

CHAPTER 7



2007: Convergence

7.1. Introduction

In 2007, *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins's highly influential book on the convergence of old and new media, was published in Italy, just one year after its publication in the United States. This publication marks the next crucial step in our journey tracing intermedia in Italy, signalling Italy's belated, and sudden, embrace of digital platforms, platforms which were to provide exciting new spaces for the arts and media to collide. Digital technology is central to this new step, as artists experiment with the possibilities it offers as well as testing its limitations. However, while digital technology dominates the narrative in this chapter, our story is not one of straightforward technological determinism. The drive towards intermedial practice will prove more deep-rooted and complex than this.

While the first personal computer was sold as early as 1975 and Italy's first website launched in 1994, it was only at the start of the twenty-first century that websites and other digital platforms really became established as critical meeting points for intermedial experimentation.¹ This is not to deny the many cases of digital and computer-orientated experimentation that had gone on before this, as recently observed by both Emanuela Patti and Eleonora Lima;² it is simply to note that the impact of the digital on artistic practice, however tantalizing and important, was limited, and it remained a rather niche pursuit prior to the new millennium. While Italy was initially slow to use digital media,³ once Italian artists stepped onto these platforms, they were to have an extraordinarily important place in the story of intermediality we are endeavouring to tell here.

One of the reasons why digital space became so political at the start of the millennium leads us back to Silvio Berlusconi and the domination of electronic media (television especially) and print media mentioned in the previous chapter. During the five years of Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right coalition (2001–06), online space increasingly became a place where left-wing political players, minorities of all kinds, and radical artists found a way to voice their views. What had happened was that in establishing the powerful media company Mediaset in 1993, Berlusconi effectively created a media duopoly in Italy.⁴ When he became Prime Minister for the second time, in 2001, he was then able to exercise control over both Mediaset and Rai, giving him power over six of the seven main television channels in Italy. Airing oppositional material on television — Italy's most important medium

— quickly became difficult as key oppositional voices were expelled from the airwaves or blocked from entering them in the first place.⁵ Berlusconi also had an exceptionally wide influence over a swathe of old media, including radio, and book and magazine publishing.⁶ With large parts of old media under the thumb of a single media tycoon/politician and with the peninsula ranked only forty-second in the world for press freedom by Freedom House in 2005, media spaces outside television were frequently viewed as creative and liberatory spaces of experimentation and left-wing counterculture. Digital spaces were seen as new and radical, and many artists and activists embraced them.

This utopian embrace of digital culture in the first decade of the millennium may now seem naive, since in recent years social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter/X have been repeatedly called out as anti-democratic, but is easy to forget how exciting early digital media seemed when it was first adopted. The claims made for freedom and for bottom-up democracy by bloggers, like Beppe Grillo when he launched his enormously successful blog in 2005, have been subject to increasing scrutiny. Fifteen years later, social media is seen as polarizing its users and creating echo chambers.⁷ Furthermore, it has been widely accused of creating and circulating fake news, fuelling populism, and manipulating the outcomes of both the Brexit referendum in the UK (2016) and the election of Donald Trump in America (2016). Here, we will attempt to recapture the utopic moment when websites and other digital platforms appeared to point to a happier, freer, and more democratic future, a unique moment of optimism which, from our standpoint in 2020, can be seen to have been confidently poised right above the cliff edge of a global economic crash in 2008 that would radically change the mood in Italy and across the Western world.

2007 is the year in which the concept of ‘convergence’, which had been circulating among artists for some years prior to this, was explicitly discussed. The publication of the Italian translation of Henry Jenkins’s book and the launch of the *Manituana* website by the well-known writers collective, Wu Ming, was what opened this debate in Italy. As discussed in the Introduction to this book, Jenkins’s understanding of convergence comprises both the idea of multiple media converging on various digital platforms and the idea that they flow between platforms. Convergence is a much more mobile and transient concept than hybridity, which points to a more stable merging.

Wu Ming’s *Manituana* website is an almost textbook example of how Jenkins’s ideas about convergence were received and reconceived in Italy. 2007 is also the year in which some fascinating experiments in convergence in other fields took place. *Global Stage*, for instance, by veteran Italian filmmaker Carlo Lizzani, used digital technology to connect cinema, theatre, dance, mime, and drawings together in a utopic transnational space. Two architects at the Brera Academy in Milan created *Macchine per fare le bolle* [Machines for Making Bubbles] inside the three-dimensional virtual world on the international digital platform *Second Life*, often seen now as a precursor to the metaverse. Their work draws together architecture, sculpture, performance, video documentation, gaming, and narrative.

The *Manituana* website, *Global Stage*, and *Macchine per fare le bolle* will act as three brief exemplary artistic projects through which we will explore convergence. They provide glimpses of how Italy was responding to, and shaping, the global shift towards media convergence that had emerged in the late 1990s. They also illustrate the utopian drive that so often appears to resurface when the concept of the unity of the arts emerges explicitly in debates. We have already seen in this book how this artistic totality was appropriated by the political right in Fascist Italy. Here, in this chapter, we will see how it was taken forward by artists, especially by artists on the political left who transported a fundamentally capitalist and mainstream American model of convergence into a peculiarly Italian, and often countercultural, context in a country where the Internet was being seen as a viable alternative to mainstream Berlusconi-dominated media, itself — as we argued in the previous chapter — intermedial. Exploring convergence allows us to glimpse how artists responded to, and drove, change as their art collided with digital technologies. It enables us to see how the material differences between the arts were challenged, as art objects were dematerialized into the digital language of numbers. It highlights the changing conception of space, as multiple arts could now appear together in new ways in a digital space. The Italian model of convergence deserves debate because it highlights how a concept — convergence — with its roots in a capitalist mass-media model can be overturned and used to subvert communicative, and artistic, norms. In 2007, we see new forms of intermediality emerging as a form of political subversion again, rather than as a mass-media influenced, commercialized phenomena that we saw in the middle of the 1990s. This is not to imply that the commercialized intermedia we saw a decade previously had gone away — it had not. Rather, intermediality, with its ever-changing combinations of art and media, was being reintroduced in the early 2000s as part of a new digital and political phenomenon.

7.2. Cultural Convergence: Wu Ming's *Manituana*

By 2007, Wu Ming had been working across multiple media and with digital technology for some time. While the collective was born in 2000, since the mid-1990s its members had been working, as we saw in the previous chapter, under another name: the Luther Blisset Project. This small group of politically orientated Italian writers had a long-standing interest in what they referred to as 'communication warfare', taking some of their inspiration from Berlin Dada events and Futurist soirees, as well as from pop culture and Mexican Zapatistas. In other words, the radical communication of their ideas was central to their sense of purpose, and they had been looking, from the outset, for novel ways to break communicative conventions. For some time, they had been interested in creating international networks of artists. The Luther Blisset Project had put together a community of contributors through early computer Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) like FidoNet (1984–), used by computer enthusiasts and hackers to communicate with each other. Using both BBS and the national network of occupied social centres, the Luther Blisset Project successfully established what they referred to as a hoax, encouraging artists and activists across a range of artistic fields to publish their work under the



FIG. 7.1. Landing page, Wu Ming's *Manituana* website (2007) @Wu Ming Foundation.

shared pseudonym of footballer Luther Blisset. This was an exercise in the creation of an international, cross-media collective identity which had garnered success and notoriety: hundreds of people used the name, and it piqued journalistic curiosity.

It was really, however, only at the time of their contact with Henry Jenkins that their interest in networks, digital activism, and writing collided with the digital in a way that would radically change their own work as writers and would create Italy's most well-known instance of transmedial writing. In 2016, Wu Ming 1 wrote an email to Jenkins, outlining what he saw as the 'commonalities' between what their collective had been doing and the work described by Jenkins in *Convergence Culture*. Wu Ming 1 explained to Jenkins how his theory reflected 'the things we've been doing and theorizing for more than twelve years, albeit with a more radical/activist edge (multitudinous authorship, crossmedia storytelling, world making, identity games, RPG guerrilla warfare, old/new media collision, copyleft-orientated practices, media hoaxes, and so on)'.⁸ After this initial contact, two things happened. Firstly, Wu Ming wrote the Preface to the 2007 Italian translation of Jenkins's book. Given the importance of Wu Ming in Italy at this time, this meant that critical attention in Italy would be firmly drawn towards Jenkins's ideas. Secondly, they took the critic's ideas and translated them into what might be considered a kind of online laboratory for convergence: the website for their collectively written historical novel, *Manituana*, which narrates the story of the American revolution from the point of view of the indigenous Americans i.e., the losing side.

This website <www.manituana.com>, created together with programmer Andrea Alberti, is, in Clodagh Brook and Emanuela Patti's words, an 'estensione multimediale' [multimedial extension] of the eponymous novel. It was published

in parallel to the book, and can, according to Emanuela Piga, be read as a fully fledged digital work of art.⁹ The website is the first in Italy to bring together book and book trailer, spinoff stories written by fans, music, and visual illustrations, including maps. In other words, it draws together various arts and media — both old and new — onto a single platform. Nonetheless, the centre of its practice remains literary, and the website draws attention from the outset to its foundation in literature. It does this both through the typography of the landing page that leans heavily on literary forms (the use of italics; the flourishes on initial capitals which mirror writing with an ink pen) and through the addition of the page's subheading, 'romanzo' [novel] — see Fig. 7.1. Moreover, the old black and white map and etchings of indigenous Americans that appear on the landing page could easily belong to nineteenth-century book illustrations. The landing page itself is designed as a webpage which has in its central space a piece of parchment or old paper, a crease down its medial line so that it resembles a book cover, perhaps, or an old book open on one page. It is clear from this landing page that Wu Ming is trying to recreate some sense of the 'thingness', or materiality, of a book on a dematerialized digital platform. They attempt to capture some of the history of the literary object through traditional typography and lithography. If the arts converge on this digital space, in other words, precedence is firmly being given to one of them.

The website's tabs, nonetheless, draw attention to the way that <manituana.com> draws together arts into one space (merging) as well as indicating further platforms where the narrative develops (flow), thus conjoining the two directions that convergence commonly takes, according to Jenkins.¹⁰ While the first tab on the far left is titled 'il libro' [the book], and is therefore given due prominence in terms of the natural left-to-right bias of Western perception, this is followed by tabs labelled 'trailer', 'notizie', 'racconti ammutinati', 'luoghi', 'visioni', 'suoni', 'cronologia', 'livello 2', and 'Pontiac' [trailer, news, mutineer tales, places, visions, sounds, chronology, level 2, Pontiac]. Inside these tabs we find, for instance, a book trailer, links to Google Maps (where some of the places in the book can be explored), a photograph of a stuffed doll made by a schoolchild in the likeness of one of *Manituana's* characters, and a computer game. Under the tab *Pontiac*, downloadable MP3 files combine a musical soundtrack with readings of narratives which expand upon a tiny fragment of *Manituana's* world (the Proclamation Line of 1763). If the arts converge temporarily at one point (the website), the site itself sends its visitors from here to multiple platforms — to music devices, YouTube, and offline debates. With its focus on content migrating across multiple platforms, the site shares much with Jenkins's conception of flow.

On the site, Wu Ming state their aim as 'raccontare storie con ogni mezzo necessario, partire dal romanzo per esplorare un universo narrativo e renderlo accessibile da diversi sentieri: non solo il libro, ma anche fumetti, video, musiche, pagine web' [the idea is to tell stories by every means necessary, beginning with the novel in order to explore the narrative universe and render it accessible from different paths, not just the book, but also comics, video, music, and web pages]. While there is clearly a marketing element behind this, the website appears to be driven not so much by economics as by the desire to explore *Manituana's* narrative

universe and create different media pathways into it. Its users are not treated as consumers, but as loyal fans of the book, the most loyal of whom can enter the website's gated and (intellectually) guarded 'Level 2' by answering questions related to the novel. Nor does the website provide items to buy, like games or toys. In fact, the central product (the novel *Manituana*) can be downloaded without payment following so-called copy-left principals. In line with Wu Ming's left-wing political views and Italy's nascent sharing economy, the Italian product is therefore far less consumer-orientated than the mass-media products like *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *American Idol*, created by global franchises and discussed by Jenkins. It is a form of convergence that is rooted in a bottom-up consumerism brought into a countercultural Italian context in which left-wing principles of collective production hold sway. This creates a version of convergence that fits well into Italy's quality global art production: i.e., elite pop culture produced by artists on the political left.

There are parallels to be drawn here between the *Manituana* website and art-house cinema in the 1960s. Mid-century art-house cinema saw experimental forms of filmmaking develop in Italy and across Europe, as prominent cinematic auteurs took a commercial form (cinema) and re-inscribed it, intermedially, within high-art practices. At this time filmmakers such as Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Marco Bellocchio, Carmelo Bene, Lina Wertmüller and Pier Paolo Pasolini, while retaining elements of cinema's original Fordian production methods, emphasized its connection to theatre, to music, and to the visual arts in order to valorize the product, re-inscribing pop culture into a hybrid pop-elite form that is not dissimilar to that seen on the *Manituana* website. This hybrid form provides its audience with a range of viewing pleasures as well as proving enduringly lucrative.¹¹ Unlike popular Italian cinema, which is considered too local and culturally specific to travel, art-house cinema gains access to a significant global market reserved for high-quality art products.¹² There are also parallels that can be drawn with Umberto Eco's concept of an intertextual cult classic, a concept cited in Jenkins's book, and almost certainly noted by Wu Ming in their reading of *Convergence Culture*. Eco's idea of cult objects is firmly rooted in the notion of world-making. It is about creating a work which goes beyond a single book; a story cannot be 'fully explored or exhausted within a single work or even a single medium',¹³ and it transcends linear narrative as it shifts towards complexity. Eco's idea, like that of Italy's cinematic modernism of the 1960s, is all about creating complex art, while finding ways to hook in a readership that is smaller, perhaps, but highly *loyal*, an audience which enjoys a cult cultural product because it has the intermedial competence to pick up references to other works.

While Jenkins's discussion of convergence is focused on mass culture, those who use that culture are often, for Wu Ming, 'una minoranza di ascoltatori' or 'una nicchia underground' [a minority of listeners; an underground niche]. If, for Jenkins, convergence is both a 'top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process',¹⁴ for Wu Ming the emphasis is almost entirely on the latter, and they see their work as questioning the authority of the author (top down)

and instead empowering the reader.¹⁵ However, here too they re-position Jenkins when they read consumers of culture as distinctly countercultural appropriators. In their Preface, Wu Ming draw attention to pop culture, distinguishing between trivial and degraded pop culture on the one hand and ‘quality’ pop culture, on the other. While they clearly refuse to read quality pop culture as elitist, they nonetheless align trivial culture, upon which they frown, with Berlusconi’s Mediaset television channels. This underscores the politically oppositional nature of the concept of intermedial convergence for the collective. They do not read it as a money-making bolt-on created by marketeers (the top-down approach), but instead as a new, and already intrinsic, part of making culture in the twenty-first century:

The Italian debate is more focused on technological convergence (the newer-than-latest monstrously gimmicky multi-function cell phone) than on transmedia culture. In the rare cases when this aspect is taken into account, the focus is always on corporate strategies, on how the potentates of entertainment are trying to move their content to new platforms, like candies from an old dispenser to the new one. No pundit says a word about this very same interest being shared, practiced and (often ‘illegally’) subverted by the public.

People move stories, sounds and images across territories all the time, but nobody seems to acknowledge that this ‘smuggling’ responds to a new aesthetical model, a new way to tell stories, inform, sabotage, and have fun. It’s just marketing. And if you’re a writer you’ve got to write a *real* book, one that’s made of paper. Everything else — websites, booktrailers, blogs, extra features and outtakes etc. — is promotional material, a spurious appendix that smells like money.¹⁶

In seeing their own intermedial work as radical and subversive, they ignore the roots of their own intermediality in the normalization and aestheticization of the hybrid 1990s. Instead, Wu Ming appear to step over the 1990s, to recuperate the experimental flavour of intermediality of the 1960s and 1970s. They use the lessons provided by Umberto Eco and cinematic modernism to provide the gateway for Jenkins’s ideas of ‘convergence’ to travel within Italy. On the *Manituana* website, they draw a wide variety of arts together to create a complex, innovative, and encyclopaedic world with characters and episodes that seem designed to take on a life of their own beyond their original novel. The international subject matter (the American civil war) and the rapid translation into English and other languages of *Manituana* makes this a transnational work that confirms Wu Ming’s emphasis on attaining a place in the global market through the creation of loyal followers. Their intermedial project is an essential part of this cultural-economic process, and, according to Emanuela Piga, this supports the claim that there is a ‘forte legame tra interattività e consumismo’ [there is a strong link between interactivity and consumerism].¹⁷ In other words, while Wu Ming’s work is experimental and participative, the creation, which appears deliberate, of a cult universe (i.e. the endless universe of *Manituana*, with its many characters, maps, narratives, and spinoffs) makes us question their motivation in the bringing together of the arts in their world-making. It brings *Manituana* closer to the commercial hybridity of the 1990s than its makers would care to admit.

So, it appears that the intermediality of *Manituana's* websites arises from a tangled web of motivations and causes. There are economic motivations linked to improving the impact and sales of literary products in an increasingly visually orientated world. There are ideological ones, especially Wu Ming's reclaiming of Jenkins's convergence for their own countercultural political purposes and their unshaken belief in the democratizing force of the digital. There are also political ones: under Berlusconi the mainstream mediasphere is far from open to them, so the internet, as it was conceived back in 2007, provides a deregulated and freer space. Then, there are technological motivations. The creation of a website is an obvious next step for a technologically aware group who had already had a positive experience of the underground networked communication provided by the BBS platform back in the 1990s. Finally, the drive towards world making appears to be a deep-seated drive in artists attracted to intermediality, including Wu Ming. The result of all these factors is the deconstruction of artistic borders, which become ever easier to cross, as well as the involvement of 'everyday people', often transnationally, in co-creation across a range of arts.

7.3. Global Convergence: Carlo Lizzani's *Global Stage*

In 2007, veteran filmmaker Carlo Lizzani (1922–2013) created *Global Stage* at the Rome Film Festival, a performance inspired by an African creation myth (*Dunia Sigui Kan*), an ecological tale which narrates the catastrophic damage to the environment that humans can do when they wield too much power over it. This performance, which was the first of its kind in the world, drew together two distinct and distant stages — one in Rome and the other in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso. Performers in West Africa and in Italy converged virtually in the same space by means of a satellite link which transported video and audio signals from the live performance in Burkina Faso onto the three-dimensional virtual Roman set in which pre-recorded and live performances were mixed.¹⁸ The Roman stage presented spectators with a split space in which they could watch the live actors performing on stage against a blue screen while simultaneously seeing, projected above them, a screening of the final performance which brought together live performances on the Roman stage, pre-recorded material produced in Italy, and live dancers projected in by satellite from Burkina Faso (see Fig. 7.2). So, what encouraged the artists to actively push art forms to converge? And what are the implications of this convergence on intermediality? The discussion in this section takes its inspiration from what Jenkins termed 'global convergence', i.e. the hybridity that takes place when media content circulates globally.

If we look first at how the convergence of the arts and media came about in this project, the first observation to be made is that the source of the idea for *Global Stage* does not lie, strictly speaking, in the figure of filmmaker Carlo Lizzani, but instead with the European Space Agency (ESA). The ESA was exploring how satellite technology could be employed in the fields of culture and entertainment and had set up a project called ISIDE to 'develop, implement and validate a satellite-based



FIG. 7.2. Still from Carlo Lizzani's *Global Stage* (2007).

system of N-(Networked) cinema'.¹⁹ Carlo Lizzani grasped the opportunity, and the funding that went with it, and worked with the producers, Digital Pictures, and with the ESA to create *Global Stage*, a highly experimental piece. While we reject technological determinism in this book, technology here nonetheless has a central and determining role. A second observation is that this project could not have been made without a major shift in the Italian film industry towards an expanded notion of cinema, now often referred to as 'post-cinema' or, perhaps more accurately, what Richard Grusin calls 'the cinema of interactions'.²⁰ By 2007, film could 'no longer be disconnected from other media',²¹ being tied to home video, video games, advertising hoardings, video art, DVDs, and so on. Cinema, which for many critics is the first true intermedial medium, with its fusion of theatre, literature, dance, photography, painting, and so on,²² in the early twenty-first century underwent a further intermedial shift in which its relations with other media strengthened.

At this time cinema was reconnecting with early forms of cinema and experimenting with new technologies, as it travelled through a period of redefinition and a renewal of its language.²³ The rise of post-cinema meant that *Global Stage* found a ready-made distribution space that it would not have found ten years earlier. Because film festivals had become increasingly accepting of, and interested in, forms of cinema that went beyond the classic narrative theatrical release, a pavilion dedicated to multimedia communication, satellite links, small electronic devices, and video games could be erected at the Rome Film festival, and *Global Stage* could be easily collocated within this. In other words, the presence of new infrastructures, whether technological — such as satellite links — or distributive — such as the multimedia pavilion — were critical to encouraging artistic experiments which went beyond traditional screenings. Without these, *Global Stage* could not

have been made and might never have been distributed, at least as an international event.

Nonetheless, we would not want to suggest that *Global Stage's* intermediality results solely from technological and infrastructural changes. While it is clearly a product both of technological change and changing attitudes towards the medium of cinema, its intermediality has deeper roots. These roots lie especially in Lizzani's own ideological and artistic groundings as a filmmaker with a longstanding interest in cultures outside Europe. Not only did his communist-inspired documentary, *La muraglia cinese* [Behind the Great Wall] (1959), provide the first colour footage of China available in the West, but he also imagined that *Global Stage* might pave the way for further global connections and throw down bridges to 'altri paesi emergenti che soffrono di dittature o condizioni difficili' [other emerging countries that suffer dictatorships or difficult conditions].²⁴ His global interests appear to stem from his left-wing militancy, especially within the Italian Communist party, and a strong, and related, desire to defend society's marginalized members that goes right back to the neorealist principles seen in his earliest feature film, *Achtung! Banditi!* [Attention! Bandits!] (1951). These interests in a global and interconnected world undoubtedly underlie his response to the call from the European Spatial Agency to use satellite technology.

What Lizzani created in response to the call stems too from his wide-ranging artistic interests. As a versatile and multifaceted film director, he carried with him a vast knowledge of cinema, photography, literature, and twentieth-century painting. Some of this was gained in his earliest years (his father was a photographer), and some developed from his interactions with the people closest to him in later life: his wife was an artist, and he recounts that they often visited art galleries together. He also notes the importance of café culture, citing especially the Caffè Brera and Latteria Pirovini in Via Fiori Chiari, Milan, frequented by young intellectuals and artists.²⁵ Here he met painters like Ennio Morlotti (1910–1992), writers like Umberto Eco and Elio Vittorini (1908–1966), and the founder of Milan's Piccolo Teatro, Giorgio Strehler (1921–1997). Bruno Torri describes Lizzani as a 'lettore onnivoro, uno studioso che vuole perlustrare le più svariate aree culturali: dalla filosofia all'antropologia, dalla sociologia alla semiologia, dalle diverse forme artistiche alla fisica moderna ad altro ancora' [an omnivorous reader, a scholar who scoured the most disparate cultural areas; from philosophy to anthropology, from sociology to semiology, from various artistic forms to modern physics, and more besides].²⁶ While, ultimately, Lizzani only produced two really intermedial works — *Global Stage* and *Roma città prigioniera* [Rome, The Captured City] (1995) — these works perfectly demonstrate the attraction of intermediality to Italian artists like Lizzani who had such wide-ranging cultural knowledge and interests.

Global Stage results from the convergence of new media technology (a satellite link) with old media and art forms (film, theatre, mime, dance, music, verbal storytelling, drawings, a pre-cinema slide show). A pre-recorded virtual setting is firmly rooted in sketches from filmmaker Federico Fellini's dream notebook: Fellini's encounter with the Jungian analyst Ernst Bernhard had led him to

document his dreams in ‘large notebooks with colourful sketches made with felt-tip markers’.²⁷ So, Jungian psychoanalysis, steeped in archetype and Western myth, comes to life in these drawings. To the left of the stage stand life-size sketches of trees. To the right, a white wall has a cut out, like a window, through which one can see a film of an ever-changing African landscape. Beneath the performers’ feet is a painted floor, whose orange swirls and palm-like tree speak to the Fellinian dreamscape as well as to an iconic African one. At the back of the virtual set, a second film is projected in traditional, if reduced, cinematic format. This second film presents talking heads interspersed with still sketches from Fellini’s notebook, the latter distinctly resembling a pre-cinematic slide show. The stage set is therefore grounded in the golden age of Italy’s auteur cinema, while also referencing pre-cinema (the slide show). It draws on Jungian psychoanalysis, steeped in archetype and Western myth, and mediated through Fellini’s drawings. The homage to cinema does not stop there, however, nor is entirely steeped in nostalgia. In the film projected at the back of the set, alongside Fellini’s drawings, we see the award-winning Burkinabé actor, Sotigui Kouyaté, narrating the African creation tale (in French) as well as the talking heads of well-known people from the contemporary Italian film industry, including actors such as Alessio Boni, the filmmaker Cristina Comencini, and film critic and screenwriter Tullio Kezich.

The impact of the collision of arts and old media with satellite technology in *Global Stage* had several important consequences. Firstly, the new technology enabled a transient transnational fusion which carried with it, and staged, an ideological framework that aimed to break down barriers between nations while maintaining difference. Onto the virtual pre-recorded cinematic background described above, the live performances converged. On the Roman stage, there was an Italian female performance artist who narrated and mimed the story, as well as two African singers seated in traditional dress, playing traditional instruments. Projected in from Burkina Faso via satellite were two male dancers who performed the story, dancing and miming its events. They appeared as three-dimensional filmed characters, pixels recomposed, which joined the flesh and blood actors on stage. Both sets of performers — in Rome and in Burkina Faso — were acting live. For thirty minutes, therefore, Lizzani’s piece made it hard for spectators to distinguish between what was in Africa and what was in Italy, what was live and what was recorded, between ancestral time and contemporary ecological concerns. The fusion of African myth and Italian/Jungian cinematic mythmaking drew the geographically distant closer, positing a universal project in which all artists could play a part (in protecting the planet) despite, or even because of, their differences. *Global Stage* also demonstrated that Africa was not a distant place: there were people of African heritage present on the Roman stage joining those beamed in through satellite. The message was one of converging cultures, where diversity is retained and where fusion is temporary, rather than of cultures merging in one (i.e. hybridity). It was through different but complementary artistic approaches that transnational teams of artists together provided answers to major social issues, in this case to climate crisis.

The second consequence of *Global Stage*’s convergence is that, in bringing together

the world of cinema with the world of the stage, it questioned the traditional binaries of presence–absence and live and filmed which had, for more than a century, enabled us to distinguish between theatre (live) and cinema (recorded). Not only was the performance laced with nostalgia for a grand auteur of the golden age of Italian cinema — Federico Fellini — and studded with a constellation of voices from Italy’s contemporary cinema industry, but the ‘final’ version of the event was projected on a screen above the stage. This version incorporated the satellite images from Burkina Faso absent from the stage below. In effect, the entire event was centred on a problematized meeting of live and recorded media. A set of live performances was beamed in through satellite link, and therefore they were not materially present; at the same time, unlike pre-recorded film, the performers from Burkina Faso were live, despite being absent. They were, in other words, temporally present and spatially absent.

Moreover, to further blur media boundaries, what remains of the *Global Stage* project today is a filmed recording available on Vimeo which provides a record only of the resultant film and shows nothing of the split stage at the Rome Film Festival or the peculiar mix of material and virtual objects and performances.²⁸ To resolve the many ambiguities that arise in Lizzani’s work, we can return to its title (*Global Stage*), which appears to define the work as theatre rather than cinema. From there we can situate Lizzani’s work in the context of the concept of ‘intermedial theatre’, an art form which ‘may be both physically based and on-screen’ and where ‘experiences may be both actual and virtual; spaces may be both public and private; bodies may be both present and absent’.²⁹ However, while this rather contested taxonomy goes some way to resolving the live–recorded binary, it remains the case that Lizzani’s work can be read by its consumers either as theatre (of a virtual intermedial kind) or as cinema (with its staging at the film festival; its multiple references to the Italian cinema industry; its circulation on Vimeo).

The problematizing of the binary of live and recorded, and the use of material from both theatre and cinema, creates profound questions around both the meaning of the medium of cinema and that of theatre and puts their categorization and the differences between them into question. If Wu Ming question and experiment with the medium and meaning of the book in a digital age, pushing out its material boundaries as it converges with multiple arts within the frame of a website, Carlo Lizzani inevitably questions the boundaries of theatre and cinema as he puts screens and stages into dialogue with the global satellite system. In this blurring, and redrawing, of boundaries, *Global Stage* acts as a beacon of twenty-first-century convergence.

So, like Wu Ming’s websites, the intermediality in this project arises from a tangle of motivations and it results in wide-ranging consequences. Technological and economic motivations underlie the choice of satellite technology, as explained above. Like Wu Ming too, the ideological motivations are also strong. The consequences of convergence are intriguing. The networking that the satellite facilitates between different parts of the earth enables an innovative model of social relations to be born, a new transnational paradigm of knowledge exchange, co-creation and cultural co-presence which is quite astounding. This networked

technology enables a communicative exchange between continents to take place in real time. It also points to the increasing difficulty in categorizing media, and even the pointlessness in trying to do so, as media travel towards the era of what Rosalind Krauss has called the 'post-medium condition'.³⁰

7.4. Technological Convergence: Brera Virtual Lab

Global Stage's merging of two- and three-dimensional performances was part of a wider trend towards a three-dimensional virtual space that by 2007 was emerging worldwide. At this time, *Second Life*, a virtual environment, was being heralded by the global media as a revolution (an obvious precursor to the metaverse which has similar claims made for itself at the time of writing). In March 2007, the *Observer* newspaper dedicated a double-page spread to it which it titled 'This year's hottest destination: Cyberspace'. *Second Life* quickly polarized the media. Some viewed it as a societal threat which would lure its users away from the real world into an addictive virtual and three-dimensional universe. Others saw it as a tremendous opportunity for making highly creative parallel virtual worlds, communicating with others within them and, potentially, making a great deal of money. Countries quickly bought land (with Linden dollars, the currency used in *Second Life*) and established embassies, campuses, virtual businesses, cinemas, galleries, shops, brothels, concert venues, political parties and so on. By its peak in 2009, 17 million people globally had created an avatar and journeyed into *Second Life* to interact with the new spaces and the *Second Life* economy totalled \$567 million US dollars.³¹

Second Life, which was launched in California in 2003 as a flat and empty space, by 2007 was a global phenomenon crowded with buildings and landscapes created by its users. Italy had a small but significant presence within this space, rooted in its rich architectural heritage, its art, fashion, and lifestyle, and spurred on by business opportunities which had led companies like Armani, Alice, and TIM to buy up virtual real estate within it. *Second Life's* 'Parioli' quarter, modelled on Rome, was founded in 2006 by Bruno Cerboni and had become extremely popular, as had 'Corso Como', a reproduction of that eponymous street in Milan. *Second Life* by now also had virtual versions of Mantua, Assisi, Venice, the Cinque Terre, and even some Palladian palaces promoted by the Province of Vicenza. Architecturally, these cities represent the reign of pastiche: virtual architecture had been completely set free of the requirements of urban planning. Piazza di Spagna, for instance, overlooked the sea, and Milan's many monuments butted up improbably against each other.³²

At the Brera Academy in Milan, long-time collaborators Stefania Albertini and Giampiero Moioli became involved in the creation of virtual worlds. In 2006 they invented their first virtual sculptures on 'Lifelog island' in *Second Life*. In 2007, they created three 'macchine per fare le bolle' [bubble-making machines], inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's drawings. They called them *Macchina simpatica*, *Acquario verticale* and *Circumfolgore* [the likeable machine; the vertical aquarium; and *circumfolgore*: the war machine]. These virtual sculptures were subsequently captured by Moioli in a short documentary video, 'Le macchine per fare le bolle'



FIG. 7.3. Still from Stefania Albertini and Giampiero Moioli, *Le macchine per fare le bolle* (2007).

(2007), in which Moioli's avatar, Giugiogia Auer, walks, sits, and flies around and inside their aerial sculptures, exploring and contemplating them, accompanied by a soundtrack of bubbles, running water, rudimentary human sounds, and an Indian sitar (see Fig. 7.3). In Moioli's video, virtual sculpture and architecture meet third-person narrative, performance, and animation in experimental digital space, now rendered in two dimensions. The following year, Moioli and Albertini's virtual 'machines', were recreated in material form and exhibited at the Castello Visconteo in Pavia in an exhibition titled *La macchina per fare le bolle, la circumfolgore ed altri congegni* [The bubble-making machine, the *circumfolgore*, and other devices]. In other words, the bubble-making machines, born in the virtual three-dimensions of *Second Life*, migrated to the two-dimensionality of video before (re)appearing in three-dimensional materiality at the Pavia exhibition, illustrating Irina Rajewsky's concept of medial transposition, as discussed in our Introduction.

For Moioli and Albertini, there was a constellation of factors that drew them towards developing a project on the *Second Life* platform. The first factor, of course, was that the platform existed; once again, technology proves itself a critical enabler. *Second Life*, along with other 3-D platforms like Blender and OpenSim, is distinct from the vast majority of internet spaces which exist in just two-dimensions. Its three-dimensionality provides a virtual creative space for the many sculptors, architects, landscape designers, and indeed any artists or performers, who need to work with volume. Having access to a virtual space to work on volumetric art transformed the artists' practice as well as bringing significant practical advantages. It enabled the artists to create three-dimensional models of whatever they wanted to think or imagine before any financial outlay was necessary.³³ Using an avatar, these artists, as well as their colleagues and students at the Brera Academy, could walk

or fly around the models, seeing how they related to each other in space and what they looked like from different angles. Based on the feedback from such flights, the form of artistic objects could be adjusted with relative ease, before the artists began work on material versions, where such adjustments would be more difficult and costly to make. The ease with which these virtual artworks could be created and then adjusted meant that Moioli and Albertini considered volumetric design in a virtual world as a particularly practical and useful tool, one that they recognized as also having a marked didactic element, given the integration of e-learning elements like Sloodle.

Moioli and Albertini believed that the new digital space would increase creativity, and they made similar utopian claims about their chosen technology to those expressed by Wu Ming and Lizzani. Moioli claimed that work on the platform would lead to a 'sviluppo esponenziale della creatività' [exponential development of creativity].³⁴ When the duo established Brera Virtual Lab the following year (2008), the collective's very title — with its reference to a laboratory — points to the centrality of interdisciplinary experimentation, linking science/technology (lab) with art (Brera) in a creative virtual space. While this creativity is rooted in real-life architectural principles based on the laws of physics, unlike many of the creations on the *Second Life* platform,³⁵ it does nonetheless provide for a new space which is immersive and world-making, as they develop an island to house their virtual art and construct the world in three-dimensions. They describe this as liberating the artists from material reality, even if they continue to work with the laws of physics and plan sculptures which will have a presence in real off-line spaces. But this space liberates them too from disciplinary policing. While *Second Life* was, and still is, not free of pressures to conform, the sculptors could certainly transgress and experiment here in a freer way than they could offline.

Finally, interactivity was critical in attracting artists to these digital platforms. Moioli flags the range of communicative channels available inside *Second Life*. Not only are there spaces for constructing virtual sculptures, but there are also channels for communicating via social media, uploading web pages, sending mail and images, and screening films at which other avatars can be present. The virtual environment itself provides an opportunity for making the artwork responsive, so that it interacts with the presence of the avatars. However, it is also the very process of creating online sculptures and spaces which is collaborative. Moioli describes how he wanted to create 'una comunità progettuale intermediale, porre l'attenzione sull'importanza del lavoro di equipe e cominciare ad incoraggiare la progettazione di Gruppo, creando una comunità capace di comunicare e lavorare insieme anche a distanza [a project-based intermedial community, focusing attention on the importance of teamwork and starting to encourage group planning, creating a community which could communicate and work together even at a distance].³⁶ In establishing this kind of working ethos, Moioli and Albertini enact Pierre Lévy's concept of collective intelligence in which, 'none of us can know everything; each of us knows something; and we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources'.³⁷ Moioli goes on to say, in fact, that working groups are critical, as only when artists work together can the complexity of technology be faced.

So, the question now is how (or indeed whether) the convergence of the digital within the artistic practices of Brera Virtual Lab actually led to the foregrounding of intermediality.³⁸ The short answer to this is yes. The three-dimensional virtual environment acts as a performative space in which sculptures can be explored from multiple perspectives. They can be walked around, flown around, and gazed upon by an avatar. Unlike the material sculptures created for the exhibition in Pavia, these virtual sculptures become props in a performance in which fictional, nomadic characters (the avatars) interact with them.³⁹ No longer fixed in the white or black cubes of a museum, they are exhibited on a fictional, virtual island. Just as we saw with Lizzani's work, this puts into question the discrete, independent, and material nature of the medium, as it is re-placed and therefore re-conceived not as a sacred and finite object, with medium specificity or essence, but instead it becomes 'an expanded system of overlapping relations'.⁴⁰

While this all implies convergence in the sense of 'merging', another form of convergence is explicit in their work, and this brings us to the final point. Moioli and Albertini have taken an ancient form of art (sculpture) and rendered it digital and immaterial in an example of what Jenkins had called technological convergence. Not only this, they have created a flow of interrelated, but not identical, content across a variety of platforms (*Second Life*; Vimeo; an art gallery in Pavia). In this flow, their work ranges through art and media forms, especially filmmaking, sculpture, and design. While these forms do not converge necessarily in the same space at the same time to create a single intermedial form, they do converge as flow across platforms, and as such break down barriers between them.

7.5. Conclusion: The 'Achievable Utopias' of Convergence

For the story we are attempting to tell in this book, 2007 has proved to be an intriguing year. The case studies we have examined here mark an intensification of intermedial boundary crossing and a renewed sense of experimentation after several decades in which intermedia had progressively shifted from the avant-garde fringes of creative practice to its normalized centre, as we traced in the previous chapter. This is not to say that all art converged digitally at this time (it did not), or that media-specific artforms vanished (they did not), or even that 'convergence' was any kind of programme or movement in Italy (it most certainly was not). While some of Italy's writers dabbled in transmedial storytelling (Wu Ming, Kai Zen, Simone Sarasso and Daniele Rudoni, for example), in 2007 most of Italy's most important writers (like Andrea Camilleri, for instance, or Dacia Maraini) were still using websites as simple commercial add-ons to their books, rather than integral parts of their creation, distribution, and consumption. Similarly, most filmmakers continued to make films, whether digital or analogue, without necessarily embarking on experimental intermediality. 2007 marks a time when it was still experimental to dabble in the kinds of practices we have been outlining here, a time when going online was still a choice, rather than a necessity or compulsion.

In this conclusion, we draw the threads of this chapter together, summarizing and building on the findings to understand better why convergence takes place

in this way at the start of the century, as well as exploring some of its wider implications for artistic practice. There are very many factors at play. Some factors emerged at the start of the twenty-first century, but others had already debuted decades before; one, in particular (the desire for world-making), appears, from our findings in this book at least, to be so deeply rooted in human endeavour as to be an intrinsic feature of it. Others, such as economic factors, appear to affect some of the cases presented here (Wu Ming) more than others. As we cannot look at all the possible factors in this conclusion, we highlight just three of these that we find particularly striking.

The first, and most obvious point to make, is that the rise of technology was a key enabler of change. Each space we have looked at in this chapter — whether material (the stage) or immaterial (a website; a 3-D virtual environment; digital film) — highlights how technology is critical in allowing multiple arts to ‘incline together’, or converge, in the early years of the twenty-first century. By then, obstacles such as the high costs associated with the first arrival of the digital in the 1980s had been overcome and websites had become part of the fabric of life for many users. While digital experimentation had first emerged on the fringes of the art world as early as the mid-1990s (digital storytelling; net.cinema; net.art),⁴¹ it was only with the arrival of the so-called Web 2.0 in the early years of the millennium that the digital started to become mainstream.⁴² It is in these years that Facebook (2004) and YouTube (2005) were launched, Beppe Grillo’s first blog post was published (2005), and Twitter was born (2006). In was in these years too that the Internet became a mainstream form of media in Italy; by 2007, 20 million Italians had access to it. At the same time, satellite communications were attempting to extend their influence. Although satellites were first launched in 1957 (with Sputnik), the early 2000s offered growth in telecommunications, data communications, and broadcasting. Satellite broadcasting became a feature of Italian life with the launch of Sky TV in 2003.

The translation of sound, image, and video signals into the digital language of numbers via terrestrial and satellite communications at the start of the millennium marked a profound change. It enabled every digital network to bring together content of any kind with relative ease. Vuk Ćosić, the Slav artist, notes how the computer became the medium that absorbed everything, re-elaborating it from within its unifying language.⁴³ The computer was suddenly seen as a meta-medium which was able to ‘inglobare, specchio and rielaborare tutte le altre forme culturali’ [incorporate, mirror, and re-elaborate all other cultural forms],⁴⁴ breaking away from the linearity that, according to Marshall McLuhan, was ushered in by the printing press, and moving towards an all-at-onceness which is non-hierarchical and layered. Through digital communications every communicative artefact — music, sculpture, painting, theatre, cinema — lost its specific expressive materiality, with wide-ranging effects. Two such effects stand out, as far as our argument here is concerned. Firstly, the rise of the digital vastly increased the quantity of platforms which facilitated interchange between a range of arts and media (a vast array of websites; satellite links; social media). Secondly, through these platforms, but also beyond them, the digital substantially increased the ease and naturalness with which

diverse arts could interact with one another, especially because the costs of such interactions were vastly reduced, and material obstacles diminished. These two changes together have had a transformational effect over convergence of the arts.

However, in line with Henry Jenkins, we do not read the digital as simply a case of technological determinism, in which convergence emerges automatically from available technological opportunities. Instead, we read it as a *cultural force* facilitated by technological change. The convergence we see in this chapter needs therefore to be read as an expression of forces which technological developments reflect and enable. And this brings us to our second point: that these highly intermedial spaces represent a deep-rooted utopian urge towards world-making. The convergence of arts and media in Italy is closely aligned with a global trend towards the creation of alternative, utopic and interconnected worlds, built on a model of mobile and often transnational cooperation rather than conflict,⁴⁵ and dominated by the ideals of immediacy and ‘a participatory folk culture which gives average people the tools to archive, annotate, appropriate and recirculate content’.⁴⁶ These utopic elements are embedded in the three cases explored in this chapter.

As far as the most literal meaning of ‘world-making’ is concerned, all the art discussed in this chapter shares a marked sense of transnational connectedness, which expands geographical boundaries, replacing national with global space. While Carlo Lizzani’s project is the one that most obviously foregrounds the global with its harmonious, intercontinental dialogue, even *Macchine per fare le bolle* is positioned in a global space. The project, situated on the *Second Life* platform, butts up against a kitsch mix of national and imaginary cityscapes and landscapes, providing a perfect space for its avatars’ international and deterritorialized nomadism. Then, Wu Ming’s *Manituana* not only re-thinks the history of another continent (America), but uses Google Earth to explore the sites of the narrative, and is written by a collective whose name signals Chinese culture. The sense of a rooted territorial Italy has been displaced in all three case studies by a fluid and often extra-territorial inhabiting, which cherishes the nomadic, the transient, and the networked and leans on idealized co-habitation of a world marked not by conflict, but by harmonious co-operation and co-habitation. It is a deterritorialization that is implied too in the emerging metaverse, which is under discussion at the time of writing, and which will force us to question again the place of the national — i.e., of Italy — in spaces which seem ever more intensely networked.

Less literally, however, all the examples we have explored in this chapter also share a fascination with the world-making implicit in total works of art, works, in other words, which encompass everything. While this has long been a goal of certain artists — we can find it in the Futurist’s *opera d’arte totale*, discussed earlier in this book, or in Jorge Luis Borges’s wonderful short story, ‘The Book of Sand’ (1975) — the digital totality brought about by convergence provides the perfect tools for creating a complex world in which multiple arts can cohabit. Moreover, these digital spaces are relatively cocooned and separated from public spaces where conventional rules and limitations apply. This can be seen in the desire for an alternative world free of political meddling (Wu Ming), of the necessity of physical materiality (Brera Virtual Lab; Wu Ming), and of national boundaries (all three examples explored in

this chapter). The digital, and the intermediality it brings, is used to escape both disciplinary forms, and the disciplinary policing that comes with those forms. This can be read in part against the backdrop, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, of the dominance of Berlusconi in the mainstream mediasphere: the internet, as it was conceived back in 2007, could provide a deregulated space which felt freer to its users. The attempt to overcome the limits of material creation and national space can be read as somehow interconnected, and it can be seen too as a desertion by the artists of Italian public space, at least as this was still conceived at this time: the space of mainstream art world, mainstream media, and the public piazza.⁴⁷

The final point to make here is the importance of collaboration and co-creation in the creation of each of the works discussed. Collaboration is key to the process of making the artworks: writers work with musicians, web designers, and filmmakers; architects work with digital designers and filmmakers; and filmmakers work with performance artists and musicians as well as the set designers, lighting experts and so on. The level of cooperation needed between different kinds of artists is a sign of this converging art. However, what is perhaps even more striking is that collaboration is not just embedded in the design of these works but is also at the heart of its consumption. The spectator or consumer is moving into the heart of the artwork, a point that, as early 1912, the Futurists had declared in their *Manifesto tecnico della pittura*. This is most obviously the case on the *Manituana* website, which explicitly relies on creative input from Wu Ming's consumers. While it is less obvious in the second two cases, the subsequent circulation of the *Second Life* video, which was centred on Moioli and Albertini's sculptures and coordinated by Mario Gerosa, points to the dialogue between the creator of the artwork and its users. In *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins explains how the process of convergence creates encyclopaedic works which then make it hard for a single consumer to master them. In other words, these new, complex art forms necessarily involve consumers in collaborative practices so that together they may make sense of them and together co-create spin off story worlds. Works which are not encyclopaedic (*Macchine per fare le bolle*), but which are nonetheless situated in complex worlds (*Second Life*), seem to be subject to similar processes. The term participatory culture, which Jenkins uses in his book to explain this process of active engagement with the artwork, is in opposition to mid-twentieth-century presuppositions of the passive consumption of media. Jenkins, in fact, sees consumers of culture as no longer separate, but as participants 'interacting with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands'.⁴⁸ It is worth noting, nonetheless, that from our perspective in this book, the co-creating public at this time tends towards making more traditional, single artistic expressions, like the spin-off short stories under the 'mutineer stories' tab on the *Manituana* website. The intermedial creativity is harnessed almost exclusively, in other words, by the artists themselves, suggesting that the 'gap' between artist and consumer has not, in fact, been bridged, and artists remain in charge of complexity, as elite creators.

The implications of convergence are many. Collaborative and complex artworks that often defy categorization, or need new terminology to categorize them ('intermedial theatre'; 'net art'; 'transmedial fiction'; 'post-cinema'), emerge at the

meeting points of diverse art forms, at the points in which drops of paint merge in Jackson Pollock's drip painting, *Convergence* (1952), cited in our Introduction. There is little sense in any of the works discussed here of an innate understanding of the so-called 'purity' of a medium. The artwork is not an essence of any particular artistic discipline (although usually a single discipline — narrative for Wu Ming, sculpture for Brera Virtual Lab — does dominate), but it is the result of a converging of art forms in a particular place at a particular time, before breaking away from each other again and re-forming, perhaps, elsewhere. The space that houses these new art forms also undergoes a transformation, and this results in a rapidly evolving conception of *where* art is, and can be, positioned in society, as it leeches ever more out of artistic institutions like the museum, theatre, editorial industry and so on, and no longer has the prerogative of 'luogo deputato all'esperienza estetica' [a designated space of aesthetic experience], instead spilling into an increasingly aestheticized world, where even kettles and kitchens can be art. The idea that an artwork or a film was to be viewed exclusively in a particular setting, or music to be listened to only in a concert hall, or a narrative to be consumed only through language, was long gone by 2007.

What Henry Jenkins, a scholar of media, leaves out in his seminal work on convergence is that, among the many forms of convergence that he lists (technological, economic, social, cultural, global), he misses the way in which the *art* world (rather than media, or culture more generally) was transformed by convergence in the early twenty-first century, as the concept of art as a pure form was lost to many, if not most, of the artists working at this time. As we have seen in this book, the journey of the artistic media away from purity, and into ever-deeper intermedial dialogue, did not start with the twenty-first century, but has its roots deeply embedded in Italy's cultural history.

Notes to Chapter 7

1. See, Richard Wise's *Multimedia: A Critical Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999) for a clear history of the development of both multimedia technology and the ideas behind it. Wise posits two foundations on which the rise of multimedia was built and situates both in the 1960s. The first is the American military, which had invested heavily in computers since World War II and was behind the invention of the microchip, which would prove the cornerstone of modern computing. The second is America's counterculture, which emphasized the 'democratic and enabling potential of the computer' as well as its spiritual potential. Wise documents key moments in the development of the two strands — the computer and network technology — which would finally come together in the 1990s. He traces the development of multimedial computers: the launch of the CD-ROM (1986), which had the capacity to store up to three seconds of video; Apple's Hypercard (1987), which allowed Mac users to combine text, graphics, and sound; the various iterations of Microsoft Windows, culminating in Window 95, which was finally fast enough to rival Apple. Wise then documents key moments in the creation of the networked computer, including: its prehistory in early telecommunications; the invention of the modem (1977) through which computers could communicate over the telephone system; the rise of commercial interest in the Internet (1989); the launch of the World Wide Web as a program freely available on the Internet (1991). It is the combination of multimedia computer and network technology which paved the way, in technological terms, for the experiments we discuss in this chapter.

2. For detailed analysis, see the two recent works which consider the place of computers and the digital in the work of cultural practitioners well before the start of 2000. Emanuela Patti's *Opera Aperta: Italian Electronic Literature from the 1960s to the Present* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022) writes the history of electronic and digital literature in Italy from the early days of computers in the 1960s. Eleonora Lima's project website 'Narrating Computing', <<https://narratingcomputing.com/>> [accessed 28 July 2022] and her forthcoming book with Legenda (provisional title: *A Literary History of Computing: Italian Authors Write Computer Culture*) provide a history of computers in Italian literature from the 1950s, exploring how literature contributes to the debate on computing and shapes attitudes.
3. Italians were relatively late in taking up digital technology. According to Pietro Candela's chapter, 'Il fascino "discreto" del digitale', in *Link: idea per la televisione. focus: mediamorfosi: le trasformazioni della tv digitale raccontati dai protagonisti*, ed. by Federico Di Chio (Rome: RTI, 2007), pp. 15–20, the digital was little used in the 1980s as it was considered too slow. While uptake improved during the 1990s, Candela claims that the convergence of content proclaimed in 2000 was delayed, and it was only from 2005–06 that digitalization became easier.
4. The national broadcaster, RAI, had been a monopoly since its establishment in 1954; the arrival of Mediaset in 1993 introduced competition, creating the duopoly that was to hold sway from the 1990s until, arguably, the present.
5. See Clodagh Brook, 'The Cinema of Resistance: Nanni Moretti's *Il caimano* and the Italian Film Industry', in *Resisting the Tide: Cultures of Opposition Under Berlusconi*, ed. by Daniele Albertazzi and others (New York: Continuum: 2009), pp. 110–23.
6. Christopher Cepernich, in his article 'The Changing Face of the Media: A Catalogue of Anomalies', in *Resisting the Tide*, pp. 46–56, documents Berlusconi's hold on terrestrial television (through Mediaset), as well as on cinema (through Medusa Cinema and Medusa Multisala), video (50% of Blockbuster shares), and on the publishing sector (50.3% of Mondadori, as well as *Panorama* and TV Guides). Cepernich argues that legislation did little to break the monopoly that Berlusconi had over Italian terrestrial media. However, the critic notes how Berlusconi's influence over new media was limited: Mediadigit managed the Berlusconi Group's activities in this field, but it was underdeveloped when compared to the massive footprint that Mediaset had across old media. The early 2000s were dominated by discussions of Berlusconi's conflict of interest, given his influence in television, which was still the main source from which Italians derived their information and news at this time: ISTAT's 2006 survey shows that 93% of Italians watched TV at this time, while internet usage was only 35.6%.
7. Hywel Williams and others, 'Network Analysis Reveals Open Forums and Echo Chambers in Social Media Discussions of Climate Change', *Global Environmental Change*, 32 (2015), 126–38 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.03.006>>.
8. Henry Jenkins, 'How Slapshot Inspired a Cultural Revolution (Part One): An Interview with the Wu Ming Foundation', *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, 4 October 2006 <http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2006/10/how_slapshot_inspired_a_cultur.html> [accessed 28 July 2022].
9. Clodagh Brook and Emanuela Patti, 'Introduzione', pp. 7–32 (p. 7) and Emanuela Piga, 'Comunità, intelligenza connettiva e letteratura: dall'open source all'opera aperta in Wu Ming', pp. 55–78. Both in *Transmedia: storia, memoria e narrazioni attraverso i media*, ed. by Clodagh Brook and Emanuela Patti (Milan: Mimesis, 2014).
10. As discussed in our Introduction to this book, 'flow' and 'merging' are two aspects of media convergence. Jenkins's *Convergence Culture* privileges the *flow* of content from one media platform to another. This migratory process is what he refers to as 'transmedia' (across media), a process he defines as the 'flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want' (p. 2). The etymology of the word 'convergence', on the other hand, points more to a bending towards, or inclining towards, or *merging*, signalling a moment when arts and media converge on the same space before moving away and dispersing once again. This alternative sense of the word can also be seen in Jenkins's work on convergence.
11. See Clodagh Brook. *Marco Bellocchio: The Cinematic Eye in the Political Sphere* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

12. See Steve Neale, 'Art Cinema as Institution', *Screen*, 22. 1 (1981), 11–39.
13. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*. p. 10.
14. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, p. 37.
15. See Emanuela Patti. 'Il romanzo nella "galassia internet": sperimentazioni transmediali nella narrativa italiana del xxi secolo', in *Transmedia: storia, memoria e narrazioni attraverso i media*, ed. by Clodagh Brook and Emanuela Patti (Milan: Mimesis, 2014), 33–54.
16. Wu Ming's 'Preface' to the Italian version of *Cultural Convergence*, available at <https://www.wumingfoundation.com/english/outtakes/convergence_culture.htm>.
17. Emanuela Piga, 'Comunità, intelligenza connettiva e letteratura: dall'open source all'opera aperta in Wu Ming', in *Transmedia: storia, memoria e narrazioni*, pp. 55–77.
18. Ernesto Assante, 'Lizzani, film in due set virtuali lo spettacolo diventa globale', *La Repubblica*, 15 October 2007, <https://www.repubblica.it/2007/10/sezioni/spettacoli_e_cultura/cinema/roma/lizzani-global/lizzani-global/lizzani-global.html> [accessed 28 July 2022].
19. ARTES (Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems), 'Italy and Burkina Faso Together on One Virtual Stage', *The European Space Agency*, 2 November 2007 <<https://artes.esa.int/news/italy-and-burkina-faso-together-one-virtual-stage>> [accessed 28 July 2022].
20. Richard Grusin, 'DVD, Videogames and the Cinema of Interactions', in *Post-cinema: Theorising 21st Century Film*, ed. by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda (Sussex: ReFrame Books, 2016), pp. 65–87 <<https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/1-3-grusin/>> [accessed 15 December 2021].
21. Steven Jacobs, *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 154.
22. See, for instance: Jürgen Heinrichs, and Yvonne Spielmann, 'What is Intermedia?', *Convergence*, 8.4 (2002), 5–10; Ágnes Pethő, 'Intermediality in Film: A Historiography of Methodologies', *Film and Media Studies*, 2 (2010), 39–72.
23. See Luciano De Giusti, *Immagini migranti: forme intermediali del cinema nell'era digitale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2008).
24. Assante, 'Lizzani'.
25. Vito Zagarrío, 'Tre volte nella polvere, tre volte... Intervista a Carlo Lizzani', in *Carlo Lizzani: un lungo viaggio nel cinema*, ed. by Vito Zagarrío (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), pp. 24–54.
26. Bruno Torri, 'Il teorico: cinema e altro', in *Carlo Lizzani: un lungo viaggio*, pp. 55–60 (p. 56).
27. Peter Bondanella, and Federico Pacchioni, *A History of Italian Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), p. 258.
28. Mark Crossley and Lars Elleström in their chapter for Crossley's *Intermedial Theatre*; note the difference between filmic and theatrical intermediality. Citing Claudia Giorgi's assertion that theatre has an 'ability to integrate other media without affecting their respective materiality and mediality' (p. 18), while at the same time, of course, representing them as theatrical signifiers, Crossley concludes that although theatre's materiality may be intact, it is arguable how much of a medium remains once theatricalized. Nonetheless, he notes that not all thinkers are persuaded of this. Elleström, for instance, believes that 'theatre represents other media with less material interference or transformation than other plurimedial forms and thereby with more of the innate qualities of the original medium present' (p. 19). Ultimately, however, Crossley argues that the term 'hypermedium' can indeed be used, as long as these qualifications are borne in mind when using it. Mark Crossley, with Lars Elleström, 'Theatre (and You) as Medium and Intermedium', in *Intermedial Theatre: Principles and Practices*, ed. Mark Crossley (London: Red Globe, 2019), pp. 1–42.
29. *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, ed. by Sarah Bay-Cheng and others (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), p. 10.
30. Rosalind Krauss, 'A Voyage on the North Sea': *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000).
31. Gregory Kipper, *Augmented Reality: An Emerging Technologies Guide to AR* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2012).
32. *Second Life* is dominated in part by mimesis, as so many buildings replicate real architectural sources. However, there are also many imaginary worlds, some based on literary genres, especially fantasy, as well as on canonical texts like Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*. There are also many art galleries housing the work of artists of often dubious talent. One of *Second Life's* most

- high-profile artists at that time was the Italian Gazira Babeli. In 2007, she had a solo exhibition inside one of *Second Life*'s many galleries, showcasing some of her performative works like 'Singing Pizza' in which huge pizzas — two metres in diameter — were placed on the gallery floor. Whenever an avatar steps on one, it spews tomato sauce and sings 'O sole mio'. Babeli also used Andy Warhol's Campbell's tins and flying bananas based on Warhol's famous yellow banana for the album, *Velvet Underground & Nico*. Her mashing and remediation of pop art and performance practice earned her a substantial reputation inside the virtual world.
33. Giampiero Moioli, 'Open source, virtual reality, and mixed reality: applicazioni per l'arte, la progettazione e la comunicazione', in *Brera Academy; Virtual Lab: un viaggio dai mondi virtuali alla realtà aumentata nel segno dell'Open Source*, ed. by Mario Gerosa and Giampiero Moioli (Milan: Francoangeli, 2010), pp. 11–29.
 34. Moioli, p. 13.
 35. As the Italian architect, known in *Second Life* as Turboy Runo, says, Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, who was active in the first century BC, ascribes three features to architecture: *firmitas* [structure], *utilitas* [functionality] and *venustas* [aesthetics]. Runo notes how *firmitas* is not necessary in *Second Life*. Turboy Runo, 'Architecture in SL,' 28 June 2007 <<https://archsl.wordpress.com/category/turboy-runo/>> [accessed 28 July 2022].
 36. Moioli, p. 27.
 37. Pierre Lévy, summarized by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture*, p. 4. As mentioned in our Introduction, the French theorist Lévy coined the term 'collective intelligence' that was subsequently used by Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* to argue that a collaborative approach to culture was essential today.
 38. The bubble-making machines are a 'remediation', following the now classic definition of that term by Bolter and Grusin in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000). The critics define it as 'new media refashion(ing) prior media forms' (p. 273). Moioli and Albertini take their ideas of material sculpture and convert them by means of coding for a 3-D digital platform, where they become immaterial forms. However, in doing this, they do not eclipse the older art form, but reshape it, so that both forms exist and are evidently co-dependent: the virtual form of the bubble-making machines owes its existence to Moioli and Albertini's prior work on sculpture; the sculptures exhibited later in Pavia owed a great deal to the virtual experiments that preceded them. The remediation alone, however, would not necessarily lead to increased intermediality.
 39. The *Second Life* versions of these sculptures are far from immaterial, nonetheless. They require a computer and an internet connection with sufficient bandwidth to support the program, as well as the presence of either *Second Life* or a similar computer program.
 40. Haidee Wasson, 'The Networked Screen: Moving Images, Materiality, and Aesthetics of Size', in *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*, ed. by Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 74–95 (p. 75).
 41. Digital storytelling began in 1992 with *The Edge of Intentions* by Joseph Bates, which used algorithms to organize narrative directions. Net.cinema and net.art began in the mid-1990s, with the focus firmly on the *process* of making art, rather than an art object.
 42. It is clear that without the arrival of Web 2.0 (a term popularized in the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference in 2004), the idea of an interactive website with user-generated material would not have been possible.
 43. Gabriella Taddeo, *Ipercinema: immaginario cinematografico nell'era digitale* (Milan: Guerini scientifica, 2007), p. 47.
 44. Taddeo, p. 37.
 45. Although conflict between arts and artists does not, of course, disappear. Bolter and Grusin in *Remediation*, for instance, talk about remediation as a competition among media so as to avoid fading into obsolescence. Much was written, especially at the start of the 2000s, on the competitive relation between various media for survival.
 46. Henry Jenkins, 'Convergence? I Diverge', *Technology Review*, 104.5 (2001), p. 93.
 47. In *Liquid Modernity*, Zygmunt Bauman pessimistically notes the desertion of the public sphere and the move of powerful agents to the 'exterritoriality of electronic networks', 'beyond the reach of citizens' control', leaving a public space increasingly empty of public issues (p. x).
 48. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, p. x.

