Viruses: that intricate yarn.

In Part 1 of Greg Bear's science fiction novel “Darwin’s Children,” Kaye Rafelson, a scientist, virologist, and mother of a so-called “virus child” (a child born through a pregnancy induced by the SHEVA virus and therefore a mutant, a freak, a potentially dangerous creature) is reviewing a paper where she tries not only to demystify the myths and prejudices about viruses, but also to suggest and demonstrate their utility and necessity for the evolution of human beings and the emergence of new species on earth:

To assume that viruses and transposable elements are first and foremost causes of disease is like assuming that automobiles are first and foremost made to kill people. (Bear 2003, 24)

Rafelson’s statement calls for the rehabilitation and rethinking of an entity that is historically being labeled as “absolutely negative,” dangerous and superfluous.

The hypothesis is not merely the result of the author’s fantasy, but

it is object of controversy within a, very real, scientific community. Joshua Lederberg, for instance, in his critique of immunological practices, complains about the marginalization of most research that studies the burden of mutual adaptation between virus and host, in favor of a hyper-aggressive practice that treats viruses as non-welcome and finds in their elimination the only solution (Lederberg 2000).

But can the above quote be only about biological viruses? If considered separate from its narrative context, the sentence could easily refer to another category of viruses that, this time, do not exclusively affect our biological body but instead our hard drive and our networks.

The connection is eased for at least two related reasons. It is a common belief that information systems and biological organisms are both separated and unified by "code." Philosophers and scientists have claimed for centuries that human beings can be measured, separated into independent unities that could be reconfigured, reassembled and represented by means of numbers. But it is since the beginning of the fifties, as the result of an alliance between biology and cybernetics and culminating with the "cracking of the DNA code," that the notion of information is increasingly and dangerously simplified and interpreted as a synonym of text, bits and code. As biology started considering itself a communication science, organisms were increasingly understood not just as carriers of information, but also as

transmitters. If the organism can be analyzed in terms of code in the same way computers are composed of code, then we are talking about two systems that could stand in an equivalence relation. From here, we can easily draw a comparison not only between human beings and information systems, but also between biological viruses and computer viruses. This is not to demonstrate that computer viruses and biological viruses are equipoise, as it would represent a gross oversimplification. However, some correspondence could be intercepted between them, meaning that we can talk about them by using similar terminology and that, metaphorically, we could translate a computer virus code into biological code.

The terminology used to describe biological viruses (this is the case of SHEVA virus) eases the correspondence between the Biological and the Informational. In fact, it can be adapted to refer to computer viruses, Trojan horses and other commonly defined "malignant" code circulating within the information networks, as if their attributes and characteristics were interchangeable. Another uncanny correspondence can be identified between the human or natural domain and the digital realm. In other words, whether intercepted on the Internet, in our hard drive or in our body, viruses are pervaded by an identical rhetoric of discourse that produces a similar metaphorical language and invests them with similar connotations dictated—consciously or not—by cultural, social and political assumptions (Foucault 1989).

As a result, the above correspondences imply the existence of an invisible thread between disciplines that could ideally transcend the lines of separation arbitrarily placed between biology and technology, art and science.

To go back to the science fiction novel, Rafelson seems to advocate for a certain degree of mutual adaptation between the virus and its host, be the latter a natural creature or an agglomerate of bits, as both appear to be affecting each other and simultaneously interacting with their "natural" environments. The heroine seems to conceive viruses not only as part of a complex, natural or digital system, but also as dynamic systems in and off themselves. What's at stake here is not the virus as a theme or its legacy as a profound culturally embedded notion with its value as a marginal, evil and demonized nature, but the very process through which the virus reveals itself and functions. This last element calls for a closer analysis that incorporates the very functioning of viruses and their use as tools necessary for the construction of a discourse. But what kind of discourse?

Adopting "viral discursive practices" could mean bypassing and rejecting a traditional discourse built upon continuous constructions of dichotomies, dialectic relations and hierarchical ranking that always result in the prioritization of a "preferred interpretation", a "mainstream way-to-act" and in the annihilation of any alternative option. Despite their ambiguous status as entities located in the limbo between life and death, and despite their

assumed parasitical nature, suggestive of a passive, yet exploitative performance, viruses seem to be governed by a quite active and dynamic agency. Maybe it is their ubiquity as entities that appear to transcend disciplinary boundaries and locations. Or it is maybe their unexpected and unpredictable behavior that seems to carry the potentials for novel discursive practices.

In the first case, Popular culture's perception of viruses has definitely and increasingly contributed to turn them into active players that participate in our everyday life. Therefore, viruses' importance is not in their "being" viruses, that is particles or code observable separately from their original environment, but it lies in their simultaneous and multiple relevance and presence in many contexts at the same time. In the second case, viruses' very dynamism and fugitive behavior could be well adopted as a strategy or as a behavior in itself.

All the above characteristics can be ideally observed in a number of artistic interventions that have actively engaged with the virus as notion, concrete entity or tactical strategy. For example, the two collectives 01001.org and Epidemic , Robert Saucier and KIT and the curatorial project I love you curated by Franziska Nori used the virus as topic and have shown its structure's flexibility, as well as its code's aesthetic potentials, while still enjoying some enhanced extra attention drawn by the uncommon wedding of the virus with the arts and its display in the gallery.

In their attempt to liberate viruses from their negative connotations, all the above artists and collectives ended up placing particular emphasis on their negative attributes. In order to argue against such attributes, they were forced to "name them." Thus, a few questions immediately arise: does the above use and exploitation of viruses truly succeed in investing them with a new positive light? Or, as the artists themselves often claim, is the exploitation of the perceived and established attributes of viruses contributing to emancipate them from their "negative aura"? Or will they obtain the opposite effect? Is it possible to build an artwork that forces the viewer to focus on the virus' dynamic structure instead of falling into the stereotype trap? What if the virus looses its negative features?

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Unraveling the skein: a viral experiment.

1. The End of the Skein.

Documenting workshops experienced in first person is no easy task. If the scope of the workshop, then, is to produce a collaborative project that incorporates original work coming from different individuals, the task becomes even more complicated. Personal investment, along with different expectations are certainly not the only reasons for such difficulty. Sometimes, it is the complex topic with which individuals have to deal, or the fragmentariness and incompleteness of the results produced, that prevent the commentator from producing a coherent and comprehensive report and from drawing accurate or ultimate conclusions. One is left with unfinished notes, pieces of a puzzle that still needs to be assembled, or, in our case, the end of a skein yet to be knitted.

The project produced by one of the five groups at "Digital poetics and politics" in august 2004 belongs to the above category. Its ambition was not only to combine two quite diverse topics in a critical way, but it also attempted to do it by connecting each member's skills, competences and creativity. As part of our task, to use the words of one of our members, we "set out to explore the

surprisingly plentiful interconnections between knitting as a form of activism and computer viruses" (Matt Soar).

As the concluding piece took form through a processual formula, I had wished I could draw attention to the process of making our project. The emphasis on this aspect rather than on the result itself had less to do with the very fragmentariness of the project than with the relevance and the significance of the process itself. Viruses constitute a process on their own and knitting is an activity that involves a multi-phase process. How could one materialize an artistic idea or a discourse without taking into consideration this detail? In addition, the work had been conceived since the beginning as open ended, leaving possibilities for expansion and further development. The very act of constructing it implied a continuous intertwining of skills, competences and ideas that could be reshaped at any time. Moreover, the very methods used to create our unfinished product involved a process-based allure. Finally, it was not our intention to foster solid and ultimate theoretical conclusions. However, it is, again, the process that made us reflect on the consequences connected with the combination of viruses, knitting and activism. Consequences that we would have never expected otherwise.

In sum, I needed to find a way to reproduce the fragmentary, unfinished, and yet extremely rich discussion that took place during those days, through my writing. After having tried, with no particularly satisfactory results, to produce a sterile and linear

ethnography that accounted for what was said during those days, I came to the conclusion that the problem lied in my stylistic structure (or no style at all). I therefore purposely decided to go for a fragmentary and non-linear structure to reproduce and to echo the very process the members of the group had endured.

By combining some found notes and other clues from the seven days of workshop, I decided to provide a report, along with my own interpretation, of the main phases that characterized the making of the project. These descriptions are followed by longer critical notes, which try to make sense of the goals, the methods employed, the process itself and the missed or failed elements. The descriptions are marked after day and time during which a discussion or an event took place and they shortly describe the material activities in which the group was involved in that moment, while the latter are titled using the knitting lingo. The reader might find this text scattered and inconclusive. Indeed, the project itself provided no solid conclusions. However, I decided to help the reader anyway by adding some internal hyperlinks that will hopefully help holding together my knit.

August 10 2004, 8:00 a.m.

Everything is still silent in the mega-refrigerated dorms at Queens University. It is another cloudy and unusually cool morning, if one considers the season. A summer with no sun. Like a needle with no yarn or…a virus with no host.

After a while, I hear voices: exclamations of surprise. Or rather: it is a mix of surprise and amusement. A few minutes later, the surprise has already turned into laughter. What has caused the initial reaction has already lost its momentum.

2. Of Ambitious Knitting.

What had caused the above reaction was the view of our "knitted viruses." This unfinished effort is the result of the collaborative work of four individuals (Roberta Buiani, Max Haiven, Kirsty Robertson and Matt Soar) who composed one of the six participating groups. Early in the morning on August 10, the conclusive day of our residence, a number of bright red, multiform tiny creatures had been disseminated around the floor. We had quickly and frantically knitted them the day before to provide a concrete, quick and yet incisive demonstration of the lively and quite thoughtful discussion we had during the past three days. Now our creatures were hanging on top of doors handles, sitting in people's rooms, lying on the floors and greeting people at the dorms entrance.

But all this was only the last concrete and somehow spectacular step of a composite experiment that had occupied us in the last three intense days. It was never meant to be a final product. It was, indeed, a work in progress that clearly had not fully developed yet. Even today, the project has not reached a coherent form, and who

knows if we will ever reach the ultimate configuration? More pieces have been added later (see Kirsty Robertson's performance at Ryerson University) and have been presented at other venues outside Queen's University and hopefully others will be added in the future. After all, this is the way a virus should work: unpredictable and distributed in its spread.

Despite its approximate nature, this project had some ambitious goals. Our initial plan was to unveil the multidimensional and ultra-flexible nature of viruses (be they conceived as biological threats, computer pests, or metaphorical entities) and the many ways their significance could be transported, utilized and exploited across different disciplines and for different purposes. Second, it was supposed to develop a discursive narrative that reviewed, dismantled and reconstructed some of the assumptions usually made about viruses. Given the diversity of skills and viewpoints that characterized our group, the project was also designed to incorporate them all in one single big inclusive creative piece. The latter, we thought, would affirm our collaborative effort as well as substantiate viruses' natural and multidimensional span across diverse areas.

The project was also meant to test possible alternative utilizations of viruses' very behavior. Could this be turned into a viable tactic to be used for activist purposes? Although all the above purposes were addressed one by one and we had tried to answer the above question, the project took some unplanned twists and we ended up

with a result we hadn't exactly expected. Our final “product” suggested that the answer to the dilemma was an ambiguous one. Viral tactics could, but are not necessarily used by activists. Nor were they the first ones to utilize this resource. To acknowledge this, our creature was titled “Virus Inc.” a corporation that produced self-knitting viruses. In addition to the dissemination of samples, or knitted viruses, whose result was well visible during our final “knitted virus showdown,” we created some ad hoc promotional material. A basic video accompanied by a proper soundtrack portrayed the act of knitting. Being a corporation ,Virus Inc. was provided with a logo, ads, and a presentation package.

August 9, 2004: h 3:00 pm

Many beginner knitters might have experienced the frustrating process of starting a project and never reaching a final product, or having to undo it many times before achieving a satisfactory result (or giving up after the tenth unfortunate attempt). Virus inc. was built like a knitting project. I bet at some point everybody felt the uncomfortable sensation that we would never finish in time. Or had the sneaking sensation that our project was going nowhere. Indeed, it was going somewhere unexpected: before we had even noticed, it had spread like a virus among the other participants, outside the university, who knows where else?

Knit or “Pearl”?

One of the most intricate, though interesting aspects of this project was the “process of its making”. This implies the entire –lengthy and sometimes troublesome— general process that led to the final product and, more specifically, the methods employed during such process. In the first case, the path chosen was far from being linear. The group was governed by untold rules: first, the production of a creative work had to entail a combination of different topics. Second, it had to do so by taking advantage of each member's skills and competences. Given two topics and four members with different focuses and goals, this postulate could be satisfied only through continuous revisions, and adjustments, all activities that constitute a negotiation process. Because the said activities were invoked at different times and phases of the project development, their effect was to highlight new issues arising from its current configuration, question previous ideas and open to new and more challenging ones. This general process could be seen as a torrent that constantly changes its course by creating new meanders and undoing other.

In the second case, a precise methodology hadn't been formulated beforehand, nor had we any in mind during the project development. However, it is still possible to recognize a series of methods. Summed up together, they build a processual pattern. I believe that this was a peculiar and special kind of process. In fact, while the general process, imperfect and non-linear as it was, went towards one direction and manifested the acceptance of some basic rules, the single methods used tended to expand in many

directions, almost naturally establishing unexpected links between the two topics, between different methodological choices and areas of exploration that we hadn't been able to anticipate before starting the project.

On a very pragmatic level, the choice of combining knitting and viruses unveils the intention of engaging with both characteristics and dynamic features of viruses and with the underestimated and gender-specific art of knitting. It also witnesses the aspiration to combine the two well-separate areas of craft and informatics in one single project. Both tendencies constitute a process in itself and reveal the existence of two distinct, though correlated methods. On the one hand, engaging with both topics means analyzing what makes them peculiar and extracting those elements that could be used for a hypothetical conjoined project. This means comparing, juxtaposing and separating the activity of knitting as well as the virus' phenomenology into their basic characteristics. On the other hand, the act of combining two separate topics means finding what elements, chosen among their main characteristics, could make them potentially compatible.

Knitting and viruses belong to two separate dimensional realms. While viruses are mainly ephemeral, invisible entities that can be noticed only once they have already marked the territory over which they have spread and which they have infected, knitting is a rather concrete practice whose results are, on the contrary, very visible and colorful. What they do have in common is a binary

code. The code used by computers could be formally converted into the primary code used in books and magazines to transmit knitting instructions. In order to give viruses a concrete appearance one could easily translate knit and purl (K and P) into 0 and 1 and vice-versa. In addition, the term that indicates one of the primary stitches, "purl," is already reminiscent of a computer language: "Pearl." Purl is often spelled (or misspelled) as Pearl. This coincidence constitutes one of the surprising elements that makes the comparison between knitting and viruses almost instantaneous and that allows informatics to invade the territory of knitting. This could be easily interpreted as a "viral" component to the act of translation. Moreover, it is only when we had already established a "code comparison" that we discovered the similarity between Purl and Pearl.

Both comparison and translation are two mathematical operations that imply a process. While the first one equals to finding the minimum denominator, the operation required in algebra to solve a number of operations between fractions, the second one resembles an equivalence of relation (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equivalence_relation), a type of relation on a given set that provides a way for elements of that set to be identified with (meaning considered equivalent to for some present purpose) other elements of that set (Wikipedia) In this way, two apparently incompatible quantities can be employed within the same operation. Although our use of mathematical methods was barely noticed, it can be added to the myriads of methods we

employed during the making of our project and can be listed as being an important portion of the whole process involved. Once again, the use of a certain mathematical method was never overtly planned for the accomplishment of Virus Inc. however, its presence establishes a tight relation between craft and scientific method, artistic creation and computation.

We had established to engage in a collaboration that fluidly included the skills and abilities of each person participating. This meant that each person would contribute to add sections and ideas to the multi part project. The only rule was that each contribution had to involve knitting and viruses as its main topics. The final project was the result of the intertwining of different skills that were communicated to each other. It was only after our experience was over that I realized that what we had done was metaphorically knitting our competences and creativities together to create a single artifact. And the final result was a real knitted object (or many tiny objects). Was this another unexpected viral trespassing?

The final deployment of Virus Inc., in addition to being a by-product of the methods employed, can be considered a "viral offspring." Like a number of other unpredicted elements (the similarity between Pearl and Purl or the mathematical operations, or our "knitting together our contributions"), Virus Inc. represents the consequent and somehow unavoidable, yet initially unplanned solution resulting from previous discussions that took place at various points of the building process. Virus Inc. is a corporation.

Its configuration and distribution can be easily associated to the one of a virus. We then discovered that the corporation not only was the perfect hub around which we could materially collect and from which we could distribute all the material we had produced, but it also constituted an object that made us reflect and re-evaluate our initial ideas about the entire project.

August 8, 2004: h2:15

Sitting in a hardly lit room, we are trying to assemble a creative project in three short days. We don't have much to share, if one excludes a common inclination to analyzing, making and playing with activism and a fascination for phenomena that manifest a certain viral behavior. So, we start to come out with random ideas. No defined structure, just brainstorming.

Casting on.

In an effort to take advantage of all the skills and expertise within our group, we chose to establish a dialogue between two resembling but apparently separate areas: on the one hand the distributed, unpredictable and fuzzy structures of computer viruses, and, on the other, the revolutionary knitting actions practiced by grassroots and activist groups during global protests. This combination seemed to be a good match, as the phenomenology of both coincided at various points.

After having looked for resemblances and connections between knitting practice and virus behavior, two elements in particular were initially selected. The inherent negative and disruptive connotation ascribed to all viruses, their perception as “misfit,” as “other” against an ideal established norm seemed to offer an excellent way to start. More than the viruses’ negative connotations, it was their disruptive potential that had a particular appeal. In fact, disruption signifies also disturbance, change, drive to produce a different category of balance. This would fit the purposes and the goals of the Revolutionary knitting circles. In the same way a virus is able to momentarily disturb or shut down a network system, the revolutionary knitting circles would knit together to attract attention over a particular human right, or global issues. In the same way a virus is rarely detected before it has already entered a system, the revolutionary knitters present themselves with quite an innocuous appearance. But how could we utilize such specific characteristic proper of viruses without taking into account their most visible and infamous attribute?

Implicitly bypassing viruses' negative connotation and the halo of fear that accompanies them seemed to be impossible. It is the feature that has made viruses popular in history and in people’s imaginations. On the other hand, dealing with popular entities means also getting more attention form a prospective audience. The more viruses are potentially dangerous, the more popular they are. This connection between viciousness and popularity is a sexy element indeed. If incorporated into our work, it could have easily

diverted entirely our purposes, whose trajectory would have probably bent towards prioritizing viruses' negativity, rather than highlighting their complex features. We decided to leave the scary side of the virus ambiguous and we concentrated our efforts on its productivity as a complex entity. Its negative aspects would have surfaced anyway, and this, we later discovered, could have acted as an effective, although not always welcome, “marketing strategy.”

A second element that drew our attention was what I would call the “code compatibility.” Given a specific virus code (in our case the virus called “code red”) we could translate its binary computer language into the knitting language. This would permit us to achieve simultaneously two results: with such transcription the viral code would cross the border between real and virtual, colonizing the real space. Its mainly virtual, ephemeral and microscopic nature, would be turned into something visible definitely tangible: for instance, a scarf or a sweater. Through such translation, also its negative connotations would be mitigated: from subtle and absolutely negative it would be turned into solid and somehow, useful. This doesn't mean that its new acquired nature wouldn't carry any constructive or subversive message. We had embraced and used the virus’ features and its very structure as if it was an extension of our agency. The product would be a tangible object that lacked any trace of previous noxious connotations. Turning the virus into a knitted object meant that not only could the relation host/ receiver be easily inverted and reassembled but also the identity of the host could be changed into that of a

proactive agent, rather than being a mere receiver. Using a number of creative tactics, we could select and appropriate features that characterize the virus and turn them to our advantage.

Given the above postulates, the formulation of a concrete project needed to start. How and thanks to what technology or other device could a knitted virus spread? What would the significance of such virus be and what message would it deliver? What change would it foster? How would the very development or structure of the piece follow the allure of a virus? Is there such a thing as viral tactics?

The formulation of a viable project that contained the above characteristics (turning a virus into a tangible and innocuous fluffy object) and addressed the above questions didn't come with any risk and doubts. With its most popular symbolic value gone, the virus, turned into a cute knitted gadget, was now susceptible to easy appropriation and possible exploitation as a consumer good. This shouldn't have come as a surprise. After all, its structure and dynamic behavior had already been utilized before us: it can be said that franchise enterprises have multiplied and spread like viruses across the globe, acting as fosterers of new economic models or as witnesses of a systemic shift in the current capitalist structure. While the franchise model appears to have silently inherited and productively appropriated the functioning of a virus without yet adopting its name, other enterprises weren't afraid to admit their association with a certain viral behavior. It is the case of viral marketing, whose terminology was openly inspired by

viruses. Such choice was made to underscore the supposed aggressiveness and infiltration capacities of this marketing tactics. Yet, its viral features have been turned to the entrepreneur's service.

Clearly, the viral marketers knew that maintaining such name would have procured them quite some publicity. Despite its loss of negative features, also our knitted virus carried that label. In our case, however, this element could be both the source of misunderstandings as well as a catalyst for visibility . Even before separating into groups for the first time, the word “virus” had been the talk of the town. Many participants to the Summer institute had named it several times. Once the magic term had been pronounced for the first time, everybody had started employing viral metaphors and had made repeated comparisons between various viruses' characteristics and their own work. When the core group split to work in smaller divisions it was already clear that our group would combine viruses and knitting. The term was too popular to be forgotten. Unfortunately, also its infamous reputation was too cumbersome to be ignored. The virus peculiar complexity was almost relegated in the background, while its most popular connotations had jumped on the front seat once again, even if the virus no longer carried such connotations.

Summing up this last effect to its possible exploitation as a gadget, we concluded that our project would explore, and denounce, such situation by creating a self-knitting virus corporation. In its short

life, Virus inc. would enact a double appropriation/exploitation: it would exploit the virus as a topic to increase interest and promote a hypothetical “subversive knitting” new fashion. Then, it would propagate its products using corporate viral techniques of distribution. After the workshop was concluded Matt Soar wrote “The group ... explored the notion of near-future scenarios in which subversive crafting has become co-opted by mainstream media.” This is still our conclusion so far.

August 9, 2004: h 10:00

Our promo material is almost ready: Max is almost done with his promo “power-point” presentation, Matt has produced his first magazine cover and Kirsty and I have started knitting viruses.

If you knit a virus, then it no longer does any harm. And if we allow somebody to mass-produce knitted viruses, they would sure have a market. At least their negative halo is gone.

Dropped stitches.

Using the virus as one of the topics had soon produced some effects. Whether we wanted or not, not only had it become almost the absolute protagonist of the artwork, but also it had taken over our intentions.

There is no particular reason why everybody was so obsessed by

viruses. My hypothesis can be summarized in the following equation: [(danger + bad popularity)/ creative use]=cool. Viruses are stereotypically noxious and, consequently, infamous. They are the “forbidden fruit”, the one you are not supposed to play with, but you do anyway. It is like practicing extreme sports. You know they are dangerous but you practice them anyways. Even when they are used outside of their context and their inherent “fear factor” is eliminated de facto, they tend to maintain the said feature. It is a brand feature that maintains interest and fascination.

In the end, we had obtained something by producing our project. First, we hadn't quite managed to fully exploit the dynamic features of viruses (but did we really want to?). However, we discovered that we were not completely responsible for this partial failure. Our audience would have never noticed (or fully acknowledged) the innovative potentials shown by the structure and phenomenology of viruses, as they were principally and immediately attracted to their given notion and the fascinating way in which such notion can be subverted. In this sense, our piece testified to the power of established notions and the difficulty to eradicate them.

Second, we hadn't been able to create the ultimate tool that could be exclusively placed at the service of some activist group. By trivializing viruses' negativity, we had to accept, almost despite ourselves, the possibility of a massive and automatic appropriation by the mainstream. Our piece was, therefore, a valid way to draw

attention over such possibility and to its ultimate unavoidability.

Although the unfinished nature of our knitted creatures, somehowjustified the partial success of the piece, I was left with an overall sensation of failure. Although our knitted viruses had somehow obtained some attention and had managed to unveil some distinctive and shared viral attributes, they were far from reflecting accurately the discussions we had engaged with and what we wanted to address with this piece. To be frank, I felt a little defeated, as I didn't expect that our audience reacted in the way they did. The audience had some expectations. At some point during the week we had tried to pick people's curiosity by making real or fake announcements about mysterious viruses that we would release soon. Therefore, when they saw the knitted viruses, they burst into laughter, without probably thinking that our piece had only partially playful intentions. Possibly, our peers' reaction underscores a series of missed elements and unnoticed mistakes leading to deceived expectations: some of these elements could be an inaccurate or awkward use of humor, or, the maybe arrogant assumption that everybody could follow or understand the particular narrative we had conceived.

Some questions therefore remain unanswered. How do play and irony affect the work's perception? Is it possible to address important issues by dressing them with playful connotation? How can we reformulate or modify any discursive narrative by using a language that everybody understands and that is able to rework

given meanings?

By the way: I recently discovered that a company that sells cute viruses exists. Whimsies-online.com produces little fluffy pets that can sit next to your computer...for company.