

# ELO 2021- Abstracts

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## #199 Agnieszka Przybyszewska

### **Title:**

A narrative approach to ambient literature: embedded dramatic monologue and enhanced interactional metalepsis

### **Abstract:**

This paper will focus on “ambient literature” (Abba, Dovey, Pullinger 2020) as a kind of tradition-inspired literature of the future. Thus I will propose to look critically at traditional theoretical concepts and devices and analyse how apply them to characterise and realise such reading experiences. My starting point will be enhancing the concept of interactional metalepsis (Bell 2016 or Bell, Ensslin and Rustad 2014), then I will go for proposing the concept of “embedded dramatic monologue”, a form of narration built upon tradition and useful in creating immersive ambient reading experiences.

I will focus on texts that declare: ‘Dear Reader, borrow me your body, and then I will show You my story’, thus, I will analyse works for which the corporeal “readiness” (Gadd 2020) is *conditio sine qua non* of reading, due to the fact that the reader’s body is conceptualised as an essential element of the author-reader contract. Such reading experiences frequently lead to mashing of ontological boundaries, to entering extradiegetic elements into diegetic world or the other way round, the phenomenon known as a metalepsis. Although theoretical approach to metalepsis had just been amplified in the digital fiction context (because the interactivity has opened new fields for artistic exploration of this device), ambient literature encourages deepening that critical reflection. The concept of interactional metalepsis yet proposed still underlies the metaphorical and symbolic dimension of the reader entering into the storyworld, while examples of ambient literature permit talk about literal overlapping of fictional and real world.

However, such crossing of ontological borders results in a clear need of creating a space for a reader in the narration, narrative and storyworld. I will focus on the ways and devices used to achieve that, being extremely interested in the form of narration that creates such space for a reader, inviting him to cross the ontological borders. I will propose to look back at the traditional form of “dramatic monologue” (used for the first time by A. Camus in *The Fall*). In context of ambient literature we frequently can and should enhance the dramatic monologue’s theory (successfully built by i.e. M. Głowiński (Głowiński 1963)) and talk about “embedded dramatic monologue”; The latter - build upon the interactional metalepsis and a bleed of the storyworld into the real world of the reader (and vice versa) - does not simply simulate that in a storyworld there is a space for the reader, who is listening to the protagonist’s monologue. It really invites the reader to be and act in the storyworld, the storyworld that overlaps the reader’s reality. Ambient literature often takes the form of narration that does not pretend to permit the reader to listen to the story protagonists “as if” he was standing close to them, but “demands” that the reader really stand there.

Classical locative narratives, even GPS-less ones (as Janet Cardiff's Her Long Black Hair) and examples from works created on creative writing courses held at the University of Lodz will be case studies used to illustrate characterised form.

## #57 Alessia Pannese

### **Title:**

Platforms of contemplation in times of confinement: a philosophico-physiological reflection

### **Abstract:**

The forced confinement due to the Covid-19 pandemic has been framed as a condition from which to reassess modern life's habits and values, and build upon such reassessment in order to reimagine a more sustainable and equitable future. A ubiquitous feature of such confinement has been the transition from physical/presential modes of expression and interaction to virtual ones, typically supported through electronic platforms. In the current conditions of physical distancing and confinement, electronic-platform culture presents a tension between two opposite but coexisting aspects – isolation and connectedness – both of which it seems to amplify: the former through its implication of physical distance, the latter through its global reach. My poster will offer a reflection on today's recourse to electronic platforms under conditions of physical confinement in light of physiological evidence and philosophical ideas, in particular the work of ancient Chinese thinker Zhuang Zhou (369-286 BC).

A prominent feature of Zhuang Zhou's thought is the emphasis on contemplation and spontaneity as vehicles for the achievement of virtue and wisdom. In his writings, Zhuang Zhou maintains that 'the perfect man does nothing [...] In the hope of attaining, by contemplation, a like spontaneity'. Zhuang Zhou's emphasis on wisdom as spontaneity (as opposed to deliberate action) echoes Aristotle's (384-322 BC) account of virtue as acquired through automatic habit (as opposed to wilful effort). Similarly, Zhuang Zhou's emphasis on spontaneity and automaticity resonates with the prominent role of involuntary mechanisms in human physiology, as in the autonomic nervous system, which ensures human survival through unconscious, automatic processes.

Zhuang Zhou's stress on the link between virtue and spontaneity continues to be relevant today, as its emphasis on the pursuit of contemplation and inactivity challenges the intuitive understanding of the human individual as defined by conscious, deliberate, and wilful choices, and highlights instead the centrality of unconscious, non-deliberate, and automatic physiological mechanisms that largely regulate human survival. Furthermore, Zhuang Zhou's emphasis on the pursuit of contemplation and inactivity as the path to wisdom resonates with sections of the rhetoric permeating the discourse around the current pandemic-related forced confinement. Building on my dual training in literature and neuroscience, I will

bring Zhuang Zhou's theory of spontaneity and inactivity into dialogue with physiological mechanisms, as they relate to the use of electronic platforms under conditions of confinement. By pitting Zhuang Zhou's intuitions against Aristotle's theory and today's state of affairs my poster will use the current pandemic-related platform-based culture as a pivot to draw conceptual bridges between ideas spanning millennia and continents. This confrontation will also prompt reflection on ways in which the specific circumstances of the current pandemic affected the production of – and the cultural practices surrounding – electronic literature, as well as how literature may in turn orientate the ways in which the specific circumstances of the pandemic are framed and experienced. My goal is offer a tradition-rooted yet timely and forward-looking reflection that might prompt fresh utopian (and perhaps also dystopian) perspectives on the world's current predicament.

## #162 Alex Mitchell

### **Title:**

Repetition and Defamiliarization in AI Dungeon and Project December

### **Abstract:**

Recent advances in machine learning provide new opportunities for the exploration of creative, interactive works based around generative text. This paper compares two such works, AI Dungeon (Walton 2019) and Project December (Rohrer 2020), both of which are built on the same artificial intelligence (AI) platform, OpenAI's GPT-2 and GPT-3. In AI Dungeon, the player can choose from several predetermined worlds, each of which provide a starting point for the story generation. However, while interacting with the system within this world, the player can stop, edit, modify and retry each utterance, allowing the player to “sculpt” the AI's responses, and choose what goes into the AI's memory, helping to shape the overall direction of the story. At a broader level, the player can edit world descriptions, insert scripts between the AI and the player (themselves or others), and share these worlds/scenarios with other players. Similarly, in Project December, the player interacts with several AI “matrices”, either directly through conversations, or more indirectly by creating new matrices by defining a starting paragraph and sample responses, which can then be “spun up”, tested, and tweaked much like the worlds in AI Dungeon. These matrices can also be shared with other players.

When interacting with both works, there is a need for the player to repeatedly engage with the work to learn how to entice a satisfying experience from the system (Mitchell 2012; 2020). However, the key difference is the framing of the experience. In AI Dungeon the person experiencing the work is either taking on the role of the player, entering text and seeing how the AI responds, or that of an author or perhaps a co-author, tweaking the input to the AI or its responses or adjusting the underlying scenario to get a desired response. In contrast, Project December is presented as part of a fictional website for a

“Project December” run by “Rhinehold Data Systems”, promising the opportunity to talk to “the world’s most super computer”. Upon accessing the “customer terminal”, which looks and feels like an old dialup terminal, the player takes on the loosely defined role of “Professor Pedersen” whose “.plan file”, dated November 13, 1982, contains several tasks related to the various “matrices”, suggesting a mystery to be solved and a larger narrative to be explored. I will argue that whereas AI Dungeon attempts to provide players with access to and an uncritical understanding of how the underlying AI system works, Project December’s narrative framing instead defamiliarizes the play experience (Mitchell et al. 2020), potentially creating a more emotional connection between the player and the “matrices”, and thereby encouraging the player to critically reflect on the implications of the underlying technological platform.

## #149 Allegra Rosenberg

### **Title:**

“Writing To Cope”: Anti-Shipping Rhetoric in Media Fandom

### **Abstract:**

Hannibal, a drama series which aired on NBC from 2014-2017, experienced an unexpected revival when the show was released for streaming on Netflix in 2020. New fans, many of whom had been too young for the show when it first aired, brought with them a disdain for “problematic” content—ironic given the show itself’s over-the-top engagement with subjects like murder, emotional abuse, and cannibalism. A public incident on Twitter involving series creator Bryan Fuller provoked the ire of these new fans, who perceived an immoral betrayal in his vehement disapproval of “anti-shipping” culture.

The topic of this paper addresses an understudied yet integral element of contemporary fan practices in the new decade. “Anti-shipper” or “fancop” ideology, its followers often referred to simply as “antis,” casts itself against the similarly vehement “anti-anti” or “pro-shipper” faction. The former, made up of fans of all ages but predominated by teens and younger adults, posits that fictional works involving taboo content (rape, incest, underage sex, abuse) should not be created, consumed, or promoted, due to being “harmful.” This position, strongly held, induces “fancops” to heavily police the content created by others, to the extent of group harassment, doxxing, and public shaming. The latter, whose loudest voices are generally older, holds to the stance that since works of art and fiction involve no harm to real people, the positions held by “antis” are puritanical and ultimately counterproductive, especially towards those who create and consume “dark” content to cope with their own personal traumas.

The outgrowth of media fandom as a primarily niche activity performed within private communities of the 2000s and earlier, to a widely recognized hobby and valid form of participatory digital culture in the 2010s and beyond, has brought fan-writers and fan-artists into the public eye, and thus in direct contact—and often conflict—with creators, non-fans, and the mainstream. “In the public visibility of online publication,

the insular nature of fan fiction – which could practically be maintained in its previous offline mode – is dispelled” (Lam 2014).

There is much research regarding the conflict in the 2010s between fans and non-fans, creators and actors specifically, as it relates to the “fourth wall” (Zubernis, Larsen 2012) but the newly & involuntarily public nature of fan practices, combined with the dominant and proactive Gen Z attitude towards social justice, has given rise to intense questions of what is permissible in fan activity, as of yet unexamined from an academic perspective.

The commerce-driven algorithmic affordances of this era’s mainstream fandom platforms have had the effect of breaking down boundaries between formerly siloed communities—including subcultures with different ideological and philosophical priorities.

This paper will use the Hannibal incident to explore sociological questions of anti-shipping behavior, its effects on fan literature production, and its origins within a wider digital environment dominated by discussions of free speech, social justice, and cancel culture. It will argue that the conflict is not new, but its new virulence and visibility can be attributed to drastic shifts in digital platform usage by fan communities.

## #152 Allison Parrish

### **Title:**

Language models can only write poetry

### **Abstract:**

A perennial question in the field of artificial intelligence is "Can a computer write poetry?" With the recent arrival of large pre-trained language models such as BERT and GPT-n, it's possible that the answer to this question in the popular imagination might soon be "Yes, of course." In this paper, I argue that poetry is, in fact, the only kind of writing that language models can produce. Drawing on Austen's *How to Do Things with Words*, I argue that language model outputs fail the necessary preconditions of felicitous speech acts, rendering them "hollow and void"—a phrase that Austen also used to describe the illocutionary effect of poetry. Because of this, I argue that language model outputs are always (in accordance with William Carlos Williams' definition of poetry in *Spring and All*) "new form dealt with as a reality in itself," regardless of the genre of text that the language model is trained to produce, and the qualities of verisimilitude demonstrated by the model's outputs. The paper concludes with a discussion of Frank Lantz' "Immersion Fallacy," arguing that even in a world with "perfect" language models that produce outputs indistinguishable from poetry composed by conventional means, the poet would still be tasked with inventing new poetic forms. The paper includes a discussion of critical responses to recent

high-profile experiments in language model-generated poetry (including Gwern's GPT-2 experiments, David Jhave Johnston's Rerites and Lillian-Yvonne Bertram's Travesty Generator), and also explains the inner workings of language models and their history in computational creative writing.

## #187 Amy Spencer

### **Title:**

Amplified Publishing: Finding Audiences

### **Abstract:**

We live in a world where everyone with access to technology can publish. From YouTubers to Instagram-influencers, from gamers watching each other play online to writers self-publishing, content is everywhere. And yet, the biggest company with its most promising title and the podcaster putting their first episode online share the same problem: how to find an audience. Over recent years, digital technologies have fostered the proliferation of new platforms for publishing and broadcasting, and the rise of video streaming has further dissolved the boundaries between these two modes. Publishing no longer refers only to words but also images, video and sound and its reach is pervasive and global.

Amplified Publishing, part of the Bristol+Bath Creative R+D project, a collaboration between four universities in the UK is examining what publishing has come to mean across sectors, platforms and media and explores its future direction. As a wide-scale research project, it looks at questions such as; What does 'publishing' mean in the 21st Century? How will the increased availability of seamless and synchronous visual and audio media enhance and expand traditional media, like books and magazines? What does personalisation offer to both content creators, their publishers, and their audiences? With the rise of visual storytelling, what is the future of reading? And, most importantly of all, who are our audiences, where are our audiences, and what does our audience want?

This paper addresses this question of audience and seeks to understand specifically how narrative-based digital publishing, a theme within the Amplified Publishing project, can reach an active audience across platforms. In particular, it questions how audiences experience innovative forms and how their experiences can be mediated and guided by writers, producers and technologists. It uses findings drawn from an understanding of audience from electronic literature and ambient literature to draw conclusions about the future of audiences as they experience digital published content across platforms. It reaches beyond the Covid-19 digital landscape and seeks to understand how audiences have changed and what they might be looking for next.

## #183 Anamarija Podrebarac

### Title:

The Sensuality of Code; Experiencing Realm of Networked Being

### Abstract:

Last year was the year of the shift from a physical environment to the multiplicity of online space. Space that operates on a different logic and it is measured by and clicks not metric system. One image posted online no longer raises a question if it's good or bad, but how it is growing with likes while our digital avatars are categorizing them with hashtags. The online environment has no distinction between appearance and essence, the appearance is the essence.

Computers deal in symbol strings, propositions, algorithms, and sentences, but the view that their primary role to represent is limited. Spaces, object and people in the computer database are represented through number modelling, visualisation charts or simulation, but these representations are not a real nature of computer operations.

Constantly being rewritten and running complex task, code is connected to repetition that leads to creating a sensation. Algorithmic instructions are using the logic of patterns to create rhythm and execute tasks that are multiplying and becoming rhythms again.

The year 2020. was the year we will remember as an event of a global pandemic that shifted the world into the environment of network, a new realm of sense where background processes of code produce new expression and experiences. It makes us ask questions "what it means to exist as a digital avatar?"

Living exists in a webwork of entanglements and attachments, webwork that is in a continuous change with elements of disruptions materialized in the environment.

As we communicate through different online video and conference platforms, we are no longer bounded by physical space and time, as laws of Newtonian physics do not apply in a new realm of a networked environment. Algorithmic processes are reshaping physical environment and our senses, what it means to be human in a networked environment.

How does it feel to say goodbye to the loved ones through a device that is using a video platform? What kind of relationship will emerge with technology and inner apparatus within us? Instead of drawing conclusions and fixating on damage, I am looking for a new method and a different perspective on how to live as a network being.

Phenomenology, as a study of experience, provides the theoretical starting point for this paper, as it allows us to inquire about the experiences of code in terms of an encounter. This paper is approaching web network as a sensual entity with the autonomy of its own that offers a new realm of being.

## #155 Anders Visti and Malthe Stavning Erslev

### **Title:**

Aarhus Urban Operating System

### **Abstract:**

This submission to the 2021 ELO Conference and Media Arts Festival is both a virtual engagement event, a submission of a novel work of electronic literature for the Platforming Utopias (and Platformed Dystopias) exhibition, and, lastly, an introductory performance, proposed as a way of setting the 'Aarhus-vibe' of the conference.

Aarhus Urban Operating System (AaUOS) both is a piece that meditates the generational conflicts of e-lit by situating e-literary encounters with Aarhus that invites for a virtual *dérive* of a platformed imaginary of the city.

This year's ELO conference takes place online – across a number of global partner institutions, and will be hosted 'in' Aarhus, which is to say at Aarhus University's server. Instead of visiting the city of Aarhus physically, participants in this year's conference will visit the rather unspectacular platform `conferences.au.dk`, which (apart from the name and logo) has little to do with neither the physical actualities of Aarhus as a place nor the creative, literary, and intellectual qualities of Aarhus as a space.

This virtual engagement proposal seeks to situate an e-literary encounter with Aarhus that exists at the intersection of (1) the ELO conference and its participants, (2) corporate visions for city development in Aarhus, and (3) a chatterbot-esque interface aesthetic that is connected to a generative, neural network-based bot.

By situating a parasitic interface based on the official ELO conference website, AaUOS enacts the 'flipside' of the glossy, corporate-esque images and videos of Aarhus offered by the University management (see attachment for a sketch of the work [in Danish; the work itself will be in English]).

In this way AaUOS is both a case of 3rd gen e-lit, existing within the framework of an established platform, and at the same time, AaUOS is a handcrafted, specifically designed system that can be associated with the 2nd gen of e-lit. Entering into this position of tension between the generations of e-lit,

the work invites for contemplation of the role of e-lit in the face of the increasing platformization and Zoomification of society.

On this 'flipside' of the conference website, participants are invited to interact with, and mimic, a neural network that was trained on corporate visions for so-called 'creative city development', which is really just a fetish-relation to words such as 'concrete' and 'building'. By creating an interface that connects these generative corporate visions and city-imaginaries with a virtual conference on electronic literature, AaUOS sustains an e-literary encounter with emergent imaginaries of Aarhus, stemming collaboratively from local city developers, a machine learning algorithm, playful imitative writing practices, and an international community of scholars.

In the case of AaUOS, the work makes for an unstable and emergent poiesis of a gathering that could have been, situated in the imaginary of an Aarhus that might still become. Further, AaUOS acts as an interface to a platformed vision for Aarhus; not quite a traditional situationist *dérive* of the city, but something that might become an opportunity to perform an electronic *dérive* of the city's platformization.

## #88 Andréa Catrópa

### Title:

Oneirographia - The writing of dreams

### Abstract:

This work presents an artistic process based on a dream that took place in the capital of Czechoslovakia, a region unknown to the dreamer, which happened at the beginning of the quarantine period due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The first stage of this creative process started with the confirmation of coincidences between real-life Prague and the dreamed Prague. The similarities, discovered mainly through the search algorithms that led to Google maps, touristic blogs, Wikipedia, and other websites allowed the collection of data for the memories would not be lost and could be used as tools for the creative process. That fact so unique and different from other experienced dream phenomena aroused a series of sensations and reflections on the possibility of incorporating the unforeseen and irrational element as a means of promoting academic inquiry and artistic research. It was also an encouragement at the critical moment of confinement and pessimism.

In Antiquity, as the work of Artemidoro confirms, the dream had a cosmic dimension related to the mystical tradition and the collectivity. However, the psychoanalytic conception, influential in Western society since the first decades of the twentieth century, contributed to fixing the perception of dreaming as a private event that concerns only the individual dimension. On the other hand, neuroscience favors a biological approach to dreaming, even though Sidarta Ribeiro is a dissonant voice in this environment.

The Brazilian neuroscientist relates dreams and memory since we dream as a way of remembering what we are and what we do. According to him, we also dream to prepare ourselves for the future.

The conceptual project started from a dream and proceeded, at first, with the help of Internet search engines. The dream experience allowed a deviation in the search algorithms using private intuition. This methodology contradicts the rational tendency behind the “improvement” of the artificial intelligence of these mechanisms. This effort included bibliographic research and the construction of a web page that will contain more information about the work in development. The process also allowed the idealization of Oneirographia, which is a 3D interactive online environment that is under construction. In this work, the interactor can build or simulate his digital dreams with data input that’ll randomly create a sensory ambiance. First, the user will fill a form and, then it will be possible to choose between a dream or a nightmare to define the atmosphere of the digital experience. After that, the user will navigate between images, words, and sounds, and, at any moment, he can choose to capture photographs of the digital dream to download or share them on the social media networks.

Dreams hold relevant messages and memories that we cannot access otherwise. However, its encrypted language makes it difficult to understand, and usually, during the wake, we quickly forget what we have dreamed of. Oneirographia aims to facilitate the remembering, reimagining, and sharing of this important aspect of our lives.

## **#247 Andréa Catrópa**

### **Title:**

ONEIROGRAFIA - THE WRITING OF DREAMS

### **Abstract:**

Oneirografia is an interactive digital work that proposes a reflection on the role of dreams in our lives. Created from research initiated in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the work began with internet searches on a particular dream. Subsequently, this creative process became an investigation into the atavistic relationships that the human species maintains with dreams and observed the different meanings that this state of mind has acquired throughout our history.

Oneirografia is inspired by dream experiences and allows the user to navigate in a 3D environment. Into this environment, is possible to receive the message of the oracle, which is a combinatorial poem. In addition, the user can make up his e-dreams. Composed of the choices made during navigation, e-dreams mix images, filters, and text. It is possible, from there, to save the formed images or share them.

## #103 Andrew Haik Demirjian

### **Title:**

Spaces Speak: (RE)VERB an Emerging Space for E-Lit Creations

### **Abstract:**

Spaces Speak is a panel presentation to raise awareness and enlist participation in (RE)VERB an Audio AR 'zine for e-lit writers/artists. (RE)VERB is an audio augmented reality zine dedicated to spatially conceived electronic literature projects that explore the aesthetic possibilities of sonically delivered language engaging with the physical and corporeal experience of the environment. As a publication (RE)VERB was inspired by the Emerging Spaces for E-Lit Creations initiative to expand works that engage with popular social media spaces.

Spaces Speak will consist of five presenters including editorial board members, the guest curator for issue one and artists who created work for the first issue. The artists and curators will discuss the challenges and rewards for producing site-specific work and the concepts driving their creative decisions.

The panel will also feature an overview of the goals and artistic vision for the 'zine. A discussion of the first issue, with a sneak-peak/advanced listen to excerpts from the forthcoming 'zine to be released in June 2021. Other details discussed will include the release schedule for future issues, explanations for how listeners can access content, integration with social media platforms and how e-lit community members can participate in upcoming issues.

In addition, Spaces Speak will highlight the partnerships with organizations the 'zine will be pursuing to participate in its open calls and curation (Eyebeam, NEW INC, AFROTECTOPIA, the New Media Caucus, Rhizome, Harvestworks, and AudioAR.org) for E-Lit to reach new audiences in related fields like new media art, internet art, sound art and audio AR.

The last segment of the panel discussion will be an open dialog with the ELO community to hear the directions they would like the 'zine to pursue, what might be compelling thematic topics and locations, what other organizations should we include in our outreach and who they would suggest for international curators and artists for future issues as we continue to expand the global reach of the 'zine.

In relation to the conference themes, the (RE)VERB 'zine can be seen as a case study of a third space, instead of a large corporate behemoth platform siloed from the content or individualistic artist vision,

(RE)VERB is a partnership between publication and platform, working in dialog with the Gesso, an AR platform dedicated to spatially conceived projects, to create a sustainable E-Lit creative space.

Taken as a whole, (RE)VERB enables electronic literature writers to engage with the sensorial experience of place, the granularity of the human voice and chance occurrences in the environment to provide an expansive opportunity for aesthetic experimentation and a vital co-mingling of creative communities. Spaces Speak provides an opportunity for an open exchange of ideas and an exploration for how all community members can be involved on any level of the project.

## #99 Angeliki Malakasioti

### **Title:**

Digital Selfhood and its Mental Spatialities: Abstracts of Textual Constructs

### **Abstract:**

Early cyberspatial theories reflected on the qualities of computer mediated experience by introducing aspects of immateriality, incorporeality, symbolism, abstraction, as well as exploring the mental, perceptual, and psychological dimensions of digital experience itself. Electronic interactions have been described as platonically erotic, transcendental, allegorical, even ecstatic conditions, that still seem timely and compelling nowadays, even since the pre-pandemic era. Human mind appeared as an inherent ingredient of the digital phenomenon since its birth. On the other side, ideas such as 'body amnesia' or 'fleshworld', emerged denoting the rigidity of the physical body to reach the other side of the screen.

These days, the superfluous, excessive, sometimes obsessive use of digital technology, pervasive software as well as the internet of things have surpassed the Cartesian mind-body dualism and have given rise to novel hybrid approaches of our contemporary relation to technology. Hybridity has created space for intertextual interpretations of experience, that do not divide the notion of mind and body, but comment on the complex interactions of self with digital culture, through numerous differentiated contexts, evolving cyborg ontologies, alternate bodies, human-nonhuman systems, transformative personas, all rendered through a daily mediated reality.

The study attempts to look at the mind-body ever-present conundrum, through a quest on digital spatiality. Digital experience has always been inseparable from the metaphoric use of spatial concepts. At the same time, textual space constitutes an allegorical or symbolic construction with its own architecture, ambience, and other characteristics. Space is not only relating to the strict conception of geometry, physics, or mathematics, but also to an anthropological reading of existence, a quality that is often elusive and immeasurable, thus it helps define abstract, psychological, experiential phenomena, or in other words, that which is in fact indefinable.

In this context, self takes the role of a mental dynamic, while space is interpreted as a metaphoric, volatile construction whose literary aesthetics emerge from digital culture. The idea of digital experience is approached through a series of textual-spatial concepts and projects that reflect on space that is constructed in the interstitial area between the digitally platformed self and the mediated environment. This exploration takes the form of creative writings, chatbot interviews, exercises of verbal configurations, visual poetics, interactive game-poems and other abstracts of writing in both artistic and educational contexts. The overall idea of the digital mind-body interpretation takes the form of a series of mental spatialities that comment on our contemporary way of being in the digital world. In architecture, to read means to uniquely understand and thoroughly grasp the phenomena of the surrounding environment - in this case, space is translated in an altered vocabulary that helps us understand what it means to 'read' the contemporary self in a platformed culture.

## **#47 Astrid Ensslin, Kathryn Cramer, Dene Grigar and Mariusz Pisarski**

### **Title:**

On the "Effect(s) of Living Backwards": A Platform-critical, Collaborative Analysis of Kathryn Cramer's In Small and Large Pieces

### **Abstract:**

From its earliest beginnings, electronic literature has eschewed canonization and institutionalization by manifesting itself as a "set of [dynamic] practices" (Pawlicka 2017; Ensslin 2007) that have responded to and generated new and perpetually morphing forms and methods of writing and reading. This processual, personalized and platform-contingent textuality can only adequately be studied in a concerted approach that takes into account the numerous platforms on which electronic literature has been accessible pre- and post-Web. Similarly, it raises important questions about original design and intent, and the breakage thereof across platforms.

To demonstrate how platform contingency can lead to complementary, diachronically pertinent analyses, this panel focuses on a seminal, pre-web hypertext published in issue 1:3 (1994) of the Eastgate Quarterly Review of Hypertext. Kathryn Cramer's In Small and Large Pieces first appeared in a folio containing two 3.5-inch floppy disks for Macintosh and PC, and later on a single CD-ROM requiring 2 MB RAM and a hard disk drive. It was originally written in Storyspace 1.08 and used 875K (Grigar et al. 2019). To access the work in its original format, historical machines such as a Macintosh Classic or Performa are required. However, there are other platforms on which the text can be rendered and emulated, including for example Eastgate's Tinderbox and Windows XP emulators like Oracle VM VirtualBox. Focusing on these three hardware and software constellations and their individual aesthetic and embodied affordances, this panel will explore the ways in which reading "the same" work in different

technological environments yields platform-specific analytical nuances, and how, collectively, these readings open up new forms of collaborative, connective textuality. Our work will deepen our understanding of how platform-conscious readings can shed light on discrepancies between reader experience and original design and intent, and how contemporary technologies might make it possible to bring back an obsolescent work. In doing so, we explore how platform studies can operate synchronically and diachronically, especially if combined with post-pandemic forms of remote collaboration and presentation that enable scholars to read from their own site-specific premises.

Our presentation will begin with some introductory notes from Kathryn Cramer about the genesis of her work (8 min). This will be followed by three short analytical demos from the other panellists, with Grigar reading from a Macintosh Performa 5215CD (8 min), Pisarski from Tinderbox (8 min), and Ensslin from VirtualBox Windows XP (8 min). Cramer will close with a commentary on the analyses (8 min), followed by plenary discussion (20 min).

#### References:

Ensslin, Astrid (2007) *Canonizing Hypertext: Explorations and Constructions*. London: Bloomsbury.

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Pawlicka, Urszula (2017) "An essay on electronic literature as platform," *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy*, 33, 430-444.

## #246 Asun López-Varela

### Title:

[Plat]forms of poïesis. From the Holodeck to Mez Breeze's V[R]erses

### Abstract:

This paper explores work by Australian net.artist and game designer Mez Breeze. In 2020, Breeze's VR and XR creations were shortlisted for the Woollahra Digital Literary Award. In 2019 she won Queensland University of Technology's Digital Literature Award for her Virtual Reality Microstories Series V[R]ignettes, and received the Marjorie C. Luesebrink Career Achievement Award as a visionary artist. In 2018, another of her VR Literature experiences was shortlisted for the If:book New Media Writing Prize. Also in 2018, Mez Breeze collaborated with Microsoft, Samsung and MasterpieceVR in their VR Influencers Sustainability Initiative. These are only some of her achievements. She currently serves as an Advisor to

the Mixed Augmented Reality Art Research Organisation and is a Senior Research Affiliate of the Humanities and Critical Code Studies Lab, among other responsibilities.

V[R]erses is a collection of 3D online experiences of X-Reality -virtual, mixed, and augmented- created by Mez Breeze in collaboration with other well-known E-lit artists. In this paper, I argue that this work inquiries into the posthuman scenario, that is, on the impact of human and nonhuman actions in the Anthropocene.

In the case of electronic literature and net.art, a central concern has been the role of software, considered by some a sort of disembodied haunting voice of the ghost in the machine. In “Theory as Praxis: The poetics of Electronic Textuality” (2002), Johanna Drucker, turned to Jerome McGann’s Radiant Textuality to assert that the Aristotelian’s concept of “poïesis”, nowadays conceptualized only as theory was, in its ancient Greek original meaning, a form of making or craft (see also López-Varela 2017). According to Drucker, “Making things ... pushes the horizons of one’s understanding.” (2002: 684) Decades later, there is still the need to call attention to the practical aspects of Humanities disciplines. The aims of this paper are multiple. It attempts to show how art and, in this case, Mez Breeze’s net.art, foregrounds contemporary problems such as the possible agency of nonhuman actants. It also calls for a blend of STEM disciplines into STE[A]M in order to highlight the 4E consilience of all knowledge.

## #217 Ben Grosser

### **Title:**

When you can’t look away: what The Endless Doomscroller reveals about the relations between users, platforms, and interfaces during the age of pandemic.

### **Abstract:**

A primary interface pattern of contemporary software platforms is the infinite scroll. Often used to deliver algorithmically-selected personalized content, infinitely scrolling feeds are one of many design decisions seen as responsible for compulsive use of social media platforms and other information-rich sites and apps. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a time marked by a substantive increase in time spent online, the infinitely scrolling feed has been implicated in a new negative pattern: “doomscrolling.” Doomscrolling refers to the ways in which people find themselves regularly--and in some cases, almost involuntarily--scrolling bad news headlines on their phone, often for hours each night in bed when they had meant to be sleeping. While the realities of the pandemic have necessitated a level of vigilance for the purposes of personal safety, doomscrolling isn’t just a natural reaction to the news of the day—it’s the result of a perfect yet evil marriage between a populace stuck online, social media interfaces designed to game and hold our attention, and the realities of an existential global crisis. It may be hard to look away from bad news in any format, but it’s nearly impossible to avert our eyes when that news is endlessly

presented via designed-to-be-addictive social media interfaces that know just what to show us next in order to keep us “engaged.” As an alternative interface, the author’s artwork, titled *The Endless Doomscroller*, acts as a lens on our software-enabled collective descent into despair. By distilling the news and social media sites down to their barest most generalized phrases and interface conventions, *The Endless Doomscroller* shows us the mechanism that’s behind our scroll-induced anxiety: interfaces—and corporations—that always want more. More doom (bad news headlines) compels more engagement (via continued liking/sharing/posting) which produces more personal data, thus making possible ever more profit. Using concepts from Christian Ulrik Andersen’s and Søren Pold’s *Metainterface*, Taina Bucher’s analyses of algorithmic politics, Geert Lovink’s theories of how sadness gets coded into platforms, and Matthew Fuller’s software studies guidance to perform deep analyses of small computational things, this paper will examine how the infinite scroll has intersected with pandemic-era platforms to create a world full of unhappy and unrelenting doomscrollers. Why don’t users look away from the scroll? Who most benefits when they can’t stop? And how might text-focused digital artworks intervene? Can an artwork that asks users to read \*more\* bad news headlines create an opportunity for mindfulness or enable a sort of exposure or substitution therapy, a way to escape or replace what platform interfaces want from and do to us? What if, in this age of pandemic platforms, the only way out of too much doomscrolling is endless doomscrolling?

## #167 Boyd Branch, Piotr Mirowski and Kory Mathewson

### **Title:**

Platforms for Multilingual Tele-Immersive Storytelling and Improvisation

### **Abstract:**

Theatre is a sometimes forgotten casualty of the current pandemic. Social distancing precludes the assembly necessary for participatory theatre. Theatre and theatrical improvisation rely on participants--performers and audiences alike--gathering in the same space, exploiting their physical proximity to tell stories. Because of the limited modalities of communication, virtual gatherings using video-conferencing platforms are, at best, an ersatz solution for audiences longing for connection in an ever more disconnected world. While some performance groups have embraced tele-conferencing and streaming for workshops, practice and performance, many theatre makers and performers are preferring to temporarily pause while waiting for the conditions of performance to resume [1]. We took the opposite view, believing that live theatre cannot wait for the pandemic to wane.

We therefore built a computer tool for online performance. Our system, called the Virtual Director, enables actors to recreate a feeling of presence with stage partners while performing and storytelling remotely [2].

Our research combines cinematic and video communication technologies with the theatrical practice of improvisational and scripted theatre, and aims at recreating presence, virtually.

Virtual Director relies on commodity software (TouchDesigner, web browsers), widely adopted video conferencing tools (Zoom, Microsoft Teams) and streaming platforms (YouTube, Twitch)--digital platforms for streaming and video conferencing that we subverted for participatory online performances.

We deployed Virtual Director during community-based performances at the Online Paris Fringe festival. We noticed that the audience was curious about new interaction formats and performance modalities. We believe that our streamed performances redefined the nature of live performance, as we identified four levels of participation: performer, privileged audience member, general audience member, and onlooker who watches the recording of the show. First, our tool enabled visual collocation and presence among performers. Second, Virtual Director enabled visual collocation and audio interaction between selected audience members and the performers, or recreated visual presence if we placed them in a virtual "amphitheatre". Third, audiences could interact indirectly via chat. Finally, onlookers followed the show via streaming. As a complement to previous analyses of the performers' experience of presence in a tele-immersive virtual space [2], this paper examines the perception of the performance by audiences and their participation in collective storytelling; we situate our work in literature on improvisation and interactive performance.

As we performed remotely with multilingual actors from different countries, we exploited live translation and speech recognition technology to enable actors to improvise in multiple languages while being understood by cast members and audiences. Building up on an existing multilingual improv stage show [3], we combined tele-immersion with translation to create a multilingual performance that transcends typical physical limitations of the stage. Our paper concludes with our ongoing work: once we assemble again in a post-pandemic world, we will keep the tele-immersion and translation tools to create mixed-presence connected international shows.

[1] Berger, "The Forgotten Art of Assembly", April 2020, retrieved January 2021, <https://medium.com/@nicholasberger/the-forgotten-art-of-assembly-a94e164edf0f>

[2] Branch et al, "Tele-Immersive Improv", SIG CHI 2021.

[3] Mirowski et al, "Rosetta Code: Improv in Any Language", Computational Creativity 2020.

## #196 Boyd Branch, Piotr Mirowski and Kory Mathewson

### Title:

Presently Performing Tele-Presence Pleasantly

### Abstract:

In this interactive workshop, participants will be introduced to various platforms that can facilitate online communication and storytelling. These platforms include our own open source tool Virtual Director, developed in TouchDesigner, for compositing multiple participants in a shared virtual space in order to communicate tele-immersively [1], as well as open-source creativity helpers such as an automated slide generator [2].

The workshop will start with warm-up exercises taken from improvised comedy practice, and conclude with short live improvised presentations made by the participants. Over the course of the workshop, participants will learn a range of skills and best practices, derived from applied improvisation and cinematographic language, that will help them foster a sense of presence, connection, and creativity in digitally immersed environments.

In Part I: “Tele-Immersion with off the shelf digital tools”, participants will learn how to use OBS, Zoom, and NDI tools to program virtual sets for live theatrical performance.

In Part II: “Virtual Director - Designing tools for improvisation”, participants will learn how to use our own open source tool for facilitating live interactive tele-immersive performance, rehearsal, and improvisation.

In Part III: “The virtual theatre DJ/VJ: Directing ensembles in virtual spaces”, participants will engage in a series of games and activities that demonstrate best practices for helping performers feel connected and present with each other, facilitating physical and emotional connection through the visual language of cinema and the pedagogy of improvisation.

### About the facilitators:

Boyd Branch is the founder and director of the London-based Improvisational Media and Performance Lab, which explores how improvisational pedagogies can be utilized to create accessible, adaptive, and socially supportive technologies. He has been a troupe member of Improbabilities since 2018. A former Fulbright fellow, he holds an M.F.A. in interdisciplinary digital media from Arizona State University, and an M.A. in theatre studies from the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. He is currently a Vice-Chancellor’s Fellow at the University of Kent.

Piotr Mirowski, a theatre actor and researcher in AI, co-founded AI-enabled improv companies HumanMachine and Improbabilities. Experimenting with AI for artistic human and machine-based

co-creation, he created shows featuring robots and chatbots that have toured internationally. Piotr obtained a PhD in computer science in 2011 at New York University as well as a Diploma in Acting at London School of Dramatic Art (2015-2017). Piotr works as Staff Research Scientist at DeepMind on AI research.

Kory Mathewson is a Research Scientist with DeepMind and a Machine Learning Lab Scientist with the Creative Destruction Lab. He holds a Ph.D. in Computing Science from the University of Alberta. His research interests include interactive machine learning, human-in-the-loop deep reinforcement learning, human-robot interfaces, prosthetic robotics, and conversational dialogue systems. Kory is an accomplished improvisational theatre performance artist with Rapid Fire Theatre.

[1] Branch et al, “Tele-Immersive Improv”, SIG CHI 2021.

[2] Winters and Mathewson, AutomaTED Talk Generator, <https://talkgenerator.com/>

## #143 Bronwin Patrickson

### **Title:**

What Do We Call This?

### **Abstract:**

What Do We Call This?

Between 2019 – 2020 The University of South Wales collaborated with a consortium of creative commercial practitioners dubbed Fictioneers in a UKRI funded, Audience of the Future R&D demonstrator project designed to further develop digital storytelling within the UK Creative Industries. Using the popular Wallace and Gromit IP, the consortium drew upon their combined skills in games production, animation, creative marketing and new technology development to create a location-based experience targeting young audiences entitled Wallace & Gromit: Big Fix Up, designed to propel new and playful identities for a traditional narrative media.

Wallace & Gromit: Big Fix Up is an ambitious and complex production. Through their research and development efforts, Fictioneers sought to develop a viable production alternative to branching tree, digital story-telling structures which risk combinatorial explosion. Instead, the application delivers a rich tapestry of serialised, short media elements. Linked by a central, enhanced mobile application, the multi-platform media include YouTube videos and comics, as well as augmented reality game-play challenges. The application aims to engage new audiences and provide innovative ways for long term fans to interact with media favourites. Mimicking a variety of social newsfeed items these media elements are variable, chunked and optional to view. They are also pre-determined and closely networked via the

central newsfeed. The story-flow is complex nevertheless, incorporating enhanced augmented reality story-telling, multi-platform media and mobile game-play.

The hybridity of this experience posed new challenges regarding the most definitive way to describe the experience on offer, as well as the most helpful frameworks to evaluate it. With few alternative terms on hand to describe this genre, the term experience was often used to describe the sort of hybrid encounter made possible via this complex network of media influences, but experience is still an open-ended concept that can be hard to pin-point. Alternative terms like digital story-telling may also be useful place-holders to help delineate interactive and narrativised experiences from traditional media encounters, nevertheless such terminology is still only useful to an extent. Narrative frameworks such as characterisation, pace and tone are relevant to projects like Wallace & Gromit: Big Fix Up, but they don't capture all the elements that audiences encounter in real time. Describing the experience as a game can be equally problematic, since it can set up expectations of a very different type of challenge-driven, dramatic experience than this application delivers.

In this paper I explore what additional insights can be gained by also considering the interplay of technology and creativity within the research and development process. Technology is a defining feature of this digital storytelling experience. Augmented reality technologies, for example, offer dynamic, enhanced tracking and visualisation opportunities, whilst also demanding strict file-size constraints, comprehensive audience testing and extensive cross-disciplinary collaboration. By evaluating the creative and technical processes shaping the development of this hybrid media identity, I explore the ways in which any effective definition of this new type of distributed genre is likely to be as much about co-ordination, as new experience.

## **#105 Caitlin Fisher and Maureen Engel**

### **Title:**

Edge Effects: Queer Virtual Arcades

### **Abstract:**

What happens at the edges of bordercrossing technologies?

Our poster showcases an exploratory, Benjaminian digital experiment that queers the investigation into who and what and how emerging technologies connect with our bodies, lives and desires. This work is part of a larger project investigating tools, platforms and digital strategies that help us to weave together the digital and the analogue, human and machine, and interactivity that moves us beyond linearity to multiplicity, and for ELO we are excited to highlighting our proposed experimental project archive, still in the early stages of development as we are considering multiple platforms and seeking feedback.

We're building a kind of queer digital arcades - both platform and method - weaving together poetry, elit, theory and ephemera to perform an interactive, technoerotic story that troubles the borders between technologies, selves, others and the world. Our goal is to offer de-centred and multiple entry points to explore the increasingly ubiquitous technologies that summon our curiosities, vulnerabilities and penetrability, and implicate our skin, our memories of the basement bar, and our bravery.

This multivocal work includes both poetic and analytical texts, electronic literature and theory as we work to visually and associatively map a series of technologies and concepts into constellations and queer formations.

We understand and use the term "queer" methodologically – that is, we believe that queerness is a way of doing, whether that doing is in the production, consumption, or circulation of digital forms. The queerness here is in the very structure of the interface, the affordances of the platform, the non-linear, expansive, and associative logics that are revealed through exploration. The result is aspirational as much as, or more than, it is analytic, prompting users to imagine new speculative queer worlds as we all grapple with the ones we currently inhabit.

The larger project aims to literalize the circuit formed by the digital and the queer, thus representing an emerging, heterogenous interactivity that produces radical possibilities, possibilities that we call edge effects. Our Benjaminian digital arcade aims both to capture and perform some of these edge effects and will include new electronic writing alongside experiments in spatial theorymaking. We are considering a variety of platforms at this time, including:

- 1) VR Chat;
- 2) an emerging beta platform for webvr and
- 3) Unity

We anticipate having screen captures of prototypes across multiple platforms and perhaps active links to beta worlds to share at the time of the conference.

## **#104 Christine Wilks, Astrid Ensslin, Carla Rice, Sarah Riley, Megan Perram, Hannah Fowlie, Aly Bailey and Lauren Munro**

### **Title:**

Open to Construction: reading and writing bodies in digital fiction and the open web platform

**Abstract:**

Drawing parallels between the open web platform and the open way a fictional body can be constructed from a text, this paper explores the creative and ethical strategies employed in the creation of a feminist interactive digital fiction for body image narrative therapy, advocacy and plurality. The digital fiction was created with and for young women and gender non-conforming individuals from diverse intersectional backgrounds.

If, as Possible Worlds theory posits, the real world serves as a model for the mental construction of textual fictional storyworlds, it follows that our experience and knowledge of real bodies, including our own bodies, serve as a model for the mental construction of textual fictional bodies. Unless a text draws attention to the physical appearance of a fictional character, the reader will tend to assume, according to Ryan's 'principle of minimal departure' (1991), that their body conforms to a familiar or generic norm (two eyes, two arms, two legs, etc.).

The main character of the Writing New Bodies project's digital fiction, Jordan, has body image issues relating to her size and shape. This becomes evident from her negative self-talk. Jordan describes herself as fat, flabby and repulsive, but is that true in the textual actual world or is it a distortion of her body image problem? In our interactive text-based fiction, where the reader-player makes choices on Jordan's behalf that can affect her body image, there is no narratorial voice to authoritatively describe her body and none of the characters are ever depicted in mimetic visual form. Therefore Jordan's body is open to interpretation, open to (re)construction. Although normative concepts of the body are insidious, the reader-player has some latitude to give body to her in their own idiosyncratic way, perhaps empathically shaping her in their own self-image. This openness is a deliberate strategy to make the bibliotherapeutic benefits and socio-political commitments of the work as fluid and widely accessible as possible.

Similarly, with accessibility in mind, we chose to build the digital fiction on and for the open web platform using a mobile-first, responsive web design approach for the greatest reach. But the affinity between these twin approaches runs deeper. Both the refusal to visually represent a (female-gendered or sexed-coded) body in a digital fiction and the refusal to use proprietary closed platforms represent a form of resistance to the normative forces of cultural hegemony within neoliberalism; not least because the big tech platforms that want to lock us in to proprietary systems are amongst the most prolific purveyors of imagery and messaging that contribute to body dissatisfaction in young people. In this context, choosing the open web platform is a feminist strategy that pragmatically and aesthetically underpins the concerns of our digital fiction, where the body is relatively open to (re)construction rather than defined and limited by the restrictive norms and unattainable ideals commonly found in digital media representations of bodies.

Reference:

Ryan, M.-L. (1991) Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence and Narrative Theory. 1st Edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

## #31 Claire Fitch

### **Title:**

Populated Solitude

### **Abstract:**

Populated Solitude

Encounters, between the interior and exterior. The between-two of solitude.

An awkwardness, the combinations, probabilities, frailness, charm, and style arising from the communication and encounters during the COVID pandemic. Movements, ideas, events and people constantly move in a zig zag effect that happen as interaction takes place. There is an a-parallel evolution, a result of an encounter “to find, to capture” (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 7).

Solitude populated with encounters which are always becoming. Movements, ideas, events, people in a zigzag effect happening in an a-parallel evolution, the double capture, a connection.

Capture is always a double-capture, that which creates not something mutual, but an asymmetrical block, an a-parallel evolution. Always ‘outside’ and ‘between’ (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 7).

This is the encounter. The becoming. We are not just one thing, not just a musician, not just a local resident, not just an artist, but an entire production studio.

The block starts gathering momentum.. It no longer belongs to anyone, it is ‘between’ everyone. Chance will turn up following inspiration from something. A ‘pick-up’, rather than a ‘cut-up’. I propose to research the location, the people who were part of its history, to find any records, any photos, any memories still held by people around the town. To facilitate this collection there will be a call for participation on social media.

The creation of a collection of sound, vision and text will result in a performance using content with an online presence and a physical presence.

### Bibliography

Deleuze, Gilles and Parnet, Claire. Dialogues. New York: Columbia University Press. 1987.

## #102 Clara Chetcuti

### Title:

“Let my readers go”: Freedom, the ‘post-’, electronic ‘literature’

### Abstract:

What do Jeremy Hight’s *Glacial, A Novel* (whose content he has pledged to Tweet one word at a time every day between the November 2020 and June 2042), Anna Anthropy’s *Queers in Love At the End of the World* (a Twine romance unfolding at the eleventh minute before the apocalypse which readers are allowed to devour in just ten seconds), and Claire Dinsmore’s *The Dazzle as Question* (a hypermedia prose-poem about old-school artistry versus the onset of the digital with a penchant for blind(sid)ing its reader) all share in common? For one, they are narratives mediated by computer-hosted platforms and invested in wresting lection from their readers. For another, this paper will argue, they are examples of the post-literary according to a very specific and not strictly conventional definition.

A by-product of what Brian McHale styles the “name-that-period sweepstakes for what comes after postmodernism” has been the proliferation of commentaries on the meaning of the ‘post-literary’. Reference has been made to some kind of after-literature which, as the product of a succession of literatures, is expected to retain a vestige of what anteceded it while making for a fresh direction. The general narrative concerning the ‘post-’ has been about unlearning the past, innovation and progress, but also one of a limbic sense of living on after the end times. To a different reader, Hight, Anthropy, and Dinsmore’s work might exemplify one or all of these definitions of the condition of being ‘post-’. However, this reader prefers to think of their work in the broad terms established by the journal, *CounterText* – that is, as manifestations which are implausibly represented by the term ‘literature’ yet register belonging in the “domain” of the post-literary, where “any artefact that might have some claim on the literary appears”.

Hight, Anthropy, and Dinsmore thumb their noses at conventional reading practices, employing digital affordances to force narrative to move at a glacial pace, accelerate it impossibly, and place a variety of obstacles in the way of reading. Yet, it is clear from the way they goad the reader that the works still expect to be read. They seem thus to be at the bleeding edge of the ontological challenge identified by John Cayley when he hypothesizes, “if literature is a practice that is determined, chiefly, by material cultural formations that orbit practices and conventions of reading, then it is literature that faces its ontological challenge with respect to digitization.” Given the way digitization has skewed conventional reading practices, Cayley concludes: “Electronic literature is, precisely, no longer literature”. Besides, if Jean-Paul Sartre is right that “the writer, a free man addressing free men, has only one subject – freedom”, so that “any attempt to enslave his readers threatens him in his very art”, then Hight, Anthropy,

and Dinsmore cannot be writing literature when they employ programmed platforms to regulate and curtail their readers' freedom quite simply to read; theirs must be a kind of 'electronic post-literary'.

## #130 Claudia Kozak, Agustín Berti, Anahí Re and Leonardo Solaas

### Title:

Platformization and Decolonial E-Lit. Is There Any Chance?

### Abstract:

We will discuss the issue of the platformization of culture from a Latin-American perspective and decolonial thinking. Platforms strive on the automated algorithmic administration of access and reproduction of creative works (text, sound, video, or code-based). The common trait of current platform culture is the maximization of profit by means of garnering data and attention in order to capture more attention (and more data). In this context, is there any space for pursuing artistic digital activism and decolonial e-lit? The presentations in this panel will try to answer this question. The panel will be Spanish-English based in a sort of tentative of linguistic decolonization of e-lit field:

Agustín Berti: The Country and the Platform, or The Issue of Nanofundia

The issue of latifundia and the consolidation of vast productive land owned by a very reduced minority of wealthy elites has been one of the distinctive traits of lasting inequalities in Latin-American countries. This has seemingly nothing to do with digital culture, and yet this push forward the concept of nanofundia as a continuation of the reprimarization of production in the developing world and the digital extractivism of platform economy described by Pasquinelli and Joler. If there is any chance of reverting this situation in terms of decolonial geopolitics of electronic literature, the struggles will be about national and regional digital infrastructures and the local regulations over the globalized attention economies.

Anahí Re: It Will Be Difficult or Won't Be. Challenges of Latin-American E-Lit.

Platforms that nowadays enable large scale production and distribution of third generation e-lit (Flores), and even this kind of e-lit itself, promote a specific temporality. Doing so they guarantee the permanence of users in social media. What is at stake is clearly our "available attention" (Stiegler). Following Stiegler's organological perspective, this presentation will focus on why "the difficult" (Tisselli/Torres) is, and should always be, an emancipatory alternative within Latin American poetic industries.

Claudia Kozak: Occupy the Platforms. Scope and Limitations of Decolonial Contemporary E-Lit.

This presentation will analyze cases of Latin American e-lit that particularly engage to deconstruct and/or occupy contemporary platform culture. Being these cases either strictly experimental e-lit based on "the difficult" (Tisselli/ Torres), or digital activism in indigenous languages or even attempts of decolonial mixtures between experimentalism and third-generation platform e-lit, there is an opening for discussing

how e-lit might temporarily occupy contemporary platforms without being (completely) absorbed by their agenda.

Leonardo Solaas: The Pull of The Banal: Digital Systems and Programmed Freedom

Internet platforms are based on a perfect formula: they provide us with the endless satisfaction of choosing, while they get to know all about us and better anticipate our tastes and desires. They create for us dazzling worlds of perfect visibility, while their own logic recedes into the unreachable depths of an ever-blacker box. We will analyze how the space of possibilities generated by digital systems deploys a field of power under the guise of freedom, and how users can adopt three positions with regards to it: integration, rebellion, or critique.

**#184 Claus-Michael Schlesinger, Mona Ulrich, Jan Hess, Andre Blessing, Thomas Bönisch, Nina Buck, Pascal Hein, Alexander Holz, Kerstin Jung, Roland Kamzelak, Heinz-Werner Kramski, Jonas Kuhn, Volodymyr Kushnarenko, Björn Schembera and Gabriel Viehhauser**

**Title:**

Science Data Center for Literature - Archive and Research of Net Literature and Born-Digitals

**Abstract:**

The interdisciplinary Science Data Center for Literature (SDC4Lit) reflects on the demands that net literature and born-digital archival material place on archiving, research and reading. The main goal is to implement appropriate solutions for a sustainable data lifecycle for the archive and for research purposes, which include introductory uses at university and school level. The focus is on the establishment of distributed long-term repositories for net literature and born-digital archival material and the development of a research platform. The repositories will be regularly expanded by the project and its cooperation partners and will form a hub for harvesting various forms of net literature in the future operation of SDC4Lit. The research platform will offer the possibility of computer-assisted work with the archived material. Since such a repository structure, which integrates collecting, archiving, and analysis, can only be accomplished through interdisciplinary collaboration, the project brings together partners with expertise in the subfields of archives, supercomputing, natural language processing, and digital humanities: The German Literature Archive (Deutsches Literaturarchiv) with a focus on archiving and preservation; the High Performance Computing Center Stuttgart (HLRS) with a focus on computing; the Institute for Natural Language Processing and the Institute for Literary Studies at the University of Stuttgart with a focus on NLP, cultural and literary history and digital humanities.

An important task of the project is the modeling of net literature and born-digital literature, which will initially be carried out in an example-oriented manner in dealing with an already existing corpus of net

literature and examples from the large born-digital collection at DLA. Underlying research on both technical and poetological challenges of digital, non-digital, and post-digital literature, e.g. on questions of genre or on computational approaches towards net literature and literary blogs as digital and networked objects.

In addition to digital objects and corresponding metadata, the accruing research data are also stored in a sustainable manner. Research data includes, first, research data generated in the course of the project's work, especially data used by regular services on the platform such as named entity recognition trained with data from the archived material. Secondly, the repository should offer the possibility to store research data generated by users of the research platform in a structured way and to make it available for further research. The connection of archival repository, research platform and research data repository follows standard research data management practices (FAIR principles) and works toward the goal to support a sustainable research data lifecycle for archivists and researchers working with electronic literature (on the web) and born-digital literature archived at the DLA archive and potential future cooperating institutions.

## **#192 Claus-Michael Schlesinger, Mona Ulrich, Pascal Hein and André Blessing**

### **Title:**

Networks of Net Literature - Modelling, Extracting and Visualizing Link-Based Networks in the DLA corpus of net literature

### **Abstract:**

Net literature on the WWW is characterized by a special relationship between literary text and technical medium. In addition to the importance of graphic and typographic design, this includes in particular the hypertext structure of the texts. The distribution of a literary text across several interlinked web pages often leads to a non-linear structure, which usually corresponds to non-linear narrative structures. We consider a non-linear text structure to exist as soon as a page contains more than one reference to subsequent pages. A linear passage through the entire text is then no longer possible. For narrative texts, this also implies a non-linear narrative progression. Non-linear text structures can allow predominantly linear narrative progressions with alternative strands, variable endings, and cyclical elements, or multiple narrative progressions through complex linking.

For the identification of non-linear patterns, we extract link and element structures from the corpus data and visualize the link networks. We then identify patterns via the visualization and network metrics. A necessary prerequisite for corpus-oriented pattern recognition is the comparability and reproducibility of the individual analyses. Live online literary works can change over time. We work with archived versions

of the works, which are kept available via a repository. The pages are archived in the WARC format, a standard format for web archiving.

We have modelled and described all types of links we found in the corpus. This model is mainly based on our historical corpus and serves to improve extraction and analysis, but will be tested and complemented with additional material in the future. Additionally, we assessed several existing approaches for the extraction of links. For the actual extraction of the link network data from the WARC files, we use our own software module WARC2graph which is based on our link network model and makes use of multiple extraction approaches. WARC2graph extracts link networks from WARC files and returns these link networks. Users can choose which method to use to extract the network data. The program has a basic module for generic visualization of the data, but this is just for a first impression, since visualization depends on the research question and the nature of the analyzed material.

WARC2graph will be made available as a Python module and as a web service run by the Science Data Center for Literature, a joint project of the German Literature Archive (DLA) and several departments at the University of Stuttgart.

Our approach is focused on net literature and literary blogs. However, it should work generically on standard WARC files. We hope to make the module reusable both at the level of research-oriented work with WARC data and at the level of archiving and provision of WARC data and data analytics services.

## #34 Colin Post

### **Title:**

On the Platform's Ruins: Practicing a Poetics of Obsolescence

### **Abstract:**

Visual artists, writers, and other cultural producers have long leveraged networked technologies to establish platforms that circulate cultural products in participatory contexts intentionally distinct from cultural institutions. As technologies change over time—including deprecated plug-ins, changes to HTML, and linkrot—these platforms fall into various states of decay. In this paper, I examine an example of a platform, the Net Art Latino Database (1999-2004), an effort to document net-based artworks vulnerable to obsolescence that overall stands as a precarious monument to an earlier era of digital culture. As the platform slowly falls out of joint with current web technologies, the Database illustrates practices of cultural production that respond to the decay of the very technologies being used.

The Net Art Latino Database was initiated by the Uruguayan digital artist Brian Mackern to compile examples of net art activity by Latinx artists, working at the periphery of English-language dominant net art communities. The Database functions as an art platform in the sense offered by Olga Goriunova: a dynamic configuration of people and technologies amplifying new kinds of creative activities that push beyond the boundaries of existing categories of cultural production. As Goriunova's theorization of art platforms suggests, the lines between categories like 'net art' and 'electronic literature' are often blurry, as artists and writers deploy the same technologies and pursue similar aesthetic strategies to circulate digital cultural production online.

While the Database catalogs principally digital visual artworks, it is instructive to think about this platform in the context of electronic literature specifically. First, the Database documents works that function expressly as electronic literature, including listings for e-zines. More fundamentally, though, the Database can be read as a work of electronic literature. Coded by hand in HTML, Mackern's work exemplifies the scribal practices that were the foundation of early Web culture. The text-based work consists entirely of descriptions of other artworks and links to other projects. These sites are frequently located under the top-level domains of Central or South American countries, though many are no longer active, and these defunct sites are rarely captured in public web archives. As such, the Database serves an ekphrastic function, evoking multimedia artworks that no longer readily circulate online—and may no longer materially exist beyond this description.

I approach this analysis from the discipline of library and information science (LIS). A deeper understanding of Mackern's artistic and curatorial practices can help to shape professional perspectives on the preservation of net art, electronic literature, and digital cultural production more generally. Unlike a traditional institutional repository, the diverse artworks included in the database are documented as part of a living, interconnected media ecology. Rather than adaptively preserving individual works through migration to new technological environments, Mackern's Database enacts a poetics of obsolescence, carefully stewarding works on a platform built with the recognition of its own fragility.

## **#209 Coentin Colin**

### **Title:**

Hugging Pixels: How Gaming Rethinks Physical Interactions

### **Abstract:**

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the first confinement measures in most countries, COVID-19 has been a defining factor of our lives through 2020 into 2021. Due to the pandemic, all our lives were

drastically changed; not simply by the losses and inevitable pain that comes with the disease, but also by the way in which it completely shifted the way in which our lives were organized. Where activities were once separated between the “inside” and the “outside” there is now only the “offline” and the “online,” both confined within our own household. Work and education are done remotely when possible, and socializing has abruptly become a virtual experience. Even attempts at socializing “in real life” must always be monitored by strict rules of social distancing and the wearing of a mask, which are marked by an absence of physicality. As a way to cope with such a situation, people have found ways to transfer their social lives online. How many Americans have celebrated Thanksgiving or the Winter Holidays on Zoom with their families in 2020? As we moved into an online social space, I found it interesting to look around me and see the reaction of my fellow students, teachers, or friends. Some of them could hardly adapt to the sudden need for technology, which they had never been comfortable using. Others lamented the lack of genuine human interaction that came with meeting people by pure chance; in the Zoom era, all is scheduled, after all. These reactions struck me in different ways, as all I could see was my acquaintances suddenly walking into a lifestyle that I recognized as my own and describing it as a living hell.

In this paper I want to engage with the ways in which online interactions can provide an alternative to social contact, especially in terms of physicality. Specifically, I want to focus on how video games offer ways to circumvent the frustration of distance and virtuality in order to offer new approaches to thinking about physical interactions. This paper will be based in great part on my own experiences as an online gamer, interacting with friends living across the world, and having to find ways through gaming in which one could find intimacy, physical contact, and at times eroticism. My argument is that while all media can offer some form of erotic or intimate interaction with its content, gaming, and especially online gaming, can push those boundaries further through a process of incarnation and transposition of the self into an avatar. This paper starts with the ways in which a player can interact with non-player characters and find solace in the virtual intimacy provided by said characters. This paper will address how an online interface allows for a different physicality through the control of an avatar. Finally, I want to discuss the specificities of VR socializing when it comes to experiences of virtual physical interactions.

## #125 Dani Spinosa

### **Title:**

Learning Management Platforms: Notes on Teaching “Taroko Gorge” in a Pandemic

### **Abstract:**

As an adjunct instructor during the pandemic, I am in a rather unique position to speak to the use of the Learning Management System (LMS) as a pedagogical platform (I currently teach at three different

post-secondary institutions and use three different LMSs). This pandemic has clearly laid bare several of the difficulties of precarious labour in the academy, and the need to fluently navigate several disparate platforms is just one. But, I would like to use this unique position to begin to speak to the role of pedagogies of digital literature to help students develop critical digital literacies, and how the proprietary LMS might influence or impede that process.

This paper's primary focus is a scholarly analysis and critique of the use of the LMS Blackboard for course delivery of ENGL4309 Digital Adventures in English, a fourth-year seminar that is marketed primarily as a course in DH tools for the study of literature and the digital literary. One of those DH tools I am using in a module on digital literatures is Nick Montfort's "Taroko Gorge" and the many remixes thereof. By situating the e-lit classic in this way, my goal is to treat the code and the popularity of its remixes as a DH tool, and to thus follow in the excellent arguments made throughout 2020 about electronic literature as digital poetics (see, of course Dene Grigar and James O'Sullivan's *Electronic Literature as Digital Poetics*, or Alex Saum-Pascal and Scott Rettberg's "Electronic Literature [Frame]works for the Creative Digital Humanities" for the *Electronic Book Review*).

As a part of this module, I ask my students to remix "Taroko Gorge," as we did when I first encountered the work through the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) several years before. However, extending that same project to upper-year students who were, until that point unfamiliar with the field, and most of whom had never interacted with code before at all, proved to be difficult. And one of the difficulties of this assignment, indicating barriers to access for student and instructor alike, was attempting this project using the proprietary software of the LMS.

Of course, one of the assignment's learning objectives is building the critical digital literacy of recognizing that all digital texts are two texts: a code, and its reconstitution. Following Serge Bouchardon's arguments in his "Mind the Gap! 10 Gaps for Digital Literature," this assignment is designed to at least in part reveal the basic mechanisms of how code shapes the digital text to readers who do not know how to program (like me!), and to thus begin to close "the gap separating us from digital literacy" that Bouchardon observes. But, the incongruity of the LMS and the remixing project reveal a potential limitation that we need to be cognizant of as instructors of the digital literary and beyond.

## **#208 Daniel Cox, Kenton Howard and Chris Klimas**

### **Title:**

Platform as a Service: A Roundtable Discussion of Community Labor and Platformization of Twine and Ink

**Abstract:**

While both can produce choice-based interactive fiction works playable via a web browser, the hypertext authoring tool Twine and the narrative scripting language Ink are, at first glance, two very different platforms. Twine takes text input in the form of passages and transforms it into HTML. Ink, as a scripting language, uses applications like Inky to create JSON files representing a compiled Ink project capable of more easily being used with game engines like Godot and Unity. The communities for each, however, approach these processes in the same ways: they create guides, make tutorials, and build resources to help other users understand how each tool moves content from input to output. They provide, in a word, service. It is this labor supporting the connections between users across these platforms, and it is the members of these communities maintaining its resources and reinforcing the platformization of each.

This roundtable examines two different primary documents related to these platforms, the community labor histories behind them, and their current iterations. The first, the Twine Cookbook, was born out of a collection of resources and has become, over three years, the go-to source of Twine knowledge. During its lifetime, it has slowly absorbed content spread across other services such as the Twine wiki, forum, and details found in development posts. The second document, the Unofficial Ink Cookbook, is a more recent creation that was born out of the combined experiences of two instructors. It has slowly grown into an expansive document now quoted and used as a reference document by students learning Ink and as part of the Ink Discord to help new users understand concepts within the scripting language Ink.

As editors and contributors to these documents, the members of this roundtable will speak to the ways in which community labor, service, is the conduit through which knowledge is shared, rules are enforced, and the sense of a “platform” emerges through the pedagogical resources created by the communities around Twine and Ink. Given the variety of platforms and tools available for creating interactive fiction, the members of this roundtable will review common problems, discuss possible solutions, and examine how a “platform” cannot exist without its community supplying the labor to sustain it.

## **#156 Daniel Howe**

**Title:**

Scripting Observable with RiScript

**Abstract:**

This workshop presents a hands-on introduction to the RiTa v2.0 tools, including the new RiScript language. Version 2 of RiTa is a complete rewrite of the library that is easier-to-use, faster and more powerful. The workshop will cover the basics of RiTa and RiScript in JavaScript, with a specific focus on the Observable notebook environment.

The number of addition topics covered, and the depth to which they are explored, will vary in relation to the time allotted by conference organizers and the experience of participants. While no specific skills are required for participation, familiarity with JavaScript and a basic knowledge of programming concepts (conditionals, variables, loops, etc.) will be assumed.

## #120 Daria Petrova

### **Title:**

The Mediapoetry Laboratory 101: new forms of creative cooperation

### **Abstract:**

My poster will be full of works of participants of the first Russian Laboratory of Mediapoetry 101 for teenagers (12-19 years old).

It just turned out that the fate of the project is closely related to circumstances of pandemic that is why a search for new forms of creative cooperation, ways of communication and methods of creating new projects has become overarching issue of the work of the laboratory participants.

I am the curator of the Mediapoetry Laboratory 101. Although “curator” is poorly conclusive definition. An ideologist, a dreamer, an inspirer, the one who has got a grant (financial support) from the government for a genre of mediapoetry which is not recognized in Russia yet.

The project got the grant in February, 2020. My gladness did not see any limits. Off-line sessions had to start from April, 2020, but everyone knows what prevented it to happen.

The terms of the project were extended for several times in accordance with a level of my optimism. Either to autumn or to winter. Due to formal limitations and restrictions of the grant I found myself among different restrictions: necessity to hold the Laboratory not later the spring 2021, to hold at least some meetings offline. But at the same moment the government makes new resolutions not in advance enough. All of us know about new rules approximately a day before the come into force. And for the audience of my laboratory the restrictions were the most severe ones.

However I believe that, such disempowerment is breeding ground for creators. Isn't it allowed to gather in the room? We will prepare a media poetic walk&performance. Isn't it allowed to come up to each other closer than 1,5 meter? We will make a performance about disengagement and invisible relations. Isn't it allowed to go out? We are glad to remember about air mail and surface mail, about telegrams and helium balloons.

Students of the Laboratory have been already chosen and are on the point of starting the work. In April I will see different projects in mediapoetry genre: games, performances, chat-poetry, texting-games, locative narrative etc. I am sure that we are waited by interesting experience of creative work. The teenagers are very flexible they needed just a little time to get used to new communicative reality of the pandemic, switching over to distant studying was easier for them than for teachers.

To my mind, adolescents have better skills of new media language. They are more organic in using it that means they have greater chances to leap forward from creative and semantic point of view.

Together with this young audience we are going to discuss about culture of platforms, how they have changed visually and our feelings about communication with society, what we have known about ourselves during lockdown and how to create and keep creative collaborations.

Results of this breathtaking work will be presented by me at the conference as a poster which unites works of the Laboratory participants, their thoughts, discoveries and predictions.

## **#204 David Nuñez**

### **Title:**

WORKSHOP: INFINITE NARRATIVES WITH THE NIS SYSTEM

### **Abstract:**

Non Infinite Stories© is a system that uses digital combinatorial processes, specific narrative rules and optimization of works fragmented into nodes or short narrative blocks.

Generating multiple possible readings, specific to each reader with different approaches and resolutions. This is a tool that allows the transformation/relationship of a fixed plot to a specific reconfiguration creating a new opening, is the discourse between the user and the machine.

In the workshop, it can be explained how the system works and let all the people that attends develop their own proposed chapter in a macro-story. Creating as a result a new way in how the stories are told and read.

Session 1: The text (20 min)

- The Paradigm of Contemporary Narrative Structure: Explanation of the hypertext plot. How the digital narrative and multilinearity structure works from plot twisting and climaxes changes, and how the three Aristotelian acts in cinema and the five Elizabethan acts in television can be transformed into an exponential form.

Analyzing the idea, the synopsis and the treatment.

- Practice: Each student will develop a proposed chapter into a predefined macro-story.

Session 2: The NIS system (20 min)

- The construction of the system: Dynamics, categories and motivation of the NIS program.
- Elements of the structure: The sequence, scenes, use of fragmented characters (from serialized novels to digital seriality).
- Practice: Sketch of each chapter, seeing how they can interact when combined "infinitely".

Session 3: The making (60 min)

- Chapter writing and construction of the macrostructure.
- Construction, writing and rewriting with supervision and assistance.

Session 4: Publishing (20 min)

- Publishing of the works written by the ELO members in our online platform

([www.noninfinitestories.com](http://www.noninfinitestories.com)) where they can download free infinite versions of their texts

## #101 David Thomas Henry Wright

### **Title:**

Dystopic plagiarized platforms: found text, corrupted code, and robotic poetics.

### **Abstract:**

The (auto)biography of 김정은 (2020) is a conceptual 'found' artwork in VII parts. It combines found code with found text. Multiple 'found' computational pieces have been modified with vocabulary drawn from multiple speeches delivered by the current North Korean Leader, Kim Jong-un/김정은. In addition, vocabulary and phrases from journalism critical of the North Korean regime are also incorporated into these generative works. On the one hand, this work is an experiment in propaganda delivery: it emulates the relentlessness of the North Korean indoctrination machine and shows how born-digital writing can be stolen and misused; in so doing, it reveals digital literature's power. As part of this process, a Kim Jong-un 'poetic robot' has been created to demonstrate how such propaganda might be delivered/forced upon a populace. This work also seeks to capture the perspective of a curious, intelligent yet powerless North Korean citizen and demonstrate how they might (struggle to) engage with local culture.

This paper reflects on this artwork in relation to Critical Code Studies (Marino, 2020). Specifically, it looks at how code can be adopted and exploited. Through practice-led research (Smith and Dean, 2009), this work deliberately exploits the code of multiple digital poets in order to show how such works might be corrupted. These subsequent works can be regarded as an example of third generation electronic literature (Flores, 2019). These works can also be regarded as an example of ‘overt plagiarism’ (Holland-Batt and Jeffery, 2020). If the works’ ‘fictional’ construction is believed, then it would be an example of ‘covert plagiarism’.

Additionally, this paper looks at how this code and corrupted poetry could be reformed into robotic poetics (Winder, 2004). Through this extension to robotic poetics, this paper extends the notion of Critical Code Studies, by extending it to robotics, and interrogating what impact such an artefact has on transforming the initial work.

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## #63 David Thomas Henry Wright and Chris Arnold

### Title:

Beyond Maximalism: Resolving the Novelistic Incompatibilities of Realism, Paranoia, Omniscience, and Encyclopedism through Electronic Literature.

### Abstract:

Beyond Maximalism: Resolving the Novelistic Incompatibilities of Realism, Paranoia, Omniscience, and Encyclopedism through Electronic Literature.

In *The Maximalist Novel*, Ercolino defines a type of novel that displays multiform maximizing and hypertrophic tension. He lists Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and *Mason & Dixon* (1997), Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996), DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997), Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), Franzen's *The Corrections* (2001), and Bolaño's *2666* (2004) as examples of the term, and classifies the maximalist novel using ten elements: length, encyclopedic mode, dissonant chorality, diegetic exuberance, completeness, narratorial omniscience, paranoid imagination, intersemioticity, ethical commitment, and hybrid realism. While Ercolino's ten elements accurately identify and classify a significant novel form that has emerged, I argue that these elements are incompatible with one another, which has resulted in criticisms of maximalist novels, as well as a number of maximalist novelists to abandon the form. While Ercolino argues that these incompatibilities represent an 'internal dialectic' of the genre, I argue that this is too conflicting to be stable as a novelistic form. These incompatibilities include the incompatibility of multiple (hybrid) realisms, the incompatibility of paranoid imagination with ethical commitment, and the incompatibilities of narratorial omniscience and an encyclopedic mode with a persuasive realism. By examining contemporary fictional works written by previously maximalist novelists, I reassess Ercolino's ten elements in order to identify the reasons why certain authors have moved beyond the limits of his definition. In so doing, I compare and contrast Ercolino's 'maximalist novel' with Woods's 'hysterical realism,' and Johnston's 'novel of information multiplicity.' Using the Franzen and Smith corpuses as examples, this paper speculates on the future form of the novel as it progresses into the 21st Century. From this literary interrogation, I apply these conclusions to my digital creative practice by developing the digital novel *The Perfect Democracy* (funded by the Australia Council for the Arts). This work takes as its subject the entire population of contemporary Australia. Such a vast subject is impossible to represent in a work of fiction. The whole work is presented as a 3D frame-like artefact, that can be navigated as a whole, allowing readers to be presented with a multivalent, broad-canvas novel, while resolving the paradoxical issues identified in my interrogation of Ercolino. I propose that this will be achieved by utilising Calvino's *Six Memos*. Images of Australian currency will be used as a structural device to remove weight by representing the whole society from the richest to the poorest in the quickest way possible, and a multitude of simultaneous digital writing formats and voices will be used to precisely depict characterisation.

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## #159 Davin Heckman

### Title:

Gastropoetics, text generation, and the body

### Abstract:

This paper will explore Memmott and Rettberg's *Gastropoetics* as a humanistic challenge to the grammar of language, platform, and text generation. The impulse is to situate such works within the tradition of dada and futurist performance, where obvious antecedents can be found. However, in the age of platform dominance, the meaning of experiments in absurdity and embodiment take on new meaning, as platform spaces do the work of aestheticizing the absurd conditions produced by the Taylorization of social life. Where industrial processes once disturbed the lifeworld of human craft and technique in the process of industrialization, the cultural world at the most minute level is subject to the proletarianizing process, and its reassembly into an economic model is now the work of the platform spaces. In other words, Platforms do the ideological work of normalizing social collapse as progress towards the rationalized reorganization of body politic into "taste communities" and other post-digital demographics. While *Gastropoetics* is a marginal practice, these culinary experiments explore the relational dynamics of cooking, hospitality, and eating as persistent humanistic practices, even as such practices are increasingly mediated by emergent practices like "food selfies" and other performative taste practices. Key to understanding the appeal of gastropoetics is the ad hoc nature of human production and consumption (see de Certeau's "everyday life") performed under the constraints of the generated menu, of the platform, and of the mnemotechnical system itself.

## #19 Deena Larsen and Jules Chatelain

### **Title:**

WritePods: Write-Reader Interaction to Engage Platforms Opening Destinations

### **Abstract:**

Writers workshops—the lifeblood of any writing movement. Electronic literature has had its share of writing workshops, and we'd like to revitalize that tradition. Yet electronic literature opens up dimensions of meaning—and just as reading electronic literature becomes convoluted and complex, so too does critiquing works in progress. Can a small, dedicated group of people be brought together to surmount these challenges? Are there people willing to commit 5 hours of their lives to yet more meetings, as well as homework? Probably. After all, we are crazy enough to write and deep read this stuff, so we may well be crazy enough to share our addictions.

This engagement series would happen mostly before the ELO 2021 conference. We will provide a survey and ask for volunteers in early February for two pods of six writers each. Each pod would have a moderator. An introductory meeting with all pods would take place in early March, and then schedule two pod meetings in March and April. These working sessions would allot 30 minutes per work to discuss and react.

Pod participants (max of 12 people unless we get someone else to moderate a new pod) would gain training in user interaction and reaction and be able to workshop their works in progress.

At the conference, a virtual engagement session with all participants would discuss what went well, what could be improved, and how this preliminary pod approach could be extended to provide an outlet for electronic literature creators to explore each other's works. All ELO conference participants would discuss ways that reacting critique techniques, user experience and interface testing, and plain old writing workshops could help electronic literature creations.

WritePODS will provide an outlet and a voice for works in progress. It will also be ideal for newcomers to electronic literature as this would ensure that participants will know at least the 6 others in their pod before the conference. WRITEPODS can also spark new collaborations and creations.

**DURATION OF EVENT AT THE CONFERENCE:** 90 minutes, with the first 30 showcasing some of the works, 30 minutes to discuss the pods, and 30 minutes to dream about the future.

**MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:** 12 in the pods (unless someone else volunteers as a moderator for another pod) and unlimited in the conference event.

## #185 Devin Shepherd

### Title:

The Tyranny of Completion; Or, How Electronic Art Can Engage the Firehose

### Abstract:

Toward the end of 2020, one of the most culturally impactful web games of all time shut down—at least, the original, Flash-based version did. FarmVille, by social game studio Zynga, was not outstanding for its gameplay mechanics nor for its imaginative qualities. In fact, social games like Farmville are defined by game designer and scholar Ian Bogost as “games you don’t have to play.” Rather, FarmVille was special because it tapped into 2009-era Facebook’s lax user-generated notification system, and its developers succeeded in creating a user-operated spam cannon disguised as a game. What made FarmVille a cultural phenomenon is best represented by the metanarrative about how it manufactured and sold compulsive behavior to a new audience. By targeting ludic luddites with its folksy facade and “freemium” business model, FarmVille ushered in a new era of games that encouraged users to exchange money for in-game effects. Farmville is just one example of plethora experiences made possible by digital platforms that everyday people inhabit—and increasingly rely on for work and social connection during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic—that demand constant attention. While it may not be a matter of your digital crops dying or your digital cows going un milked, the gamification of real life has other, more tangible consequences. With questions circulating for years now on the extent of digital surveillance and abusive, intrusive advertisements disguised as entertainment, contemporary artforms must engage. To what degree can electronic literature exist in the same spaces (platforms) as applications that profit from artificial as well as human limits? And if new social platforms are needed to improve access to electronic literature, to what extent can they or should they resemble the status quo? Germane to this line of questioning is the advancements in computing power that have made imagining virtually limitless, uncompletable digital experiences possible. When a work is untethered from meaningful material limitations, new possibilities arise and—as is the case with impositions on an audience like FarmVillian microtransactions that reveal a naked pecuniary interest—certain possibilities are foreclosed upon; in other words, what form does a genre take when it can be “bottomless”? Asynchronicity is another element that must be better grappled with as individuals and institutions become more adapted to remote work and play. In what ways future platforms can address the breakneck kairos of art, either by accommodating or deviating from recent mass cultural reprogramming and the by-now prosaic ever-splintering, ever-accelerating pace of media consumption will be explored.

## #148 Devin Shepherd, Bradley Shepherd and Will McEnergy

### Title:

Tenure Track: A Critical Simulation Game

### Abstract:

Tenure Track is a postmodernist critique of 21st-century academia in the form of a simulation game. In the vein of satirical games like Cow Clicker—a product of “carpentry,” or a strategy for creating philosophical, creative work, according to its designer Ian Bogost—Tenure Track also borrows game mechanics from popular puzzle simulators like Papers, Please, merging the finite potentiality of a critical text with the lightheartedness and non-prescriptiveness of play. Additionally, the simulation game as a genre harkens back to philosophical toys of the 19th century, such as the thaumatrope, the purpose of which was demystification through wonderment. The proposed poster would include imagery from the game, as well as links to interactive components (gameplay footage, demos) and brief descriptions of the mechanics and concept of the game.

Developed in Unity for desktop and VR over the past year, Tenure Track visually consists of a 3D re-creation of a nondescript office, viewed from a first-person perspective, with every object in the space being manipulable. The goal of the game is to achieve tenure by completing research, grading papers, and communicating with students and administrators. Much of this “work” is mediated through a variety of simulated digital platforms, which are accessed via a desktop monitor and a mobile phone. The centering of platforms underscores the degree to which they are essential to what constitutes labor. Post-pandemic, this can be read as referencing a potentially obsolete “platform”: the physical office.

As the player performs a litany of menial tasks over the course of a series of seconds-long days, they are interrupted constantly by notifications and knocks at the door. Over time, this produces a simulacrum of the frantic yet mundane administrative role many modern-day academics find themselves “playing” as they strive for the promised land of tenure. The sequence of predefined yet somewhat open-ended steps in the tenure process lends itself to this kind of gamification, which resists the interpretation of a prescribed process as fair or logical. The many small but cumulatively important decisions players make imparts a feeling of decision fatigue common to most knowledge work, playing with the assumption many outside of academe have of the professoriate as belonging to an exceptional, noble profession. What is not known until the game’s conclusion is that, once a player reaches one of several possible “endings,” the days continue to loop continuously.

While the game rewards literacy of both games and academe by subverting the former and reifying the latter, arguably the most satisfying interactions are the ones that are, in reality, the most disruptive (dropping the mobile phone and cracking the screen) or least salient (disposing of empty beverage

containers in a recycling bin). Those who misunderstand the tenure track job as a stairway to heaven, or even as fundamentally different from other types of white-collar jobs, stand to see it in an uncanny light.

## #168 Diogo Marques and Ana Gago

### Title:

Language |H|as a Virus: from figure of thought to experimental laboratory

### Abstract:

“Modernism is a history of infections: by political movements; by mass culture and consumerism; and now by the Internet, information technology, and interactivity. The openness to exteriority and its infections is an essential characteristic of the modernist inheritance, and that inheritance is the will to reveal the Other within oneself, to become Other, to become infected by Otherness.”

Boris Groys, "In the Flow"

The “Art in Quarantine” (AiQ) project [<https://wreading-digits.com/art-in-quarantine/>] is an online gallery launched after an international Open Call for (e-)mail art and art via email by cyberliterature collective wr3ad1ng d1g1t5 [wreading-digits.com], in the first 40 days that followed the Covid-19 pandemic status. Currently hosting more than 900 artworks, the AiQ project aimed to facilitate a safe place for artistic expression in the aftermath of one of the most restrictive and impactful periods of the COVID-19 pandemic so far.

Reminiscent of the viral-like behaviour intrinsic to mail art culture and community(ies), AiQ adopts several principles of mail art to the digital sphere, namely networking and collaborative practices as a form of disrupting conventional art channels. Functioning as a net art installation, it includes an interactive digital map in which visitors can track the arrival of artworks by day and location. Symbolically subverting a logic of infection, contamination, and contagion (from Latin *contagionem*, "a touching, contact"), this virtual interface reveals, day after day, the transmission chain of another type of virus: that of artistic expression.

On the whole, after its period of quarantine, the gallery featured artworks covering multiple formats and genres, by more than 350 authors from 57 different countries, and emulating the behaviour of “good” viruses that establish a symbiotic relationship with their host: in this case, the AiQ online gallery.

For the present paper, we will focus on 3 artworks that fall under the spectrum of “electronic literature”<sup>1</sup>. Working as organisms that are part of a specific ecosystem, or population, this sample has the potential to take even further the idea of language as a virus both as a figure of thought and experimental laboratory.

In their self-reflective nature, revealing language as a form of virus in itself, the selected artworks act as distinctive virus strains that make use of different poetic and programming languages in artistic creation: a generative online memorial, a mobile screen capture performance, and a software system/digital art installation.

Ultimately, the experience of confinement in pandemic times is the infectious prima materia that paradoxically constricted and impelled their creations and creation processes, leading them to experiment on distinctive media and languages, often away from their usual workspaces and into the online flow, where, to a great extent, life and art have temporarily moved.

1 Patient Zer0, by Pedro Alves da Veiga [<https://wreading-digits.com/art-in-quarantine/#images-113>]; viral#c, by Robert B. Lisek [<https://wreading-digits.com/art-in-quarantine/#images-23>]; Status Offline (from Thoughts on Screen series), by Clara Abi Nader [<https://wreading-digits.com/art-in-quarantine/#images-51>].

## #151 Eleonora Acerra and Nathalie Lacelle

### **Title:**

Lab-yrinthe: an online laboratory for observing childrens's e-lit and accompanying digital literacy

### **Abstract:**

Recent researches have revealed some of the factors that seem to hinder both the production of digital literary contents for young readers and their diffusion in the school context. Within the framework of the project led by Nathalie Lacelle (2017-2020) and dedicated to accompanying the development of digital children's publishing initiatives in Quebec, three major issues have particularly emerged:

- a lack of knowledge about the current editorial offer, by educators, librarians and, more generally, by common readers;

- a difficulty in including e-literary creations in the school canon and in conceiving pertinent educative materials, that seems to be mostly provoked by an unfamiliarity with the poetics and the rhetoric of digital texts;

- a lack of understanding, by creators and publishers, of the young readers' psycho-cognitive and affective specificities, as well as of the constraints and conditions that define the school reading process.

In order to reduce these limitations, to stimulate the reading practices and, at the same time, to develop young readers' competencies in digital literacy, a website dedicated to children's digital literature has been conceived, in partnership with the Littérature Québécoise Mobile group, directed by Bertrand Gervais: Lab-yrinthe.

The website is intended as a virtual laboratory on contemporary children's digital literary phenomena and aims at providing information based on scientific observations, as well as conceptual and didactic tools to educators, publishers and researchers.

More particularly, Lab-yrinthe presents a catalog of heterogeneous digital literary works produced or distributed in Quebec, including enriched books, mobile apps, narrative video games, geolocated narrations, augmented reality creations, interactive theater performances, virtual installations and podcasts. Each creation is analyzed from a set of descriptive parameters conceived by the research team (Acerra, Lacelle et al., 2021) with the purpose to illustrate the semiotic, multimodal and technological materials of the text, as well as the poetic or rhetoric effects of their combinations. From this basis, some educational and didactic suggestions are depicted: teachers can refer to this section to find a reading key of the digital work and, at the same time, to have clear examples of the possible exploitations of a digital writing process in the school context.

Finally, a dedicated section of the Lab-yrinthe website presents the main co-creation and co-production projects, carried out with partners from the cultural industry (ranging from the National television, to the Montréal Poetry Festival and Bookfair, from digital and analog publishers to National libraries and archives). In this case, both the actors, the contents and the distribution conditions are presented as indicators of the current orientations of the digital publishing field.

## Bibliography

Acerra, E., Lacelle, N., et al. (2021, in press). « Décrire les œuvres littéraires numériques pour la jeunesse », Lire, comprendre, interpréter et apprécier des supports composites, La Lettre de l'AIRDF, n° 68.

Lacelle, N., et al. (2017-2020). Soutien au développement de démarches d'édition numérique jeunesse au Québec à partir de pratiques favorables de production, diffusion et réception. Research project financed by the Fonds de Recherche Société et Culture (Québec).

## #90 Elliott Hedman

### Title:

Motivating Struggling Readers to Mentally “Show Up” with Wonder Stories

### Abstract:

In the United States, a student in the 20th percentile reads books for 0.7 minutes per day, while a student in the 98th percentile reads 65 minutes per day (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). For the last four years, with 300 children from Title 1 schools and the Boys & Girls Club, we researched how to create digital texts that better cognitively engage struggling readers using psychophysiological sensors, eye tracking, and co-creation.

This research led to the creation of Wonder Stories. Wonder Stories’ texts motivate students to critically think by immersing students in frequent, story-based questions. As a response to children’s low motivations during COVID-19, we added a social competition to Wonder Stories – answering questions correctly gave points in a trivia-like game.

When struggling readers were given Wonder Stories, students mentally showed up: their participation increased, readers were more cognitively engaged with the material, and students were critically thinking about the text more often. This study suggests that interactive, question-based reading shows great promise to increasing children’s participation and engagement in middle-grade reading.

## #139 Erik Loyer

### Title:

Creating Story Instruments with Stepworks 2

### Abstract:

In this workshop, attendees will learn to create "story instruments," a genre of performative e-lit with a very simple interaction model. In a story instrument, the author decides \*what\* happens, and the user, through a one-button interface, determines \*when\* it happens. This form, with its inherent connections to music, video games, interactive comics, and slide presentations, has been used to collaboratively remix the works of noted California poets, sonify the history of Mars exploration, create multi-vocal lyric videos for Hamilton, and visualize samples of martial arts films in hip-hop tracks — to name just a few applications.

The software attendees will use to create their story instruments is Stepworks 2, a new version of the web-based tool I first introduced in 2017. Stepworks (<http://step.works>) has been described as "an ideal

platform for teaching e-literature through feminist critical making pedagogies" (Sarah Whitcomb Laiola, "Back in a Flash: Critical Making Pedagogies to Counter Technological Obsolescence" [The Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy, December 10, 2020]). It can be used to create interactive works, live-streamed presentations, or linear videos (one example being last year's popular ELO talk "Temporal Aesthetics in Digital Comics: An Introduction for Makers and Researchers").

Stepworks standardizes multimodal interactive media in a way that simplifies authoring, while collapsing the boundaries between text, visual, audio, and musical content. Instead of tracks or layers, Stepworks features "characters" who take actions in discrete steps. Each character appears as a rectangular panel that can be rendered anywhere on screen. When a character "speaks" a word, that word appears in its panel. When they "show" a video, that video fills the panel's area. Put another way, Stepworks takes the visual logic of Zoom we've been living with during the pandemic — in which each box equals a person — and allows authors to build on it in creative ways.

Stepworks 2 introduces a web-based authoring environment to augment the Google Sheets model launched with Stepworks 1, making possible more sophisticated compositions (even including the user's webcam) while maintaining ease of use. Attendees will come away from the workshop with basic knowledge of the tool, and free accounts which they can continue to use afterward (while Stepworks will ultimately include a paid tier to support continued development, the essential set of authoring features will continue to be free, and its file format is open and JSON-based).

The workshop will be held over Zoom, and participants (up to 15) will be required to use the Chrome web browser. Each attendee will use Stepworks to follow along with workshop activities, creating their own experiments using media they possess locally or find online. Attendees will be encouraged to show progress via screen sharing, and will save their work locally, while also learning how to publish projects online (a secondary account like a GitHub account may be required for this). Finally, participants will receive tips for using Stepworks to expose students to basic e-lit creation in a classroom setting.

## #212 Erik Zepka

### **Title:**

The Ecology of Platforms: Early Modern Histories of Physics and Sociotechnical Expression

### **Abstract:**

In the manner of a Kuhn, Marx or Nietzsche, I will look at the dialogue between cultural and material historical circumstance, how legitimated knowledge feeds back and forth into and out of its social context. Each economic basis provides a new material platform out of which culture grows, and against which it is reminded of its paradigmatic forebear.

I will look at four different historical moments in science and technology and the cultural qualities that coincided. In each section I will look at the paradigm these thinkers and makers bring about, and then consider how well this view is illuminated by artistic examples in the medium. Perhaps only the first will be conventionally recognizable as electronic or media-oriented literature as it will concern the relation of cultural creation to computers. Further, only it may bear the resemblance of providing protocol platforms in its engagement - yet it will be my contention that this idea materially defined will extend historically and benefit from that analytical standpoint. Video technology will be considered next, from its scientific origins to its manifestation today from DVDs and theatres to file types within streaming services. Next will be electricity itself followed by print technology. A material ecological view will be proposed that orients platform engagement and literary forms around the historical and extended physical properties of given media used in terms of cultural expression. From this view, the extremely virtualized notion of platform and its mildly divergent notion of different social media brands, becomes a timely contemporary symptom. To deconstruct this will be to reveal the ailing social environment behind capitalism, computer networks and their alien social spheres.

Lovelace, Carroll and Von Neuman: The Logic of Machines does not need Machines

Ada Lovelace set the social and conceptual model - how software and the abstract machine make up the future. In Carroll we discover the committed logician who perhaps like no other applied this same rigour to the creation of narrative both intense and fantastic and yet thoroughly rational. Von Neumann formalizes abstraction and returns it to the space of statecraft, the sociopolitical forming of an engineered world.

Edison, Melies and Muybridge: Time Documentation and the Privilege of Visual Coherence

What for Muybridge extends the tools of science and re-analysis, for Edison is a vehicle of narrative and commerce, for Melies of magic.

Franklin, Priestley and Shelley: Resurrection, The Law of the Lightning Rod

Where Priestley contributes to the refining of electromagnetic law, Franklin produces technology of new utility, Shelley stories of new cultural force.

Cavendish, Cervantes and Copernicus: Printing Novel Essays and a New Cosmogony

The repetition of romance makes Cervantes mock-epic novel the day's prescription, while Copernicus takes the mountains of astronomical data available in the name of a radicalized universal picture, Cavendish finds expertise in both, culminating in work in materialist philosophy, scientific poetry and pioneering science fiction.

## #210 Erin Kathleen Bahl

### Title:

Botanicals: An E-Literary Approach to Cultivating Pedagogical Platforms

### Abstract:

This poster presentation discusses a forthcoming critical making project (part of The Digital Review's special issue on "Critical Making, Critical Design") at the intersections of electronic literature and asynchronous online pedagogy. In this research-creative project, I explore the role of "teacher" as creative maker, designer, and crafter of epistemological experiences. Building on the work of artist-scholar-teachers such as Lynda Barry (2014, 2019), Jody Shipka (2011), Kate Hanzalik (2021), and Hanzalik and Virgintino (2019), I investigate what it means to be a digital designer who cultivates aesthetic learning experiences for my students, with all the wonder, uncertainty, and risk this process entails.

In the poster session lightning talk, I introduce the pedagogical webcomic (described below) and the theory and design practices behind it. I then compare the affordances and constraints for "instructor as maker" between two pedagogical platforms: a designer-controlled platform created via the "infinite canvas" (McCloud, 2009) of a website in HTML/CSS; and D2L Brightspace, the content management system used at my university. Overall, I ask audience members to consider how we can bring our work as makers and scholars of electronic literature to explore new horizons for engaging, experiential course delivery methods via online platforms.

"Botanicals" is an interactive webcomic that reimagines an online platform for an asynchronous professional writing course informed by e-literary design. By breaking away from the temporal logics of a course content management system, a webcomic designed from scratch instead allows instructors to use the logics of the "infinite canvas" to craft spaces that foster exploration according to a student's own pace, sequence, and learning goals. Inspired by interactive webcomics such as Emily Carroll's "Margot's Room" (2011) and "Grave of the Lizard Queen" (2013), "Botanicals: An Interactive Pedagogical Webcomic" is built from HTML/CSS with embedded hyperlinked illustrations and other media. Designed around the visual metaphors of a greenhouse and a garden path, the comic offers two interwoven "tracks." One track addresses students "wandering through" the comic in pursuit of a pedagogical experience, and another track addresses scholarly readers and fellow designer-teachers with "framed reflections" on the pedagogical-aesthetic decisions informing the webcomic's design process.

This project emerges from my ongoing work as digital scholarship designer and independent comics creator, in an attempt to bring this critical-creative practice into closer conversation with my teaching practices. Recent global shifts to online learning have offered increased opportunities to design media for students in online environments, via a range of teaching modalities. Responding to these exigencies, I

strive to create pedagogical webcomics that are beautiful, engaging, and aesthetically pleasing for their own sake, as works (like Barry's Syllabus [2014] and Making Comics [2019]) at the intersections of "pedagogical delivery tool" and "aesthetic object." These interactive comics facilitate pedagogical user experiences (Borgman and McArdle, 2019; Borgman and McArdle, 2021) that invite students into inventive exploration, that will help them design their own learning experiences, and that encourage instructor-designers to bring their critical making imaginations to bear upon teaching as a way of creating knowledge together with students through interactive design.

## #231 Fernanda Mugica

### **Title:**

Appropriationist practices and subjectivation / desubjectivation processes: some productions of Argentine digital literature in times of algorithmic governance

### **Abstract:**

In this work, we propose to study a series of Argentine digital literature productions that problematize the idea of property in language. We refer to practices of appropriation and expropriation that –through copy-paste, plagiarism, remix, collage and work with "ready made", among other operations that the digital medium facilitates - question the triad author-authority-property. We consider that, in this questioning of the traditional conception of authorship, these productions also allow us to read an "epochal slippage" within the category of subject (Bürger 2001), as they propose alternative forms of subjectivity.

In the general process of virtualization of subjects and their signifying practices, we consider that appropriationist writing practices propose particular modes of subjectivation. In this sense, we are interested in asking ourselves if it is possible to think in terms of mediated subjectivities, "halfway" –between human agency and the machine–, turned into specters or turned into a "medium", due to their various links with technology. That is to say multiplied subjectivities, as they "make others speak" and withdraw from the expression of their own, in a questioning of the notions of ownership and authorship. Productions that bring multiple voices into play, while giving place to them in a single modulation. Regarding these practices, we are interested in raising the question of whether or not they operate as resistance to the hegemonic meanings of digital culture. In other words, if they manage to escape the binary logics of the technolinguistic standardization systems and the segmentation of profiles, which tend to reduce the subjective to what is offered "to be captured as data" (Kozak).

## #150 Giovanna Di Rosario, Asun López-Varela, Maya Zalbidea, Eman Younis and Nohelia Meza

### Title:

Gender in “Bits”: Critical Thinking and Pattern Recognition in World Electronic Literature Platforms

### Abstract:

#### Panel description

This panel explores how digital environments affect literature, and more specifically, how writing and reading practices speak across electronic literature platforms. If it is true that every medium develops its own telling structure and, thus, each platform allows authors specific literary affordances and constraints. It is also true, from a narratological point of view, that the same medium could spawn different products (Ryan 2004). With this in mind, panel members focus on female literary creations, coming from different geographic regions. Their papers analyse the ways in which platforms affect narrative and poetic construction, including gender patterns highlighted in the selected examples. Methodologically, qualitative and quantitative research methods are used, including close reading, digital hermeneutics, distant reading, semiotics and Material Engagement Theory (MET).

HStudies Research Group, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

#### Individual abstracts

Posthuman Intermedial Semiotics: From the Holodeck to Mez Breeze’s micro-V[R]erse

Asun López-Varela (Complutense University Madrid, Spain)

From a semiotic perspective, this presentation explores V[R]erse, a collection of poems and micro-stories that celebrates well-known E-lit artists, turning the pieces into Posthuman VR experiences. Australian net.artist and game designer Mez Breeze uses VR sculptures to add to these micro-stories. From a semiotic and MET perspective, the paper explores desktop-based VR.

A Hermeneutics of Stephanie Strickland, Cyntia Lawson Jaramillo and Paul Ryan’s Slippingglimpse  
Maya Zalbidea (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

This study offers a hermeneutical analysis of the Flash interactive poem Slippingglimpse. This hermeneutical analysis pays attention to the common features of poetry such as poetical language, structure, form and rhythm, as well as the particular signs used, as well as the effects and the computer elements it integrates.

### Labiba Khammar's Critical and Creative Works

Eman Younis (Beit Berl College, Israel)

This paper sheds light on the experience of the Moroccan writer and critic Labiba Khammar, who is one of the pioneering Arab women writers in the field of digital literature. Labiba wrote an important theoretical book, a theoretical project that was followed by a practical creative project: *Guraf wa Maraya*. Through this work, Khammar discussed the issues of writing a novel through a series of stories that are disconnected and connected simultaneously.

### Unfixed Gender Patterns in World Electronic Literature Platforms

Giovanna Di Rosario (Polytechnic of Milan, Italy) and Nohelia Meza (Independent Scholar, Mexico)

This research describes and analyses the ways in which traditional markers of identity, such as gender, are reconfigured in digital literature. The study aims at understanding the role of place and gender in a poetic digital environment. By investigating and applying distant reading techniques to works authored by female writers from Europe and Latin America, Di Rosario and Meza trace the unfixed and polyhedric feminine literary and poetic voices embedded in E-lit creations.

## #107 Giulia Carla Rossi

### **Title:**

Creating and Archiving Electronic Literature During the Pandemic

### **Abstract:**

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on the way cultural heritage organisations engage with their audiences. At a time when public exhibitions and events have to be postponed indefinitely or cancelled, many GLAM institutions have chosen to increase their online presence instead, looking at virtual platforms as a means to deliver content, showcase their collections and drive engagement.

The British Library Simulator (<https://giuliac.itch.io/the-british-library-simulator>) is a brief video game created and released in June 2020, as a way to engage with our audience while the physical library buildings were closed. The game, created using the free online game engine Bitsy, allows players to explore a pixelated rendition of some popular areas of the British Library; by moving their avatar and interacting with other characters in the game, players can learn facts about the history of the building and discover some of the projects the library staff have been working on during the pandemic.

One of the main projects we wanted to raise awareness about is the Emerging Formats project: the British Library, with the other five UK Legal Deposit Libraries, have been researching, collecting, archiving

and preserving complex digital publications produced in the UK for the past four years. We curate a growing collection of web-based interactive narratives hosted in the UK Web Archive (<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/1836>), which includes a variety of format types and interaction patterns, and have just recently launched a collection of all winning and shortlisted entries for the New Media Writing Prize (<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/2912>). While most of the collected entries are only available on Library premises for legal reasons, a few can be accessed remotely, allowing for part of the collection to be accessible even during lockdown.

Another aim of the game was to highlight the British Library's effort to collect and archive around COVID-19: the Library has been collecting radio stations recordings, interviews, websites and testimonies to capture the experience of lockdown and living through the pandemic. These also include examples of e-lit produced in the UK, as well as extensive dedicated collections in the UK Web Archive (<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/2975>) and the British Library Sounds (<https://sounds.bl.uk/>). Both are mentioned in the game, in an effort to direct audiences to our digital resources and bring our steady online services into the spotlight.

The British Library Simulator offered us a chance to present libraries not just as keepers of knowledge, but as active and engaging content creators; it allowed us to reach new audiences, outside of the usual academic circle; by being an interactive narrative itself, it helped us stress the importance of collecting and preserving contemporary born-digital publications, as well as provide an example of the electronic literature the Library is interested in collecting; and lastly, it highlighted our ongoing effort to keep offering our services online even while the physical Library remains closed.

## #134 Hannah Ackermans

### **Title:**

A Platform's Media Specificity in Context: Follow the Pathfinders

### **Abstract:**

Following the increasing hypertext practice in digital culture over the past decades, reinventing the medial mode of academic publication becomes desirable to open up new research practices and knowledge production. New digital platforms are taking practice-based steps towards more multimodal publications. This paper examines the born-digital book *Pathfinders: Documenting the Experience of Early Digital Literature* by Dene Grigar and Stuart Moulthrop which was published in the humanities publication platform Scalar. In *Pathfinders*, four classic works of electronic literature are documented using a combination of Traversals (filmed walkthroughs by authors and readers), filmed interviews and carefully described and photographed physical materials. As such, *Pathfinders* is positioned as a DH practice to "rescue" early works of electronic literature from both technological obsolescence and oblivion.

Using the 'Follow the Thing' method, I trace the various stages in the publication to induce the themes that are important for born-digital publications. The first stage is the technical platform Scalar and its technological affordances. The second stage is the scholars' adoption and appropriation of the platform for their own purposes. The third stage is the media text, the born-digital book publication, and its media-specific arguments. The fourth and final stage is the reader's experience of the multimodal book.

Through a combination of interviews (with author Dene Grigar and two readers), textual analysis, and literature review, I distill the themes that are key in this publication. The first theme is platform adoption. Here, I focus on the technological affordances of Scalar in relation to the use of Scalar by the authors and readers of Pathfinders. This includes a discussion on software sustainability in terms of labor as well as a media analysis on the 'bookishness' of the work. A second theme that arose is the implementation in institutional and academic publication structures. Previously mainly researched in the context of digital pedagogy, I take this to a new level by considering how Pathfinders has fared as a seminal publication in the field of electronic literature and the role of accessibility in its functioning as an academic resource. Third, I focus on the technological context, which includes a reflection on the embedded media as an iteration of the metainterface paradigm and the role of documented physical materials in the understanding of early electronic literature. Finally, I discuss the theme of documentation and publication as a research value. Pathfinders is a prime example of the argument the documentation needs to be at the center of research on ephemeral media, using the platform's tool and functionalities to highlight this in the book.

My video presentation and article provide a nuanced understanding of Pathfinders, using video clips from the various interviews. I take my analysis into a broader perspective by considering how this understanding can be extrapolated for other born-digital publications.

## **#197 Hartmut Koenitz, Mirjam Eladhari, Sandy Louchart and Frank Nack**

### **Title:**

Solving the Babylonian Confusion: an Encyclopedia for Interactive Digital Narrative

### **Abstract:**

The lack of a shared vocabulary is a crucial obstacle on the path to a generalized, accessible body of knowledge about Interactive Digital Narratives. This describes a platform to solve this issue, developed in the EU COST action INDCOR (Interactive Narrative Design for Complexity Representations) - a community-driven encyclopedia, defining concepts and applications. Two similar and successful projects (The Living Handbook of Narratology and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) serve as examples

for this effort, showing how community-authored encyclopedias can provide high-quality content. The authors introduce a taxonomy based on an overarching analytical framework (SPP model) as the foundational element of the encyclopedia, and detail editorial procedures for the project, including a peer-review process, designed to assure high academic quality and relevance of encyclopedia entries.

## #172 Inge van de Ven

### **Title:**

Platform-based Rules of Notice: Electronic literature and attentional modulation

### **Abstract:**

William James famously defined attention in terms of focused concentration: an act of zooming in on one out of many possible objects. In our current hypermediated moment, such acts of focused attention have become more difficult, to the point where we have come to rely on multiple sources of input in order to be able to concentrate. How to decide what to attend to and what to disregard becomes a pressing aesthetic, ethical, and even political issue (if it hadn't always been).

Traditionally, literary studies have celebrated the close reading of texts in a mode of 'deep', focused attention, as a core skill. Yet in our present attention economy, where we are bombarded with texts and images from multiple sources and channels on a daily basis, attentional flexibility and modulation become sought-after skills as well. There is simply too much to read, and we do not always know beforehand what might turn out to be of importance.

In this paper, I examine a range of works in electronic and digital literature to go beyond the juxtaposition of close or deep literary reading on the one hand, and hyperreading as modality of the information age on the other. I argue that this binary fails to grasp the different rhythms and modalities of literary reading. This becomes especially clear in the case of electronic works that incite us to combine a whole range of attentional stances and foci from broad to narrow, vigilant to absorbed to distracted, and deep to hyper. How do contemporary and older works of electronic literature both reflect and anticipate different modes of reading and attention? How does the design of the text and its utilization of platform affordances incite us to modulate our reading rhythm and attention?

I examine such diverse works as Stuart Moulthrop's *hegirascope* (1995); Jim Andrews' *Stir Fry Texts* (1999-); the serial flash texts of Young-Hae Chang *Heavy Industries*; *With those We Love Alive* by Porpentine *Charity Heartscape* (Twine, 2014); *Pry* (Tender Claws, 2014); *The Ice-Bound Concordance* (Reid & Jacob Garb 2014), and the novella and 'meditative story app' *Lotus* ('t Hooft & Freeke 2019). I make an inventory of devices that structure attention, including alterations of speed, expanding and contracting text, foregrounding and backgrounding devices, maximalist and minimalist forms, 'useless'

text, pop ups, and time outs. Thus, I map out the 'rules of un/notice' (Rabinowitz 1987) for multimodal, digital works of literature, with attention to their platform- and media specific affordances. In my conclusion, I reflect on possible uses of electronic literature to inspire strategies of attending in increasingly information-rich environments.

## References

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## #100 Iqra Khurshid and Sarwet Rasul

### **Title:**

Variations in Literature: A Multimodal Analysis of Dissimilar Versions of the Tale "Little Red Riding Hood"

### **Abstract:**

Today, Digital technology not only helps its users in every walk of life to address human limitations but also to control and direct their ideologies. Hence, the novel concept of advanced Transhumanism is prevalent. This Study seeks to explore the possibilities of conducting research in the field of Human Language and Digital Technology amidst related fields. The article presents theoretical concepts and methodological tools from multimodal analysis that allow the readers to gain new insights into the study of electronic literature and the difference between a monomodal and multimodal children literature. The data for this article comes from Grimm brothers' transcribed tale named "Little Red Riding Hood" directly from fairy tale narrated by their villagers and the digital novel "red riding hood" from the 1st Collection of Electronic Literature. The discussion and analysis part of the project explains how various modes can be used to convey the underlying meanings clearly and create a single masterpiece which is suggested as a new form of literature.

Since the definition of literature does not match with this innovative form, the article suggests that it should be revised again, which says that literature is anything written, in an artistic form of human expressions in an organized manner. But, as far as a multimodal piece of work is concerned, it is a combination of distinct (mono)modal structures such as sounds, visual images, spatial and textual evidence. These all modes are shown in red riding hood specifically and the other literary works in the 1st Collection of Electronic Literature in general.

Since, in Pakistan, the investigations in this field are rare so it provides the basis for future studies in the field of human language and digital technology and other above mentioned related areas. Also, this

research can open up new ways for immersive literacy and for the researchers to focus on the innovative immersive literacy, its need, impacts, social consequences, and other possible transformations it requires for the born-digital generation.

## #87 Jack Murray, Nick Lalone and Christopher Maraffi

### **Title:**

Virtualizing Material Games

### **Abstract:**

Even before worldwide quarantines added impetus, material gaming had already become increasingly enacted in virtual spaces. Rather than virtual play replacing the material, as some speculated in the early days of videogames, material play has become increasingly entangled with virtuality. These increasingly complementary modes of play offer a rich space for exploring the multifaceted embodied and conceptual activity of play, the blending of material and virtual that in many ways defines games.

The three panelists encompass a wide range of perspectives, including the perspective of a game maker translating material play into the digital realm, that of a Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) scholar who researched how players interact differently with the Catan boardgame and its digital implementations, and that of a theorist reflecting on how virtual spaces remediate material affects. Together, these diverse perspectives aim to explore the paradoxical yet generative spaces where materiality and virtuality intersect in gaming.

The theoretical approach looks at analog games as capable of producing the specific circumstances that foreground the affective relationships between the players and the other pieces of the assemblage. Because of the procedural nature that necessitates specific types of interactions between parts of the play assemblage, analog games amplify the social interactions between players and differently produce affective orientations as a consequence of their systems. Then examines the ways that these games are remediated and adapted to digital platforms highlighting the things that are lost or changed in the move to digital, uncovering the types of experiences that are important for each type of adaptation.

The HCI approach presents Association Mapping (AM) in HCI; called so because the formation of a network is due to objects making associations in context. By recording the associations that form a network, it is possible to understand what objects are most central within that network. . This research contributes to the next paradigm of HCI by providing a new tool to understand use that is fragmented, distributed, and invisible. AM incorporates association as its measurement. This results in passive measures of attention, hybridity, and influence in network formation of any kind. It does this by making the systemic nature of use visible and capable of evaluation at any level.

And finally the design approach applies design strategies for incorporating three main types of play: Screenplay, Gameplay, and Roleplay, seeking to answer questions about how to bridge the narrative and performance aspects of digital and analog play. This is particularly applicable to classic games that are associated with transmedia narratives and characters, such as the Clue board game, where there are established cinematic traditions and character roles.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, board games have become a useful medium for examining our changing relationship with physical and digital interaction. In addition to presenting our own findings, this panel also offers several methodologies for furthering research into the intersections of the analog, digital, physical, and virtual.

## #145 Jason Boyd

### **Title:**

TabLit: Theorizing, Teaching and Preserving a Platform-Specific eLit

### **Abstract:**

Tablet computers such as the iPad come with standard technological affordances that other computers such as laptops and desktops do not have as a default, such as touch screens, gyroscopes, and accelerometers. Their simplicity of design, consisting of a flat screen with no required peripherals (such as a mouse and keyboard), and their manipulability (they can be held in one hand, utilized assuming multiple bodily positions, held at different angles and in various distances from one's face, and easily switched between portrait and landscape orientations) have opened new creative opportunities for multimedia authors. In doing so, 'TabLit' (or 'AppLit') has challenged scholars, teachers and preservationists of eLit to address the unique features of the platform which has enabled and shaped this body of work. This presentation represents a preliminary foray into delineating and foregrounding some of the key issues of tabLit from theoretical, instructional, and preservation and access perspectives, using four mobile-only works as case studies: Erik Loyer's *Strange Rain* (2011), Semyon Polyakonskiy's *Maginary* (2020), Tiger Style's *Spider: The Secret of Bryce Manor* (2009), and Simogo's *DEVICE 6* (2013).

Tablet computers, in terms of technological design, are much closer than other computer types to an approximation of the book page. Although some works of appLit simulate the 'turnable' pages of the print book, others replace this navigation with page scrolling, and still others radically rethink the idea of 'the page,' requiring the development of a new poetics of the page. In large part due to the touch screen, two common design paradigms can be distinguished in the design of the tabLit page/screen: the indexical or digital instrument, which requires skilled use of a finger (or fingers), and the frame and infinite

page, where the tablet screen becomes a 'moveable' viewing window over a page that extends in multiple directions beyond this window.

In regard to teaching tabLit, this presentation will describe a pilot tablet lending program the author developed with his university library in order to ensure that tablet-based works assigned in a course ("Narrative in a Digital Age") were accessible to students. It will outline some of the challenges this pilot faced, including students' tablet/tabLit literacy and technological obsolescence. This last challenge offers a germane segue way into the final topic, preservation and access, which is (or should be) a key concern for both scholars and teachers of tabLit. Two current but far from optimal sites that address access (and, though this access, a form of preservation) will be discussed: the website and social media channels of the iOS game reviewer, App Unwrapper, and GameClub, a subscription service that enables access to a "library of iconic games," created in response to the concern that "We're losing the history of the App Store" (Eli Hodapp, 2019). To conclude, the presentation will survey how resources like the Electronic Literature Directory and the ELMCIP Knowledge Base are currently covering tabLit and suggest possible improvements.

## #225 Jeremy Douglass

### **Title:**

Git as Platform for Electronic Literature Authorware

### **Abstract:**

This paper outlines public archives of electronic literature authoring tools and technologies via git version control as a platform for decentralized organization, with a specific focus on current and proposed future uses of the GitHub platforms. How are the source code and tooling for creating electronic literature maintained currently preserved through public open source, and how might ELO initiatives and community best practices engage with them in the future?

Throughout its history electronic literature has been widely varied and proliferated in many ways: varied in forms or artifacts that are experimental or avant-garde in themselves, varied in modes of distribution across various platforms (including popular and experimental forms), and varied in the authoring tools and techniques used to create it. This proliferation and continual engagement with the \*now\* of rapid technological change is by its nature usually attached to relatively ephemeral software and hardware forms, whether StorySpace, Flash, the Nintendo DS, et cetera. As most electronic literary works are therefor by default ephemera, a long-held core mission of electronic literature communities of practice has been the preservation, archiving, and dissemination of electronic literature works. A survey briefly considers the context of many existing initiatives to catalog and archive such works -- in particular, the

examples of the ELMCIP Electronic Literature Knowledge Base (<https://elmcip.net/>), the CELL Search Engine (<https://cellproject.net/>), and IFDB: the Interactive Fiction Database (<https://ifdb.tads.org/>). As the CELL project describes it: "To the degree that inclusion in a database is now the publishing event and the life of a literary work is defined through a trail of linked commentaries and active responses, the gathering and identification of works becomes itself a creative and scholarly activity." Currently these database catalogs tend to be primarily artifact-centric -- focused primarily on preserving a "work" -- rather than tool-centric or platform-centric, focused on preserving a practice, craft, or creative mode.

By contrast, several electronic literature authoring communities of practice are organized around particular genres or platforms -- for example, hypertext authors using Twine, IF authors using Inform, or bot authors using Tracery -- make extensive use of open source repositories and hosts such as GitHub in order to develop and disseminate authoring tools, platforms, libraries, and plugins et cetera for electronic literature authoring. These tend to be decentralized, supported by small numbers of self-hosting developers who are addressing to specific active communities of practice in their own terms. One practical consequence of this is tagging: umbrella terms such as "electronic literature" or "elit" are almost unknown in GitHub repository tags.

The paper concludes by putting forward a model for a public open source archive for electronic literature tool and platform source code, based on cataloging and mirroring a collection of forks of existing code bases drawn from across multiple electronic literature authoring communities. It is modeled on a related project in the area of creative computing, the Archive for Processing initiative (<https://github.com/archive-for-processing/archive-for-processing>).

## #226 Jeremy Douglass

### **Title:**

Interactive Cinema from Kinoautomat to Bandersnatch

### **Abstract:**

This poster presentation summarizes the interactive narrative designs of a historical series of significant works of interactive cinema, from Kinoautomat (1967) to Bandersnatch (2018). It focuses on comparison and contrast of the graph or flowchart representation of the interactive choice structure for each work, whether highly constrained or expansive, highlighting points of comparison and contrast.

Visualization of each works and data on their choice structure is based on upcoming contributions to the Transverse Reading Gallery project, which maps interactive plot structures across form and media from the 1920s to the present starting with the print gamebooks of the Demian Katz Archive.

<https://jeremydouglass.github.io/transverse-gallery/gallery.html>

## #166 Jessica Pressman, Mark Marino, Diana Leong and Melody Jue

### Title:

Ocean as Media Platform for Electronic Literature

### Abstract:

Ocean as Media Platform for Electronic Literature

The ocean is a media platform. Recognizing it as such can change how we think of platform, media, and meaning. This panel takes an ecocritical approach. We understand the ocean to be a primary platform for life on Earth, encompassing 70% of our globe, and also a platform that inspires much of our digital life and literature. We take Joellyn Rock and Alison Aune's "FISHNETSTOCKINGS" as sinew connecting our diverse critical methodologies and perspectives, as we consider how emerging knowledge from environmental humanities informs electronic literature.

Melody Jue: "Beyond Blue: Ocean and/as Platform":

What might it look like to speculatively submerge our ideas about computational platforms in the ocean? How terrestrial is platform studies? Drawing from my book *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Seawater* (2020), this talk explores the valences of the "platform" in oceanic contexts, considering its media-specific meaning alongside others (oil platform, advocacy platform) and the metaphor of the platform as a flat, planar surface. I consider the affordances of platforms and oceans through a reading of the video game *Beyond Blue*, by BBC and E-line media, which presents an occasion to consider ocean health and resource extraction alongside multiple senses of "platform," from computation to environmental politics.

Mark Marino: "Diving into the code of immersive e-lit."

From immersion in sound and image in Char Davies' *Osmose* (1995) and *Ephémère* (1998) to immersion in a downpour of letters in Romy Achituv and Camille Utterback's "Text Rain" (2000) to immersion in a sea of text in Stephanie Strickland and Nick Montfort's "Sea and Spar Between" (2010), artists of electronic literature have plunged readers into virtual oceans. This presentation will take a deep dive into the Processing code to explore the ways "FISHNETSTOCKINGS" immerses its participants in tides of gender, hybridity, and fantasy.

Diana Leong: "Silhouettes and the Sea: Mediating Racial Fetishism":

From Josiah Wedgwood's abolitionist medallion to artist Kara Walker's cut-paper installations, the silhouette has occupied a singular place within the iconography of slavery and its afterlife. This style of illustration can be understood as operating within the dynamics of racial fetishism as it attempts to resolve tensions between the universal (e.g., racial blackness) and the particular (e.g., black bodies). This talk

examines how “FISHNETSTOCKINGS” evokes a similar dynamic by staging oceanic entanglements between depth (e.g., immersion) and surface (e.g., silhouette) as a complement to universal/particular. By mapping these entanglements onto the mermaid’s multiple forms of liminality, “FISHNETSTOCKINGS” gestures towards a reading of racial fetishism as a form of pleasure predicated on an ambivalent relationship to difference.

Jessica Pressman: “Mermaids in Elit”:

This talk explores the role of mermaids in electronic literature, past and present, as poetic symbol and formal device. We can read the presence of mermaids as portending transformations in literature’s media, signifying change in the materiality of literary production and reception. In this talk, I use “FISHNETSTOCKINGS” as exemplary of how electronic literature uses mermaids and what we can learn by diving deep into consideration of them.

## #61 Jocelyn Ibarra

### **Title:**

The Time Travel Agency's The Algorithm of Donated Dreams

### **Abstract:**

The Algorithm of Donated Dreams is a sociotechnical artifact and a piece of computational poetry.

It is the product of a speculative design experience for the blockchain community DAOstack and the Reshaping Work Barcelona conference in 2019.

It is also published in Taper 04 and is live here: <https://taper.badquar.to/4/>

Guests who participated in its making went through a game of futures to speculate "What if we lived in a society where we donated dreams like we donate blood? And what if those dreams were inserted in an algorithm that made us see we can build that society?".

Through our game, guests found challenges in that future society and prototyped solutions first with objects around them and then with language.

There were two experiences to arrive to the algorithm:

IRL: <https://thetimetravel.agency/The-Laboratory-of-Donated-Dreams>

Online: <https://thetimetravel.agency/The-Algorithm-of-Donated-Dreams>

The code for the algorithm was taken from a tiny computational poem at Taper.

Direct link to the algorithm: [https://taper.badquar.to/4/algorithm\\_of\\_donated\\_dreams.html](https://taper.badquar.to/4/algorithm_of_donated_dreams.html)

## #218 Jonathan Gallagher

### Title:

Transformative Reading and Writing Interfaces using Language Models

### Abstract:

This paper reflects on Electronic Literature projects I created between 2017 and 2020 through interrogating how each project collaborates with an increasingly complex non-human component. Riffing off of Donna Haraway's concept of "significant otherness" and making kin, I speculate on the differences in the significance of the otherness that is engaged with in projects using methods based on combinatorics/chance, statistical models, and vector semantics (contemporary neural-network based language models like GPT-2). While recognizing that each approach involves a reduction in human agency, this reflective paper focuses on the increasing complexity to which this agency is relinquished and how to deal with presenting this relationship between human and non-human actors. Culminating in a series of projects using OpenAI's GPT-2, the need for a self-reflexive "transformative reading interface" is introduced as a concrete instantiation of Katherine Hayles' concept of a "technotext." A transformative reading interface links a corpus of text to text generated by a language model based on that corpus. Such an interface serves to provide a source of noisy creativity for writing and a way to explore the materiality of contemporary language models for reading, while interrogating and respecting the posthuman nature of these artifacts.

## #175 Judith Pintar

### Title:

Distributed Memories: CompuServe's Gamer's Forum and the heyday of the Adventure Game Toolkit.

### Abstract:

I propose to share with the ELO community, the story of the rise and fall of The Adventure Game Toolkit (AGT), a Pascal-based design system written in 1987 by David Malmberg, based on Mark J. Welch's 1985 Generic Adventure Game System (GAGS). It was the leading platform for parser-based interactive fiction in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with Text Adventure Development System (TADS) as its upstart competitor. The use of these early pre-Graham Nelson's Inform design system, parser-based interactive fiction platforms was supported by an annual AGT contest, and a design community that stayed in touch through BBS-communities, the largest of which was Compuserve's Gamer's Forum. Malmberg ceased to support AGT in 1992, (the final release was AGT 1.7) but the contest continued until 1994, after which it

was rebranded and continued on as the Interactive Fiction Competition, (which has been run since 2016 by the Interactive Fiction Technology Foundation). A game that I wrote for the AGT contest in 1992, CosmoServe, featured a simulated DOS environment, featuring the frustrating use of dial-up software and the aesthetic of CompuServe screens from that era, as well as the more visceral experience of BBS communication -- wailing modems, paying by the minute, long download times and corrupt files, hard-drive destroying viruses etc...). Ironically, this game is now all that appears to be left of CompuServe's rich gamers' and game designers' lifeworld. A collaborative work that I organized, Shades of Gray: an adventure in Black and White, written in AGT, was designed and coordinated in a CompuServe Gamer's Forum private room, and represents the heyday of bulletin board IF collaboration. Ironically, when CompuServe died in the mid-1990s, after having been assimilated in a borg-like way by its longstanding and hated rival, AOL, nothing of CompuServe remained to be archived digitally, except what individual users might have downloaded to their own computers and backed up on floppy disks. I will soon be launching, through IFTF, a crowdsourced "Digital Archeology" project asking old users of CompuServe Forums (chiefly Gamers and Science Fiction forums, the two places that gamers and game designers hung out), to go into their own basements and see what they can find of media they might have downloaded from CompuServe in its final years. This includes transcripts of conferences, listings and files from libraries, public postings and private email. I will share the history of AGT as a e-lit platform, its code, games, contest, and disappearance from the scene. I'll also give an update on the CompuServe Gamer's Forum Digital Archeology project, particularly as our finds shed light on the life and times of writers of e-literature and interactive fiction who used early platforms, like GAGS, AGT, and TADS to write and share their work, uploading and downloading it to and from BBS-services. It is a world that has vanished from the digital record – in my paper, and presentation, I'll try to bring some of it back.

## #113 Julian Hanna

### **Title:**

Pandemic and Protest, Revolution and Reflection: The Online Manifesto in 2020-21

### **Abstract:**

In 2015 a colleague and I set up a Tumblr and Twitter account called Crap Futures. The tagline was a quote from Ray Bradbury: 'People ask me to predict the Future, when all I want to do is prevent it.' At the time it felt slightly pessimistic — not to mention unscholarly, as we were using the blog to work out ideas from our research. Then came the double surprise of the Brexit referendum and the 2016 US election, and by 2020 'crap futures' felt downright tame, almost conventional wisdom. At the same time we felt it was important not to fall into the trap of doomscrolling, apocalyptic paralysis, and the aesthetics of collapse. Instead we should start building the future we want — a point we made in our manifesto — and hold onto a glimmer of hope.

The flourishing of manifestos of all types showed 2020 to be a period of both action and reflection. More precisely it was a year of reflection (spring) followed by action (summer) followed by hope (autumn) followed by reaction and acceleration into near collapse (winter). The manifesto is the ur-genre of the avant-garde, reflecting (and often encouraging) crisis and upheaval in politics, society and the arts. The genre's high period, what Mary Ann Caws calls the 'manifesto moment', was a century ago during a similarly tumultuous decade — 1909 to 1919 — the decade following the first manifesto of Italian Futurism; there have been several waves since. Most studies of the manifesto, however, were written before 2008, so they (largely) miss the latest wave — the digital manifesto — and the unprecedented changes that accompanied this newly invigorated form between 2008-2020. I wrote about some of these issues in *The Manifesto Handbook*, which came out in February. In March, Breanne Fahs' extensive anthology *Burn It Down! Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution* was published. Through social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as niche and alternative platforms, the manifesto has reclaimed its function as a primary marker of history in the making. But whether analogue or digital, the manifesto has always served extremely diverse aims and movements.

In this paper I will survey some of the dozens of manifestos that have appeared online in the past year and attempt to draw some conclusions and place them in a wider context of online culture. As I note in my book, manifestos are always at the bleeding edge of culture and politics. The threats they contain are potent because they are sincere: there is always enough instability, enough wildness about the manifesto to give it real menace — the possibility, near or distant, of real danger, real action, actual revolution. What kinds of manifestos will we need going forward into the 2020s — a decade that (let's face it) is not off to an easy start, and that urgently requires our active engagement as scholars and citizens? What kinds of manifestos do we deserve, and what kind will we get?

## **#126 Justin Bortnick**

### **Title:**

Dangerous Games: ARGs, Social Media Platforms and Participatory Propaganda

### **Abstract:**

Video games and their associated forms stand as the most lucrative entertainment sector on the planet, dominating other forms of visual media in dollars generated annually. In the proposed paper, adapted from a dissertation chapter, I will draw upon my experience as a game designer to illuminate the increasingly dire ways that various actors in the political sphere – from online trolls all the way to world leaders – have combined the language and techniques borne from the industrial practices of game design with the power of social media and other online communication platforms to produce new forms of disinformation, propaganda and conspiracy theory. In this paper, I will trace the history of a specific form

of game – the Alternate Reality Game (ARG), from its early literary history in 1903 to its modern incarnations. Subsequently, by harnessing lessons from my own work developing ARGs for the 2016 video game Frog Fractions 2 and the 2020 film Dared My Best Friend, I will examine how closely the principles employed during ARG marketing campaign have been in similar use in American politics since the 2016 American presidential campaign, culminating in the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capital. I will discuss how modern totalitarian systems will almost certainly continue to refine and deploy these strategies in the future as a new, dangerous form of propaganda: one that lives primarily in online discussion platforms and, much like the narrative of an ARG, is constructed both unwittingly and collaboratively by the targets of the propaganda themselves. Finally, I utilize my experience both as a designer and online community manager to address how, especially during COVID-19 quarantine, these emerging risks can be combated as the daily intersection of digital and analogue worlds continue to merge ever closer.

## #81 Kaeden Berg, Henry Koelling and James Ryan

### **Title:**

English Versification for the Billion: Translating the Early Latin Poetry Generator "Artificial Versifying" (1677)

### **Abstract:**

Amid the Great Plague of London (1665–1666), a man named John Peter developed a peculiar system allowing for the procedural generation of Latin poetry. A decade later, in 1677, Peter's system was published in a landmark booklet, titled "Artificial Versifying," whose subtitle proclaims that anyone "that only knows the A.B.C. and can count 9" may use it to produce "true Latin, true verse, and good sense" [1].

The system itself centers on six tables in which letters are distributed across grids of cells. To generate a line of poetry, the user first produces a string of six digits (e.g., "952129"). Next, each digit is used to retrieve a sequence of letters from the table corresponding to that digit's position in the string. The letters obtained from a given table form one of nine words contained in that table, and the concatenation of the six chosen words constitutes a line of Latin verse in dactylic hexameter. The system is capable of generating  $9^6$ , or 531,441, lines of verse.

As a bizarre forerunner of electronic literature, "Artificial Versifying" was wildly successful: the booklet appeared in three editions, and its procedure was reprinted in books and periodicals for the next 200 years [2-5]. Sadly, Peter's innovative system has received scant treatment by scholars working in this area today [6-9]. This limited coverage is incommensurate to its importance as a groundbreaking work

produced centuries ahead of its time. Indeed, its combinatorial method is similar to those employed in early computer poetry, such as Theo Lutz's "Stochastische Texte" [10-11].

We have carried out the first translation into English of the "Artificial Versifying" system. While it would be easy to translate any one of the 531,441 hexameter verses that the system can produce, we sought instead to translate the system itself into English. This only entailed translating the 54 words in the six tables, but the process raised a number of interesting challenges nonetheless. The major difficulty is in preserving both meaning and meter, and in total we identified twelve features of the original system that we sought to maintain. In wrangling with interrelations between these features at the level of combinatorics, our design space was not unlike Peter's. While a core aim of this process has been to make "Artificial Versifying" accessible to non-Latin speakers today, this act of translation has helped us to better appreciate the triumph of the system's design.

While our project seeks to celebrate an unheralded pioneering effort in the area that became electronic literature, we situate this work amid emerging scholarship on the challenges and opportunities of translating computational textual artifacts. This subarea of translation studies [12] is perhaps best characterized by the Renderings project carried out by Nick Montfort, Piotr Marecki, and other collaborators in the last decade [14-17], though others have taken it up [18-21]. In this paper, we will show that the peculiar considerations inherent in the translation of computational textual artifacts are already present in protocomputational works that are sufficiently procedural, such as "Artificial Versifying."

[See Attached Bibliography.]

## **#193 Karen Ann Donnachie and Andy Simionato**

### **Title:**

The App is not the Territory: Writing to the edge of Platformism

### **Abstract:**

This research will attempt to define a new cultural and socio-economic movement we will tentatively call 'Platformism.' We will define Platformism as a contemporary overarching meta-narrative driven by the networked communities and economies made possible by software apps which can be considered at once discrete platforms, and forming part of broader ecosystems affecting almost every sphere of human experience. By delineating and mapping Platformism as an evolving system of complex and disputed territories, our purpose is to explore how creative practices including writing and literature can function in, through and against the platform.

Beginning with the 2020 Covid emergency travel and movement restrictions, there has been a dramatic acceleration of the already significant mass-migration toward digital platforms. Networked platforms have multiplied in form and function, and (according to the hyperbole of some companies offering these services) cater to almost every aspect of human being. Many of these platforms have been proposed as alternatives to traditional spaces for social and professional activities. Individuals, groups and communities have experienced a kind of 'forced experiment' during this period as they adopted services made possible by online and networked technologies, through computer and mobile telephony, often for the first time.

Contemporary writers and other creative practitioners are no exception to this digital mass-migration. Not surprisingly, many artists have embraced Platformism; its promise of new feelings through innovative software; its claims of 'exposure' through access to massive user-bases; its non-stop attention/affirmation cycles through ubiquitous always-on technologies. We will argue against accepting the platform as a neutral, arbitrary and isolated substrate passively awaiting inscription by the user/artist. From this perspective, an understanding of Platformism can be useful for observing and developing art and literature in, through, and against the platform.

We will present a speculative Platformist 'manifesto', algorithmically generated through the statistical analysis of a large number of 'terms of service' documents taken from existing software and hardware platforms. This Platformist Manifesto resignifies the legal agreements of social media sites (such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) with hardware platforms (such as Apple, Google, Microsoft, Playstation, and Nintendo) into a general declaration which can reveal underlying intentions, motives and beliefs.

This generative manifesto will also reveal the metanarratives of Platformism, allowing the reader to form a mental mindscape. These topographies may suggest the limits of the Platform, or at least offer pathways to navigate its boundaries. Our purpose in mapping this territory is to cultivate opportunities for commoning our struggles and priorities, to forge artistic and social positions within these topographies. To return writing to the edge.

## **#200 Kate Tyrol, Andrew Klobucar, Kirill Azernyy, Rebecca Rouse and Stephanie Jennings**

### **Title:**

End Matter: Interactive Fiction and a New Linguistic Consciousness

### **Abstract:**

The possibilities for interaction in electronic literature (e-lit) are heavily shaped by the platforms on which

that interaction occurs, yet audiences are rarely aware of the extent to which the digital interface may influence, if not define, their sociality. These limitations take the form of community moderation tools and explicit censorship (such as in the case of profanity filters), but also in the designs of emote systems and content popularity systems, and achievement and reputation systems, and even in gameplay design. Often players, users, and audience members must oscillate rapidly and continually between determining the affordances of the tools available to them and evaluating the capacity of those tools to provide the social aims they desire.

This panel explores the current limitations of contemporary literary and art criticism when applied to interactive narratives in order to build a richer dialogue attentive to sociological factors affecting platform-based literary activity. A diffusion of social and literary perspectives, we argue, is ultimately more appropriate for understanding the complex role networked communication and collaboration plays in the very fabric of these works. Considered together, the presentations on this panel will look deeply into how social media platforms generate increasingly innovative experiments in narrative structure by adapting interpersonal communication and live social exchange to online writing and reading practices. Digital network culture, dating back to the earliest text adventure games and first BBS servers, marked a fascinating conjunction between art works and participatory activity, aligning in the process many established literary and artistic aims with an array of diverse social behaviors and habits. The narrative structure of interactive fiction tends to offer the same points of reference key to any story, beginning with its setup followed by examples of conflict and resolution. Upon migrating to platform-managed media tools, narrative design has continued to sponsor a variety of coordinating behaviors among users, including what we've identified as consistent patterns of aggregation, accumulation, and competition. In addition, as critics like Manuel Castells, Lev Manovich, and more recently Manish Mehta have shown, networked media platforms invoke powerful programmable determinisms in the process of managing, and, in some cases, defining our cultural and social interactions.

Aligning these behavioral patterns with new literary guidelines and frameworks, the panel will look critically and, we hope, provocatively at narrative construction as collaborative digital network interaction. As these technologies continue to entwine human agents into increasingly complex actor-network systems, the resulting shift in writing practices and attitudes compares well to the new linguistic consciousness Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin attributed a century ago to the emergence of the novel within modern literature. Panelists Kirill Azernyi, Stephanie Jennings, Andrew Klobucar, Rebecca Rouse, and Kate Tyrol will contribute presentations covering a variety of perspectives on these considerations, including online conspiracy theory, classroom gamification, player and user experience, interactive sculpture, and the role of debate in public discourse.

The panel will consist of traditional oral presentations, and attendees will also be invited to concurrently experience the panel through a custom-built Twine narrative.

(Summaries of individual presentations attached.)

## **#245 Kathleen Zoller, Katya Farinsky, Betsy Hanrahan, Sarah West, Mallory Hobson and Preston Reed**

### **Title:**

A Tour of ELO's The NEXT

### **Abstract:**

The pandemic has enhanced awareness and reliance on digital platforms. Brick and mortar museums and libraries that are having difficulties pivoting to such platforms are presently unable to share works with the public for safety reasons. Consequently, special attention is being paid to platforms that produce, protect, and promote electronic literature, such as Electronic Literature Organization's Repository. Housing 30 collections of 2500 digital-born works, the site must be maintained, the works thoroughly and accurately described, and digital art preserved and shared with scholars, artists, and the public. In light of the pandemic, it was realized that the Repository could fill more roles than storing digital artwork and the accompanying information. It had the untapped potential of becoming a space where digital art could be studied, experienced, preserved, and shared from anywhere. In short, it would become the next generation museum, library, and preservation site for born digital literature collected by the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO), the site now known as The NEXT. This panel showcases the newly designed Repository implemented by 39 students at Washington State University Vancouver (WSUV).

In 2021, ELO in conjunction with the Electronic Literature Lab (ELL) partnered with students at WSUV to implement this new vision for The NEXT. The new site makes digital artwork easily accessible to the public from a single digital space, enhanced by SEO and ADA compliance. From here, visitors have the ability to download permitted works and view any associated media, including images, videos, visualizations, and recorded interviews with the donor. They have also developed a search function for easily finding records. To further increase accessibility, students conducted usability testing on pages within the site, which includes an About page, Donations page, documentation regarding metadata schema, and more. With these components, The NEXT has transformed from an informational space into a multimedial site that is participatory, interactive, and experiential.

The architecture of the site is built to be scalable, allowing it to grow as new donations are offered to ELO. The NEXT sets a precedent for future museums and databases to follow. Blending information with human interaction stimulates The NEXT's use as a virtual interactive museum and library, while increasing awareness of artists and their artwork. The site will continue to be maintained by ELL for ELO,

and sustained by donations to ELO and ELL. Scholars volunteering their time and labor will further refine the metadata.

The NEXT will be presented at the conference by five of the 39 students involved in the implementation stage of the project. Kathleen Zoller will act as moderator, discussing the aim of the project and the components that made it come together; Katya Farinsky will share her process regarding copyediting; Betsy Hanrahan and Sarah West will demonstrate the site's architecture and layout; Mallory Hobson will share design decisions made for The NEXT; Preston Reed will discuss the filming and interview process.

## #195 Katie Schaag

### **Title:**

Erasure Poetry as E-Literature

### **Abstract:**

Erasure is a powerful technique that allows contemporary creative writers, visual artists, and political activists to reveal underlying patterns within extant narratives. Perhaps because of its imbrication with book arts and other tactile forms, erasure poetry is relatively unexplored in the domain of e-literature. However, educational platforms like Wave Books' interactive erasure poetry website, as well as recent artistic projects such as Amaranth Borsuk, Jesper Juul, and Nick Montfort's web browser extension The Deletionist, Jacob Harris' Times Haiku, and my own participatory platform The Infinite Woman demonstrate some of the possibilities for making and reading erasure poetry in a digital context.

In this one-hour hands-on workshop, I'll briefly introduce the form and technique of erasure in contemporary creative writing, looking at some physical examples (like Lauren Russell's chalk erasure of *Descent*) in addition to the digital examples mentioned above. We'll discuss the aesthetic and political choices in handcrafted and computationally generated erasure poems; consider erasure's overlap with and distinction from other approaches like remix, appropriation, and conceptualism; and explore how erasure allows writers and artists to stretch and innovate poetic technique. Then, I'll introduce a series of hands-on exercises designed to get participants quickly making their own physical and digital erasures. Participants will experiment with user-friendly tools to make their own erasure poems on a variety of platforms.

Participants will need to have access to the Chrome web browser and a word processor, as well as a design program (I'll be using the free online platform Canva in lieu of an Adobe product; if participants do not already have a design program, they should sign up for a free Canva account before the workshop). They will also need scissors, markers, found physical text (like a newspaper or electrical bill), and found digital text (like a speech, blog post, or literary passage).

## #205 Katie Schaag

### Title:

Queer/Femme Internet Aesthetics

### Abstract:

Queer/Femme Internet Aesthetics

This fun, playful, one-hour workshop is primarily intended for participants identified as women, femme, nonbinary, trans, and/or queer. However, anyone is welcome to attend.

Queer femme\* internet aesthetics often intentionally subvert minimalist design principles and usability heuristics, making the user aware of the platform/medium rather than concealing it.

In this workshop, we'll first explore how and why net artists, writers, and designers like Petra Cortright, Olia Lialina, Marisa Olson, Momo Pixel, and Sam Cohen and Sandra Rosales break "good design" rules and embrace a Web 1.0 aesthetic.

Then, we'll experience digital femme history and culture firsthand through the embodied limitations and affordances of using web 1.0 technology. Participants will make an old-fashioned glitter GIF. Since the Blingee platform requires an account, we'll use the open-access platform GlitterPhoto (<https://www.glitterphoto.net/>), developed in 2003. Although the 1.0 Blingee aesthetics are echoed in contemporary Instagram and Snapchat stickers, we'll use one of the "original" platforms, clunky by our current standards, to experience not only the aesthetics but also the tools and techniques inherent to the platform that enabled those aesthetics.

This workshop builds on the "Queer & Femme Digital Literature" panel that I chaired at AWP 2020, featuring Sarah Ciston, Sam Cohen, Kate Durbin, Feliz Lucia Molina, and Sandra Rosales ([https://www.awpwriter.org/awp\\_conference/event\\_detail/17596](https://www.awpwriter.org/awp_conference/event_detail/17596)).

\* I conceptualize a queer femme aesthetic like a hyper-saturated, self-conscious, postmodern, performative femininity. Glitter, sequins, lip gloss, nail polish, dELiA\*s magazine, '90s neon pink and slime green. Digitally, I think the queer femme aesthetic was innovated in spaces like Tumblr and MySpace, with tools like Blingee and Angelfire Dollz. Kate Durbin's Tumblr project Women as Objects archives teen girls' labor in shaping early internet aesthetics, and Sam Cohen and Sandra Rosales' publishing project Yes Femmes tracks the contemporary development of this aesthetic in a literary context. Of course, there is no one definition of a queer femme digital aesthetic, though I'd argue that the nail polish emoji is pretty

key!

## #115 Kendra McPheeters

### Title:

"Thin Spaces:" Using Twine for Storytelling and Catharsis

### Abstract:

For individuals who have suffered from abuse, working with hyperlink texts can provide an opportunity to unpack trauma and experience catharsis. "Thin Spaces" is hyperlink fiction that introduces interactors to a narrator reliving her experiences of being in an abusive marriage and her subsequent PTSD. Through presenting this autobiographical IDN, the hope is to shed light on abuse cycles and demonstrate one way that they can be broken. "Thin Spaces" weaves through two timelines: a personal timeline of key moments surrounding the abuse and a genealogical timeline consisting of historical documents and family stories of the narrator's ancestors. The blending of personal experience and genealogy shows that abuse can span generations. The initial framework of the story forms a cycle that culminates in a therapy session. This lexia's one hyperlink takes readers back to an earlier lexia in the story. This earlier lexia maintains its initial hyperlinks but introduces a new option to break the cycle using an italicized sentence offset from the rest of the text. The strand of lexia proceeding from this new hyperlink moves interactors through the aftermath of the narrator's divorce, culminating in the hope that survival is possible. Like PTSD, some options in the new lexia—with inverse colors from the initial cycle—cause the reader to re-experience the traumatic episodes of the piece and require them to make the conscious decision to either hit the previous screen arrow within Twine to exit that phase quickly or work through the abusive sections again to find their way back out of the abuse. Being given this choice ties to the aftermath of trauma in which some PTSD episodes can be resolved quickly through deep breathing, self-talk, or somatic strategies while other episodes resist these tactics and take longer to escape. The interactor must be cognizant of the strategy of clicking the previous screen arrow in order to avoid lapsing back into a more lengthy process of sifting through abusive flashbacks, which parallels abuse survivors needing to have the wherewithal to employ the strategies they learn in order to avoid more serious flashbacks or PTSD episodes. At its conclusion, Thin Spaces shifts to the narrator in a healthier place, though still using coping mechanisms to deal with the effects of the trauma. The piece allows readers the choice to exit with the call of the common loon, a calming yet mournful sound. With this presentation, the audience will have access to "Thin Spaces" and see how the author's writing process unfolded, including choices in structure and color as well as the personal experience of writing autobiographically about trauma.

## #202 Korine Powers

### Title:

Rape, Revenge, and Red Dead Redemption 2

### Abstract:

Rockstar Games' 2018 critical and commercial darling Red Dead Redemption 2 (RDR2) follows outlaw Arthur Morgan as he and the other members of the Van der Linde gang try to outrun the law, rival gangs, and looming twentieth-century industrialization in a fictionalized version of the American West. Like its predecessor, Red Dead Redemption (2010), the single player campaign mostly focuses on how men relate to other men, though RDR2 does attempt to add greater diversity to the women Arthur meets in the game's numerous scripted and randomly occurring encounters. While the previous game gave players an achievement for binding and murdering a woman via train in the style of Rocky and Bullwinkle's Snidely Whiplash, RDR2 more critically approaches what it means to make an interactive depiction of a world where women's career options were "split evenly between being a teacher, a nurse or a prostitute" ("Rape a Problem in Old West; Still is Today" n.p., 2010). The women of RDR2 are singers, farmers, heiresses, mothers, gunslingers, scientists, and suffragettes. While the game's open world often leaves it up to the player to determine how to interact with the characters that populate it—and this "freedom" has resulted in numerous popular videos of players brutalizing suffragettes—Red Dead Redemption 2 most often dwells on encounters that ask Arthur Morgan (and the player) to consider the purpose and cost of the violence he witnesses and commits.

Among the many optional side-missions and unnamed "moments" in the game, Red Dead Redemption 2 includes a brief but chilling encounter with a stranger living in the swamplands of Lemoyne, RDR2's answer to New Orleans, where Arthur is removed from the player's control, knocked unconscious, sexually assaulted, and left in a different part of the game map. After a muttered "oh my lord" and a bowlegged first few steps, the game resumes with minimal additional commentary. In a culture and medium where male sexual victimization is rarely discussed and rape-revenge narratives are defined by centering rape as the "core action" that motivates the main character (Projansky in Heller-Nicholas 4, 2011), the incident destabilizes our traditional relationship with gender performance, player control, and goal-oriented game design. My paper will explore the effects of creating an incident of rape, what it means to encode that sexual assault on a masculine body in a game decorated with the familiar iconography of the traditionally masculine Western genre, and how the open-ended encounter affects the player's ability to seek catharsis, revenge, or redemption following Arthur's rape. In particular, I will examine how the playability and incidental nature of the event moves beyond the familiar trappings of the rape-revenge narrative, and how the player's response(s) continues to negotiate the game's overarching questions about violence, power, and control.

## **#180 Krista-Lee Malone, Casey James O’ceallaigh, Edword Flabberjackson and Andrew C. Fudge**

### **Title:**

Community Storytelling: Beyond the Table and onto the Digital Green

### **Abstract:**

Tabletop Role-Playing Games (ttrpgs) are games of communal storytelling. These gameworlds exist in the minds of players who collectively populate them with people, events, and histories. Traditionally played in-person, groups found themselves hard hit when social-distancing rules came into effect. While some went on hiatus, others took to the web to continue their sagas. For some, this was an uphill battle of new technology and social norms. For others, the move was trivial as ttrpgs in fact existed online even before the pandemic.

For this panel, we take for granted that playing ttrpgs is an act of oral literary production. We talk about the ways this storytelling – once done cooperatively but semi-privately – has grown beyond the table through various internet platforms to include a much larger production base. We will also cover the ways platforms have enhanced the building aspects of ttrpgs – the building of community, worlds, and narratives. Our panelists are as follows.

We often hide the learning process, not wanting anyone to see our vulnerability. In an attempt at normalizing learning and imperfection, Krista-Lee Malone decided to live-stream her process of learning to be a dungeon master (DM) on twitch.tv/gameranthro. Additionally, she hoped that by live-streaming this she would be able to tap into the shared knowledge and experience of her audience. Although she has been a player for over 20 years, she had never before been a DM. She began live-streaming her preparation in January with many questions.

Casey James O’Ceallaigh was live-streaming as a DM on twitch.tv/serious\_play before the pandemic. At that time the players used a campus lab to play and stream. When the pandemic shut down campus, the group was forced to negotiate not only how to continue the game, but also how to continue sharing the lab channel. Previously, all streaming was done at the lab which was set up specifically for this purpose. Suddenly, the group had to set-up across multiple computers and locations. Casey will be discussing these negotiations and the struggles of DMing virtually while streaming.

Edword Flabberjackson is the personality behind twitch.tv/pokeyoureyesoutgames and founder of the GCGG (Good Community, Good Games) stream team. Noticing the hard time some were having with the current state of the world and guided by the truth that we are the stories we tell ourselves, Edword decided to change those stories through a ttrpg stream. By having the players play both characters and

themselves, he hoped to slowly get the players to start changing the stories they tell about themselves and therefore change how they feel. He will be talking about how those stories progressed.

Andrew C. Fudge runs a ttrpg dedicated Discord server for the LGBTQ+ community. He is also preparing a Twitch stream dedicated to diversity in D&D. He will be discussing the process of content-making and building spaces dedicated to marginalized identities and how these spaces often become places for players' first "coming out" moments, an integral step for LGBTQ+ people.

## **#94 Lai-Tze Fan, Anastasia Salter, Stuart Moulthrop, Lyle Skains, Sarah Laiola and Caleb Andrew Milligan**

### **Title:**

Alternative Play? Twine as a Digital Storytelling Platform

### **Abstract:**

In this panel moderated by Lai-Tze Fan, we examine Twine at ten, exploring the ongoing influence of this hypertext platform on pedagogy, play, and literature:

What We Talk About When We Talk About Twine (Moulthrop) - Creating digital stories and games involves many cultural registers. Just as important is the unmapped, semi-formal culture that underlies communal, open-source software. In the case of Twine, this can involve distinctions among versions of the core software, associated scripting languages, and "story formats." Learning this buried lore can reveal a technologized "artworld," in Howard Becker's term, and raises questions of hierarchy, value, and the nature of creative work in what is essentially a gift economy – questions that may ultimately apply to any form of art.

Twine at 10: Reflections on Pandemic Storytelling (Salter) - Hypertext and games platform Twine recently marked its ten year anniversary, complete with a celebratory game jam. Twine's affordances as a web-driven, open source tool drive its renewed significance as a platform for rapid response storytelling, enabling users to build playful, poignant responses to the many challenges of 2020 as exemplified by Mark Sample's 10 Lost Boys; Cait Kirby's September 7, 2020; and Adi Robbertson's You Have to Ban the President.

Twine, The EpistoLab (Laiola) - A frustrating element of teaching with Twine is the platform's limitations with real-time collaboration across devices. Before COVID, when the classroom could operate as a lab, this limitation could be solved by students gathering around a single machine. But when shared machinery and gathering becomes impossible, Twine offers another model--"the epistolab." The epistolab follows an epistolary model of collaborative work, dispersing colLABoration across times and spaces, and

prompting a reevaluation of the roles that simultaneity and liveness play in collaborative, pedagogical work.

Twine as Literature, Not Literacy, in the Program(ming) Era (Milligan) - In the 21st century digital humanities, “digital literacy” has seemingly become the humanistic endgame for how we conceptualize, rationalize, and advertise the skillsets we impart; In e-lit, Twine as well is often presented to students in these terms. As the potential shortcomings of literacy as sole pedagogical outcome, however, become increasingly clearer (for instance -- as we reckon with its limitations to prevent insurgency-through-misinformation in the US), I propose another way to teach Twine and its promise of digital storytelling differently: through a model, based on the creative writing workshop, that highlights the literature and literary possibilities of Twine.

The panel will conclude with an open discussion of Twine’s future as a platform.

## **#215 Lai-Tze Fan, Marjorie C. Luesebrink, Christy Sanford, Erik Loyer, Caitlin Fisher and Will Luers**

### **Title:**

E-Literature Bound to Platforms: Exploring Opportunities for Narrative Connection and Disconnection

### **Abstract:**

Recent pandemic-imposed restrictions on face-to-face exchanges have required that we find new ways to connect, often through networked platforms. Without classrooms, labs, and conference environments, ELO has embraced platforms such as Discord and Zoom for communication, and has also looked to online platforms for collaborative writing.

As we contemplate how platforms can keep us connected with our work and with each other, as well as the ways they may limit our interactions and thus arguably “disconnect” us, this panel explores what happens when e-literature—as research, practice, and field—is bound to platforms. E-literature scholarship and creative works that do not have the opportunity for in-person exchange provoke re-examinations of platform affordances and limitations. We ask: how may platforms may shape e-literature through their pre-set parameters, interfaces, and infrastructures? What are the promises and perils of platform-specific e-literature? Can we bring attention to platform through works of e-literature? Led by Marjorie C. Luesebrink, five speakers will answer these questions.

Lai-Tze Fan will trace the platform of a work of e-literature to its infrastructural origins. Nick Montfort’s generative poem Round (2013) is accompanied by a Note that describes the computational processes behind the poem. Fan will trace the specific hardware components’ production, manufacturing, assembly,

and natural resource origins that support Round; in so doing, she provides an ecological understanding of the physical platforms that support e-literature.

Will Luers will sketch out some principles for a theory of recombinant fiction by exploring algorithmic flux (scripted variability) as something experiential within the digital text itself. His question for authors and readers of platform-based fiction production is: why is this play of forces between chaos and order thematically and formally important? Luers argues that algorithmic flux in digital fiction has a history, but that it presently lacks a theory and poetics for contemporary practice.

Erik Loyer will examine Google Sheets for how it enables users to treat spreadsheets as databases which can drive whole applications, effectively turning documents into platforms. He asks: what happens when we apply the same approach to digital narrative, giving individual stories the potential to function as their own platforms? Drawing on his experience developing creative tools for the digital humanities, digital comics, and e-lit, Loyer will sketch out some of the potentials and pitfalls of this mode of creation, and how our practices might better encourage it.

Christy Sanford reflects upon the processes for combining images and texts in some of her creative works. Sanford finds herself prompted by various platforms and platform-based texts around her, noting that in order to combine images and text, she needs technology's assistance and inspiration to let unique characteristics of programs and platforms contribute to the development of her work.

Finally, Caitlin Fisher will discuss the promises and perils of disconnection and connection inside VR platforms that support literary and artistic co-creation. As we consider the use of virtual environments and spaces in place of in-person meetings and engagements, Fisher explores the futures of these platforms as a novel means of creative exchange.

## #203 Laura Hyunjee Kim

### **Title:**

Feeling without Touching

### **Abstract:**

"Feeling without Touching" is a remote workshop inspired by "The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows" by John Koenig, a list of invented words that describe feelings that "give a name to emotions we all might experience but don't yet have a word for." Workshop participants will engage in a series of (dis)embodied activities that refer to the body, emotion, and a speculative concept, "feelosophy." All participants will explore and be involved in creating a collection of poetic intimate objects that hold pre/post-verbal

sentimental value and reimagine how emotions are languaged in digital spaces: a survey on how we feel at the current moment and what it feels to interact with one another without “physically” being in touch.

## #121 Lauren Rouse and Rachel Winter

### **Title:**

"Swipe Night is Fun, but Useless" An Analysis of Tinder's Swipe Night, an Interactive Foray in Online Dating

### **Abstract:**

Electronic literature and computer games share a common history beginning from the earliest adventure games (Rettberg 87). As both the “technological platforms” that host electronic literature and games, and the “social contexts” that inform them evolve, so does the content, gameplay, and types of interactions they facilitate (Rettberg). The development of the Tinder platform and other mediated dating applications has precipitated the incorporation of interactive fiction games into the dating experience.

The conception of dating as a game is by no means a new phenomenon. The “pickup” model of dating considers interactions between potential sexual partners to be governed by a set of rules that participants can learn in order to “win”(Almog and Kaplan). While such practices existed long before digitally mediated dating sites, applications like Tinder extend the gamification of dating; the Tinder platform further gamified these experiences with the release of the electronic literature game, Swipe Night, which debuted in October 2019. Swipe Night, in the model of hypertextual fiction, allowed users to play through a narrative, making choices that impacted the resulting storyline.

Swipe Night was intended to connect users in new matches based on their choices as they navigate through the Swipe Night story, a deviation from Tinder's usual matching via geographic proximity alone. The game played out over four weeks, with each week continuing the story from the week before. The in-app interactive narrative was largely successful, with over a million people tuning in each week (Perez). The Swipe Night trailer began making its rounds on tinder and other social media apps in late September 2019. In the 45 second trailer, users were introduced to the concept of the narrative: “Every Sunday, experience an interactive adventure where your choices can lead to matches. But you only have till midnight until the adventure is over” (Timmermans and De Caluwé).

While the Tinder application has, since its inception, facilitated the gamification of dating through its fast-paced, turn-based interactions, the debut of the hypertextual fiction Swipe Night further underscored the game-like interactions of the platform. However, Swipe Night also enabled community development based around common choices within the narrative, and fostered discussion among Tinder users on a variety of platforms. While users' Tinder data is ephemeral and not publicly available, cross platform

conversations offer insight into user perceptions and experiences navigating the Tinder platform, and Swipe Night in particular. This study examines user reactions to the Swipe Night event on the subreddit r/Tinder; some users praised the unique matches they were able to form through interaction with the electronic narrative, while others lamented the effectiveness of the fiction for facilitating the development of actual relationships. As the formation of both communities and romantic relationships increasingly occurs via digitally mediated communication, a study of Tinder's Swipe Night event provides essential insight into both the gamification of human interaction and audience reception of these developing interactive fiction technologies.

## #25 Leah Henrickson

### **Title:**

'AN INTERNET BARD AT LAST!!!': The Positive and Perverse Power of Alt-Lit Poet Steve Roggenbuck

### **Abstract:**

'In a strict sense, I don't believe there's any definition of poetry that applies to all poets. Different poets have different goals. Different poets have different things in their hearts that they're trying to express in different ways that they want to express them. Are my videos where I'm running around in the woods talking about YOLO and dogs and dads – are these really poetry? Why call them poetry?'

These are the words of Steve Roggenbuck (<https://www.youtube.com/user/steveroggenbuck>), a twenty-something self-proclaimed video artist and poet who released YouTube videos from 2010 to 2017. Roggenbuck's video poems comprised clips of his stream of consciousness, often filmed while he rolled in the grass or ran through natural scenes, screaming. Amongst random - and, frankly, weird - comments, Roggenbuck inserted motivational moments urging viewers to appreciate nature and follow their dreams. Many videos have been edited to include musical accompaniment, green screen-facilitated backgrounds, and/or additional graphics.

Over seven years, Roggenbuck's fanbase grew larger and more devoted, with Roggenbuck being established as one of the alt-lit (alternative literature) movement's most renowned contributors. In October 2018, though, Roggenbuck's fans turned their backs to him as he confirmed allegations of sexual misconduct: allegations that followed numerous others made against alt-lit contributors.

There are, to be sure, many Internet and alt-lit poets. Roggenbuck makes for a particularly interesting case study because he embodies various facets of Internet culture: visual and aural disjointedness, conscious contempt for grammatical correctness (a poetic license, so to speak), premeditated performance of personality, and – as he has confirmed – sexual harassment brought to light in the #MeToo moment. His online persona embodies the complexities of human connection in an increasingly

digital context. Rather ironically, though, most of his videos aim to ignite viewers' passion for the natural world. 'Worms! Worms! Worms!' he excitedly screams as he runs through a desert in one video. 'Fucking llamas! Llamas! Whales are so big!'

This paper introduces readers to Roggenbuck's poetry, and explores its place within poetic traditions by highlighting the distinctive stylistic features of his work. It considers how Roggenbuck's video poetry represents a kind of electronic literature that both reflects and parodies meme culture for young adult viewers less inclined to engage with poetry in printed form. This paper also considers how the allegations against Roggenbuck impact interpretations of his work. It aims to start a conversation about negotiating literary value and socially unacceptable authorial behavior on digital platforms with new expectations and potential issues. To use Roggenbuck's own words: 'I am the bard. I am the poet. And to be a poet while the Internet exists. Man, we got an opportunity.' The 'opportunity' offered by the Internet allowed Roggenbuck to rise to fame. It was also his demise.

\*Note: A version of this paper was submitted/accepted to last year's ELO conference, but I was unable to present. This work has not been presented/published anywhere, but I continue to work on it (it's changed a lot in the last year!).

## #157 Leonardo Flores

### **Title:**

Digital Colonialism: Electronic Literature as Resistance

### **Abstract:**

In my essay titled "Third Generation Electronic Literature" I describe this new wave of electronic literature as one "based on social media networks and widely adopted platforms and apps" which is less interested in the Modernist, avant garde, or experimental poetics of 2nd wave elit. In 2019, I described that relationship between generations as analogous to popular culture versus high culture divides. More recently Nacher ("Weeding" 2020) and Berens ("Decolonize" 2020) initiated a conversation that connects 3rd gen elit to decolonization of the field, and I elaborated on that idea in my 2021 lecture, titled "Technological Imperialism and Digital Writing," by discussing the history of digital technologies, their spread throughout the world, and how they establish an imperialistic and colonial relationship with the world, situating the US and its allies at the center of a global digital empire.

My proposed paper will examine key open and proprietary platforms-- such as programming languages, the Web, Unicode, Flash, iOS, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram-- focusing on their spread, access, cultural and ideological underpinnings, potential for electronic literature, audiences, and adoption. It will advance the claim that all these technologies are hegemonic, historically privileging and centering

the US and its allies in an uneven relationship to the rest of the world by creating dependence on the platforms they develop and profit from. This analysis will be supported by the research and critiques of digital infrastructure, search engine platforms, the semantic capitalism of interfaces, and digital colonialism by Domenico Piermonte, Safiya Noble, Christian Ulrik Andersen and Søren Bro Pold, and Herbert Shiller, respectively. In highlighting some of the dependencies and varying barriers to access these platforms create I will interrogate the notion that open platforms like the Web or programming languages are less complicit than private commercial platforms in creating and perpetuating digital colonialism.

The essay will expand on the work of Eugenio Tisselli, Rui Torres, and Claudia Kozak's by exploring how electronic literature uses, engages, and challenges digital technologies enacting strategies of resistance against the political, commercial, and cultural underpinnings of digital platforms. I conclude by discussing how electronic literature-- of all generations-- helps advance the common goals of widespread adoption of digital writing practices and decolonization of the field while interrogating the usefulness of generational frameworks when considered in a global context.

## **#114 Liahm Ruest**

### **Title:**

American Utopia - Analyzing the Far-Right politics of BioShock: Infinite and Trump's America

### **Abstract:**

Video games are mirrors to our contemporary reality that reflect our society's philosophies, rhetoric, and more. Published in 2013, BioShock: Infinite offered a glimpse into the reality of a Utopian America ruled by conservative far-right identity politics. In 2016, Donald Trump's election as the 45th President of the United States brought to the forefront of America what is often ignored. In this essay, I argue what Utopia is to the far-right by analyzing the society of Columbia, the use of media in the state, and more. Overall, I argue that politics and ideas of Utopia can be simulated into video games to understand far-right narratives of Trumpian politics better.

## **#117 Lyle Skains, Deena Larsen, Johannah Rodgers, Caitlin Fisher, Kate Brooks and Jules Chatelain**

### **Title:**

ELO Salons: Beyond 2020

**Abstract:**

First proposed by Annie Abrahams and Deena Larsen at the 2019 ELO Conference in Cork, the ELO Salons initially comprised 10 online sessions on the second Tuesday of every month from February to November 2020. The sessions encompassed close readings and ensuing discussions, collaborative writing experiments, ontological examination of elit, and approaches to increasing elit accessibility and archivability. Each session has been led by a different attendee, recorded, and archived. Conceived by Deena Larsen as "almost like an extended family, which has a core group of people that participated and could function online", the Salons have been a point of brightness in an extremely difficult year for many.

For this proposed Virtual Engagement Event, we would like to look back on the fascinating discussions and discoveries of the last year of salons, and look forward to the next. Hosting panelists will include Salon creators Deena Larsen, Johannah Rodgers, and Caitlin Fisher, as well as various session leaders. A Salon organizer will moderate, posing questions to the hosts and attendees alike, and supplement the discussion with images and documents arising from the last year's engagement.

Most importantly, the current Salon participants will open the floor to future participants, seeking to build upon its first year in terms of activities and members. What more can we do with these Salons? Who else can we reach? What doors can we open, and how can we enrich our community? We have already engaged in projects increasing accessibility to elit work, exploring marginalized voices, revisiting the foundations of elit, and developing new avenues for creation and discovery of elit. We welcome discussions as to how we can evolve these interactions further, and invite all ELO members and conference attendants to join us.

The ELO Salons have been a fun thing to look forward to, rather than another dreary required zoom meeting. We started a bit before the pandemic, promising a chance to examine issues and works, and even collaborative tools that lie at the heart of our mutual obsessions: electronic literature. This virtual engagement session will be an open working session to allow participants to reflect on the highlights of the ELO Salons and to help shape its future.

## **#207 María Goicoechea**

**Title:**

The Art Object in a Post-Digital World

**Abstract:**

This presentation aims to reflect on two labels that have been used to define sets of artefacts born out of the same context but evoking different connotations. I refer to the terms "post-internet" and "post-digital".

Both terms allude to a post-stage, a leap that announces a cultural shift, perceived by artists but difficult to pinpoint and demarcate with precision, a prefix that might refer to 'after' (chronologically) as well as 'beyond' (spatially); often used to highlight that what has been superseded is the novelty and exceptionality of the internet and digital technology. Actually, these terms address the fact that digital media is no longer a form of mediation but it has become our ontology, though this new form of being is of such a diffuse, complex and assembled nature, not even Haraway could have anticipated it.

Triggered by impulses of excess and overindulgence, on the one hand, or sustainability and preservation, on the other, post-internet and post-digital art emerge from a networking and tech-savvy sensibility that has altered the relation between artist, audience, and art object.

In particular, I am going to focus on the work of artists that use Instagram as an art gallery for exhibiting their work (Almudena Lobera, Johanna Jaskowska, Lucy Hardcastle) or to sabotage the platform from the inside (Amalia Ulman, Joshua Citarella). Bearing a family resemblance to electronic literature, these works also explore the narrative process in the construction of an artist's identity, the changing territories of human-machine/artist-spectator interactions and digital-analogue materializations. The art objects they produce can be classified as "phygital", physical/digital constructs that inhabit, in a myriad of different possibilities of mediation and convergence, the physical and the digital spaces.

As artists explore the platform's potential as exhibition space, advertising site, and conversation aisle, their phygital objects reflect the tensions between a nostalgia for an analogue craftsmanship which rebels against machinic perfection and an interrogation of human creativity that propels us into the future through an ever more profound symbiosis with our technological habitus.

## **#137 Maria Mencia**

### **Title:**

Digital methodologies for analysing and disseminating community research: societal, cultural, political, ethics and perspectives

### **Abstract:**

The global COVID-19 pandemic has made me further address the value that artistic research has for our mental and psychological health and its significance in community healing. I have, for a while now, used digital technologies to create poetic spaces of shared personal stories interconnecting narratives to bring up issues of power, territory, displacement, historical memory, gender and violence. The need to live, work, socialise at a distance, through digital platforms has highlighted the importance of finding ways to share stories, connect and heal through community creative research practice. How can we engage global communities through electronic literature art practices?

This paper will explore the use of digital methods and tools to conduct and disseminate research in interdisciplinary projects alongside artists and communities and will address the motivations to researching with participants. It will draw from the findings coming up from our workshop in 'Creative Digital Practices: Community Platform for Healing and Mapping', (also submitted to the ELO conference).

As co-investigator of the AHRC funded project Memory, Victims, and Representation of the Colombian Conflict my role was leading the creative team working on the artistic research project titled Invisible Voices: Women Victims of the Colombian Conflict and give voice to the women in their participation in the construction of memory. This was an enriching experience where both parties - the academics/artists and the community group – gained knowledge through the physical co-creative workshops with tailored designed research methods for this specific context, and the subsequent digital documentation and archival of the artistic experience. Taking this project and others as core studies, this paper will address questions in connection to community research; the value of creative storytelling and artistic approaches to share personal stories; and discuss pertinent issues in connection to the value, impact and societal change these projects can contribute, not only to the specific group, but to society in general.

## **#108 Maria Mencia and Vinicius Marquet**

### **Title:**

Creative Digital Practices: Community Platform for Healing and Mapping

### **Abstract:**

The global coronavirus pandemic has brought up a series of challenges which have made us change our lifestyle by balancing work and family life, education and recreation. It has brought up feelings of uncertainty, isolation, hopelessness, fear, anxiety, depression, stress; impacting on our mental health and well-being as well as our economic situation. This global disaster has hit harder those people from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as socioeconomic status, physical and health issues, living in violent and abusive relationships and has brought up to light the imbalance in society.

For some of us, online platforms have served to make this situation more bearable. We are learning to do what we did before at a distance. Based on this and previous creative projects where we were already dealing with a community-based goal, the aim of this workshop is to make visible ( through sharing) social, personal or collective issues/challenges which have become more apparent during the pandemic.

We will be using digital methodologies of collaboration and visualisation to highlight the main concerns of the community taking part in this discussion. For this purpose, we will be providing an online platform where participants will be able to share a personal or collective issue to heal. These stories will be

distributed amongst the participants, who will find solutions to heal them through a creative digital proposal. All participants sharing and healing will be anonymous.

This exchanging storytelling platform gathers, distributes and serves as an archive from which to draw information about the concerns of that particular community. The main keywords/concerns will be visualised with links to the stories and the healing's proposals so the whole group can engage in meaningful conversations.

We are hoping to make this workshop prototype a sustainable tool to be shared between any other community groups and creators/academics with the possibility of the application of different parameters.

Duration: 60 minutes

Participants: 5 minimum and 20 max

## #171 Marianne Gunderson

### **Title:**

Heats, knots and hierarchies: Speculative genders in omegaverse fanfiction

### **Abstract:**

As a digital genre, fanfiction enables the recontextualisation and transformation of characters, plots, and stories from popular culture. The dynamic combination of a community-driven writing practice with well-developed platforms that support an extensive and generative labelling system, supports the development of an ever-expanding network of tropes, which are continually being reinvented and reimaged in new forms. This article discusses one such trope, popularly known as “omegaverse” or alpha/beta/omega fanfiction. Currently counting 89 253 distinct works on the fanfiction platform aO3.org, omegaverse fanfiction draws on popular imaginations of wolf or canine social hierarchies and reproductive behaviours in order to reimagine characters from popular culture into a parallel gender structure as alphas, betas, or omegas. Using concepts from fan studies and feminist theory, this article shows how omegaverse fanfiction treats discourses about gender and embodiment in the same manner as it treats the original media texts, mining them for meaning in order to imaginatively transform them. Through this speculative mode, omegaverse fanfiction creates a space where the discourses associated with gender, biology, and embodiment are broken down into a set of building blocks with which individual authors can explore the inner logic of fictional gender systems on societies, relationships, and situations, examine their consequences, and imagine their downfall. Furthermore, by rewriting these discourses onto familiar characters through fanfictional narratives, the alpha/beta/omega system works as a node through which fans imagine how specific reconfigurations of differently gendered bodies would play out as lived, situated, meaningful experience. The speculative mode that is characteristic of fanfiction as a digital

genre, in combination with the affordances of platforms such as ArchiveOfOurOwn.org, support the iterative play not just with products and works of popular culture, but also with the discourses and meanings with which gendered bodies are constructed and made intelligible. The constant reinvention of the trope is made possible through the interconnected and iterative process of this community-based, affect-driven, digitally native genre. Understood as an example of electronic literature, omegaverse fanfiction can be read as a kind of ‘low theory’, theory that exists at the margin of formal knowledge formations, creating alternative ways of talking and thinking about gendered embodiment.

## #89 Mariusz Pisarski and Michał Furgat

### **Title:**

Translating and Visualising Storyspace Classics for the Web. A User-Friendly Framework

### **Abstract:**

More than 20 years after their publication web-based hypertexts such as Hegirascope or The Unknown are available, read and viewed just as intended on their publication date. “Html and a bit of Javascript” or “Javascript and a bit of html”, in case of Web based text generators such as Taroko Gorge, seem to constitute the best formula for creating long-lasting e-literature. Any platform, old or new, which supports exporting to html improves not only the longevity of the work, but can also bring it new life on any platform in the future. Flash, celebrated for its user-friendliness and accessibility, did not follow this path. Storyspace, infamous for its cost and its role in propagating commercial circulation of e-literature, did! All of its versions starting from 1.5 included a support for open formats in form of html export (although by default in limited form).

The workshop demonstrates the future direction of the in-house development environment used for translation and migration of Michael Joyce’s *afternoon.a story* (2011) and *Twilight. A Symphony* (2015) into browser/online ports and translations. The framework has been currently updated to its third edition which – apart from its support for guard fields, roadmaps, link scripting – introduces form-based import layer and mobile friendly visualizations of Storyspace Map Views based on D3.js JavaScript library. In fact, the library allows for visual representations of any connections between html elements. As such, the platform is evolving into a toolkit for linguistic and media translation of any e-elit work that enables html export. During the workshop a workflow of importing the work, processing its metadata, and preparing the linking system for the visualization module will be demonstrated and analysed.

The hypertexts used during the workshop are: *Izme Pass* by C. Guyer, M. Joyce, and M. Petry; *WOE* by M. Joyce, and *The Life of Geronimo Sandoval* by S. Ersinghaus.

## #93 Matthew Kirschenbaum, Deena Larsen, Andrew Ferguson and Susan Tracz

### Title:

“Beyond Range of Air”: The Story Behind the 30-Year Deferred Publication of William H. Dickey’s HyperPoems

### Abstract:

William H. Dickey, who died of complications from HIV in 1994, was born in 1928 and brought up in the Pacific Northwest. He published fifteen books of poetry, including *Of the Festivities*, which was selected by W. H. Auden for the Yale Series of Younger Poets in 1959, *More Under Saturn*, which was awarded the California Silver Medal for Poetry in 1963, and *The Rainbow Grocery*, which won the Juniper Prize in 1978. In the *Dreaming: Selected Poems* was published by the University of Arkansas Press in 1994, and *The Education of Desire* appeared posthumously from Wesleyan University Press in 1996.

While a professor of English and creative writing at San Francisco State University in the 1980s, he became interested in the potential of early personal computers to expand the boundaries of poetry. The California Association of Teachers of English cited him as "Friend of the Machine."

Beginning in 1988, Dickey used the HyperCard software on his Macintosh SE to compose what would become fourteen "HyperPoems." Integrating images, icons, animation, and sound effects with typography and text, the HyperPoems address many themes critics acknowledge as central to Dickey's print oeuvre: history, mythology, memory, sexuality, the barrenness of modern life, and (over and under all of it), love and death. But they also represent an important technical progression of his poetics, one with clear roots in the ideas about poetry he had forged through decades of mindfulness about the craft.

Three of the poems (those in Vol. 2) may fairly be called erotica, and represent unique documents of gay life in San Francisco at the height of a prior pandemic. They are certainly some of the very earliest (and most explicit) digital creative works by an LGBTQ+ author.

None were ever published in his lifetime. Plans for a posthumous edition (prepared for publication on floppy disk with technical and editorial assistance from Deena Larsen) ultimately went unfulfilled. In the summer of 2020, however, the HyperCard Online emulator at the Internet Archive (in Dickey's own home city of San Francisco) finally offered us a platform. This panel discussion will mark the first public presentation of Dickey's innovative HyperCard poetry to the electronic literature community. Panelists will include:

Matthew Kirschenbaum (Chair), Professor of English and Digital Studies at the University of Maryland. Kirschenbaum led the effort to recover the poems from older storage media and migrate them to the Internet Archive.

Deena Larsen, the original technical editor for Dickey's HyperPoetry. Larsen will walk us through one or two poems in detail, discussing both poetics and the nature of her posthumous editorial interventions.

Andrew Ferguson, lead for the HyperCard Online emulator. Ferguson will discuss technical challenges involved in migrating thirty-year-old HyperCard stacks to a browser-based environment.

Susan Tracz, Professor Emerita and the California State University Fresno and Dickey's literary executor—and long-time friend of the poet. Tracz will fill in the human story behind the poetry and the computers.

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[https://archive.org/details/william\\_dickey\\_hyperpoems\\_volume\\_2](https://archive.org/details/william_dickey_hyperpoems_volume_2)

## #194 Matthew Schneider

### **Title:**

Platforming Inclusivity: Blaseball and an inclusive vision of browser games

### **Abstract:**

Blaseball, a fantasy baseball simulator developed by The Game Band, took 2020 by storm, quickly developing from a niche web game to an legitimate cultural phenomenon, including a whole catalogue of fan-created merchandise, more than a dozen albums of music, including a musical, and a dedicated following of players from around the world. Much of the attraction of the game comes from the passionate involvement of the fans and the openness The Game Band have shown to players making the game their own.

In this paper, I demonstrate how The Game Band and players make use of the affordances of web browsers as a platform to create an inclusive space for play where each player can enjoy the game in their own way without precluding or diminishing other ways of playing Blaseball. The specific examples I examine are the use of a minimalist, text-forward approach to the game in a way that gives players licence to imagine a diverse, inclusive league of Blaseball characters; the development of "forbidden knowledge" as a way to include players with an interest in spoilers without alienating those who wish to avoid this information; and the player-led creation of a wiki that supports simultaneous-yet-mutually-exclusive descriptions of characters and events in the game, which allows the community of fans to enjoy a variety of interpretations of the minimalist events of the game without excluding any other faction of the fanbase.

In using a minimalist, text-forward approach to game development, The Game Band not only created a low-cost, quick-to-iterate game by excluding the time- and labour intensive components of visual art, video, and audio elements; they also created an opportunity for fans to develop their own visions of the in-game characters and events without being limited by canonical race, gender, or sexual orientation. This seemingly-practical choice for a project from a small team is in fact pivotal to the game's inclusiveness.

Given the easy access to the game's code that web browsers offer, it was inevitable that players would explore and try to divine how the game works. While such behaviour could be seen as cheating, in Blaseball the interaction with the game's code and data is part of the experience. In response to the grey area such interactions exist in, The Game Band and players developed the idea of "forbidden knowledge"— knowledge players had back-door access to but hadn't been made public by the game itself. I examine the concept of forbidden knowledge within the context of traditional methods of cheating, as studied by Mia Consalvo, and demonstrate how forbidden knowledge, as a social practice, is an inclusive response.

Finally, I demonstrate how players make use of the mutability of web content to allow multiple visions of the same game to coexist in the form of the Blaseball wiki. This wiki loads random fan-generated player backstories every time the page refreshes so that no single vision of the game dominates all others.

## #133 Melinda White

### **Title:**

Plat(form)s: accessible tools for new e-lit composers

### **Abstract:**

"In a participatory medium, immersion implies learning to swim, to do the things that the new environment makes possible." -Janet Murray, Hamlet on the Holodeck

For new "digital swimmers," or those just dipping their toes into the pool for a semester or two, complicated (and expensive) technology and skill sets can sometimes hinder creative expression. My goal, as a teacher of digital creative writing, is to get students to "listen to their broccoli" (follow their intuition), as Anne Lamott suggests, and express their unique voices through multiple modes. By utilizing software that is accessible on their own computers and easy to navigate, students are less intimidated and free to create and focus on writing. Although all software has its limitations, I'm seeing some wonderfully creative and thoughtful projects from my students.

My digital creative writing courses are "open education resource." In the past, I have relied heavily on the Adobe Creative Suite in my courses (accessible on campus) and taught mainly Dreamweaver for

hypertext projects. With the spring pivot online, Adobe was not quite as easy to access (although the free subscriptions they offered were appreciated by several of my students) and students in the fall wanted to use their own computers and not those in the lab. I had always tried to incorporate free software options—Twine, Google Maps, and Knightlab storytelling tools—but found myself expanding these options even more this past year. Between my writing and e-lit courses, we explored Google Earth, Scene, and ThingLink for 360 work, and relied mostly on Twine and ThingLink for hypertext projects. This semester I am adding Timeline. The simplicity of the software has allowed these new digital swimmers to delve deeper into the platforms' potential and their subject matter. I have been impressed with the complex projects being made in ThingLink, which at first glance seems like a very simple platform. You can add links to video, 360 environments, add sound, videos, and link multiple “pages” (projects) together. My intro. level students had very little trouble learning the interface and executing their ideas.

As Anne Frances Wysocki says in *Writing New Media*, “When someone makes an object that is both separate from her but that shows how she can use the tools and materials of her time, then she can see a possible self—a self positioned and working within the wide material conditions of her world, even shaping that world—in that object” (21). In this paper, I will discuss several of these “Plat(free)forms” and their capabilities (and limitations). I will explore how these accessible platforms enable expression, in particular of marginalized voices, as Twine has been used widely in the LGBTQ+ community, as well as provide potential for exploring virtual spaces with minimal technology. I will show several student projects that exemplify their uses, as well as how they are being used to create political, diverse, and deeply personal narratives, allowing digital learners to shape their worlds and add their voices to the world of e-lit.

## #227 Michael Heidt

### **Title:**

Hybrid Constitutions and the Algorithmic Social Contract

### **Abstract:**

Our lives unfold within an interstitial zone between digital platforms and physical sites, yet our laws and courts are geared towards regulation of meatspace practices. This text seeks to explore the potentials of communal practices of electronic writing in creating new forms of law able to deal with our contemporary reality in a more adequate and creative fashion.

Enthusiastic hacker culture once pronounced cyberspace as a politically independent entity. The sphere of the digital emerged as a model of post-political communal life, free from the infractions of corporations and the nation state. Within this regime all power rests with the hacker as creative individual - "Code is

law", the legal apparatus becomes identical with technical machinery. It is a fluid form of regulation, readily available to processes of patching, tinkering, substitution, and creative subversion.

In the face of monopolistic platform capitalism, these promises now ring hollow. Code may be law, but users do not have access to it - it is hackable no more. Meatspace law presents itself as outdated and repressive, its enforcement is slow and cumbersome. Content filters act instantaneous, yet their legitimacy remains dubious.

Despite perceptions of an anarchic digital space, online platforms such as social networks are in fact highly regulated. Every signifier within the logic of the platform is constantly appraised on the basis of its economic merits.

Life within the interstitial space of online and offline activity thus oscillates between a sense of repression and lawlessness. There is no constitution of cyberspace while social networks appear to have revoked the social contract.

Perhaps, the notion of an "algorithmic" social contract (Rahwan, 2018) holds interesting potential regarding the communal regulation of our hybrid realities. Originating from discourse surrounding the problematic of ethical AI, the notion of the algorithmic social contract situates itself at the crossroads of legal and technical infrastructure.

Thus it holds the potential of creating hybrid forms of social regulation, neither enforced through a traditional legal system nor subscribing to the doctrine of "code is law".

How could these electronic constitutions look like?

How would we write them?

I argue here that the practice of electronic writing offers unique potentials for creation of documents able to regulate the hybrid space consisting of digital and physical subjects.

Intelligible to humans and machines alike, they would have to move the passions of carbon-based subjects while informing the decisions of silicone based cognition.

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## #211 Michael Hurtado, Pamela Medina and Miluska Falero

### Title:

Media archeology: a genealogical approach to Peruvian electronic poetry

### Abstract:

Since the 1960s, several Peruvian poets, insular and heirs to an experimental poetic tradition, created works with visual and verbal elements that advanced the presence of poetry in electronic media and platforms. Works such as those by Jorge Eielson, Raquel Jodorowsky, Ricardo Falla, Enrique Verástegui, César Toro Montalvo or Juan Ramirez Ruiz already showed in Peruvian creators an awareness of the existence and assimilation of electronic media to their productions based on references to circuits electronic (1964), computers (1973-1988) and formal and experimental games with the algorithm (1977). Works like these are used in key antecedents to reimagine the Peruvian poetic tradition, but, at the same time, they raise the need for an approach that analyzes and discusses the adoption of the media as part of poetic experimentation to understand, in all its dimensions, at the time of the internet boom and its platformization, the work carried out in later decades by José Aburto with interactive poems using Flash (2000); Oswaldo Chanove through the possibilities of the hyperlink in a web platform (2001); Enrique Beó with hypertext poems in binary language through Wix and Issuu (2010); and Rafael García Godos with MVX0 a video game poem programmed in Unity (2017). Therefore, the objective of this panel is to show how, since the 2000s, Peruvian poets have inhabited digital platforms with works that used different technologies in trend, as practices related to what was previously developed by their peers in the materiality of paper. For this, our research will focus on this problem from a media archeology with two areas that must necessarily dialogue: discursive and digital. In the first case, to trace the insularity of these authors, we start from Michel Foucault's concept of genealogy as the study of a non-linear and heterogeneous history of knowledge, contextualized by power relations. In the second case, to show the jobs that were hosted on the Internet, we will use various rescue platforms such as wayback machine, for old websites; Ruffle, for work done in flash; and videos of the experience in the case of wix. The result of this work will be exposed in a data visualization on what we have called the origins of electronic poetry in Peru. In this way, we consider that a genealogical work must combine the apparatus of symbolic evaluation and the consequent use of platforms to counteract the absence of a critical and theoretical approach to this complex field, but also the obsolescence of technology.

## #74 Michael Schlauch

### Title:

The Paradox of Electronic Literature in the Classroom: Investigating the Challenges for New Literacy Practices within the Platformized School

### Abstract:

Reviewing the history of computing, the educational potential of new ways of knowledge representation and new literary affordances have sparked many influential ideas and reform efforts, spanning from "frantic systems" (Nelson, 1970) to constructionist discovery learning (Papert, 1993) to the reconfiguration of literary education (Landow, 2006, ch. 7). Yet, the current usages of electronic literature in education arguably fall behind those early anticipations. Therefore, this paper explores the wider educational and social entanglements that withhold electronic literature from entering classrooms in the context of current technology transformations.

Considering the recent pandemic-related global upsurge of the digitalization of educational systems, the mere lack of supply of digital devices and equipment will cease to be the main obstacle for the adoption of electronic literature in K12 classrooms. Nonetheless, the question shifts to what imaginaries and discourses shape (and limit) the use of new digital literary affordances. Reviewing current trends, three issues are identified. These concern (1) a focus on technological disruption, (2) problematizing learning objectives and (3) the marginalization of teaching.

The focus on technological disruption (and solutionism) refers to a tendency for innovators to overly emphasize particular technological aspects and to become fixated on their "disruptive" benefits while disregarding the need for cultural and artistic conventions and communities of education practices to grow within the digital medium.

Secondly, the problematization of learning objectives relates to a prioritization of basic skills and 21st century workforce preparation while neglecting the need to address new critical literacy practices. Moreover, reading researchers have expressed concerns about the erosion of deep reading within digital media (E-Read, 2019). Rather than responding with a restricted, preservationist stance limited to paper-based literacy, educators and authors may find ways of combining material affordances and electronic literature to introduce wider literacy conceptions in educational practice.

In a similar vein, the marginalization of teaching is concerned with how technology is being used to quantify, classify and control teaching practices within new regimes of digital governance. In other words, teachers are being increasingly framed as technicians and behavioral managers in place of enhancing their role as "cyberbards" (Murray, 2016) or "narrative architects" (Jenkins, 2004).

Given that some of the issues raised correspond to known problems in the field of electronic literature, they also provide opportunities for further transdisciplinary research into the production and adaptation of electronic literature for educational purposes.

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## #188 Michał Furgal

### Title:

Poster: Behind The Scenes of Twilight. A Symphony Online. Evolving Framework

### Abstract:

This poster presents the in-house development environment used for translation and migration of Michael Joyce's *Twilight. A Symphony* (2021) into browser/online edition. The framework has been built from scratch but based on translations of Joyce's hypertexts into Polish. Apart from supporting guard fields, outgoing link labelling and conditional links – for the first time in the history of Storyspace ports – it will also support mobile friendly visualisation of the Storyspace Map View.

Programming tools: Java, HTML, JavaScript, Microsoft .NET MVC Framework.

The poster will present the scheme of media translation process and visualization template.

## #177 Natalia Fedorova and Anna Tolkacheva

### Title:

Generated Mandelstam

**Abstract:**

The paper describes the procedure of porting of one of the first known poetry generators in Russian from a description of a program algorithm published as an article in the USSR Academy of Sciences: Automatics and Telemechanics in 1978. Boris Katz, a computer linguist at MIT in the moment, and at that moment mathematical mechanical faculty of Moscow university graduate was working on the generator in 1972 - 1975. The generator is based on Stone, 1916, the collected poems by Osip Mandelstam. This work was inspired by his elder colleague, a professor of Moscow University, E.M.Landis. Katz started his research on machine poetry and was asking colleagues if they knew anyone working on the theme in the Soviet Union, and they failed to point him to similar work.

After several years of developing the program on BECM - 4 (Big Electronic Calculating Machine) he noticed Michael Gasparov's book Contemporary Russian verse. Metrics and rhythmic. 1974, that analysed contemporary and traditional poetic verse and general laws of organization of Russian verse. This made a considerable contribution to the work.

In order to understand the context in which On Program Composing Verse was produced we have to note that unlike in other language contexts the first generated poems in Russian appeared later than musical compositions, even though the beginnings of statistical analysis of literary texts dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. Another component that proved necessary for the computational poetics in the Soviet context was the study of structural properties of literary texts such as metrical analysis of Russian verse undertaken by Vladislav Kholshchevnikov, Boris Tomashevsky and Michael Gasparov. So it was important to gain both qualitative and quantitative knowledge in regards of the properties of the poetic text in Russian.

Porting or recreating this generator involved creation of a database in which every word of the Mandelstam's Stone has been classified and included into a database. The program was created by a computer scientist Boris Katz in 1978 for BECM. A poet and computer programmer Anna Tolkacheva used java script for porting the original program. The paper will report on the principles and choices made during the process, as well as the mistakes made at the first iteration of the project and methods implemented for correcting them.

## **#182 Nicholas Schiller**

**Title:**

Comparing methods of generating 3.5 inch floppy disk forensic images

**Abstract:**

I propose comparing methods of generating forensic images of 3.5 inch floppy disks in order to evaluate methodologies for use in media archeology labs. Many key works of electronic literature (including the bulk of Eastgate Systems, Inc. early publications) were released on 3.5 inch floppy media. I will use both Kyroflux and Superdrive floppy disk controller units to generate forensic images and also generate images using BitCurator suite of forensic software and using legacy computing hardware and software.

Gathering data on the quality of images created by these disparate methods and also on the workflows involved and the ease and practicality of employing them will produce useful information for other media archeology labs examining how the field of floppy disk forensics has advanced.

The results of these tests should show useful comparison data between the quality of the images created from identical media, the range of image types that can be created using each technique, and the usefulness for online access and emulation each forensic methodology and platform provides.

## **#158 Oreto Domenech and Anton Ferret**

**Title:**

The Fugue \* book: when platforms don't let us escape literature.

**Abstract:**

Anton Ferret, author of the E-Lit work The Fugue\* book, will present a reflection on the technological and creative part of it, all that can be done well working with platforms and taking advantage of their own intrusion into the data and all that it means to lose it by the cultural and technological change that has meant the greater awareness for privacy. Oreto Doménech, a researcher in digital literature, will focus on the reception: on how this literary work reconfigures the platforms through which it's expressed and on how fiction itself uses the platforms to build a metadiscursive reflection on the literature inserted in the historical and social fact.

The Fugue\* book (ELC II; 2008) turns the reader into the author and protagonist of the same story he is reading and his real-life friends turn into fictional characters. Both obsessively harass him in a violent, sensual plot: with crimes, envy (including literary one), false attributions of authorship and bitter disputes in forums and social networks. Technically, the work is based on the idea of remixing and "mashup" and integrates elements as diverse as the Facebook APIs, applications in PHP and Javascript languages, automatic emails, PDF self-generation or speech synthesis. You can see a video of the work ([https://youtu.be/m4UW5uo\\_H4M](https://youtu.be/m4UW5uo_H4M)) which cannot be read right now due to the obsolescence of the Adobe Flash software.

Technologies and platforms in this work are related to creation, not to edition or distribution, which supposes main problems and diverse derivatives of the technologies, like the need of continuous technological update, costs, dependence on the work to the availability of the technology and of the platforms, like for example, to other people's conditions, subjection to technological evolution of the platforms and the introduction of third parties, the big platforms, in the very heart of the works. This literary fiction is constructed with interaction, multimedia, language technologies, data obtained from the Internet and data provided by the reader, ingredients all of which involve well-known and used technologies and platforms.

However, the reading pact that introduces us to fiction, reconfigures these platforms along different reading paths. The use of the wide range of platforms builds the plausibility of the stories and ironically places them at the center of the digital landscape in a critical review of the platforms themselves. The theme is distilled, refined, and focuses on the dehumanization of relationships between people, the text-context relationship, public and private space, the real self and masks (authorship, deception and plagiarism), gender literary texts and their analogy with the types of platforms... Texts and spaces related to a communicative situation completely out of literary creation make it possible for all these fragments to function as parts of a single literary narrative.

Reading *The Fugue\** book is an intelligent, amusing and critical experience, with the subtle background of the complexity of the human being able to create (the) networks with words. When digital accelerates the hybridization of the arts, only the centrality of the word defines literature.

## #198 Patrick Lichty

### **Title:**

Epidemiology and Spatial Narrative : Scaffolds under the Pandemic - Confinement Spaces and Existential E-Narrative

### **Abstract:**

Were forced into situations somewhere between Brazil and *The Matrix*, in which workspaces become the world. Also this evinced Paul Virilio's notion of technological acceleration while confining to one spot (ZOOM!) undifferentiates the technologically enabled person without disabilities and the technologically au and the technologically augmented paraplegic (*The Third interval*).

These existential effects led to my creation of a visual narratological immersive experience entitled *Confinement Spaces*, which consisted of 3D scans and renders of the UAE quotidian landscape, first of places immediately around me. But as I was able to expand my travels, more spaces were scanned in,

creating a form of “narrative molecule” based on experience in the 1990’s with designer Roy Stringer’s Navihedron interface regime.

In Confinement Spaces, six months of expanding explorations into iconic spaces of the United Arab Emirates as an allegory of confinement in space and the fracturing of reality as depicted by the glitches in the 3D scans.

All of these elements (technological collapse of space and time, the freezing of existence into a timeless space, and all of these spaces collapsed in to a form of momentary narrative are consistent with my studies of spatial narratology and form as proposed by Joseph Frank. In this paper, I wish to discuss the spatiality of pandemic time, the similarities of Covid time to Joyce and Proust, and the modes in which Confinement spaces develop these ideas.

## **#109 Perla Sasson-Henry, Oreto Doménech and María Ángela Celis Sánchez**

### **Title:**

E-Lit and its Myriad of Platforms: A Critical Approach to Language, Culture and Digital Literacy

### **Abstract:**

E-Lit is yet to be discovered by many scholars, educators and students at different levels of education but the impact it has had on the teaching and learning of those who have already come across this field is worth sharing in order to broaden not only the recognition of the field but the impact it might have in the teaching and learning of modern languages in our fast-evolving technological societies. In light of the benefits that a critical study of e-lit works presents, this panel addresses three scenarios where the teaching and learning of e-lit has proven a challenging yet productive path to broaden educators and students’ horizons alike. Whereas one presentation seeks to reflect on the training of educators at the elementary and high school level in literary and digital literacy, the other two presentations discuss scenarios where the teaching of e-lit in higher education has demonstrated how e-lit with its richness opens the way for interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning, approaches that emphasize the digital and the literary (Saum- Pascual, 2017). How do educators and students take advantage of the affordances of the different platforms either to teach or analyze e-lit? What does a critical interdisciplinary analysis of e-it works bring to a modern language course?

## #189 Rachel Horst, Kedrick James, Esteban Morales, Yuya Takeda and Effiam Yung

### Title:

Sounding the futures imaginary: a collaborative intra-modal storytelling methodology

### Abstract:

While Covid-19 may have fractured our public, private, and professional narratives of normalcy, out of this slow-moving and surreal catastrophe, new images of the future imaginary began to emerge, as well as new creative practices for collaborative (re)imagining. The Digital Literacy Centre is a collective of researcher/academic/artists at the University of British Columbia who are interested in exploring innovative approaches to literacy, digital media research, and experimental methodologies for technologically enriched meaning-making practices and collaboration. Like everyone in the world, each of us in the DLC experienced the pandemic individually as a diffracted and intensely intimate encounter and yet also collectively, as a shared story, one that we were narrating together in real time, however virtually. We decided to take up this evolving pandemic moment as a technological and creative research challenge to engage with the innovative digital platforms at our disposal towards collaborative futures imagining during a time of crisis. *Skunk Tales* is the result— a multimodal, collaborative futures fiction that we wrote/composed/sonified/and performed in chapters that map an imagined future of human interactions with literate technologies.

In this paper, we describe a collaborative, technologically-mediated storytelling methodology that enacts “the diffraction patterns that arise when specific aural experiences are rubbed against specific narrations of human-technological coupling” (Cecchetto, 2013, p. 3). During our storytelling sessions, we simultaneously sonified the emergent narrative data using Singling, a Text-to-MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) linguistic data sonification software. We developed Singling for the sonification and visceralization of textual data in qualitative research and analysis. Capable of sounding discrete characters, symbols, and punctuation, as well as word forms in lexicogrammatical categories of English language texts, Singling transforms text into user-determined soundscapes. As we wrote *Skunk Tales*, we invited the emergent soundings to permeate the futures imagining and become entangled with the movements of the narrative. As Cecchetto (2013) argued, “It is precisely the forceful quality of sound that makes it an agent of modulation that can help to amplify certain elements of narratives of human-technological coupling, making them audible” (p. 4). This paper maps our creative futures research generation that is informed by technological posthumanism and how “different technologies of text production suggest different models of signification... initiat[ing] new experience of embodiment; and embodied experience interacts with codes of representation to generate new kinds of textual worlds” (Hayles, 1993, p. 69). Sound permeates the methodology and the resulting diffracted narratives, both theoretically, materially, and thematically.

We first began the narrative face to face, in the early days of the pandemic, and then diffracted outwards into social isolation and virtual jam sessions; we extended the narrative beyond the limits of our collective and into a storying performance at the 2020 Artful Inquiry Research Group virtual conference, during which we wrote and sonified a chapter live in virtual space. As such, *Skunk Tales* is a pandemic tale, sounding the evolution of a future now receding into the past, while simultaneously signifying new possibilities for dynamic arts-based conversations between subjectivities, technologies, sounds, and meanings.

## #86 Richard Carter

### Title:

Executable Landscapes: Speculative Platforms for Ecological E-Lit

### Abstract:

The contemporary digital environment is made possible through a matrix of behemoth infrastructures that traverse the orbital, atmospheric, oceanic, and terrestrial domains. These infrastructures manifest not only in the narrowly technical sense, but encompass the manufacturing chains, regulatory interfaces, and geopolitical contexts that enable (or forestall) the development, deployment, and maintenance of digital systems at a global scale.

Underpinning all these aspects are the flows of energy and materials constituting the liveable Earthly ecology. The latter comprises the ultimate baseline 'platform' on which specific digital platforms, as more commonly expressed, are enabled—but which, being so defined, can obscure these far larger structures and processes in which they are embedded.

Coming out of all this, we can note that the global scale of digital infrastructure is now foundational to the charting and modelling of a rapidly deteriorating planetary ecology, but this comes with the recognition that the former is both the product, and a critical facilitator, of economic processes that are driving the very pollution, wastage, and largely unhindered exploitation behind our present environmental calamities.

It is in these contexts that we are encouraged to evaluate how works of digital art and electronic literature are responding to this uncomfortable paradox. We might recall here how early digital art sought to demonstrate (with admittedly varying success) different possibilities for computing beyond militarised technoscience, and the creative and critical challenge today is to rework and reframe digital platforms so they might perform and inspire substantive ecological critique and expression, rather than be relegated only as perpetuators of extractive, accelerationist, technocentric paradigms. Contemporary electronic literature, in its very particular fusions of data, writing, and the algorithmic, affords rich experimental

pathways for just this kind of work—as deftly illustrated by the recent outputs of artists such as J.R. Carpenter and Eugenio Tisselli.

This paper will contextualise and document the author’s latest experiments with creating electronic literary works that bring together a diverse, unconventional assemblage of platforms as a key aspect of their creation and expression. Cameras, satellites, drones, canvas graphics, esoteric code, and printed outputs are combined to establish elaborate, contingent exchanges, with the ‘work’ itself being enacted across these different platforms—each contributing to an always provisional outcome—and drawing its creative and critical force as much by examining and reflecting on these aspects and processes, as the varied marks they leave behind. In particular, the author will discuss his newly emerging work, “Landform”, in which satellite and drone image data of terrestrial landscapes are parsed into esoteric visual algorithms, that, once interpreted, are compiled into code poems that draw on a vocabulary derived from scientific, scholarly, and poetic texts discussing present ecological concerns. The aim is to actualise a set of speculative, experimental relations between the platforms, materials, and concepts involved, investigating their potential for enacting novel modes of environmental computational practice, and, thus, suggest another vector for articulating the entanglements and contingencies that are driving the present situation.

## #124 Rob Gallagher

### **Title:**

From ‘Cinema Envy’ to Social Media Envy? The Changing Face of Videogame Characterisation in the Age of Platformisation

### **Abstract:**

It was in Summer 2020 that Seraphine - a ‘virtual influencer’ in the mould of Brüd’s Lil Miquela – began building an audience on Twitter, Instagram and Soundcloud. Each of her posts served to flesh out her persona: that of an anxiety-prone aspiring musician with an ‘adorkably’ girly personal style and a cute pet cat. In September it emerged that Seraphine was a new playable character in e-sports giant Riot’s League of Legends (Riot 2009), a free-to-play ‘multiplayer online battle arena’ funded by the sale of ‘skins’ and cosmetics items that allow players to customise the appearance of their chosen characters. While the character proved highly popular, the launch was not without controversy, with some pundits finding Riot’s bids for ‘relatability’ clumsy and their portrayal of the Seraphine’s mental health issues ‘perverse’ and ‘offensive’ – especially when set against the backdrop of a worsening pandemic (Jackson 2020). The controversy intensified when, in a post published two months later, Medium user Step-nie (2020) recounted her ‘brief relationship with a Riot employee’ and outlined her belief that the company had essentially plagiarised her online persona to create Seraphine, a character who ‘looks like me, and talks like me, and sounds like me, and draws like me’.

The Seraphine incident highlights how shifts in the development, distribution and monetisation of digital games driven by the rise of ‘platform capitalism’ (Srnicek 2017) are fostering new approaches to characterisation and storytelling - approaches informed by (and often modelled on) the ‘self-branding’ strategies (Duffy and Hund 2015) and ‘small storytelling’ practices (Georgakopoulou 2016) of young social media users. For a sense of how these approaches diverge from previous paradigms we might look to *The Last of Us Part II* (Naughty Dog 2020). Naughty Dog’s blockbuster sequel confirms that gaming has yet to shake the case of ‘cinema envy’ that Eric Zimmerman diagnosed it with almost two decades ago (2002, 125). If the game’s photorealistic visuals and its use of state-of-the-art performance capture techniques mean it often looks like a film, its approach to plotting and characterisation is similarly steeped in Hollywood conventions, and entails subjecting protagonists Ellie and Abby to a series of life-threatening trials and life-changing tests of character set in motion by a shocking inciting incident. But while the game was one of the highest-grossing releases of last year, as a story-led singleplayer console game it is also a specimen of what many consider a dying breed. Drawing on accounts of fictional characters as ‘quasi-persons’ (Frow 2014), studies of transmedia characterisation (Thon 2019; Steinberg 2012; Azuma 2009) and work on games and social media, this paper asks what Ellie, Abby and Seraphine can tell us about the functions of fictional characters in an entertainment ecosystem being reshaped by platformisation.

## #146 Rob Wittig

### **Title:**

Netprov in the Classroom: Character Building and Team Building

### **Abstract:**

This talk shares collaboration strategies and “funnest practices” for using netprov — networked improvisation, online roleplay literature — in the classroom. In sequences of “jump right in” creative games, students explore such topics as character development and character voice in a real-time laboratory of quick creative exchanges (accompanied by mutual encouragement and laughter). By building a bridge between students’ own social media writing practices and learning about historic literature, their creative strategies are expanded and critical connections between canonical texts and contemporary, everyday writing are made. What students may not realize is that netprov also can help break through their own creative blockages and freezes.

## #144 Rob Wittig and Cathy Podeszwa

### **Title:**

Workshop: Platform Dive: Netprov and Performance in Videoconferencing

### **Abstract:**

In this workshop we will bounce about in the egg carton of zoom and experiment with ways to dissolve the 6th wall (the camera) (the other 5 being: the 3 walls of the room and the 2 side walls of the image frame) through collaborative story and through dance and physical performance. Building on the practice of netprov — internet improv, online roleplay narrative — we will use words and movement to explore those zones of video meeting practice that have yet to coalesce into social norms: awkward beginnings, sudden disappearances, background guests, dropped connections, mis-timings, garbles, and lags. Each of these can lead to narrative. We also will build on art history and comics to experiment with ways to make the platform's grid echo and expand shared visual traditions, or, comically, to play against them. We will share and co-create methods and moments you can apply in art and education.

## #111 Roderick Coover

### **Title:**

Platform Collaboration, Creativity and Determinism in Virtual Reality (VR): An artist paper the making of The Key To Time, a work for VR, domes and CAVEs.

### **Abstract:**

Addressing conference themes of platform utopias, determinisms, identities, collaborations and modes, this conversational presentation discusses ways that concepts of time, space and narrative are expanded in The Key To Time <https://unknownterritories.org/keytotime/>. The Key To Time is a surreal and lyrical work for immersive, cinematic art experiences such as domes and 360 degree cinemas as well as for individual viewing on head-mounted virtual reality devices. Bridging 1920's silent film and virtual reality, the surface story draws viewers into a playful exploration of genre, identity and desire. In doing so, the work unravels narrative underpinnings of myths, genres, and technological constructs of time.

The Key To Time is created by media artist/filmmaker Roderick Coover (FR/US) and composer Krzysztof Wołek (PL) as part of a program designed to build cross-cultural, composer-artist collaborations. The dreamlike story follows a scientist who is trapped in the future due to a time-travel experiment gone wrong. His only hope to escape his predicament is to travel through dreams. His dreams, however, are troubled by anxieties, fears and anger. As the scientist travels through time, aesthetics change from those

of silent film of the early 20th century to those of VR and a future cinema. There is also slippage between these times, with figures from memories walking into color settings as black and white figures or cartoon ones, and visual references draw upon early cinematic works like Louis Lumiere's Arrival of a Train at Ciotat (1895) and Fritz Lang's Metropolis (1927).

Through montage and collage, a mix color and black and white images, animation, intertitles, and sudden changes in dimension and perspective, The Key To Time toys with conventions and expectations. Song and dialog combine with layered and collaged imagery filmed in greenbox studio settings and natural settings. As with works like Guy Maddin's The Forbidden Room (2015) and David Blair's Wax or the Discovery of Television Among the Bees (1991), this experimental artwork plays with the ways differing visual technologies shape consciousness, language and narrative forms.

Whereas in many films, sound composition comes after the film is written, shot and edited, in this case the music was part of the process of invention rather than an afterthought done only in post-production. Five songs were at the center of design. The songs hold essential roles in the movement of the story, which is driven by emotional tensions and unseen forces rather than rational thought. Second, we decided to record the script in advance of shooting the film. This decision enhanced a creative freedom and allowed for lots of play between dialog, images and sounds. The result disconnect between voice and image is evocative of early film and radio drama, and the approach is also similar to a workflow frequently used in animation; in this way too, the platform stimulated new ways of thinking about the collaboration and the creative process.

## #223 Samara Hayley Steele

### **Title:**

Cellphone Plays: Exploring a Cross-Platform Genre

### **Abstract:**

Resembling at times a two-person show, the cellphone play is a dramatic genre that usually involves two characters: "you", the assumed texter, who tends to be the primary character, and a textee, who tends to be the secondary character, and whose identity is usually only indicated by whatever the primary character has named them in their phone. While cellphone screen caps are often treated as a type of fact-event in public discourse, the cellphone play genre opens up this cross-platform approach to the potentials of composing fiction. This paper offers an exploration of cellphone plays that are roughly 6-12 screencaps in length created by student artists during the 2020-21 academic year, along with artistic statements discussing the artists' intentions for each piece. The cellphone play genre offers a performative practice to bring two people together to create fiction in these COVID times of digital distance.

## #224 Samara Hayley Steele

### Title:

"To Larp, or Not to Larp?" Must Embodiment and Code Deployment Reinforce Systemic Injustice across Larp Platforms?

### Abstract:

Larps are a form of analog game in which participants co-create and collectively inhabit diegeses (Montola 2012). Larp may also be thought of as a medium, and codic larps are a type of larp platform that use diegetic code (Steele 2016) to represent parts of the story, allowing conflicts about what happens next to be resolved through contests in which diegetic material has been congealed into code and rendered deployable. Codic larps offer a unique opportunity to teach and study code, and the analog nature of codic larp allows advanced engagements like platform modding to happen with fewer layers of technology to navigate than digital code platforms, ostensibly lowering the barrier of entry to coding, while allowing diegetic code to serve as a "boundary object" (Star 1999) through which scholars and professionals from many backgrounds may develop common language to engage in cross-codic critique.

Recently, activities including as codic larps have come under scrutiny by those who question the power relations inherent in physically embodying one's own avatar, as well as in rituals surrounding the embodied deployment of diegetic code. After developing and touring their digital Shakespeare game, *\_Play the Knave\_*, Gina Bloom, Nicholas Toothman, and Evan Buswell have recently argued that having players physically embody their characters is troubled by the degree to which out-of-game asymmetrical power relations like racisms and sexism attach themselves to bodies (Bloom et al. 2021), an issue that is part of a phenomenon that might be called out-of-game creep. Additionally, sociologist Steven Dashiell has criticized rituals that often surround code-based analog gaming for reinforcing structural forms of sexism and other inequalities (2017, 2020), fueling arguments within larp communities that diegetic code deployment should be removed from games altogether (cf. Fatland et al. 1999). Seeming to push back against these sentiments is the work of other gamemaker-scholars who have engaged larp's embodiment and rituals of code deployment to ostensibly develop interventions into pervasive forms of systemic inequality. Jonaya Kemper's work on emancipatory bleed (2018), Diana Shipley's efforts to develop anti-racist scaffolding for codic larp (2021), as well as the work I have done on anti-code (2018), and the efforts to develop larp consent mechanics by Johanna Koljonen (2016), Sarah Lynne Bowman (2017), and Maury Brown (2017), demonstrate efforts to not only salvage different facets of the larp medium, but to "fork the code," using the larp medium's unique embodiment and of code-based play to offer game mechanics and scaffolding as interventions into systemic racisms and sexism.

## #173 Samya Brata Roy

### Title:

Indian Electronic Writing: Publics, Platforms and Possibilities.

### Abstract:

In Electronic Writing, what often becomes more essential than the narrative is how the computational elements are brought into the fold of storytelling with the text at its centre (Heckman and O'Sullivan 2018). It is true but not uniform across all spaces of creative production. Collaborative efforts like We Are Angry | Experience have been very successful in using the online space to deliver a powerful message. But, in a space like India, the digital divide also dictates the mode of storytelling, especially when it comes to solo ventures. When we think about Indian online narratives, the most common instances reach us via social media (Shanmugapriya and Menon 2018). Despite its reach, the extent of experimentation is rather low. That is why much of the writing can also be found on blogs hosted by websites like WordPress or Blogger. Yet, from personal experience of online writing, as most of the readership is found on mobile phones, the amount of media that can be incorporated is also limited. It is limited because, in a space like India, many people still do not have access to a standard internet connection to view the multimodal elements.

My paper proposes to address how individual storytellers, i.e., the people who write, design, and publish narratives all by themselves, without any collective or institutional support, who are forced to be minimal, go about telling stories in the online mode. My central research questions would be to understand: 1) the markers of Indian-ness (if any will vary from a case to case basis as it is impossible to reduce a culture to certain markers) in the narratives 2) the socio-cultural background of people who are telling these stories 3) the platforms they are choosing to tell these stories. To gather the data, I intend to float a short survey in various research and writing communities and use the dra. ft | Future of Text (@dra\_ft\_) • Instagram photos and videos archive to develop my hypothesis. Via analysis, I hope to understand the type, mode, and platform(s) most accessible for storytelling in the Indian online space.

## #165 Sarah Thorne

### Title:

Paper or Pixel: Revisiting Geoff Ryman's 253

### Abstract:

In 1996, Geoff Ryman released 253: or Tube Theatre, a novel that used hypertext linking to set the stage for his fictitious story about the crash of a London Underground train. The text is divided into seven

sections, one for each of the train's cars, which are further subdivided into passages, one for each of the 252 passengers and its driver. Two years later, a print version of the novel was released as *253: The Print Remix*. The print version maintains the same structure, but uses an index to mimic the hyperlinking used in the original. Although the two texts are otherwise identical, they were not equally reviewed by readers, as many found that Ryman's narrative fell flat in print; as Robert Kendall (2000) writes, "though the book was generally well received, some reviewers complained that it suffered from the loss of its interactive element." Others more harshly criticized the print version as "an example of form obliterating content" (Mitchell 1998), while at the same time praising the hypertext version as a "curiously addictive form of storytelling, relying on both the illusion that the reader is shaping the story through choosing which links to follow, and the voyeuristic joy of finding out what people really think on the tube." That these two texts, which share the same restrictions on form, were reviewed so differently reveals the necessity of investigating platform effects. Drawing on Jacques Lacan's theories of neurosis and perversion, this paper examines how the two texts produce different forms of enjoyment that contribute to their disparate reviews. The change in platform, as I argue, does not only alter the text's signification (Grossman 1997), but changing how readers navigate the text alters the voyeuristic fantasy conveyed by its narrative that promises to permit readers to peer into the lives of the strangers around them.

Although Ryman's text is now 25 years old, it has been chosen in part as an opportunity to reflect on how audience's thinking about electronic platforms has since shifted. *253* was once notable for its release on two platforms, though this practice is commonplace today. It was also fairly recently that Ryman's novel disappeared from his website, [ryman-novel.com](http://ryman-novel.com). According to the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine ([archive.org](http://archive.org)) and corroborated by websites that maintain records of domain registrations, Ryman's ownership of the website ended in 2018. In its place, the website appears to have been taken over by so-called domain squatters and currently contains a number of short articles about Ryman, but its links now redirect users to more dubious sites. The challenges of preserving and archiving digital literature are well-known (see Abba 2012, Dene 2018, Schrimpf 2008), but thankfully *253* remains accessible through the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, which last produced a snapshot of the novel on August 5th, 2017. In analyzing this novel, this paper makes a case for its continued relevance to discussions of new media platforms in a contemporary context.

### #33 Serge Bouchardon and Erika Fülöp

#### Title:

Digital Narrative and Temporality

#### Abstract:

Some say that our relationship with time has changed. The "new management", in companies and

administrations, is believed to lead to an ever greater and more stressful feeling of urgency. The Covid 19 crisis has undoubtedly further accentuated this trend, with one feeling compelled to be ever more connected (primarily to major platforms) and to respond immediately and at all times to digital requests.

According to Paul Ricoeur, "a story is significant insofar as it outlines the features of temporal experience" (Ricoeur, 1985). To what extent do the forms of digital literary narratives that can be observed today express a certain relationship to temporality? Are new ways of working, of organizing society (mobility, network, collaboration) and a new relationship to temporality (acceleration of time, immediacy, lifestyle events) likely to lead to other forms of narratives?

We will study three different forms of digital narratives – each time relying on a specific example – in order to understand what the Digital (and platformization) may change in the relationship between narratives and temporality.

We will first focus on a notification-based smartphone fiction (downloadable from an application platform), in which the fictional character regularly sends notifications to the reader. This type of story is based on a play with temporality via the intrusion of reality, of the reader's real time.

We will also analyze a narrative on the web based on a real-time data flow. The greatest limitation imposed on the narrative by this type of dimension is that the causal sequence is replaced by the sequentiality of real events. But this technical specificity of being based on a real-time data flow brings the contingency of life into the narrative, and leads to a "pure temporal experience" (Chambefort, 2020).

Finally, we will look at a collective narrative on a social network platform, the temporality of which depends on the activity of the contributors but is also "in direct contact with the passage of time" (Saemmer, 2018).

Do these forms of narratives help us cope with another relationship to temporality? Indeed, if we follow Ricoeur, "time becomes human insofar as it is articulated in a narrative way"...

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## #96 Shanmugapriya T and Deborah Sutton

### **Title:**

'Lost water! Remains Scape?': Transformation Waterscapes in Coimbatore from past to present through digital poetry

### **Abstract:**

'Lost water! Remains Scape?': Transformation Waterscapes in Coimbatore from past to present through digital poetry

The digital poetry 'Lost water! Remains Scape?' is written in Tamil by the environmental poet Mohamed Rafiq and in English by Shanmugapriya T, the co-author of this paper. It is created using 2D and 3D environments, and photos in Blender and Adobe Animate software. The 2D and 3D environments reflect the narrative about the ecosystem of waterscapes in the past and the photo animations represent the current situation of the water bodies in Coimbatore, the southern region in South India. This digital poetry is created based on the findings from our AHRC-funded project 'Digital Innovations in Water Scarcity, Coimbatore, South India'. This interdisciplinary project investigates the changed waterscape in Coimbatore, South India across 150 years by using range of materials and activities including studying historical maps and satellite imagery, and conducting interviews with local farmers, activists and NGOs. This digital poetry is an endeavour to bridge gap between digital literature and digital humanities. The questions we ask in this paper are how can the adoption/integration of digital literary method be an effective agency and actor to represent the environmental objects and disseminate the findings for targeted audiences? How can tools and methods contribute to the digital humanities and digital literature grounded in materials from the global south? The main aim of this paper is to explore the digital literary method as an effective agency to communicate the research findings to the broader public.

Reminiscence is the primary theme of our digital poetry. It will be mediated through text, animations and images. Waterscape is an imperative source and forms a conducive ecological community in every villages of the region Coimbatore. It is a primary source for drinking, irrigation and other economic and cultural activities. However, the forgotten waterscapes due to drought, dereliction and climate change have become conduit of drainage waters, and garbage dumping areas. The photos that have taken during our field visits depict the current condition of waterbodies among which most of them are in dreadful state. On the other hand, the oral testimonies of the local farmers illustrate a different situation of waterscapes a few decades ago. They narrated how they were blessed to have had a healthy waterscape in the past. They also told us that there were particular flora and fauna that belong to the region had been destroyed and some of the specific species such as Noyyal Otter had gone extinct. The interactive 2D and 3D environment of digital poetry will provide a revisitation to such lost waterscapes created based on the oral

testimonies. It will also portray the current condition of waterscapes through photo animation and text narration. This digital poetry will be disseminated to students, scholars, activists and the general public through our academic and NGO partners and local schools and colleges. Feedback and some of the interviews conducted will be made available via the project website.

## #142 Siebe Bluijs

### **Title:**

An Institutional Approach To Building a Platform of Digital Literary Works: The Case(s) of Dutch and Flemish Digital Literature

### **Abstract:**

The recently formed Dutch Digital Literature Consortium – a partnership of researchers from Tilburg University, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Royal Library of the Netherlands and local libraries – aims to develop and launch an online catalogue of digital literature, created in the Netherlands and Flanders, and turn this collection into a publicly accessible digital catalogue. The project draws inspiration from comparable databases, such as the Electronic Literature Collection 1-3, NT2, Hermaneaia, and Literatura Electrónica Hispánica. Whereas these databases bring together digital literary projects from a variety of traditions – often with a particular focus –, the project at hand focuses exclusively on works from a specific geographical location (much like collections such as the Brazilian Electronic Literature Collection).

The development of such a database gives rise to several theoretical and methodological questions that are central to the study of e-lit: which works and genres are eligible to be included in the database, and on what grounds is this selection made? Practical decisions critically hinge on the fundamental question what digital literature is. This question has been answered – explicitly and implicitly – by different actors and institutions involved with e-lit, such as funding institutions, libraries, and other ‘gatekeepers’. Such institutions are significant because they are responsible for the material and the symbolic production of digital literature. As Yra van Dijk points out, digital works are ‘not autonomous, in the sense that they are in fact funded and sometimes initiated by some institution, mostly in the end by the government itself’ (2012, 2). If, as Florian Cramer claims, ‘electronic literature ha[s] established itself as a field in Pierre Bourdieu’s sense, i.e. as an area of production and discourse with intrinsic distinctions and authorities’ (2012, 1), then we need to consider how these authorities push digital literature in specific directions.

While acknowledging that digital literature is also a transnational phenomenon, this paper analyses the ways in which institutions shape digital literature in specific techno-cultural contexts. The Low Countries share a language and – to a great extent – a literary tradition, while they also differ significantly culturally and institutionally. When one pays attention to the institutional frameworks, the specificity of the Dutch versus Flemish digital literature tradition is brought into focus. The institutional approach that I advocate

thus does not only do justice to the multidimensional and changing nature of digital literature, it also takes into account the differences across linguistic areas and nation states.

The question what counts as 'literature' is answered differently over time and in specific geographic contexts. The same holds true for the question what belongs to the realm of the 'digital'. Therefore, this institutional approach is twofold, 1) I examine which digital genres and individual works are considered literary, and 2) I examine what is considered digital within these specific contexts. The theoretical overview of the institutional framework of digital literature in the Low Countries offers a solid starting point for the Consortium's position on the practical, methodological questions raised above.

## #220 Surojit Kayal, Pujita Guha and Maile Young

### **Title:**

Pandemics, Platforms, Panoptics

### **Abstract:**

We propose this panel around the question of how digital platforms have played the role of the classical panopticon during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our research draws from our existing project The Digital Pandemic ([thedigitalpandemic.com](http://thedigitalpandemic.com)), which we started in the summer of 2020, to investigate the specificities of the COVID-19 as the first pandemic of the digital era. For this ELO Panel we focus exclusively on one aspect of our research: the dispersal of surveillance tactics through digital platforms during the current pandemic.

From its very classical formulation, surveillance is a platformed event: an all-seeing eye on a raised dais. While the digital challenges erstwhile notions of architecturally fixed surveillance, tracking its users environmentally, it nevertheless subsists on digital platforms as interfaces or daises upon which user information can be extracted. In this view of the digital, we explore how the panopticon, as an abstract platform, has proliferated in different concrete shapes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of our three project members (and panelists) focuses on separate case studies of this dispersal of surveillance with close attention to the aesthetics and politics of digital platforms. Maile Young's paper ("Public Health, Private Platform") studies the platforms and interfaces of COVID-19 testing to explore how they represent and reproduce the failing health care system of the US. She shows how the crisis of America's healthcare system is exacerbated by potential dangers of medical data leaks and monetization. Pujita Guha's paper ("Red for Caution") studies the optical aspect of the panoptics through an examination of the color schemes in contact tracing apps such as China's Alipay and India's Arogya Setu. She shows how the use of color for pandemic visualization owes its origin to the redlining of American cities and thus reproduces tactics of racial profiling, containment, surveillance and control. Finally, Suroit Kayal's presentation ("Platform Infrastructures of Protest Emergence") explores the platform based digital infrastructure behind

the emergence of protest movements during the pandemic such as the BLM and the ongoing Farmers' Movement in India. His presentation shows how the unavailability of other means and spaces such as the street ensured that digital platforms play a more significant role for both the coordination among protesters (for example, through the use of social media and chatting apps to google docs) and its containment through strategies of data gathering, analysis and tracking. In conversation, we will show how pandemic platforms have enabled and transformed surveillance technology to speculate on the futures of COVID-19 digital environments in the aftermath of disease.

## #68 Susie Cronin

### **Title:**

Interacting with Empathy: Migrant narrative in the context of mobile apps

### **Abstract:**

This paper explores two main mobile app narratives that deal with the issue of perilous irregular migration, 'Survival' (2017, Omnium Lab) and 'Bury me, my love' (2017, The Pixel Hunt, Figs, ARTE France). This paper explores the way in which the mobile app form lends itself to elevation of migrant narratives and explores the capacity of such works to generate empathy.

The paper will analyse the way in which migration and its subjects are treated and placed into relation with the notion of the game. The paper will also address the comparison between game-style apps and other online modes whereby migrant experience is being represented, such as that of humanitarian photojournalism and portraiture as it arises in social media apps, such as Instagram.

## #129 Svetlana Kuchina

### **Title:**

Generated Texts: Reading Strategy and Interpretational Options

### **Abstract:**

The paper is devoted to the reading and critical reflection of the generated electronic literary texts. From the structural point of view all textones of generated texts can be divided into standard schemes or patterns (word combinations or the whole sentences that are switched according to the software algorithms). Authors use these schemes to make generated texts close to the natural human language. If we look closer, for example, at elit twitter bots, most of their tweets look like meaningful expressions. But what makes them meaningful and what kind of meaning can readers get from these patterns? Is it

possible to catch the esthetic idea of the whole generated work analyzing these verbal patterns? One of the strategies to reveal the author's aesthetic concept of the generated work is to identify the key words grid of the separate textone as well as of the whole work. The key words grid allows to catch the thematic dominant and then move to the interpretive strategies of the whole literary work.

For example, the "Sea and Spar between" by N. Montfort, S. Strickland contains the following verbal patterns: [noun] / [noun + less – verb Past Simple – verb Past Simple] / [noun] / [nailed] to the [noun] and [How to withstand the jay pink course] / [nailed to the – noun / object] / [verb + preposition / on] / [noun! noun!]. The refrains in these verbal patterns signify the thematic grid of the work. The lexemes that form the thematic grid include groups of nouns with the meaning of a large space (e. g. time; sky; eternity). The second group includes both nouns and verbs with the semantics of space restriction (e. g. coffin; nailed to). The third group is formed by predicates with the meaning of an incentive to an action aimed at getting out of a closed space (e. g. wheel on; plunge on; loop on). The first two lines in the first scheme contain calls for action directed outside (e. g. Costumeless turn and climb). The lines in the second scheme implement the semantics of attachment, inability to leave a particular place (e. g. nailed to a coffin). To my mind, these verbal patterns correlate with an idea of contrast in general. The vast space (it is compared in the work with the infinity of the sea, sky, the virtual space of the WWW) is contrasted with the isolation of a particular person. Interpretive tactic in this case is like the haiku interpretation, when the first line is used as a keyword (a seasonal word in haiku). The next two lines are deployed within a single sentence. The last line is a metaphor. The textones generated in "Sea and Spar between" are easy to be structured that allows readers to identify the set of meanings. The readers involvement in the interpretational process is one of the immutable conditions of electronic generative art.

## #160 Søren Bro Pold, Scott Rettberg and Anna Nacher

### Title:

Post(?) Pandemic Prose

### Abstract:

When the global pandemic spread in early 2020, we, as many others, wondered what was happening and what it all meant. Almost all cultural activity moved online and the electronic platforms took even stronger hold of our lives. We started gathering material about the impact of the Covid 19 on e-literature and digital creativity for a round table presented at the EL Orlando 2020, the first completely online ELO conference ever. This work led to the project Electronic Literature and Covid 19 (supported by DARIAH EU), which includes an exhibition at this year's conference, a research collection at the ELMCIP Knowledge Base, other presentations and further research.

Life under the pandemic is like living under a largely invisible threat that emerges as catastrophic and tragic when death rates go up. At other times the threat of the virus is barely visible and can mainly be traced as deserted streets. Sometimes the way it invades our shared, common imagination gets quickly normalized as yet another persuasive data visualization, digital map demonstrating a sudden upsurge in viral spread or simply another infographic with increasing numbers. It might be compared to how Svetlana Alexievich describes the Chernobyl disaster (in *Chernobyl Prayer*, (1997), Penguin 2016), as an unknown catastrophe that was and is difficult to understand for the many Belarusians and Ukrainians living in the disaster zone since it did not look like war or natural disaster. Chernobyl's invisible radioactive cloud that in 1986 spread across Europe, functioned at the time much like invisible viral danger today, as a post-human, ecological crisis requiring a new understanding and politics. And, like Chernobyl, the pandemic has demonstrated the fractures in many societies' foundations such as economic inequality, racism, inadequately equipped institutions and health services, and incompetent leaders (see also Latour, Hayles Taussig, Mbembe, Chun et al. in *Critical Enquiry*, vol. 47, number S2, Winther 2021). Luckily, the pandemic has also shown caring communities and societies, newfound interests in the domestic, the local, and the environmental, including the climate crisis (see e.g. Markham AN, Harris A, Luka ME. *Massive and Microscopic Sensemaking During COVID-19 Times*. *Qualitative Inquiry*. October 2020.).

Besides its importance for health, society and the economy, the pandemic might be seen as a paradigmatic cultural change happening in a time with locked down cultural life, which can be seen from behind the global screens of platforms. Electronic literature plays an important role in exploring how people gets through daily life during the pandemic, how we see our homes, communities, cities, environments, institutions, how people become part of both progressive (BLM, Metoo, etc) and reactionary (QAnon, etc) movements. Digital platforms have played a large part in this, e.g. through the various #, through their ways of promoting extremism through profiling algorithms, through their transforming of institutions, etc.

This panel will present early outcomes of the project, present a framework for the exhibition, and an analysis of the themes of the submitted works. We will also invite feedback from the ELO community of researchers, practitioners and artists.

## **#122 Timothy Wilcox**

### **Title:**

Lyric Recollection and the Preservation of Ephemeral and Social Elit

### **Abstract:**

Though not an ideal solution, lyric reflection can be a significant method of preserving electronic literature.

Having lost Flash, one solution is mimetic: a technical project resulting in a faithful copy of the original work, allowing the work to be experienced in all its particularity and interactivity. Failing that, footage, screenshots, and thorough, plainly descriptive writing can make a long-term accessible record so that at least that space in the genre's history can be seen and understood by future generations. What happens, however, when a work features elements of ephemerality? On a computational level, this can happen to a far greater degree than with a traditional print book. Outside of rare tragedies, we can retrieve an old text from the archives, but we cannot retrieve the experience of, for instance, Multi-User Dungeons in the late 1990s. Lyric recollection, however, provides a literary model for securing something very close to the experience of the work.

Two particularly notable sources here are William Wordsworth for an early example and Indra Sinha for a specifically elit example. In his preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth wrote, "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility ... the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind." The poem, therefore, is not located in the original experience nor is it trying to be a mimetic copy of it. In the tranquil reflection, however, the poet is able, ideally, to capture the process of remembering so clearly that a new instance of the original type of emotion is actively produced by this new virtual encounter. In a similar way, Sinha records 1990s MUDs in his 1999 memoir *The Cybergypsies*, carefully shifting between forms to recreate the imaginative depth of the experience. We might also imagine a lighter form of this in the wild success of *Façade* – which parallels something of the social, writing-based experience of MUDS – on YouTube.

Pavel Curtis suggests in 1997 that "it is difficult to properly convey the sense of the experience in words. Readers desiring more detailed information are advised to try mudding themselves" (124-5). Writing such as Sinha's presents a model for how we might preserve important elements of generational and platform-specific electronic literature for future personal, authorial, and scholarly consideration. Such writing about personal online experience was popular around that time. In 2020, Anna Weiner's *Uncanny Valley* and Joanne McNeil's *Lurking* indicate a return to this more broadly. Among more formal archival efforts, in imagining a long literature history of elit for the future, lyric narratives – particularly in incorporating instances of the computer text as in Sinha – will inevitably play a significant role in how future generations ephemeral and social elit works.

## **#95 Utterings, Annie Abrahams, Curt Cloninger, Daniel Pinheiro, Constança Carvalho Homem, Nerina Cocchi and Derek Piotr**

### **Title:**

Utterings: Toward a Supra-Semiotic Telepresent Communication

### **Abstract:**

"Utterings" is a networked performance and research group whose members gather online and, while blindfolded, engage in utterings as communication. We want to create an on the fly "new" language, that forwards attention, trust and affects, above rationality. Put another way, we seek to develop a shared, experiential, supra-semiotic form of communication based on our ongoing performance history with each other. Michael Bakhtin's concept of the "utterance event" as a node of intersection between lived, present-tense communication and atemporal, semiotic meaning has informed our research. Over the past year, we have enacted eight performances online "at" festivals "in" Nantes (France), Birmingham (UK), Linz (Austria), and London (UK). Members of our group will collectively discuss what we have pragmatically learned and experienced in our performance research thus far. During the panel we will make a writing pad available, where the audience can collectively write their thoughts on utterings as a communication form. Our group will join and continue the discussion on the writing pad in the last part of the panel.

## **#179 Vinicius Marquet, Steven Malliet and Carina Erdmann**

### **Title:**

Community building through the design of co-creative online workshops: emerging collaborative practices and social dynamics.

### **Abstract:**

The concept of a workshop refers to an arrangement whereby a group of people learn, acquire new knowledge, perform creative problem-solving, or innovate in relation to a domain-specific issue (Ørngreen & Levinsen, 2017). In this round table session we will discuss the rulesets and social dynamics applied in different collaborative workshops within the context of Networked and Programmable Media (Cayley, 2009). We will share our experiences with three series of workshops organized in the past and current year, aiming to create platforms to socialize and build communities in the context of COVID19:

(1) Viral Imagina ([imaginaviral.net](http://imaginaviral.net)) is a series of online brief workshops and art performances that have been taking place throughout 2020. The project has emerged as an independent effort to spread art language practices in digital environments for the global Spanish speaking community.

(2) Salutches (<https://salutches.viniciusmarquet.com/>) is an online platform for social experiences that aims to strengthen the community of students and researchers at LUCA School of Arts. Several workshop formats have been developed in the context of Salutches, among which Trueque (an online exchange of digital objects and services) and Pastiche (eclectic pedagogic experiments in collaborative creation).

(3) Blend&Bleed. An online symposium organized at LUCA School of Arts, addressing the concept of trans-reality: the zone of experience whereby a player moves seamlessly through various physical and virtual realms, brought together in one unified game space (Lindley, 2004). Blend&Bleed aims to initiate new collaborations between the fields of Artistic Research, Performance, Game and Interaction Design.

These workshops have been iteratively developed and tested, in the context of the Ph.D. projects of the first and third author, according to the methodologies proposed by Shön (1983) and Latour (2005), outlining a design cycle that integrates practice with theoretical reflection. The round table discussion will feature both practical lessons and theoretical insights gained in the research process. Each presenter will provide a short description of their experiences as workshop organizers, after which we will initiate an interactive dialogue.

## #98 Vinícius Pereira

### **Title:**

Homenaje a Wladimir Dias-Pino: when a digital poem revisits an e-lit antecedent

### **Abstract:**

In 1956, the Brazilian avant-garde poet Wladimir Dias-Pino published one of his most famous books: *A Ave*. All copies of this conceptual work were produced in a craft press, and the content and form of the text (a process poem, as Dias-Pino called it) are inextricable from the materiality of the book, composed of superimposed perforated pages of different colors and transparency levels, with printed letters and polygonal lines. Scholars have considered *A Ave* an analog predecessor of new media poetry, reflecting on the affordances of paper, ink, punch hole, and bookbinding, and their creative use in a book of visual poetry centered on the imagery of birds in flight.

Wladimir Dias-Pino also wrote theoretical texts and a manifest that point to the permutational and the procedural nature of poetic language as code. His contributions as an antecedent to Latin-American digital literature still require further investigation, especially because scholars interested in the history of new media poetry in the continent often pay more attention to the Brazilian concrete poets from São Paulo, such as Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, and Décio Pignatari.

Nonetheless, an important gesture of acknowledging Dias-Pino's contribution to the field was made by the Uruguayan poet Clemente Padín, who created in 2003 the Flash piece *Homenaje a Wladimir Dias-Pino*. In this animation, a bird graphically constructed as a calligram is seen in flight, and the animal's body and wings are made of a combination of words that allude to the metadata of *A Ave* among apparently random ASCII symbols.

Padín's work is included in the *Litelat Anthology*, but it can no longer be accessed in its "original" format due to the obsolescence of Flash. Although this might initially seem just a setback, the limited temporality of Flash has more to say: as a technological platform with its own lifecycle, it highlights the historicity of *Homenaje a Wladimir Dias-Pino* as a piece of electronic literature produced for specific software from a specific age. *A Ave*, on the other hand, is a piece of analog procedural literature meant to be read without any extraneous device, but also susceptible to the physical deterioration that all material culture is liable to.

This poster presents some reflections on convergences and dissonances between Wladimir Dias-Pino's *A Ave* and Clemente Padín's *Homenaje a Wladimir Dias-Pino*, considering both artists' aesthetic projects, the poetic codes they used, and the affordances of the materialities in which they inscribed their images of birds in flight. We intend to point out how the work by a prominent predecessor of electronic literature is revisited by an established digital artist of our times in a dialogue that is of much interest to the community of Latin American e-lit and to that of electronic literature as a whole.

## #214 Zach Whalen

### **Title:**

The Generated Word: Metonymic, Generic and Operationalist

### **Abstract:**

The formal patterns of the codex book remain evident in literary forms no longer bound by the material efficiencies of the paper platform. For some works, like Judd Nelson's "The Jew's Daughter" or Jason Nelson's "Evidence of Everything Exploding," the printed page becomes a platform for the mutability of the screen, while others like Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse's *\_Between Page and Screen\_* or Steve Tomosula's *\_VAS: An Opera in Flatland\_* explore the tension between the printed and the projected word.

Still other electronic works embrace the physical material of a bound, published book as their final form,, and in this paper, I propose a framework for considering the differences among computer-generated books relative to their characteristics and apparent purposes. By articulating three broad genres, I attempt to draw in more diverse networks of influence that bear on the present moment.

Works that are metonymic are sculptural in their appeal to bookishness (after Jessica Pressman's) through the fact of their material existence. These works include Luigi Amato and Roberto Arista's *\_Volume\_*, which includes as its contents its literal self-description (in terms of weight, width, height, indexicality) and Jean Keller's 2012 *\_The Black Book\_*, which maximizes the value of a self-printed book by printing each page in solid black. The role of computation in the creation of these works is at least implied, and their status as metonyms for the concrete visibility of books draws in other works with different origins.

Computer-generated books may follow or invent many different literary genres, although poetry is a more forgiving milieu than prose. The books that I propose to call "generic" are those whose function is contingent upon a specific work or style. The methods programmers use may be stochastic, deterministic, or statistical, but they each begin with a specific work or works and rely for their significance on readers recognize the work being satirized. This includes the many methods following the tradition of Hugh Kenner and Joseph O'Rourke's "Travesty Generator."

Finally, works that I consider "operationalist" follow Neil Harris's identification of P.T. Barnum's method of showmanship as demonstrating an "operational aesthetic." For these books, the audience is to some extent left with some doubt as to the origin of the book, and this may include books where readers have some reason to doubt whether it was really generated by a computer program and books that have attempted to "pass" as human-authored. In either case, the operations of authorship are among the principle signifying characteristics of these works.

The typology I have proposed and will develop in this paper is broad, and many computer-generated books may have features consistent with two or more of the types I have specified here. But given the wide range and long history of books co-authored by computational processes, this attempt at a framework for describing their purposes and audiences helps connect these works of electronic literature to adjacent fields such as conceptual writing, literary hoaxes, and artist's books.