has contributed to enhance intersubjective forms of human connection and socialization.

Regarding the writers of these novels, in spite of headlines such as “Will the mobile phone novel kill ‘the author?’” which appeared in 2007 in a Japanese literary journal called *Bungakukai*, the writing of *keitai shousetsu* requires knowledge about narrative structure because these novels need to draw readers’ attention in a mere two hundred characters visible on the screen. Each of the characters counts, so each word must be thoroughly selected. Sentence structure and even employment of emoticons and punctuation are also significant.

3. THE BEGINNINGS OF *KEITAI SHOUSETSU* AND THEIR TRANSMEDIALIZATION

3.1. *Mobile Phone Novels Roots*

When it comes to *keitai shousetsu*, the Latin proverb “nomen est omen” has never been truer. If we are to literally translate the word “keitai” to English, we would find out that its meaning is actually “mobile phone”, while the word “shousetsu” means “novel”.

Mobile phone novels are today largely known under this Japanese moniker due to the fact that they are mostly widespread and incredibly prominent in Japan itself. If we had to give a clear and concise definition of this literary genre we would opt for calling it a type of fiction written in fragments, which is then being uploaded on an online hub, usually by amateur authors who write mostly for young readers.

This peculiar, sequential format, which calls for the quick publication of chapter often in their first draft and without proper editing, might remind us of the former epistolary novels, which were written as series of documents, mostly short letters, but also diary entries, newspaper clippings and other types of fragmentary writings.

With the amount of information found on the World Wide Web, short writings are becoming more and more popular. These short forms are also benefiting from other media formats such as images, whether still or animated (gif), video recordings, and other sorts of contemporary epistolary forms, such as e-mails.

In search for the very roots of the first *keitai shousetsu*, we had to time travel back to the year 2000 in Japan where we encountered the one which presumably caused a breakthrough and originated the phenomenon as we know it nowadays. A young writer has begun to publish and share his digital work by posting several short chapters almost instantly on certain platforms. He was inspired in 2000 by the increasing use of i-Mode to open Zavn.net, a website for mobile phone novels, to publicize his original writings and photographs. The writer did not reveal his real name or surname, which is rather peculiar in the publishing world. He rather used a pseudonym: "Yoshi". His novel was titled *Deep Love: Ayu no monogatari* which means "Deep Love: The Story of Ayu". In 2000, there was nowhere to upload the novel so what Yoshi did was circulate the fragments of his incomplete work via electronic mails and SMS messages. Sometime later, Yoshi set up a website called *Zavn* to subsequently publish the continuation of *Deep Love*, earning himself a countless number of readers, many of whom tried to mimic his production. This in turn originated the appearance of a myriad of mobile phone novels on the World Wide Web platform (Sorenson and Pollack 2009).

The literary motifs in *Deep Love* are numerous, dense and quite difficult to deal with when the reader takes into the account the protagonist's age. In the novel, Ayu is just seventeen years old, yet she is head over heels in love with Yoshiyuki, her boyfriend. Many teen readers show an empathic reaction and feel identified with her situation. Yoshiuki needs money for a heart opera-

tion and the sum is quite unaffordable for him. Because of this, Ayu begins to prostitute herself. However, in spite of her efforts, the money she gains is not enough. Eventually Ayu becomes ill with AIDS and she eventually dies.

Patrick W. Galbraith, a Duke university-based scholar working on Cultural Anthropology and Japanese studies, calls this novel a “romance peppered with scenes of rape, pregnancy, abortion, suicide attempts and drinking addiction” (Galbraith 2011, n.p.). Despite this fact, the shocking ordeals of the young protagonist, which occur subsequently and quickly one after another, soon became quite a sensation among the teen audience. The release of *Deep Love* on a virtual platform allowed it to spread much faster than a release in print would have. The interaction between different arts, such as the art of writing and multimedia, as in, uploading the aforementioned art to the World-Wide Web virtual hub and the usage of emoticons that intermingle with the typed-out text point out the intermedial quality of *keitai shousetsu* from a narratological angle. The novel was so successful that, in 2002, the author was offered a publishing deal, by the Starts Publishing Company. It sold over 2.5 million copies by 2004 (Yoshida 2008). The novel went through a series of adaptations from the mobile phone e-book to a manga, movie and even a television show thus also successfully becoming a transmedia product.

3.2. *Transmedialization of “Keitai Shousetsu”*

In order to firstly clarify the notion of “transmedia” before moving to the particular adaptations in reference to specific mobile phone novels, let it be said that transmedia storytelling is primarily defined as a continuous process of adaptation of basic fiction elements and their diffusion through various media in order to forge consolidated experiences. It is the same story that is being narrated through multiple mediatic platforms.

This definition was brought up by a United States researcher Henry Jenkins in an article in *MIT Technology Review*. Henry Jenkins has been the first one to coherently formalize the concept of “transmedia storytelling” as a “story [that] unfolds across multiple media platforms with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (2006, 293). The article was called “Transmedia Storytelling” and it underlined the main differences between the experiences that were being widespread across the globe (Jenkins 2010). Scolari describes transmedia storytelling as a following formula: $MI + PUC = TS$, where MI is Media Industry, PUC is participative user

culture and TS is transmedia storytelling (Scolari 2014, 69). Max Giovagnoli proceeds to refer to the four cardinal points of doing transmedia, which are:

- 1) Involving media in a publishing project.
- 2) Making the project's content available on different technological platforms while still managing the story experienced by different audiences.
- 3) Making sure that multiple media perused are permitted to narrate different stories, and yet all the while, exploring common theme.
- 4) Agreeing to give a part of the authorship and responsibility of the tale to the audience, thus creating a participatory and synergistic story in the experiences of the different audiences. (Giovagnoli 2012)

Transmedia storytelling reflects the economics of media consolidation or what industry observers call "synergy". Modern media companies are horizontally integrated, that is to say, they hold interests across a range of what were once distinct media industries. A media conglomerate has an incentive to spread its brand or expand its franchises across as many different platforms as possible, with primarily commercial or monetary interest on their mind. It may expand the potential market for a property by creating different points of entry for different audience segments, such as books that might be particularly appealing to young readers.

Deep Love, after being in the light lime as a mobile phone novel, became a paperback series which included four novels printed by Stars Publishing between 25th December 2002 and July 2003. In chronological order the titles were: *Deep Love – Ayu no monogatari*, Tokyo: Sutatsu Shuppan, 2002; *Deep Love – Hosuto*, Tokyo: Sutatsu Shuppan, 2003; *Deep Love – Reina no unmei*, Tokyo: Sutatsu Shuppan, 2003 and *Deep Love – Pao no monogatari*, Tokyo: Sutatsu Shuppan, 2003. The first story arc, aka the first novel is the most famous one and it centres on Ayu, a 17-year-old high school student who also is a prostitute. She has a materialistic view on life, and believes she loves no one and she is loved by no one. She seems to have forgotten how to feel, how to laugh and cry and is adamant about the fact that her life means absolutely nothing. Due to a chance encounter, her life will change and she will slowly start to come to her senses and find love. The novels were posteriorly adapted into five manga series:

- *Deep Love: Ayu no Monogatari* (original run: May 13, 2004 - September 13, 2004, 2 vols.);
- *Deep Love: Real* (original run: February 10, 2005 - February 5, 2010, 19 vols.);

- *Deep Love: Pao no Monogatari* (original run: February 10, 2005 - August 11, 2006, 2 vols.);
- *Deep Love: Host* (original run: February 10, 2005 - June 13, 2005, 2 vols.);
- *Deep Love: Reina no unmei* (published 2006).

All mangas were written by Yoshi, the mobile phone novel author. Three of them were illustrated by Yu Yoshii and one each drawn by Tetsu and Akiyo Kurosawa.

As mentioned, the mobile phone novel was turned into a movie and later released on DVD. The film came out under the same title on the 3rd of April 2004. It was a live action film, directed by Yoshi, and the soundtrack was done by Kawashima Ai.

The script had problems yet the actors and a few unique story lines managed to push it towards the audience. Although the music was not the best, many praise the ending song. Plus, the ending was proclaimed dramatic and a tad contrived. Many of the critics have merely commented on the movie impression, regardless of the manga (Freedman and Slade 2018).

Two TV shows were filmed, based on manga: episode 1 (*Ayu no monogatari*, 13 episodes) and episode 2 (*Host*, 12 episodes). Their broadcaster was TV Tokyo and they were broadcasted from October 2004 to January 2005, almost at the same time as the movie with the corresponding title (Calveti 2015). The producer was, once again, the mobile phone novel writer, Yoshi.

4. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE GENRE

Besides Japan, mobile phone novels are quite popular in its neighbouring countries such as South Korea, and if we move out of the Asian continent, we can also find them in South Africa, the United States, and in Europe (in Switzerland, Finland and Italy). One of the reasons for the sudden and incremented popularity of *keitai shousetsu* might be the easy accessibility to the novels, which can be distributed online and downloaded for free. Besides new content is constantly being updated. Young readers are so used to their mobile phone devices that they are happy to have rapid access to this kind of contents. The novels are easy to read, and the narrative constraints of traditional printed literature, such as the space-time limitations of the medium. However, we should emphasize that sometimes it is quite hard to determine

the exact number of readers when it comes to works hosted on online websites. For instance, a mobile phone novel *Koizora*, whose title is roughly translated as “Love Sky”, or “Sky of Love”, (2007) written by Mika (presumably nom de plume), had 20 million visualisations. Furthermore, we cannot know for certain how many people had actually read “Love Sky”, since many readers might have visited the website various times.

Platforms allow different forms of interaction. In the case of *keitai shousetsu*, the novels are designed to enable young reader various forms of immersion, from passively perusing the novel to imagine themselves as protagonists or directly connect with the author. This direct connection, unlike the one in printed literary fiction allows the author to follow the readers’ feedback to guide the plot, the narrative structure, or character development towards the desired directions provided by readers. In this way, the reading product is tailored to engage the fans and followers of the author, actively participating in the creation. The platforms also offer them the possibility of subscribing to various novels and receive notifications whenever new content is uploaded and updated. Traditional novels pull heavily the author’s role and independence. However, *keitai shousetsu* are collaborative products, much like transmedia narrative. Unlike traditional printed narrative, the writers of *keitai shousetsu* often use pen names and pseudonyms, hiding behind the screen with one-word nicknames. The reason for this lies in the fact that, as the authors themselves have admitted, on multiple occasions, the novels are partially true or inspired by their own lives. This means that if their identity were to be revealed, their privacy would suffer undesirable consequences.

Due to the heavy topics that abound in *keitai shousetsu*, this invisibility, or namelessness, so to speak, apart from absconding the true author selves, also generates mass-empathy. Perhaps this also has to do with the mentality of Japanese nation and their mass-introversion which creates a powerful contrast to the extroversion and the image of “self-focus” that even might border with narcissism (Goodyear 2008).

Finally, it is also important to mention that the authors of mobile phone novels are primarily young females, mostly in their late adolescent years. It is true that, in the past decade, some authors have decided to uncover their identity to the public, showing an increasing trend of male authors, at least when it comes to horror and science fiction plots.

5. MAIN FEATURES OF *KEITAI SHOUSETSU*

Beside the elements already mentioned that make *keitai shousetsu* special, it is also important to talk about their contents in terms of literary themes, narrative flow as well as the protagonists and other characters, and also aspects regarding their form, such as the format, length, the style and structure.

5.1. *Literary Themes*

With regards to the literary themes employed, it is obvious from the two examples that we have mentioned that one of the most dominant genres when it comes to mobile phone novels is love and romance. This is obvious due to the fact that the chief recipients of *keitai shousetsu* are young adults, particularly open to love, and vulnerable to all its forms. In the novels, love can take many forms, some are pleasant and some others aren't. The plots range from innocent romantic love and the first troves of passion, to extremely difficult and disagreeable stories, such as the one appearing in Yoshi's "Deep Love", that covers the topics of teen prostitution, pregnancy, drug abuse, death of loved ones, consensual and non-consensual sexual relations, abortion, disease and suicide attempts (Farrar 2009). "Deep Love" is particularly harsh and pessimistic because the reader is predisposed to the mainstream romance 'chick-lit' novels, as they are called, which end in a happy 'girl gets the guy' moment of no greater consequences. However, this story presents the reader the shock of the unexpected, in a distinct antithesis between the common images of Western teenage girl, a proactive participant who makes her own choices and is in control of her own destiny, and a teenage girl in Japan who seems to be doomed and she falls prey to unexpected circumstances that turn her into helpless, passive sufferer.

Therefore, the themes that abound in mobile phone novels are very much based on the reality of Japanese culture and the social life surrounding the authors. For instance, Mark D. West in *Lovesick Japan: Sex * Marriage * Romance **, claims that a 2007 government survey found that 52.2% of men and 47.7% of women between 18 and 34 have not had relationships with the opposite sex. Japan almost always ranks among the last countries in sex frequency. In addition, Japanese suicide rate is one of the highest in the world. Finally, about half of all Japanese pregnancies are violently interrupted (West 2011).

5.2. Narrative Flow

Taking into the account that *keitai shousetsu* are meant to be created and read on mobile phones which, to begin with, do not have such big screens by default, it is only logical that writers need to make the most of the small narrative space. For this reason, authors mostly opt for scenes imbued with dramatism and surprising occurrences imbued of strong emotions and often violent events: “If you have got a quiet scene, you use a lot more of returns and spaces. When a couple is fighting, you will cram the words together and make the screen very crowded” (Goodyear 2008, n.p.).

The scandalous, non-commonly treated or elaborated themes are what predominates in mobile phone novels, since the surprising ‘aha’ effects are what keeps the dynamism alive. It is also customary for the authors of these novels to end every fragment on a powerful cliffhanger that will leave the reader craving for more. Due to focusing on shocking turn of events, or unexpected plot twist, it is to be stated that the narrative flow is anything but conventional. Writing appears emotional, hasty, spontaneous and direct, intense feelings and dynamism are present and the story seems to fly forward, unburdened by ceaseless descriptive embellishments.

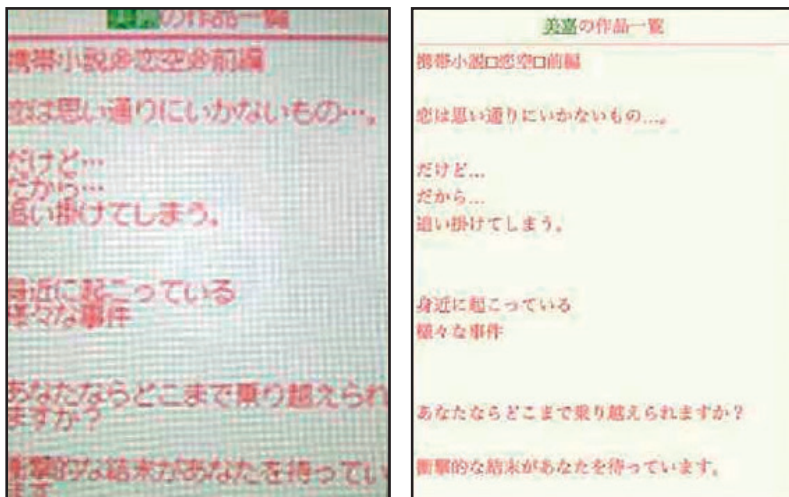


Figure 1. – Left: First page of “Koizora” (mobile frame).
Right: First page of “Koizora” (computer frame).

Figure 1 shows the first page of “Love Sky” and the way its narrative flow looks, both on a mobile screen and on a computer screen. It is immediately obvious to the reader that the frame contains very short lines and a lot of blank spaces. The way the text in Japanese is distributed even might remind the recipients of dialogues, of web and mobile phone applications chats. This is, of course, not coincidental, due to the fact that most of these lines are actually dialogues or streams of thoughts.

Calvetti notes that there are no narrative or descriptive segments like we are used to in traditional novels due to the authors being spatially limited, so even though there are no illustrations whatsoever to speak of, the text distribution does, indeed, resemble a graphical novel or a comic. This usage of screen space favours language economy while at the same time trying to convey an identical message to the reader, yet, using fewer characters and symbols (2015, 206)

5.3. Mobile Phone Novel Characters

Protagonists are one of the most important elements of a good story. They are to be well crafted and humane in such a way that the audience can really identify themselves with the novel character, live and breathe with them, empathise and jump through the hoops of life together, following their struggles as if they were their own. According to the words of Robert Olen Butler:

Most of the time good fiction comes out of an inspiration that includes an intuition of yearning ... the thing that triggers the moment in my unconscious when a character is ready to speak or be spoken of, ready to be a story, is a flash of intuition about that character's yearning. (2005, 42)

Keitai shousetsu, are, in a way, a patchwork digital opus consisting of numerous micro-narratives. This means that each mobile phone novel typically does not contain too many characters, neither protagonists nor side-tagonists and that the characters that do figure within the mobile phone novel tend to be reduced to mere sketches instead of being submitted to complicated, convoluted character development that most of us, as readers, might have grown accustomed to, while reading and perusing classical opuses. There is very little character evolution and growth overall, and the so called-character arc is lacking.

Predominating dialogue and monologue tend to be developed through the short and simple sentences. Words are frequently being crammed together, to show rapid actions, angry or hot scenes, and in order to demonstrate that the character isn't speaking in that scene. The blank spaces are used to show silence, these are the ones that indicate very little character evolution.

It is to be highlighted that, due to the fact that the target audience of this kind of novels are teens, the protagonists are as well mostly adolescents. The problems they face are commonplace teenage problems such as doubts regarding who they are, self-confidence regarding their own bodies, relationships with their peers or their crushes, budding sexuality, and the everlasting longing for understanding what this life is for. In such a literary world, it is precisely friends and romantic interests which are the side protagonists whereas adults such as teachers, parents or any kind of authority figures are not present at all or are merely mentioned.

The main protagonist almost always narrates the story in first person, which renders authenticity and complicity with the reader, strengthening the writer-reader relationship in this manner. Wilson underlines: "The first person serves to give the characters a strong presence, a sense of being real, as if the reader is witnessing, voyeuristically, the process of text being sent from someone else's cellphone" (2010, 15).

What the authors cleverly do is keep the readers on the edge of their seats by introducing so-called cliff-hangers at the end of each micro-chapter which tend to be powerful hints related to what might possibly be the next. For instance, the writer of *Love Sky*, Mika, makes the main character of the same name go through series of unfortunate events, one negative occurrence after another. The worse the event, the more hooked the readers get to the serialised chapters, and more eager for the next instalment. Mika, however, does not make things happen to her in any way but she is rather a passive observer of what occurs to her and sometimes does not respond to those event in any way, neither through words, deeds or feelings reveal.

The adverse incidents are quite dramatic, and range from gifting a heart to a bad boy through being pregnant and having a miscarriage on Christmas to being gang-raped, etc. That shock-effect maintains both the plot dynamism and the readers' intrigue for what is about to transpire next; at the same time, the protagonist is being pitied and the empathy readers feel for the main character/author (due to the fact that mobile phone novels are semi or fully autobiographical).

There are no complex secondary characters, only a sequence of shocking events that continuously occur one after another as if on cue, with strongly unfavourable outcomes, which aim to cause powerful emotional and melodramatic reactions in readers. The main protagonist, even though she goes through such hardships, does not realistically change as we might expect her to.

Another aspect that is quite specific for the characters that star in the novels is the constant presence of music in their lives, not unlike how it is with the adolescents in real life. Depending on the song that is being played at a certain moment in a mini-chapter, we can deduce how the character is feeling or if the type and song genre change a lot, we can extrapolate that they are having a mood whiplash. Scott quotes several examples:

- April 12, 2006, 10:30 PM
(music playing: *Blurry* – Puddle of Mud) (2010, 82);
- June 7, 2006, 12:05 AM
(music playing: *Zero* – The Smashing Pumpkins) (2010, 154);
- Aug 9, 2006, 2:02 AM
(music playing: *I Want You to Want Me* – Cheap Trick) (2010, 226).

5.4. *Novel Format, Style and Structure*

The overall format of *keitai shousetsu* is epistolary. The phrases are extremely brief and this is of course primordial due to the fact that a mobile phone screen can merely contain in between one hundred and fifty and two hundred characters. As far as the total length of a cellphone novel is concerned, texts vary from five thousand to more than one hundred and thirty-five thousand words, but what all of them have in common is a shared style and structure, as well as the shortness of individual lines, use of abbreviations and employment of emoticons.

As mentioned before, one of the main features of mobile phone novels is their abbreviated form. These abbreviations contribute to the language economy but at the same time, they are supposed to appeal to the recipients and immerse them into the narrative in an easier and a faster way. Dialogue inclinations are towards the natural way of expression. The *keitai shousetsu* authors tend to write down the conversations that seem exactly the same as those in real life thus contributing to the veracity of the written material. An important aspect is the use of slang, the language Japanese youth readily uses and recognizes. The overall style appears to be more laid back and informal in comparison to the traditional novels. We must also mention the inevitable

use of emoticons that replace entire sentences, sentence structures and even paragraphs, as they are supposed to convey thoughts and feelings in a more informal way, too (Nishimura 2007).

It is important to recognise the distinction between both the specific youth register – argot of Japanese language as in colloquial speech and tech-savvy register – the one perused by the avid users and owners of mobile phones. Both sets exist and the authors are able to play lexical and morphosyntactic elements in their favour, making an emotional link between the addresser and the addressee at a long distance, merely through the communicative virtual hub of a technological gadget such as a mobile phone or a laptop (Calvetti 2015). A significant portion of the messages that *keitai shousetsu* transmit is occupied by the usage of emojis. Fiormonte underlines that the employment of illustrative emoticons and their very creation is rooted in the impossibility, or at least, partial possibility of mere words on screen to convey the sentiments of the person creating a written content. Love, hatred, pleasantry, fear, nervousness, cannot be easily transmitted at a distance as that is the case with the immediate physical contact and the possibility to read the interlocutor's body language (Fiormonte 2003). Japanese expression for “emoji” is *kaomoji*, and it might be freely traduced as “face-character” which makes sense due to the fact that many emojis are facial expression substitutions and kind of “supplements” to electronic texting conversation, so to speak, trying to, at least partially, become a surrogate for the lack of the presential communication. *Kaomojis* are there to convey the textual subtleties in the best possible way.

As we all know, emojis are strategically inserted at certain fragments of the sentence structure in order to evoke determined feelings in readers, either in a singular manner or in creative sequences. When non-verbal or non-textual elements such as emoticons, that normally do not belong in the novel, are often used in the *keitai shousetsu*, this means that the author is also making an effort in order to give a modern dimension to their text.

Some of the best known emojis would be:

- :-) smiling or agreeing;
- :-D laughing;
- :-(sad or unhappy;
- :-@ screaming;
- :-& tongue tied;
- :* kisses;
- etc.

Besides conveying emotions, emojis can also largely contribute to the language economy, since they can replace entire paragraphs and reduce word count when it comes to mobile phone novels. There is no danger of misinterpretation because both the addresser and the addressee know perfectly well what each pictogram represents as they themselves have employed them in the past and are still wielding them in day-to-day conversations. Being tiny pictograms or symbols, these emoticons represent a variety of expressions of the writer and thereby save a number of text characters.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Japanese mobile phone novels or *keitai shousetsu* might have initially surfaced as brief literary works originally written on a mobile phone via text messaging but over the decades, they have become an intriguing literary wonder that deserves special attention of critics' magnifying glass.

Their innovative aspects lie in the different way of textual organization, usage of abbreviations and colloquial short forms, which bring about a new era of minimalism in art. Their specific line spacing, and employment of emojis set the mood and establish the nuances of an ongoing communication. Dramatic and drastic plots twist and turn, usually ending microchapters on a cliffhanger, keeping the audience expecting for the next instalment.

Mobile phone novels can be considered transmedia texts due to the fact that many of them have been adapted to other formats and platforms such as cinema, television and comic (manga). The most known example is of course, the aforementioned *Deep Love*, that was first mobile phone novel published as a book, with over two million copies sold in Japan and then it spun off into a television series, a manga and a film.

The authors of mobile phone novels write on the go, offering the readers their unedited first draft, taking into the account their real time, live feed feedback. A transmedia text is similar in that regard; interactivity exists, as well: a transmedia narrative does not simply diffuse information, it bestows a set of roles and goals which readers can assume as they enact aspects of the story through their everyday life.

Transmedia texts have encyclopaedic and epistolary ambitions that results in what might be seen as gaps of excesses in the unfolding of the story. Like *keitai shousetsu*, they introduce potential plots which cannot be fully

told, or extra details which hint at more than can be revealed. Therefore, readers have strong incentive to continue to elaborate on these story elements until they take life of their own (Jenkins 2007).

Apart from the literary significance of their emergence, mobile phone novels can also be considered a budding societal phenomenon. They have turned into a secure sanctuary for numerous, mostly female, Japanese authors and their readers since they freely permit them to express their feelings and thoughts which is not customary or common for the country they are living in (Matsuhashi 2011). Instead of shutting them down, the mobile phone novel has reinvented their identities, when it comes to both writers and their fans, allowing them to be themselves to the fullest and share their emotions with each other in a safe and anonymous way.

Kathleen Yancey, the president of the National Council of Teachers of English and an English Professor at Florida State University, underlines the specific kind of literary know-how which is needed in order to decipher and comprehend the structure of *keitai shousetsu*. "There is actually an art to creating a message for a small screen. It privileges the ability to use short-hand and rewards people for reading subtext, which is a fairly sophisticated manoeuvre" (quoted in Ash 2008, 12). *Keitai shousetsu* have most certainly left a mark on the Japanese literature and allowed many literary critics to tackle with this peculiar new phenomenon and give it a proper research.

It is next to impossible to predict the future as far as Japanese mobile phone novels are concerned: they might flourish in the upcoming decades, going even so far as to say that they might become tomorrow's classics; or they might as well be rendered obsolete. For now it is safe to say that they have territorially expanded and that they are becoming transmedia products and still affecting a lot of young readers.

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