Ritualizing interactive media: from motivation to activation

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Abstract
This paper intends to reveal the essential value of interactive media by fully understanding the complex interactive mechanism of human experience. Following Cartesian dualistic thought, interactive technology has primarily been utilized as a physical control device. It hasn’t sufficiently explored its gigantic potential as a true interactive medium. Interactive technology reflects our desire to interact with someone or something. Historically, human desire for interaction has been continuously manifested from the day of primitive ritual to contemporary cyberspace. Our interactive routines have continued, from micro to macro scale, in order to confirm our existence in every day life. This universal repetitive pattern of human activity is ‘the ritual’. It is ritual because it is the archetypes of cycles driven by human instinct, regardless of their cultural and historical period. In this paper, I am defining ‘the form of ritual’, to explain the fundamental human process of interaction and becoming, and furthermore, to find the imperative potential of interactive media. The form of ritual will be explained in detail, with agent, driving force, process and by-product, taking reference from Korean shaman ritual, Yin/Yang process and Alfred North Whitehead’s process philosophy. My virtual puppetry with spiralling interaction, ‘Yong-Shin-Gud’ (calling-dragon-spirit), will be introduced as an art example to carry out the ritual. Interactive technology is an ongoing expression of human desire. Its essential value would be found in understanding human beings, nature and cosmos. Revealing its hidden essence, historical presence and spiritual value will be the next paradigm of interactive art practice.

At the beginning, the puppeteer physically controls the puppet. However, through the growing interactions, the puppeteer eventually becomes the puppet. He begins by moving his body to the puppet. His mind follows and becomes one with the puppet. The puppet truly comes to life and seems to move by itself without the puppeteer’s control, from motivation to activation.

It is unknown what exactly happens between puppet and puppeteer. Such dimension shift often occurs in the relationship between binary pairs, such as instrument/instrument player and shaman/shaman’s object. It could be a prototype of interactive process that needs to be clarified in our ubiquitous word usage, ‘interaction’. The word ‘interaction’ has appeared

Keywords
interactive media
virtual reality
spirituality
Eastern philosophy
shamanism
broadly in many fields: philosophy, science, art and media. It is one of the significant terms to express our contemporary culture, body and identity. Like Deleuze says, it is no longer a question of each individual entity (Deleuze 1995: 121). Rather, the question is what happens ‘in between’ the communication between different disciplines, cultures and societies. Every individual becomes a source of movement and interaction. What is important is not the production itself, but emerging properties from interactions with the broader population (DeLanda 1992: 105-6). In this current of time, computer technology brought the idea of interactivity into the form of media. The idea of interaction has emerged on every surface of contemporary life: art, media and society.

Despite its contemporary omni-presence, however, the idea and desire for interaction cannot simply be new and contemporary. Looking back on history, human desire for interaction has been continuously manifested from the day of primitive ritual to contemporary cyberspace. Our interactive routines have continued, from micro to macro scale, in order to confirm our existence in everyday life. This universal repetitive pattern of human activity is ‘the ritual’. It is ritual because it is the archetypes of cycles driven by human instinct, regardless of their cultural and historical period. Based on Korean shaman ritual, yin/yang process, I am defining ‘the form of ritual’, to explain this fundamental human process of interaction and becoming.

The ‘form of ritual’ will reveal the complicated layers of interactive process that haven’t understood in our daily word usage, ‘interaction’. This term has been used technically without realizing its full spectrum and meaning. Interactive technology is an important clue to see how human desire for interaction has been inherited to contemporary cyberspace. I see the interactive media as a new vehicle to carry out the ritual. Interactive technology is an ongoing expression of human desire. Its essential value could be found in understanding human beings, nature and cosmos. Revealing its hidden essence, historical presence and spiritual value would be the next paradigm of interactive art practice.

The form of ritual
Interaction is the process, the hybrid is an unexpected embodiment from this process and the binary is its profound agent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Binary pairs: you/me, East/West, reality/virtuality, body/mind, audience/performer</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>The shaman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Interaction grows to its highest level and becomes interpenetration. In this state, binary sets completely exchange their position through membrane and create new binary sets starting with a new ritual</td>
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<tr>
<td>By-product</td>
<td>This ritual is for process itself, not for the product. The unexpected hybrid is created as by-product</td>
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<td>Driving force</td>
<td>Desire for identity and liberation from oppression and limitation</td>
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From control to interaction

The agent of the ritual is the binary pair.

Binary patterns are frequently encountered throughout human history, from the ‘bush telegraph’ of the past to ‘cyberspace’ at the present (Barthes 1973: 81). These patterns may be intimately derived from the unchangeable movement of our own heartbeat - the fundamental motivation of the world and our daily ritual. Despite its omnipresence, however, a different understanding exists between Western and Eastern binary systems. These differences have long reflected each culture’s identity and ways of thinking.

Cartesian thought in the West: control system

In the West, there is Cartesian thought, in which the mind is completely separated from the body with an explicit hierarchy. The mind in an upper position controls the body in a lower. In other words, one opposite dominates and conquers the other. This dualism is necessary to understand the drama of Christian theology (Eisenstadt 1971: 18). The souls, as the object of salvation, must be separable from the body. It must be of different metaphysical stuff with body. This Western dualistic tradition has recently been integrated into cyberspace. Cyberspace began with the dream of the eternal body constructed with collected data, a body completely controlled by human consciousness. It is the new machine and cyborg that replaces our biological body in the quest for perfection. Interactive technology began from the idea that human consciousness can perfectly control this new body, turning all its information, including emotions and desires, into bits of data. This notion reflects a great longing for human completeness and a denial of human mortality. Following the Cartesian dualism, it appears inevitable that every science and technology begins from the conviction that humans can control the world. This dualistic tradition has been imbedded everywhere in our artificial life. It is also manifest in the Western perspective of nature, in which the natural world is a subject to be controlled, while the Eastern perspective sees nature as something to interact with. However, even if interactive technology started as a control system, it has enormous potential to be reborn as a true interactive medium, based on an understanding of our interactive cycles.

Yin/yang in the East: interactive cycle

Yin/yang thought in the East embodies the process of interaction in itself. In this thought, the world is full of binaries and these polar opposites are present together in all things and events (Sang-il 1984: 4). Mind and body, female and male, night and day, moon and sun, shadow and light. They require each other, inspire each other and exchange their positions in cycles. They act on strong inertia to join and become one. The symbol of yin/yang is divided into left and right, which means a mutual relationship and balance between two polar opposites without hierarchy.

Binary is a principle of separation but this separation already carries a process of unification. Each binary opposition penetrates through a membrane and is transformed into the other. This process give birth to a new
binary set, filled with the reversed action again. There occurs moments of unity and fullness during this action of crossover. Alfred North Whitehead describes these moments that actual entity terminates its becoming in one complex feeling involving a completely determinate bond with every item in the universe (Whitehead 1978: 44). This termination is the satisfaction of the actual entity. It’s synthetic givenness: final complete feeling. The binary erases itself over and over. It sacrifices itself for the new creation and the ongoing cycles of ritual.

‘Moo’, a character in Eastern calligraphy, can demonstrate the structure of yin/yang ritual. In this character, the human figure is represented as a mediator who dances between sky and earth (Cho 1997: 14-15). This is the shaman. The shaman can perform the ritual of interaction, based on these two polar opposite components. Paradoxically, this ritual only exists in the separation, even though its goal is to overcome the separation and become one. The shaman blurs the line between the binary pairs but also returns it to the beginning point - into disunion again. Leaving and returning, fusion and farewell, this continuous movement of two-way actions shapes our form of ritual. Everything comes back to the original order and waits the moment of the next revolution. This significant interactive process occurs all the time, from daily routines to sacred ceremonies. Ritual repeats forever.

From physical to spiritual
The driving force of the ritual is the human desire for freedom and identity.

In a physical sense, new computer technology opened the way for interactive communication, whereas older media, such as film, video and television framed one-way relationships between users and media. However, no matter what we call it, direct or interactive, all media experiences are fundamentally interactive, in a mental and/or physical sense. The history of one-way media must not be forgotten in the discourse of interactive media, because it is a history of human mental interaction and spiritual engage-
ment with human binary reflection. That is why people still love the monologue of television and film.

Interactive technology has primarily been utilized as a physical control device. It has not sufficiently explored its gigantic potential as a true interactive medium. From the beginning, this tendency to focus on the physical side of interactive technology has ignored the mental and spiritual attributes of interaction. Every experience is moulded and completed by both the physical and the mental interactive components. Whitehead states it as: ‘the mental pole originates as the conceptual counterpart of operations in the physical pole. The two poles are inseparable in their origination. The mental pole starts with the conceptual registration of the physical pole’ (Whitehead 1978: 248). Without our mental transformative perceptions, our interactive experience cannot come true. Both the physical and the mental dimensions always come together to fully shape our complete experience of interaction. The physical motive initiates this action, then our mental process fills up the rest of the experience. Maintaining a balance between these two elements is important, but, unfortunately, such balance is often neglected in today’s digital interactive art practice.

Why is it that our interactive process undergoes a primary passage from physical to spiritual? As long as we have an awareness of our socialized body, we lose the possibility of pure interactive cycles. Our body has been tamed in an invisible cage of society. We have controlled ourselves and kept close watch on ourselves, and find ourselves locked in prisons of our own making. But it seems that we have always had a deep wish to break free from all these limits. It is through our rituals of interaction that these restraints are released and our physical body is transformed, eventually becoming a spiritual entity. During the creative process, artists accomplish this fundamental human desire for interaction and transformation (Eisendrath 1971: 18). They find satisfaction in the experiences that liberate them from physical limitations. The desire for absolute freedom, an essential nostalgia for human being, is fulfilled during this journey from physical to spiritual.

Human desire for interaction, freedom and identity are all interrelated. Why do we interact with each other? Why do we continue this ritual of interaction? The human desire for identity, for self-recognition, is primal, whatever his cultural period and his form of social organization. The desire of identity arises from the indeterminate nature of the world. It is our wish to find a satisfying moment by determining ourselves, based on our indeterminate nature. Whitehead states that:

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\text{indetermination has evaporated from ‘satisfaction’, so that there is a complete determination of ‘feeling’, of ‘negation of feeling’, respecting universe. This evaporation of indetermination is merely another way of considering the process whereby the actual entity arises from its data. Thus, in another sense, each actual entity includes the universe, by reason of its determinate attitude towards every element in the universe.}
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(Whitehead 1978: 45)
Just as we look into a mirror to confirm our image, we confirm our living existence through our binary oppositions. These oppositions can be found in any reflected surfaces, such as objects, living beings and intangible forms such as sound and movement. Once we find them, we build the interactive cycle, which is involved with dynamic mental activity, and, sometimes, motivated by a physical response. This process can become true because our body is also a transforming spiritual entity. In this process of becoming, we move our body toward this opposition and then our mind follows in order to become one entity. Playing a musical instrument and performing a puppet creates this gradual dimension shift, from control to interaction, from separation to assimilation, and from physical motivation to spiritual activation. Although the puppet and the puppeteer are not analogous, they are perfectly united by their relationship and interactions. In the end, the puppet becomes the image of the puppeteer and the puppeteer confirms himself, as our continuous act in front of a mirror. In a moment of absolute freedom, we realize our forgotten selves by transforming our bodies into different things (Eisendrath 1971: 18). We become eager to transcend our socially oppressed flesh. We choose to wear ‘masks’ and perform as ‘marionettes’. It is the powerful motivating force of the ritual, moving from physical to spiritual.

From linear to spiral
*The process of the ritual is growing interactions and its mediator is the Shaman.*

All symbols of becoming are spirals. It is the passage from one mode of being into another that represents cosmic rhythms of interaction and eternal becoming (Eliade 1988: xi-xii). This can be seen in lunar structure, the phases of the moon and wave, and the movement in cycles shown at the yin/yang ritual. Concrescence, and perishing. This is intermediate phases of process shown in the philosophy of organism (Whitehead 1978: 160). There is a growth from phase to phase; there are processes of integration and of reintegration. The following steps indicate the procedure of the spiraling phases of binary relationships:

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<tr>
<th>Spiralling phases of binary relationships</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Inter-coexistence:</strong> There are no other relationships other than coexistence in space and time (Bak 1999: 300-01).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Inter-action:</strong> There is a more physical relationship more than a logical one.</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Inter-dependence:</strong> By increased interactions, interdependence is also increased and helps create harmony and cooperation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Inter-penetration:</strong> Developed interdependence. This is the most active and creative relationship, because it already contains another potential for new change and harmony.</td>
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In these phases, interactive process gradually rises up to its highest level of interpenetration. Each binary opposition penetrates through a membrane into the other side and is transformed into its opponent. This is the ultimate stage of shamanic ritual and yin/yang, which evokes our primitive vital function of transformation. Hua-yen Buddhism describes this state of interpenetration as openness, presence and non-concealment (Odin 1982: 32, 1). In the Buddhist teaching of totality, hua-yen doctrine of mutual penetration and mutual-containing aspects of existence is described as follows:

1. Simultaneous-mutual-arising
2. Simultaneous-mutual-entering
3. Simultaneous-mutual-containment

Whitehead also explains the analysis of the formal constitution of an actual entity given three stages in the process of feeling: (1) the responsive phase, (2) the supplemental stage, and (3) the satisfaction (Whitehead 1978: 212).

Linear flow is entwined by the magnetic force of metamorphosis and finally spirals up to the sky. Such a magical phenomena is accomplished by the presence of a mediator, the so-called ‘shaman’. Long ago our ancestors had direct communication with spirits, gods and objects (Cho 1997: 18-20). However, this vital function has been forgotten. We are able to rebuild these relationships with the help of a mediator. The revolutionary body that freely transcends time and space is the shaman. The great role of the shaman is opening communication, awakening people’s primitive memory that lifts them up to the shaman’s state. In the Korean shamanic ritual called ‘Gud’, the shaman is the person who mediates between the spiritual world and the mundane. He/she evokes the repressed functions of the body. Gud begins with unbalanced energy and always brings harmony and balance in the end. The important factor of Gud is the energy of ‘Hung’ and ‘Shin-Myung’. They express a state of blissful self-effacement resulting from the spiral movement of interactions between the mundane and the spirit. I see the quickening of a revolutionary power from such energetic emotions. By way of these conditions, we finally free those oppressed from the tyranny of social and physical limitations.

Gud has multiple mediators present at its various channels of transfer. The relationship between the shaman and the shaman’s object initiates this spiral expansion. The first mediator is the shaman's object that brings the shaman into trance states. The second is the shaman and the third is the audience who will eventually acquire the shaman’s supernatural power (in

<table>
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<td>Moo-Gu (shaman's object) –&gt; Moo-Dang (shaman) –&gt; Dan-Gol (audience)</td>
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fact, the natural power we've forgotten).
The magical object 'Moo-Gu' can be a knife, a bell, a puppet or intangible things like dancing and singing (Cho 1997: 166-71). Many times, Moo-Dang looks for Moo-Gu buried under the ground by spirit (Kim 1993: 16-19). In order to achieve the shaman's state, Moo-Dang needs to engage herself with it. After the spiraling relationship, Moo-Dang becomes the shaman and plays a role as a second mediator. Moo-Dang connects two different spaces, the mundane and the spirit, freely crossing over the two. 'Dan-Gol', the audience, finally acquires the shaman's status, and can communicate with the spiritual world and become the third mediator.
The shaman's power and ritual is everyday and ordinary - not something special. However, how it truly becomes 'special' is because of that very universality and commonness. This happens all the time in any of our transformative activities. Arts and media, as a mediator, are the substituted forms of the contemporary shaman. Media is the window and water surface that lies between multiple realities. This transparent membrane creates the separated binary sets but also encourages crossover movements by increased interaction. This makes us aware of our forgotten selves and brings a deep understanding of phenomena during this spiraling journey of interaction. Media is a membrane for interaction, interpenetration and transformation. It establishes our binary reflection on the other surface and makes us interact with it.

Figure 3. (1) The basic version of 'Taegeuk', representing the Tao and its two elemental states of being: yin and yang (2) The Sam-Taegeuk, representing the Tao's three realms of action: heaven, earth, and man (3) The Sa-Taegeuk is just one of many variations on the Taegeuk motif
From scenario to improvisation

The by-product of the ritual is hybrid.

Movements of schools of fish under the sea, flocks of birds migrating far distances, armies of ants carrying their food. It seems that there is an invisible natural rule in these contingent and beautiful movements. Each creature becomes a part of the group structure, without dispersion in these animal kingdoms. What kind of power makes this beautiful system possible? Who is the leader of this structure? There is no revolt for the group structure. However, it is not because of their obedience, but because of their interaction. Each individual is merely interacting with its environment. It is not the power structure, but the interactive structure. No dictator can control the natural beautiful shape of this organization. Such a beautiful shape cannot be constructed by scenario, rather, it must be improvised by free participations. This unexpected hybrid holds the emerging properties that come forth during the ritual. The ritual is performed, not for the product, but for the process itself.

The dragon is the symbol of the hybrid in Eastern culture. It originally was portrayed as a combination of more than twenty different animals, with the head of a camel, the eye of a rabbit, the ear of a cow, the body of a snake, the claw of a hawk, and so on (Choi 1992: 92). Primarily, it symbolizes transformation and metamorphosis: the continuous energy flow in nature. To paraphrase Whitehead’s thoughts on ‘actual entity’, the dragon has become a ‘being’ and it belongs to the nature of every ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming’. It is the captured phase of our interactive ritual process. The dragon is a by-product in the form of ritual. At the same time, it represents a whole process of ritual and the fundamental growth.
tal driving force of its own creation. Escher’s dragon represents this non-Euclidian topology in its moebius strip structure very well.

However, in the Western world, after the introduction of Christianity, the dragon became a powerful symbol of a monster (Michell 1994: 66-82). Many scenes in old stories depict religious saints who slay the dragons. In this way, mankind begins to control natural power. The image of the dragon has been changed then from a subject to interact with, to a subject that must be controlled, from a hybrid to a monster, and from improvisation to construction.

As the dragon struggles between two opposite meanings, so too does interactive media struggle. How much does interactive media contribute to the real freedom and participation of its users? Compared to one-way media experiences, a user may appear to have more freedom in interactive media. However, users’ interactions are still much controlled by the invisible structure and pre-constructed scenarios. Interactive technology on occasion dedicates itself to making its power structure more invisible and unrecognizable. Users are often passive and caged as they play within certain interactive scenarios, where, by contrast, they may be mentally more involved with one-way media, as they continuously construct their own way of understanding (Poster 1993: 93-94). For this reason, we cannot simply define one-way media as passive and interactive media as active. The free improvisation of a real public will call the dragon spirit and generate the true hybrid form of interactive art during the ritual.

The applied ritual

Yong-Shin-Gud (calling-dragon-spirit): virtual puppetry with spiralling interaction

The form of ritual has been applied through all my art projects: storytelling interviews, animations, sound and virtual interactive puppet performances. All my projects carry out the form of ritual, with continuous position exchanges between binary pairs, such as artist/audience, storyteller/listener, real puppeteer/virtual puppet and East/West. Especially, my virtual interactive puppetry explores the most intimate and spiralling connections inherent in human-computer interaction (HCI) by using a form of traditional puppetry and shamanic ritual.

One of my virtual interactive puppet performances, called ‘Yong-Shin-Gud’ (calling-dragon-spirit), consists of the artist’s performance with live music, storytelling and 3D motion graphics, and the audience’s participation. ‘Yong-Shin-Gud’ is a Korean word, named for a special shamanic ritual that evokes dragon spirit. My live puppetry is a special ceremony to embody the dragon spirit in computer interactivity, shaping the constant process of transformation and spiralling phases of interaction.

Driven by storytelling and musical instrumental play, Yong-Shin-Gud starts with three components: the virtual world, the real space of the performance room, and a sound activated puppet, ‘virtual shaman’, who mediates between the virtual and the real, in the same way as the Korean Shaman ritual, ‘Gud’, composed of the binary pairs and shaman.
virtual sound activated puppet eventually acquires the ultimate trans-state of shaman, by spiralling interactive dialogues with the real puppeteer.

The virtual shaman: sound activated puppet

Virtual shaman: sound activated puppet comes after the primitive expression of Korean traditional puppet. Lacking realistic details, virtual shaman’s appearance connects us with the remote time of totem pole (Cho 1979: 28). It stimulates the viewer’s perception of the figure in question and encourages the act of imagination based on the abstracted signs of life (Tillis 1992: 47). The virtual puppet leads viewers to imagine. The viewer’s imagination completes the figure and life of the virtual puppet.

Unlike traditional puppets, virtual shaman is motivated by sound, not by strings, rods or hand triggers. Any sound input coming into the microphone, such as musical instrument sound and storytelling motivate the mouth, body and facial expression of the 3D virtual puppet on screen, in real time. The virtual puppet constantly speaks and sings back to the puppeteer, like real-time echoes and mirror reflections. Whereas the traditional puppeteer requires a certain trained skill to manipulate the puppet, my virtual puppet provides us immediate knowledge of how the system works. In this complete hands-off experience, the puppeteer is transformed to the puppet in a second, with strong attention to what the puppet speaks about and how.

![Figure 6. Virtual shaman: sound activated puppet](image)

**Figure 6. Virtual shaman: sound activated puppet**

Virtual shaman was created using open source, Antoine Schmitt asFFT Xtra in 3D interactive application. The asFFT Xtra computes a power spectrum using a FFT (Fast Fourier Transform) on the input sound samples. This live sound spectrum was applied to the 3D puppet’s mouth, body and texture with different types of sensitivity and controls. Most of all, real time mouth interaction has a significant role in making virtual shaman come to life. The sign system of speech is of vital importance to puppetry, allowing people to imagine the puppet as being alive (Tillis 1992: 24). Even though
there are only primitive up and down mouth responses, it makes the virtual puppet look exactly in lip-sync with the puppeteer’s voice and musical instrument sounds. However, what truly makes the puppet come to life is not the technical control over the puppet’s physical movement, but the user’s (puppeteer’s) spiritual engagement and ‘the willing suspension of disbelief’ towards the presence of the virtual puppet. The audience’s willingness makes the leap from the perception of representative abstractions to the imagination of life (Tillis 1992: 47). The audience chooses to imagine and complete the puppetry. This willingness only exists when the distinction between puppet and puppeteer is abolished. It became real by performing the ritual of interaction.

**Process of ritual**

Yong-Shin-Gud shapes the ongoing real-time lip-sync process and eventually erases the line between puppet and puppeteer. As yin and yang continuously exchange their position side by side without hierarchy, the real puppeteer becomes the virtual puppet and the virtual puppet becomes the real puppeteer in cycles. This dynamic demonstrates my perspective of the body as a strong spiritual entity that is continuously transformed into our binary reflections, seen as objects, images, and puppets. The puppetry starts with a simple physical motivational element (the lip-syncing) with which to interact; and then the whole interactive process becomes more and more powerful with the puppeteer’s increasing spiritual engagement with the puppet. This back and forth between physical motivation and spiritual activation constitutes the magical part of puppetry: *The puppeteer’s voice motivates the puppet’s mouth. The puppet lip-syncs with the puppeteer. The puppeteer becomes the puppet and talks through the puppet. The puppet’s voice motivates the puppeteer’s mouth. The puppeteer lip-syncs with the puppet. The puppet becomes the puppeteer and speaks through the puppeteer. The puppeteer’s voice motivates the puppet’s mouth.*

For this process, my project requires that the performer watch carefully her puppet’s continuous response on screen, whereas it is not necessary for the sound performer to watch the image unfolding on the screen in most of the audio-visual interactive performances. The performer should face her puppet on the screen, as the puppet’s response will gradually motivate the performer’s musical or storytelling inspiration. The audience should be located between the performer and the puppet, thus placed physically, and spiritually, between this spiralling inner dialogue of the puppet and the puppeteer. It is magical how much the puppeteer merges into the puppet on the screen. Without seeing the puppet, the puppeteer cannot possibly play the music with the same energy. The melody she plays is not
generated by her brain and consciousness - it is not her melody at all. Rather, the melody is created between the puppet and her. Her sound inspires the puppet and its movement inspires her in return. They continue to inspire each other and play a melody that is neither solo nor duet. The puppeteer falls in love with her puppet during this cycle. The more she loves the puppet, the more the puppet loves her. The more her puppet loves her, the more she loves her puppet. As a shaman begins to build its relationship with an object, so too does the puppeteer build its relationship with the virtual puppet. The relationship begins in a microscopic way, but it soon expands step by step, becoming a gigantic scale that fills up the entire world. The puppeteer communicates with the puppet, with themselves, with the audience, with the spiritual world and with the whole universe. The inner space communicates with the outer space. The energy of ritual spirals up and up.

The role of puppetry
Puppetry is one of the most ancient forms of performance in the world. In Korean traditional puppet play, puppeteers belong to the lowest social class who were oppressed, mistreated or even persecuted. Puppet plays were vehicles for their satire and criticism in society (Cho 1979: 12). Transformed to the puppet, the puppeteer discovers speaking something that was not revealed in his/her everyday life. It can be criticism or free imagination. The puppet has been functioned as a revolutionary interface to bring people free speech and imaginative storytelling.

Yong-Shin-Gud is also the public puppet performance forum to bring people’s true voice and imagination. It awakes our forgotten tradition of oral storytelling and reinstalls it in our visually oriented contemporary cyber-culture. ‘Once upon a time, long long time ago...’ This is the opening sentence given to audiences when they interact with the virtual shaman before and after the artist’s musical and storytelling performance. It is the secret interface to open the door of inner communication and improvisation. People’s speech through the virtual puppet’s mouth is unexpected. It is unexpected hybrid created between their puppet and themselves. Virtual shaman helps people to tell and listen their story. ‘...Puppet could tell the story. Puppet could tell him how to tell stories. So the big man and the puppet could tell the stories together. And this is how the big man learned to tell the stories...’ (Part of a story told by an audience through the virtual puppet).

The Virtual Shaman is designed for anybody, not only for the trained artist and the technician. It uses simple technology that works perfectly in every environment. Everyone who enjoys puppetry can come to the microphone and be a storyteller, a puppeteer and, eventually, his/her puppet. The dynamic dialogue between puppet and puppeteer brings forth the energy of free imagination and improvisation in this performance forum. As in the shamanic ritual, such a spiralling interaction ultimately erases the line of distinction between all the binary pairs, such as artist/audience, reality/virtuality, mundane/spirit, East/West and puppet/puppeteer. Yong-Shin-Gud,
as a contemporary shamanic ritual, frees all those who are oppressed in our predominantly structure-oriented society.

The hybrid narratives: oral tradition of storytelling
One of the chief characteristics of Korean puppet drama was the flexibility in terms of presentation due to the peculiar phenomenon of a folk art form preserved only by oral tradition. The puppeteers were not literate. They did not have a written script. All the narrative was passed down by word of mouth (Cho 1979: 20). Nomadic tradition of puppet theatre reinforced the natural organization of oral descending story.

Yong-Shin-Gud consists of five scenes in the artist’s performance that carry out the oral tradition of storytelling. Each scene consists of the live virtual puppet singing and storytelling, followed by 3D motion graphics. In the live virtual puppet storytelling, the puppeteer tells the story about a girl who has a journey to find out what a dragon is. 3D motion graphics follows, presenting the abstract image and sound montage of stories retold by people, based on the same story just told through the virtual puppet’s mouth. This re-inactivated narrative shows how the image of the dragon is kept transformed and therefore alive, by people’s imagination and improvisation.

As stated previously, the dragon is the symbol of the hybrid in Eastern culture. It originally was portrayed as a combination of more than twenty different animals, with the head of a camel, the eye of a rabbit, the ear of a cow, the body of a snake, the claw of a hawk, and so on. Yong-Shin-Gud portrays the dragon as the process of transformation and metamorphosis: the continuous energy flow in nature. It demonstrates the dragon spirit in multiple layers: the spiralling dialogues between puppet and puppeteer, unexpected hybrid (improvised music or story) coming out of this setting, and transformative narrative actually talking about what the dragon is.

Each of the five scenes begin with a statement that came from the first hexagram (Chien) in I Ching. The important lesson from these statements is the fact that the dragon gradually flies up to the sky but eventually comes down in the last line. Our ritual of transformation, as shown in Korean shaman ritual, ‘Gud’, always comes back to the original order and is repeated again in a non-Euclidian topology. Dragon never moves up in a linear way. Dragon moves on the moebius strip that will reverse its direction on the ultimate state. The dragon spirit circulates forever, as yin/yang does in the form of ritual (Kim 1984: 45-47).

Figure 8. The first hexagram (Chien) from ‘I Ching’

Scene 1: Dragon lying low. Do not use.
Scene 2: Dragon arising in the field. Favourable to see a great person.
Scene 3: Probably leaping from an abyss. No faults.
Scene 4: Dragon flying in the sky. Favourable to see a great person.
Scene 5: Haughty dragon. There is regret.
Freely imagine, then that you are the dragon you are looking for. When you think you have found the dragon, you are not the dragon any more. In the same way, the rainbow disappears when you catch it. The heart of the ritual is the process, not the product. The dragon constantly changes its shape in the multiple layers of mysterious veils.

Scene 1: Dragon lying low. Do not use.

Long time ago/There was a story of a little girl/So long time ago/Once there was a girl /A long time ago/She woke up from her dream/Once upon a time long long ago/She had dreams about a dragon/Once upon a time there was a girl/Long time ago/Follow follow the line/Very long path/To follow that/And she woke up and she saw a line/What is the dragon?/She follows the line in front of her house.

Scene 2: Dragon arising in the field. Favourable to see a great person.

So he went south a 100 miles, and, and a.../And a.../And a.../Sheep with like nine foxtails/Nine foxtails/It sounds like thunder and everything/It’s the shape of lamb/Body of tiger and eagle’s claws/Horns like a Billy goat/Wherever they went, there was flooding/Ok, looks like an egg/And a black hat/Six eyes/And it had feathers/It’s covered with feathers/A human’s body/I think it looked like, looked like a cat/Two cows legs as horns/If you go with this creature, there would be no fear/Then, whole town, ah, is peaceful.
Scene 3. Probably leaping from an abyss. No faults.
Across the fields, and above the hills/So, ah, he went east 450 miles/And a . . ./And a . . ./And a . . ./It looked like an owl/It kind of looks like a bull’s tusks ... they came out of his head/But it had human hands/Face like a hawk/She heard a little noise. It was like a ‘squick’/Six wings and six feet/SQUICK/It had a horse's body/Pretty colours like pink/Almost like a horse's legs/It was soft like a rabbit/Winding and wailing sounds/And he had like little stars for eyes/If people are eating them/Whenever he take it to the town/You will loose your sleep/Snowstorms will be coming.

Scene 4: Dragon flying in the sky. Favourable to see a great person.
She travelled 2400 miles/She kept walking and walking/He finally came back to some mountains/When she got to the dragon . . ./Serpent like face/Humongous head, actually two heads/The face of a rabbit, cattle ears/Wise looking eyes/Camel face/It, kind of, sounds like cats'/Miyau...'/Like a breath,
Scene 5. Green Train

I take a green train and leave for some place, looking out of the window. The window is thick enough to completely separate myself from the outer space full of life. Moreover, it becomes more serious if the window is frosted during the winter. The world beyond the window is the other side. The images passing over are not real. Something essential is missing and filtered through. I sit in the train and leave for the other place, looking out of the window.
Sometimes, I find myself deeply engaged in specific objects beyond the window. A red brick warehouse or a strangely gnarled black tree. Sometimes, I cannot bear not breaking the window, running out of the train and touching, smelling and even devouring them. This experience is momentary, gone in just seconds and so impulsive. However, I find myself still sitting in the train, looking through the window, without much disturbance. I stay with regrets but enjoy my weakness. I cannot break the window. I cannot sacrifice myself for the end of this ritual. I choose life with weakness instead of death with satisfaction. My body is full of dreams about the moment of revolution, the breaking of the window. The ritual goes on to call me and return me to my original place sitting in the train, to my life full of heavy irony. People are sitting in the train, looking through the window and performing this ongoing ritual on the unstoppable turning wheels. We are in the same train. This is the form of ritual.

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Ritualizing interactive media: from motivation to activation