# Network Everything

## Society, Publics, and Selves in the Digital Age

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It seems self-evident to emphasize the importance of the digital medium for our daily lives, our cultural production, our scientific endeavors. Nonetheless, at least in the Romanian scholarly sphere, and especially regarding fiction and poetry, analyses have overwhelmingly failed to consider the new theoretical perspectives put forward by scholars of the digital and virtual. Not only in terms of digital literature (the production of which is rather modest in Romania), but in terms of what the effects of networks and networked cultures and individuals have on specific literary artefacts and devices. This study provides a framework of "the network" in late 20th and early 21st centuries and the by-products of its "rise": the network society, networked publics and the networked self, as well as social networks. All of them have direct and undeniable influence on the ways creators and consumers approach literary artefacts today. The general view I provide here can be a starting point for the contextualization and analysis of contemporary works of fiction in terms of the now all-encompassing digital culture.

Even though human networks have always existed,[1] in 2001 it truly seemed that, just as Mark Wigley asserts in his article "Network Fever,"[2] *debates* about networks were about to reach their peak. A Google Books Ngram Viewer graph shows that the word "network" was present in about 0.013% of all the books published, peaking two years later and steadily declining until 2017, when mentions start to rise again.[3] Researchers, writers, publicists, journalists, statistically, saw networks everywhere. Networks, as discussed, are node structures and connections between these nodes. However, unlike hierarchical complexes, networks allow a non-hierarchical development, in which any two nodes can connect to each other. Of course, the result is not always that nodes are of equal importance, but the structural premise of a network is that they *can* be equal in that they allow for as many connections as possible.

Fast-forward to 23 March 2021, when a ship of over 200,000 tons and almost 400 meters long, *Ever Given*, carrying containers full of products of all kinds (from food to furniture and technology) from Malaysia to the Netherlands became stuck in the Suez Canal. By 29 March, when the ship was put back on track, about 12% of global trade

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had been shut down and the loss amounted to at least $10 billion.[4] The blockade came about a year after the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic, and global transport networks were rapidly emptying, with human travel falling dramatically.[5] At a time when the world is increasingly interconnected and most networks created between individuals and between communities are becoming more and more virtualized, moving largely into the digital environment, these two events are clear examples of the effects the persisting materiality of our existence still has. In the last thirty years, with the advent of the internet, which has led to the emergence of social networks, and after the globalization of live television, this degree of virtual interconnection has seemed to grow steadily and give the impression of a concomitant existence of the entire planet.

We must return to 2001, because the pivotal moment of this change in perception is the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York, on 11 September. Then, given that almost all general and news television channels in most countries broke the news and rebroadcast live footage presented on American television, "millions of people witnessed the second plane striking the South Tower in real time a mere 17 minutes after the first impact."[6] From any corner of the world, people who were not generally in contact with each other were connected in real time by a series of images of events that were also taking place at the same time. The dissolution or at least the transformation of the space-time continuum was taking place in a way that had never been experienced by humanity. The internet and its capabilities had only appeared for a decade, but television as a medium was reaching its peak. Whether it was 9 o'clock in the morning, 8 o'clock in the evening or noon, or whether they were in Japan, South Africa, Australia or Romania, millions of people watched the same images live, with a plane crashing into a tower in New York, and the new society, which had already begun to be theorized, analyzed, and proclaimed, appeared for the first time on an ultra-large scale. And

> *with little exaggeration, we may call the 21st century the age of networks. Networks are becoming the nervous system of our society, and we can expect this infrastructure to have more influence on our entire social and personal lives than did the construction of roads for the transportation of goods and people in the past.*[7]

Many descriptive models of this society refer, at some point, to network and/or networks. Some include it explicitly, such as the network society proposed by Manuel Castells or Jan van Dijk, while others implicitly, such as Steven G. Jones's cybersociety, Robert Hassan's information society, Roberto Simanowski's Facebook society or Shoshana Zuboff's age of surveillance capitalism.[8]

## 1. The Network Society

PROBABLY THE most debated prototypical proposal of the network society can be found in the trilogy of the information age published by Manuel Castells in the second half of the nineties. In 1996, Castells started from the premise that the emergence of the network society was made possible by the transition from the indus-

trial age to the information age. This idea also translates into shifting the focus of society from production (from means to the place of the individual in the chain) to information (obtaining, transmitting, searching, etc.), which is achieved mainly using new communication technologies (mobile devices connected through the internet). Networks are considered "the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture,"[9] and the active participation of corporations in the ecosystem of technological evolution is viewed with surprise, especially given the low financial advantages they had in the early days. Also fundamental in the network society is the fact that labor structures and production chains are changing. The various parts of a car can be manufactured in different parts of the world, and finally assembled in a place that is neither of those different parts of the world and distributed by local companies and representative offices. Thus, personal contributions become much more difficult to quantify. If in a local shoe store from the 1960s, the whole production process took place on site, from design to handling of the raw material, finishes and, finally, sale, and only the raw materials were needed (and they were often obtained locally), today we must ask "who is contributing to value creation in the electronics industry: the Silicon Valley chip designer, or the young woman on the assembly line of a South-East Asian factory? Certainly both, albeit in quite substantially different proportions."[10] Also, power relations change with the networking of society, because once the interconnection is done through nodes, the exercise and imposition of power becomes more difficult, because the nodes (whether they are represented by individuals, communities, states) can now connect to any other node. And at a cultural level, this network structure allows and even encourages diversity and cultural exchanges, constantly facilitating and sustaining access to the "other," to an otherness that in different historical moments, with different technological possibilities, would have been impossible. Manuel Castells considers that between these elements of the network society there is a relationship of inter-determination, and the two most important features of it remain the *space of flows* and *timeless time*.

Castells explains the space of flows (as opposed to *space of places*) in a 1999 article as a space in which "the material arrangements allow for simultaneity of social practices without territorial contiguity," a space that "is not purely electronic"[11] and contains four categories of elements: "a technological infrastructure of information systems, telecommunications, and transportation lines,"[12] nodes and hubs that "structure the connections,"[13] "habitats for the social actors that operate the networks"[14] and virtual spaces. This space of flows makes it easy to connect the local to the global and the global to the local. The best example of such a space of flows are the metropolises, which

> *develop as multi-ethnic places and establish global connections not only at the level of functional and economic interactions, but at the level of interpersonal relations—the networks of cultures, and the networks of people, analytically captured by the concept of transnationalism from below.*[15]

On the other hand, timeless time is set in opposition to biological time and "occurs when the characteristics of a given context, namely, the informational paradigm and the

network society, induce systemic perturbation in the sequential order of phenomena performed in that context."[16] In other words, this is a time that does not flow chronologically, it does not flow as time used to flow in the industrial age. We can take several actions at the same time, and that essentially suspends it. Work is also starting to function at the same time with other things we do, because "we discovered the network—the world of connectivity—to be uniquely suited to the overworked and overscheduled life it makes possible,"[17] and multi-tasking has become a constant of life in the network society. Moreover, we can communicate with each other even if we are in different parts of the world and in different time zones. Timeless time comes to define the space of flows itself, as Simon Bromley has been suggesting since 1999.[18]

In 2010, with the republication of the trilogy, the necessary hardware technology and thus access to the internet had become widespread, and Manuel Castells notes that there is a "social demand for the networking of everything, arising from both the needs of the business world and the public's desire to build its own communication networks."[19] Thus, "a new culture is forming, the culture of real virtuality, in which the digitized networks of multimodal communication have become so inclusive of all cultural expressions and personal experiences that they have made virtuality a fundamental dimension of our reality."[20] This concept of real virtuality is, for the Spanish sociologist, essential in the network society, because it contains, in fact, the individual condition of the people in the network society, namely that the virtual, no matter how immaterial and invisible, is in our physical reality, it has become an integral part of our lives that can no longer be denied. We are therefore already dealing with a connected world, which can not only learn about and watch passively the main global events of the day, as in 2001, but can react to them, comment on them and sometimes even interact directly with them. And it can do so from anywhere, whether at home, at work, on the street, or on public transportation, during travel, or in parks, but Castells does not believe that *mobility* is the main consequence of wireless communication devices, but "perpetual connectivity,"[21] the state of being always connected to the internet. This state is fundamentally different from the previous one, in which the periodic impossibility of access canceled perpetuity. This is a vision of how society is changing as the new digital environment spreads widely. But what happens within small communities and with the way the individual self relates to this new society?

## 2. Networked Publics and Selves

If the individual really feels more uprooted in the network society than in the previous society, where are they heading? And even more, how does she perceive her own person? Next, I will explore the notions of networked publics and networked self to observe the ways in which both belonging and self-referentiality are realized in a digital world.

In a general explanation of the term public, danah boyd analyzes the ways in which we perceive the notion of public. In general, the reference to the public is made with

a broad public in mind, and although the recipient of messages is always the "public," rarely do two addressees have the same public:

> *Traditionally, public is often marked by the definitive article "the," implying that there is only one public. Yet when the United States President addresses "the public," he is not talking to the same collection of people that the Zimbabwean President is addressing when he speaks. . . . Using the indefinite article allows us to recognize that there are different collections of people depending on the situation and context. This leaves room for multiple "publics." Individuals often engage with and are members of different publics and they move between them fluidly. Publics are not always distinct from one another and there are often smaller publics inside broader publics.*[22]

Once clarified, audience divisions and overlaps seem natural and commonplace. Only an explanation of the last part of boyd's description seems necessary, namely the impossibility of the publics' distinction from each other. Because, even if we have two politicians campaigning in the same country, their audiences are certainly different. However, they overlap when these two politicians both address (in a debate, for example) a common public. As for the other final idea, namely the existence of smaller publics in larger publics, this can be encountered, if we remain in the political analogies, in a situation like this: a politician gives a speech both at a meeting of the local leaders of a party, as well as at the congress of that party, where all the local leaders are invited. The first public, that of local leaders, is included in the second, that of the party congress. The other component of this section, the self, is a concept with a more complex and complicated history, but in this article it will be used as the reference of a person to their own person, in other words, to the way a person consciously looks at themselves from the outside.[23] But what is the relationship between publics(s), the self and networks?

Mizuko Ito, in her introduction to *Networked Publics*, the result of the study group's work on how individuals interact with the new networking opportunities of 13 researchers at the University of South Carolina from 2005 to 2006, argues that "the term *networked publics* references a linked set of social, cultural, and technological developments that have accompanied the growing engagement with digitally networked media."[24] In Ito's opinion, the term public, compared to those of audience and consumer, is more involved, more engaged, and it does not imply a hierarchical subordination. Nonetheless, she does not reiterate Manuel Castells' optimistic view of circumstances that dissolve the hierarchical means of communication, suggesting instead that hierarchies still exist somewhere in the networks of publics. Therefore, these networks are both bottom-up, top-down and side-to-side.[25] On the other hand, Zizi Papacharissi, in the introduction to the first of the three volumes about the networked self and identity, community and culture on social network sites (2011) and love (2018) and birth, life, death (2018) indicates that in the digital age we are dealing with

> *A networked sense of self communicated across collapsed and multiplied audiences is premised upon social opportunities for expression and connection. Networked and remixed sociabilities*

*emerge and are practiced over multiplied places and audiences that do not necessarily collapse one's sense of place, but afford a sense of place reflexively.*[26]

That space of flows defined by Castells makes its presence felt, and the sense we have of our own self breaks and multiplies, depending on the audience in front of which we are performing it.

## 2.1. Publics

EXTENDING ITO's definition, danah boyd starts from the premise that networked audiences are nothing more than ordinary audiences that go digital. These audiences are adapting to, using and in turn being transformed by digital networks (especially the internet). But the main addition that boyd brings to Ito's model is that, for boyd, online audiences are part of "(1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined community that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice."[27] Thus, suggesting they resemble parks, she includes social networks in the category of networked publics, in addition to the communities that take shape around certain topics, technologies, applications or themes. Boyd also continues the parallel between traditional and digital media, in a manner roughly similar to other theorists of the new society but argues that "as networked publics enable social interactions at all levels, the effects of these dynamics are felt at much broader levels than those felt by broadcast media and the introduction of other forms of media to publics."[28] This hints toward an impact on all levels of society, from the network to communities and individuals, and implies certain pros and cons. There are three factors identified as essential to the way publics communicate with each other online: invisible audiences—even if it's not mass communication from the start, the masses are always there and can receive the message, and anyone can be part of them, if the information is public, which is implicit in this case; collapsed contexts—boyd uses the same term as Papacharissi to explain that "the lack of spatial, social, and temporal boundaries makes it difficult to maintain distinct social contexts;"[29] blurring the boundaries between public and private—any piece of information (whether it's text messages, photos, statuses, audio files, etc.) can be relayed in the digital environment and is most likely stored on the servers of the companies that provide the platforms.[30]

In addition to these three factors, boyd also identifies four properties of networked publics conferred by the fact that they are actually bits.[31] The first of these, persistence, means that everything uploaded online is preserved. However, two scenarios now arise: if what is posted is public, it can be saved by virtually anyone, and a tool like Wayback Machine can store any public webpage, but if they are private (protected in some way by barriers put in place by various platform providers—cloud services or social networks with restricted access options), they can be stored only by individuals that have direct access to them or by platform providers. The second is replicability, which is the feature of "content made out of bits can be duplicated."[32] More than just duplication, techno-

logical and software advances have made it possible to manipulate the uploaded item after duplication, and that led to complex artifacts such as deepfakes, in which several types of files can be superimposed and combined, thus creating a false image.[33] The third is scalability, or the existence of a potentially unlimited potential audience. Anyone with internet access and a device running a web browser (most devices today support such browsers) is part of the potential audience of anyone who uploads anything on the internet. And the fourth is the ability to search, in other words that "content in networked publics can be accessed through search."[34]

## 2.2. The Self

Sherry Turkle recalls, in the introduction to *Alone Together*, a discussion she had in the mid–1990s with one of the subjects of her research at the time, Doug. He was a student and had four avatars—fictional characters created in the virtual environment, in different circumstances and possible worlds, whether they were intended strictly for socializing or allowing other activities. It is striking how he describes to the American psychologist that the real world (RL) is "just one more window" among the open windows of other worlds, and that "it's usually not my best one." Therefore, right after the recall, Turkle wonders where these mutations will go and talks about two major components: "the development of a *fully networked* life" and the evolution of robotics.[35] I will not dwell on the latter, given that we are talking about a rather technical and not a cultural prediction, but the road towards a *fully networked* life involves self-multiplication and self-distribution, which are already happening, regardless of whether the end point will be reached or not.

Doug's case is one that falls into the first category, the multiplication of the self. In the digital world, not only can you project whichever character you want, you can project *as many characters as you want*. Whether these characters are portrayed as the person in question (as is the case with social media profiles) or as avatars in various games and online communities, anonymous commenters, with or without a nickname, we are dealing with self-multiplication. In the case of games, for example, Turkle considers that despite the existence of specific missions or goals in them, "the virtual environments were most compelling because they offered opportunities for a social life, for performing as the self you wanted to be."[36]

However, multiplication does not exist only at a digital level, but it is beginning to translate, as widespread practice, into real life. You exist at the same time online and in real life, and in real life it is often expected of you to exist more than once (because of the suspension of time theorized by Castells). Multitasking is one of the direct consequences of the perception of multiplication that we have on ourselves and that others have on us.[37] In a way, in digital culture the idea of multi-tasking is taken for granted. In 2021, many people use their phones while walking, watching movies, socializing, listening to music, or even driving. Multi-tasking does not happen only during work, but also on a cultural level, and even entertainment has become a multi-tasking process. This compels Byung Chul Han to claim in a 2015 book that all these overlaps of physical and psy-

chological activities and processes lead to "pathological exhaustion," burnout, the main affliction of the digital age. And Sherry Turkle, extrapolating this self-multiplication and superimposing it on multi-tasking, calls the new state "multi-lifing."[38]

The second category, that of the distribution of the self, refers not only to the property of distributing the self among avatars or the multitude of created characters, but especially to the splitting of the self between the virtual world and the real world. The leap from the virtual world to the real world and vice versa becomes an invisible threshold that is constantly crossed, in both directions. If it is directed from the real world to the virtual world, it is escapism (in the footsteps of Doug, who feels much more digital), and if it is directed the other way around, from the virtual world to the real world, it is psychological pressure. "After an evening of avatar-to-avatar talk in a networked game, we feel, at one moment, in possession of a full social life and, in the next, curiously isolated, in tenuous complicity with strangers,"[39] Turkle writes about the state of the self in the virtual environment, one dominated by the contradiction of being together with others and alone. Because the spatial component is suspended and the presence of others does not physically exist around us, the self oscillates between two hypostases, which co-exist, and "our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other."[40] Moreover, "the old idea of a core self is an illusion. As such, the relationship between online and offline personas becomes a key to defining the self in a digital age,"[41] and the self becomes a palette of such online and offline avatars. We can imagine ourselves in the network society not as a single range of variables, but as a double range of variables. The relationship to these two environments is, even so, different. Because the level of attachment is different, and this difference lies between physical presence and physical absence (offline vs. online), the way people are perceived to exist for oneself only in the virtual environment is concretely downgraded in relation to people who exist for oneself in reality. In fact, when theorizing the "new self," Turkle even compares real objects and the treatment we apply to them with the treatment we apply to people in the virtual environment:

> *When I speak of a new state of the self, itself, I use the word 'itself' with purpose. It captures, although with some hyperbole, my concern that the connected life encourages us to treat those we meet online in something of the same way we treat objects—with dispatch.*[42]

Thus, there are substantial changes in the interaction and communication of audiences and self-projections with the advent of the network society and the digital environment, which is transforming communities and communication. Most of the digital communication has moved, in the last ten years, on social networks.

## 3. Network Communication: Social Networks

The size of a network is given by the number of nodes and links that exist within it. "In a social network the nodes are the individuals and the links correspond to relationships."[43] But how big can these social networks become? Throughout

history, their size has invariably depended on technological factors and, implicitly, on the communication infrastructure. As long as social networks were built through oral or written messages, and the interaction between nodes (individuals) was mostly physical, their size was naturally smaller, generally restricted to the community they belonged to. Travel and the expansion of social networks took place infrequently, and most often in the vicinity, given that transportation opportunities were limited. After the evolution of the means of transport and their mechanization, speed of travel increases, and social networks expand considerably. Of course, social networks depended to a large extent on socio-economic factors, before the advent of the internet. However, whether we are talking about local, national, or international networks, we are talking about cultural identities and citizens of the same country who claim to be part of the same social networks (even if, in practice, this is not the case), the digital environment allows the connection of nodes (people) in virtual space on a scale never seen in human history. Currently, a social network like Facebook gathers almost 40% of the world's population (around 3 billion users), and cumulatively, the six largest social networks in the world have over 11 billion users.[44] Even though they overlap and cannot be unique users, it can be estimated without much doubt that the number of people in the world who use online social networks has exceeded half of the global population.[45] We are therefore dealing with the largest audiences and gatherings of people in history, and

> *A networked self, communicated across collapsed and multiplied audiences, seeks social opportunities for expression and connection. These opportunities take a variety of forms, organically generated by relatively autonomous social agents pursuing social goals reified via the affordances of* SNSs.[46]

An ambivalent relationship develops with the self:

> *When part of your life is lived in virtual places—it can be Second Life, a computer game, a social networking site—a vexed relationship develops between what is true and what is "true here," true in simulation. In games where we expect to play an avatar, we end up being ourselves in the most revealing ways; on social-networking sites such as Facebook, we think we will be presenting ourselves, but our profile ends up as somebody else—often the fantasy of who we want to be.*[47]

Truth becomes a volatile boundary. The difference between projection and reality is becoming more and more difficult to make, and the agency of users is increasingly being questioned. In "Generation Why," Zadie Smith describes this limitation of the agency of those who use social networks and the shrinking process to which people are subjected during registration.[48] Only certain choices can be made, only certain personal traits are considered relevant, only certain public positions are censored, but nevertheless all personal information and data from conversations on social networks are recorded and used for commercial purposes.[49] Even greater controversy arises in the growing number of cases in which these profiles belong to people who have no real-life agency.[50]

All this cannot be overlooked when addressing the changes literature underwent in the digital age. It is, without a doubt, influenced by the new structure of society, in which contact between individuals is easier than ever, in which communication takes place in real time, in which space and time are suspended, and audiences and the self are reconfigured. In terms of literature, and subsequently narrative literature, networked society, networked audiences, networked self, and social networks[51] have an impact on the whole field and all the processes within the field. They reach production and the self-referentiality of authors who are *digital natives* and the evolution of those who are not, the mechanics of the book industry and the reception of texts and new evaluation/review systems,[52] the integration of the elements and properties of the new environment in artifacts and even their literary exploitation, reaching in some manifestations what Patrick Jagoda calls the aesthetics of the network.[53]

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## Notes

1. For a history of "human webs," see Jan A. G. M. van Dijk, *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media*, 2nd edition (London–Thousand Oaks–New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2006), 21–23.
2. See Mark Wigley, "Network Fever", *Grey Room* 2, 4 (2001): 83.
3. See the Google Ngram Viewer graph at https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=network&year_start=1980&year_end=2019&corpus=26&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=true.
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8. See Steven G. Jones, ed., *CyberSociety: Computer-Mediated Communication and Community* (Thousand Oaks–London–New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1994) and *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting Computer-Mediated Communication and Community* (Thousand Oaks–London–New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998); Robert Hassan, *The Information Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); Roberto Simanowski, *Facebook Society: Losing Ourselves in Sharing Ourselves*, translated by Susan H. Gillespie (New York: Columbia University

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9. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd edition, with a new preface (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 500.
10. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 506.
11. Manuel Castells, "Grassrooting the Space of Flows," *Urban Geography* 20, 4 (1999): 295.
12. Castells, "Grassrooting."
13. Castells, "Grassrooting."
14. Castells, "Grassrooting," 296.
15. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, xxxvii.
16. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 494.
17. Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 13.
18. For a broader inquiry into the space of flows and timeless time, see Simon Bromley, "The Space of Flows and Timeless Time: Manuel Castell's *The Information Age*," *Radical Philosophy* 97 (1999): 6–17.
19. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, xxv.
20. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, xxxi.
21. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, xxx.
22. danah michele boyd, "Taken Out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 18.
23. For a broader inquiry into the concept of "self," see Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA–London: MIT Press, 2005).
24. Mizuko Ito, "Introduction", in *Networked Publics*, edited by Kazys Varnelis (Cambridge, MA–London: MIT Press, 2008), 2.
25. Ito, 3.
26. Zizi Papacharissi, "Introduction," in *A Networked Self and Birth, Life, Death*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2019), 4.
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28. boyd, 38.
29. boyd, 34.
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35. Turkle, xii.
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37. Turkle, 162–163.
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39. Turkle, 11.
40. Turkle, 1.
41. Russell W. Belk, "Extended Self in a Digital World," *Journal of Consumer Research* 40, 3 (2013): 478.
42. Turkle, 168.
43. Albert-László Barabási, "Introduction and Keynote to A Networked Self," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Networking Sites*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.
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45. Brian Dean from BackLinko estimates around 56%, see https://backlinko.com/social-media-users.
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48. See Zadie Smith, "Generation Why," *New York Review of Books*, 25 November 2010, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2010/11/25/generation-why/.
49. See Zuboff.
50. See Tama Leaver, "Co-Creating Birth and Death on Social Media," in *A Networked Self and Birth, Life, Death*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi (New York–London: Routledge, 2019), 35–49.
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53. See Patrick Jagoda, *Network Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

**Abstract**

Network Everything:
Society, Publics, and Selves in the Digital Age

This study puts forward an overview of several theories regarding society, publics, the self, and communication in the digital era. From the network society (Manuel Castells, Jan van Dijk) to networked publics (Mizuko Ito, danah boyd) to the networked self (Sherry Turkle, Zizi Papacharissi), my essay charts possible frameworks for the interpretation of literary production and analysis. Arguing that in the Romanian cultural space such concepts are rarely considered when discussing fiction and poetry, I try to provide a starting point for future readings of contemporary literary artifacts.

**Keywords**

network society, networked self, networked publics, literature and the digital, social networks