THE EXPERIENCE AT TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

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Abstract: *This is a script of a play(ing). A performance once enacted and then reflected upon is herein described.*

"Play, like imagination, could mend the broken soul." [Kane 2004, 46]

Prologue

This paper is the script of the short fifteen minute play(ing) performed in the opening of the KT-DigiCult-BG International Seminar in Bansko, Bulgaria. Like any play(ing), it consists of scenes grouped into acts. Being a script, it is naked. In particular, its nakedness is due to the absence of pictures and images which are an integral part of both the play(ing) and this paper. Fortunately, images of the first play(ing) are available on the KT-DigiCult-BG World-Wide Web (WWW) site. Googling reveals all. Each picture or image mentioned in this paper is indexed by the slide of the presentation for ease of reference. The original title of the presentation was The Experience of Trinity College Dublin.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows.

1. **Setting the Scene of the Play(ing).** In the first act of any play(ing) one must set the scene. How is one to do that when it seems that one is not in a theatre and the audience does not expect that they are about to see a play(ing)? My solution was then, and here now in this paper, to be poetical – the paper begins with a poem, in three languages: Bulgarian, Irish Gaelic, and English, in that order. The purpose is to disorganize rational thought and to appeal directly to the soul (through sound impressions … an experience impossible to re–create in the written literature) and images (also not possible here due to page and printing limitation).

2. **Irish Gaelic Cultural Heritage**. A brief account of some conventional digitization of cultural heritage is presented in order to justify formally the presence of the playing performance at the KT–DigiCult–BG International Seminar.

3. **Bridging** is first of the trinity of key ideas of the paper. The other two are playing and togethering. It is noted here that the ideas are processes, practical actions. I take the position that "to see", i.e., to experience practically one's own culture through the eyes of the other, especially an other from a different culture, is the most rewarding experience possible and especially in the context of [DrDC]. Bridging is the process of the mutual cultural enrichment of the couple, and by extension, of the many.

4. **Playing.** "The rhetoric of play as the imaginary […] idealizes the imagination, flexibility, and creativity of the […] human play worlds." [Sutton–Smith, 1997, 11]. Culture emerges from play. It is not so easy to see how one's culture emerges from playing within the culture of an other over a short period of time. The [DrDC] game suggested, and very vaguely outlined in the paper is intended, to explore this idea in practice.

5. **Togethering** is a neologism which means "to gather together" ideas and people especially over the WWW.

5. **Epilogue**. Why Me ? Будител ? This is an "apologia" in the classical sense of a "defense".

Setting the Scene of the Play(ing)

The theme is the Digital re–Discovery/re–Creation of Culture. The first part "Digital re–Discovery of Culture" is taken from the title of an EduTainMent paper [Sotirova 2004b]. This paper and its earlier companion [Sotirova 2004a] informs and inspires much of what is here presented. I can explain the essence of the philosophy underpinning **[DrDC]**, an abbreviation of Digital re–Discovery/re–Creation of Culture, by a simple analogy.

In the early part of the 1970's I organized a cycling tour for young students (aged approximately 16) to Germany, a country which I had not yet visited. The cyclists were to stay in Judendherberge (Youth Hostels), a different one each night. The routes had to be planned and timed, taking into account departure from and return to Ireland. At that time, one needed detailed maps (suitable for cyclists), a list of Jugendherberge, a telephone, and a practical knowledge of the German language. All these things were acquired and put to good and successful use. I remembered stopping one day in a small German town along the Rhein, and experiencing my first taste of a typical Turkish sweet pastry at lunchtime. Also at the same time I gave an interview in my best (broken) German to the local newspaper, a copy of which (together with photograph) was sent to me later in Ireland. This typifies for me today, in some way, what it means for **physicality of soul**. Specifically I mean this : through the tools of map, e–communication (telephone) and language (German) I had set up a "discovery of culture" for myself and my students. But the actual experience of the culture did not take place until I and all the others were physically present in place. Then the soul–anticipation was physically realized. With this analogy I will now try to explain the script of the play(ing).

The target audience and original setting of the play(ing) was Bulgarian, an audience with a good knowledge of the English language. In the context of multi–culturalism, it is the norm that the deepest and richest culture of the (majority of the) audience be addressed first. Therefore the Bulgarian theatre audience must be addressed first. Others must wait. Hence in the scene setting the first soul provocation is a poem in Bulgarian.

Slide No.2 [of 11]

Let us **imagine** that there is a picture [slide 2] of the newly opened Mostar Bridge [Bridge_Mostar, 2004] facing this poem in Bulgarian. Imagine also that there is no caption on the picture. The picture clearly shows a bridge but "without a name", just like the title of the Bulgarian poem БЕЗ ИМЕ. The picture is intended to point to the poem in all sorts of ways. Later we will see that the idea pointed at by both poem and picture is the concept of **bridging**. The bridging concept is also reinforced in the Bulgarian by the use of the word дъга (rainbow). There is a certain direct correspondence between the arc(h) of the дъга and the arc(h) of the Mostar bridge. But the title of the poem "without a name" is loaded philosophically. By this I mean that once we use words to name some reality then we assume that we know everything about that reality. Every such naming word is culturally loaded. But there are naming words which may block understanding and even generate hostility. In my analogy to explain **[DrDC]** I deliberately mentioned a real life experience, using names German and Turkish, in the same context. At this time of writing it has been announced by the European Union that Turkey may apply for accession. Such an announcement did not meet with universal approval, especially within Germany (and France and others).

Poet's commentary: I am only a beginner (1 year) in Bulgarian language. But poetically, I notice sounds of "а" in дъга, тъга, няма, and of "о" in бяло, twice. The rhythm of the poem is pleasingly stopped twice with the consonant of "ят".

With a view to multi–culturalism which was more than Bulgarian and English in the setting of the original play(ing), the author/poet felt a strong need to exhibit his Irish Gaelic culture. The next poem read out in Gaelic served two purposes. First, the author/poet was the only one to understand (of this I was 99% certain). Few, reading this Gaelic text given here, will understand it now. But, it is important to know that a) Irish Gaelic is said to be the most ancient spoken and written "European" language, and b) its culture and the re–Discovery/re–Creation of such has been, and still is, a matter of cultural life and death among Irish people both at home and abroad. Hence all in the audience are now provoked by a certain strangeness. There are *two* ways, of all the many possible ones, in which I **imagine** that the audience might engage: to **listen** to the sound of the poem and to **look** at the picture facing it, about which I will speak below. One might also imagine that the audience might focus on the performer himself as the "centre of attraction" at this point. Such would be the unspoken totality of meaning of any solo performer on stage.

The second purpose in presenting the Gaelic poem was to heighten the tension in the performance and to raise some fundamental questions. Is this poem the same as the previous poem ? In other words, is it a translation ? Then, one might further ask which came first ?

Slide No.3 [of 11]

Now let us **imagine** that there is a picture [slide 3] of a single stemmed white rose (бяла роза) facing this poem. The white rose is set against a background of green colours with a small splash of red in the top right corner. What might the picture point to in this case ? What is the relation between the picture facing this poem and the picture facing the previous poem ? Is there a common connection ?

Now is the time to reveal some of the inner connections. Colour is a key component of the play(ing). Colour is exhibited in pictures and in words. The colour white is very special. The splitting of white light by a prism gives rise to the seven colours of a rainbow (дъга). Therefore, I am using white as colour to bridge the two poems. But only I the author/poet knew this at the time. Hence, the tension raised in the audience must soon be resolved.

Poet's commentary: The Irish rhyming vowel–sounds I used are naturally very different from the Bulgarian. Noteworthy is the use of "chí", the (northern Irish) verb "to see", occurring at the beginning of 3rd, 5th, and 8th lines. There is a further subtlety only apparent to one who understands Gaelic. There are two key words used in the poem, "ainm" (name) in the title and "anam" (soul) in the last line. They sound very alike and bracket the entire poem in a pleasing way.
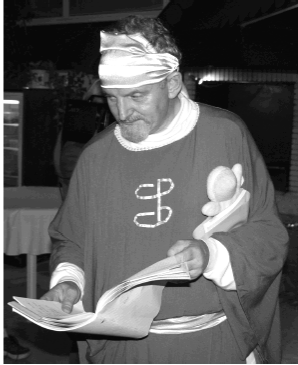
The tension brought to a height by the Irish Gaelic poem must now be completely resolved for all by the reading of the poem for the third time in the *lingua franca* of the audience –– English.

Slide No.4 [of 11]

Let us **imagine** a picture [slide 4] facing this poem, a picture of the author/poet dressed up in theatrical costume. It is very colourful and this colourfulness is the final arc(h) of the bridging set up by the three poems as pillars. The picture will also be an arc(h) to another one at the end of the play(ing) giving a unity to the entire thesis to be put forward and highlighting the significance to be paid to the concept of **bridging**.

Now that something of the staging has been explained, I want to point out that the sequence of poetic arc(he)s Bulgarian → Irish → English is deliberate. The poem was written in English first, translated by Kalina Sotirova into Bulgarian and finally by the author from both Bulgarian and English into Irish. The moral is : "Order of presentation need not be order of creation." Hence : "Order of re–discovery of culture need not be order of re–creation of culture." Finally, it is important to note that the real reason for giving three language versions of a single poem is to point out a universal reality behind culture and language. Each translator (of language pairs) will be able to bring the image of the poem into her/his culture. This is what we want to do in **[DrDC]** multi–culturalism.

Poet's commentary: notice the sound "**ain**" in r**ain**bow, p**ain**, pl**ain.** This was *not* planned. I mention this *a posteriori* analysis of my own poem in order to show that it is often the case that the poetic music arises quite unexpectedly. Translations of a poem from one language to another are always very difficult. Since the poem was written first in English, it surprises even me that there should be two very different kinds of poetical music sounding in two other very different languages. Finally, that there is a deep scientific and **physical** meaning behind the poem(s), I leave as a challenge to the reader. The only hint I give is this. Is there is a unique position, in which one must be, to see white turned into rainbow light ? How can one have rainbow drops from tears of eyes ? Where is the one who sees ? Where is the light ? Finally, that such translations of a single poem might be possible is a practical example of (cultural) **bridging** upon which we want to focus later.

Irish Gaelic Cultural Heritage

The original title of this work and paper arising out of the KT–DigiCult–BG International Seminar, Bansko, Bulgaria, 2004, was the **Experience of Trinity College Dublin** (TCD) <http://www.tcd.ie/>. What was this experience ? From the University of Dublin's point of view, the primacy of experience dealt with the Book of Kells (written c. 800 CE). The author could only report second–hand that such experience existed. That there might be other experiences, the author could only report second–hand also. But before all these second–hand experiences, the author engaged in the *Representation and Reconstruction of Chester Beatty Papyri* [Mac an Airchinnigh, 1991], which inspired to a certain extent the enthusiasm of Milena Dobreva to work on Medieval Slavonic Manuscripts [Dobreva, 1994, 21––22].

Since the author's experience transcended that of the Institution (at least historically) then much of the experience recounted in this paper is that of the author's. Nevertheless, it was important in the international and multi–cultural context to note that TCD had engaged in important Digitization of Cultural Heritage projects. To emphasize the distinction between Irish culture in the English language (currently the dominant culture) and the Irish culture in the Gaelic language, I chose the latter to exhibit experience in the actual International Seminar in Bansko.

The Irish Script on Screen (ISOS) Project <http://www.isos.dias.ie/>, led by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) illustrates very quickly the two cultures side by side. The contribution of Trinity College Dublin is exhibited at <http://www.isos.dias.ie/english/index.html>. Most noteworthy about the project is the bringing together digitally of manuscripts physically distributed.

Trinity College Dublin is perhaps better known for its facilitation of the Digitization of the **Book of Kells** (written c. 800 CE). Curiously, it is a sign of the times that commercialization is given pride of place <http://www.tcd.ie/Library/> and <http://www.bookofkells.ie/>. It is regrettable that there is no online access to the Book of Kells, an unnecessary imprisonment to one place on a small and insignificant island in the globalized digital world. This gives particular meaning to the notion of being **insular** in 2004.

Finally, it seemed important to note that there was also substantial digitization of cultural heritage going on elsewhere in Ireland. Most notable is Corpus of Electronic Texts (CELT) at UCC <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/>.

Bridging
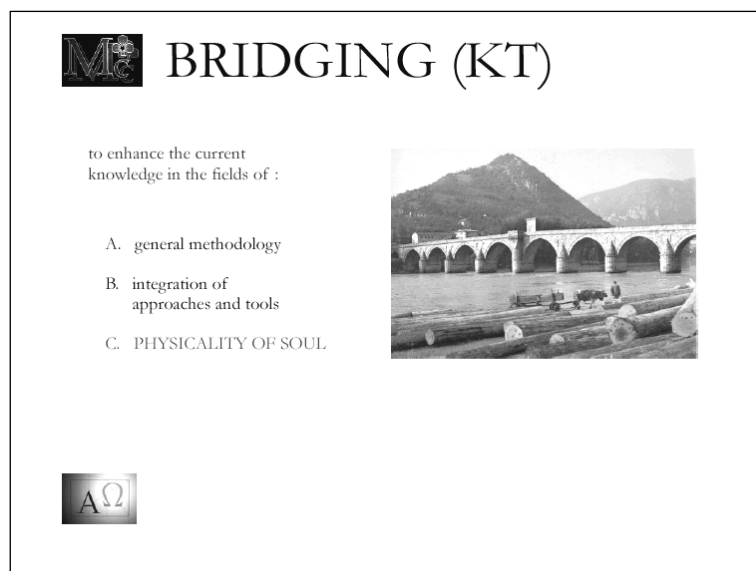
Slide No.7 [of 11]

Let us **imagine** a picture [slide 7] of the Bridge on the Drina (at Visegrad) [Bridge_Drina, 2004]. Intentionally, the bridge was not named (БЕЗ ИМЕ). But it would be noticed by the audience that pictures of bridges seemed to be an important feature of the play(ing). An interesting literary allusion (unintentional ?) to a **language–game** [Wittgenstein, 2001] appears in the book *The Bridge on the Drina* [Andric, 2000, 63] where

> "Mastro Antonio's assistant, the Arab, rushed impatiently to the spot [where a great rectangular stone is being lowered onto the bridge under construction] and began with loud angry cries (in that strange composite language which had been evolved in the course of years between these men from all parts of the world) to give orders to those handling the crane on the waters [of the Drina] below."

For me, my focus on KT–DigiCult–BG was, as I have emphasized, on multi–culturalism. It is natural to suppose that in the **[DrDC]** one would re–discover, re–create, one's one culture. But, in Ireland, we have two cultures side by side, one influencing the other (Yeats, Beckett, Heaney, …). For me, it seems natural to examine how **[DrDC]** might be about the re–discovering, re–creating, the **culture of the other**. To attempt such a thing is what I mean by **bridging**.

In practice, two cultures side–by–side, have often been and may still be "at war". Not only may language separate or divide but different religions may go hand in hand with each culture, furthering the sense of separation. In Ireland, it is *historically* the case that the English and Irish cultures were at war and were also distinguished by differing versions of Christianity: Protestantism and Catholicism, respectively. At a local level, physical bridges have often been symbols of division. The images of bridges featured: Mostar and Drina share something of this physical bridging characteristic.

The goal of the current research is to find a way of bridging such cultures through **[DrDC].** One natural way of achieving this seems to me to be by **playing together**.

Playing

Slide No.8 [of 11]

Let us **imagine** a picture [slide 8] of a chess board showing a legal configuration with "white to move". How does one know that the configuration is legal ? The image itself was screen–grabbed from an actual game played between the author (white) and the eMac computer (black). Notice again the mention of the colour **white**.

Games such as chess have well–defined rules and a well–defined goal. What sort of **[DrDC]** game might one want to play ? What are its characteristics ?

As a direct consequence of coming into contact with research on EduTainMent [Sotirova, 2004a] I discovered that there was a seminal work on **playing** : "HOMO LUDENS: a study of the play element of culture" [Huizinga. 1955]. A second paper on the subject of EduTainMent [Sotirova, 2004b] reminded me of the importance of the concept of **language–game** [Wittgenstein, 2001]. I consequently wondered whether one might introduce the idea of **image–game** [Mac an Airchinnigh, 2004b]. Some preliminary experimental work has already been conducted. The Bansko performance reported here is one such very **crude** experiment and this paper (script) itself is an ongoing part of that play(ing). The images have already been presented in public, are available on the WWW, and are now interpreted for the interested players. An attempt was made to invent appropriate working rules for a **[DrDC]** game in a multicultural setting. In the discussion context below, the cultures are Bulgarian and Irish Gaelic with a **common communication language**: English.

Ideas for Rules of a 2–player [DrDC] Game

Play may be defined as an activity which is essentially free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, and make–believe. Paraphrased from [Caillot 1961, 9].

Following [Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, 139] I will classify rules into 1) operational, 2) constitutive, and 3) implicit rules. Operational rules are those which explain how the game is played in practice. Constitutive rules are the

abstract mathematical and logical rules which underlie every formalizable/computable game. Finally, the implicit rules are those which cover everything else, such as good behaviour, those things which are understood in a culture, etc. It is also convenient to use the convention of naming two players of a game (**A**)lice and (**B**)ob. Such a pair of players is conveniently referred to as a couple. Now let us **imagine** that A is Bulgarian, B is Irish and B moves first. The goal of the game is to **surprise** [not shock!] the other player by something in their own culture by **pointing to** a collection of WWW pages which tell a story. It is difficult to say exactly (i.e., define) what a surprise might mean. But, it entails the notion of the unexpected which gives pleasure. The nature of the **[DrDC]** game is special in that the pleasure of the surprise (i.e., a winning move) is a mutual pleasure for the couple and therefore the game being non–antagonistic is mutually culture bridging/building/supporting. It is easy to see how the game might be ruled/played to have the opposite devastating effect. This is one major area of concern and which needs to be addressed in **implicit** rules which are written down and agreed to in advance. Let me try to give some outline of the operational rules that have been considered so far.

One makes a move by searching the WWW (using Google, for example) and selecting up to 3 **challenges** based on WWW pages that one thinks might cause the other player to declare surprise. The 3 challenges ought to present some image or picture in A's culture that tells a story (i.e., exhibits a common theme, such as colour) that causes A to be surprised. Every move in the game is a playful step to get to know the other as game–time passes. Here is a brief outline of the state of the rules at the time of the performance in Bansko 2004. Explanatory comments are enclosed in brackets.

R1. The starting point of a move is the use of a search word which is considered to be a **root** word for the theme. [For B's move he might start with прозорец (window). This is a good general word that suggests many possibilities, including for example the window of a computer and hence also a window into the WWW itself. *Caution:* single words may give too many hits. At the time of writing прозорец gives 134,000 hits. The initial game was played in the context of text search. Image search is also recommended.]

R2. One can use any natural language equivalent of the root word. (fuinneog, fenêtre, ...). [The idea was to allow for the possibility of using culture words outside the couple's basic pair of languages. Implicitly, it meant that each player needed to have a good online dictionary for such multi–cultural play –– online Bulgarian–Irish dictionary ? None exists ?]

R3. Searching can only be gone by Google (or any other fixed search engine).

R4. One can add words to a root word (but no more than 2, 3 words suffice for meaning frame). [The primary reason for adding words is to cut down on the number of hits with a single root word. For example, прозорец цвят gives 2,450 hits; "прозорец цвят" gives 0 hits; "цветен прозорец" gives 759 hits.]

R5. A new root word can be chosen by the person admitting изненада (surprise). [This signifies the ending of a winning move by B in the game and change of role play to A.]

R6. The new root word is the root of the изненада. [This signifies that the theme chosen by the first player B is worth playing on. Failure to play on is the end of that particular game.]

R7. At most 3 challenges can be presented in any one move. [Using прозорец the challenges might be 1. http://svishtov.com/izp/, and with прозорец бял

2. http://chm.moew.government.bg/pa/final.php?viewentry=704]

R8. At most 2 WWW sites can be presented in any one challenge.

Since the carrying out of this experiment and based on subsequent research since Bansko 2004, it seems appropriate to note the following results.

Those things which are obvious, blind one. Each person growing up within their own culture (language, music, dance, …) is like a tree in the forest. Everything seems as it ought to. It is only when an outsider comes along and "says" that there are trees just like you but in different kinds of forests on the other side of the world that you are shaken. You do not believe such a thing unless the outsider tells you something about yourself (and your culture) that you never noticed before, something that surprises you.

Rules for a **[DrDC]** game are very hard to design and formulate. That is no surprise. The above rules are very crude. Upon advice, I had seriously considered not including them at all. But I then realized that there must be some written record in public to show that an attempt had already been made. The real difficulty is to know how to

embody the playing experience of the game. By this I mean to know how the game is to be realized by **physicality of soul**. A game concerning colours ought to lead to practical colourful outcomes that can be shared – a painting perhaps ? A game concerning dance ought to lead to new or re–newed dancing experience by extension of known dancing tradition, such as a modernization of хоро ? The phenomenon of Riverdance exemplifies the general idea in the Irish Gaelic tradition. Not many know that this took place among the "Irish in the USA" and not in Ireland.

Togethering
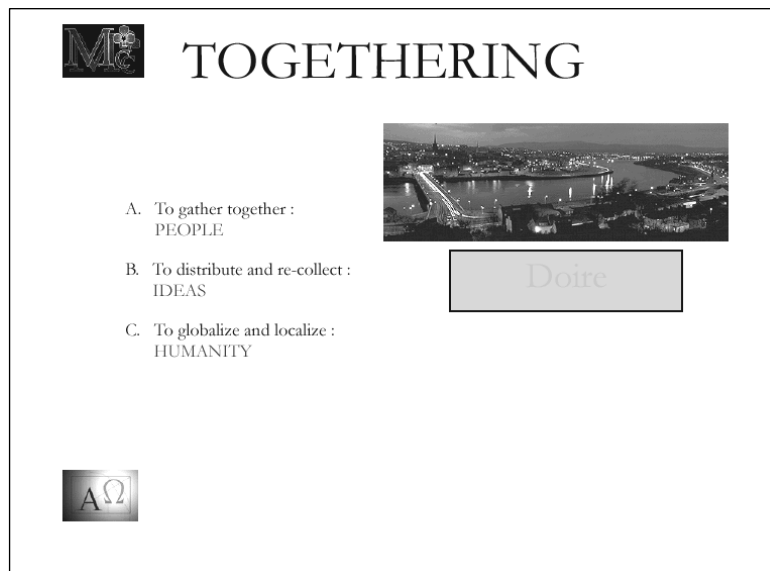
Slide No.10 [of 11]

Let us **imagine** a picture [slide 10] of a bridge. This bridge is in the city of Doire (in the place called Northern Ireland). The English name for the city is Londonderry and abbreviated to Derry by the people of the Irish Gaelic tradition. Doire and Derry both "mean" Oak tree. I write this text in a county called Kildare, or Cill Dara in the Gaelic, and Dara "means" Oak tree. The (hi)story of the oak trees of Ireland is a sign of deep separation and division between two cultures. How might one bridge such deep division?

To gather together people : the goal of the **[DrDC]** game is to bridge the deepest of divisions (linguistically or religiously or politically or …) between two cultures. The KT–DigiCult–BG project is a "knowledge transfer" project into Bulgaria. But such a transfer will be "colonizing" and "patronizing" unless there is a reciprocal "knowledge transfer" out of Bulgaria. For me and many others in this project, this reciprocity will naturally be an embracing of (at least an understanding of) Bulgarian culture, digital and embodied in practicality of soul experience. The togethering of people of diverse cultures in a linguistic setting is likely to rely on the hegemonic Americano–Anglican "English" language for at least another generation. This text is an indicative illustration. It is therefore imperative that considerable effort be put into the exhibition of the "non–dominant" cultures participating in the togethering. The three poems БЕЗ ИМЕ (without name) were intended to emphasize this in the play(ing).

To distribute and re–collect ideas : the WWW permits the distribution of ideas and texts and images to all parts of the world. There is the reciprocal inverse operation of bringing back together ideas and text and images to one place, to the individual in her/his cultural setting. One expert working on a text of 100 pages will take 100 units (day, weeks, …) in which to finish the task alone. 100 experts distributed throughout the world working on the same text will take 1 unit. The togethering might add another 10 or 20 units. Such work–togethering is the promise for our cultural heritage future in the field of digitization. The paper by Kiril Ribarov in this volume is a practical illustration of such togethering.

To globalize and localize humanity : But what exactly is the point of all this digital preservation of cultural heritage ? What is the purpose of the digitization of the Book of Kells, of medieval Slavonic Manuscripts, of … ?

This is the same problematic question as "What is the purpose of Museums and Libraries ?" Every people and state has a good sound reason for preservation and passing on of their cultural tradition/heritage and this is always a matter of passing on to the young, to the next generation. This is always, inevitably a matter of teaching, of awakening. It is with this idea that I finished the (play)ing performance and so here is the final scene.

Epilogue: Why me? Будител

Slide No.11 [of 11]

Let us **imagine** a picture [slide 11] of the author again. All players, actors, performers, look to others to speak of them. This is often done in a review. Sometimes the reviews are good, sometimes not. Here is a review:

> "This collection ends with an essayistic question mark: the paper of **Dr. Mícheál Mac an Airchinnigh** from Trinity College, Dublin. It puts many open questions. We have not choose to end with such a provoking text because of the idea that digitisation is still *terra incognita* where one does not have a clue what has to be done and how to do it. In this field, it is of utmost importance not only to present practical work done on a certain level of quality, but to find new ways to re–present and re–arrange our past through the new technologies. The paper of Dr. Mac an Airchinnigh raises these important philosophical issues in an untraditional manner presenting scientific argument in a poetic form. This appeals strongly to us, because in our work all of us have to find the right combination of practical, earthly approaches – this is our *terra*, which is yet *incognita* because we still explore the best ways to deliver content, and the content itself, and still have no answers to all questions *How? Why? In what form? When? Who? For Whom? Where?*" [Dobreva & Ikonomov, 2004]

To make a serious technological and scientific case through the medium of the arts and humanities is a difficult challenge. Every teacher and **будител** (awakener) knows this as performer. (S)he is like the bird which feeds its young. The adult bird eats and then disgorges the food for the young birds that hungrily wait and demand. Every teacher, actor, performer knows why this is really the only thing that works. In the case of humans, not everything is accepted or understood. Even the **[DrDC]** game proposed which seems to hold out so much promise, can be used to obtain exactly the opposite of mutual cultural understanding.

But the "**Why me?**" is **not** about me at all. It is a classical rhetorical question which is intended to challenge each one (in the audience then and now in the readership) who supposes that the work they do in the Digitization of Cultural Heritage has real meaning for the people of their own culture and even more importantly for the people of an "associated" culture. Ultimately, each is challenged to look to their young, to the future generations. I hope the questioning, the performance, the play(ing) will lead to new approaches, one of which I recommend and continue to explore: EduTainMent, and in particular the potential of the multi–cultural **[DrDC]** game.

Acknowledgements

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