

# ELO PROGRAM COMMITTES '24

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# INTRODUCTIONS

## Co-Chairs

We are thrilled to welcome you to the virtual Electronic Literature Organization Conference and Media Arts Festival 2024, hosted by a team based at the University of Central Florida with collaborators around the world! In 2020, our conference moved online with little warning due to the global pandemic: now, we return to a fully online format with more intention, and hope through this format to continue to grow our connections and community across boundaries. As the combined economic and environmental challenges of conferences have mounted, this online conference is intended to be as minimal as possible in both costs and resource-consumption.

ELOnline 2024's theme is (un)linked. As we are hosting our conference on the web, we also seek to interrogate and critique the web, with attention to both dystopian shifts (such as the slow demise of the platform formerly known as Twitter) and hopeful features. Our three tracks reflect intersections and possibilities in that space: Algorithms & Imaginaries; Hypertexts & Fictions; and Narrative & Worlds. We are also gathered to celebrate creators and tools that have shaped that web: our first keynote speaker, Chris Klimas, is the creator of the open-source hypertext software Twine that many of us use and teach for our work. Our second keynote speaker, Edmond Chang, is a foundational scholar in queer game studies and will be offering provocations that push out how we think of our existing "technonormative" platforms. Our third keynote speaker, Hartmut Koenitz, is the president of the Association for Research in Digital Interactive Narratives, and will be looking towards models for how complex challenges of the 21st century might be addressed in part through that form. Our final keynote speaker, Anne Sullivan, an interdisciplinary scholar whose own work bridges fields and practices from computer science to guilting, will help close the conference with a return to the material, connecting craft to storytelling.

We've built this conference with the goal of creating a lasting, shareable resource. In addition to this book of abstracts and proceedings, the conference STARS repository will provide lasting, open-access hosting for all conference talks and events. The conference exhibition has been built on the model set by the Electronic Literature Collection Volume 4, and includes substantial documentation and metadata for all works to assist with future teaching, citation, and exploration. We hope that you will find these resources helpful long after our four-day gathering has ended!

Thank you for joining us and sharing your work with our community!

#### **Anastasia Salter & John Murray**

ELOnline 2024 Conference Co-Chairs University of Central Florida

#### Exhibition

This year's conference and media festival theme, "(Un)linked," delves into the web as a contested platform of community and computational creativity, juxtaposing dystopian shifts with hopeful futures.

At the heart of the Media Festival is a profound engagement with interactivity and user participation. Works like What did the line that you last drew, ask you? and Thinking Daughters invite participants to navigate digital spaces, interact in real-time, and engage with the works' code. This active involvement not only enhances the user experience but also blurs the lines between creator and audience, fostering a collaborative exploration of the narratives.

The blend of media in other works moves us closer to imagined futures of immersive experiences. Pieces such as A Condensed History of Australian Camels and Crawl It's Image merge text, sound, visuals, and augmented reality, creating rich, multi-sensory environments. This fusion of different forms draws the audience deeper into the works and their underlying themes, even while occasionally questioning the ethics and accessibility of such media.

Exploration of identity and societal issues features heavily in this Festival; unsurprising given sociopolitical trends in recent years. Run: a Sci-Fi Apocalypse Adventure and B∀BEL RËVOLU HON address themes of race, gender, and social justice, highlighting how digital narratives can reflect and interrogate complex societal dynamics. These pieces offer a platform for marginalized voices, using electronic literature to challenge and redefine traditional representations. The use of Twine, a focus of the conference, is also a strong component of this year's exhibition; its history as a channel for the expression of identity and personal issues as they relate to wider society comes to the fore as works dance over the line between interior experiences and culturally-relevant issues.

Historical and cultural contexts are woven throughout the exhibition, offering another perspective on identity and society. Mutiny on the Batavia and Palimpsest draw from historical events and literary traditions, while Dim Sum 點心 and Are You There/Kya Tum Ho Waha? reflect personal and cultural histories. By connecting past and present, these works provide a reflective lens through which audiences can consider contemporary issues.

The innovative use of technology is always a hallmark of the ELO Media Festival. Works such as A Fibonacci Conundrum and An Experiment in Yellow exemplify the creative potential of Al and computational logic, exploring how these technologies can generate new forms of poetic and narrative expression. The integration of Al, hypertext, and other digital tools not only enhances the storytelling but also raises questions about the future of art and authorship in a digital age.

ELOnline 2024's (Un)linked Media Festival offers a compelling exploration of the web as a dynamic and contested space for electronic literature. Through interactivity, blending of media, exploration of identity and society, historical contexts, and technological innovation, these works invite audiences to engage deeply with the narratives and reflect on the evolving landscape of digital creativity in our current rollercoaster of dystopic and utopic life.

#### Dr. R. Lyle Skains, Bournemouth University

# CODE OF CONDUCT

ELO 2024, being sponsored by the University of Central Florida, invites attendees to survey the tenets of the UCF Creed: Integrity, Scholarship, Community, Creativity, and Excellence, which also culminates in non-discrimination. We do not tolerate harassment of conference participants in any form. Conference participants violating these rules may be sanctioned or expelled from the conference at the discretion of conference organizers.

ELO 2024 is dedicated to providing a harassment-free conference experience for everyone, regardless of sex (including pregnancy and parental status), gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, physical appearance, body size, race, color, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or membership in any other protected classes as set forth by law.

#### Harassment includes but is not limited to:

- Verbal comments or comments in chat that reinforce social structures of domination related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, ethnicity, religion.
- Sexual images in public spaces
- Deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following
- Harassing photography or recording
- Sustained disruption of talks or other events
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Unwelcome sexual attention
- Advocating for, or encouraging, any of the above behavior

#### For Presenters

Presenters in hour-long paper sessions are asked to attend for the entirety of their session, not just the segment of the presentation allocated for their presentation. Presenters are also expected to be mindful and respectful of the time allotted for presentation and for transition between sessions, and not to override time allotted to another participant.

Presenters are encouraged to remain visible to their fellow panel members during the session and to support the discussion and dialogue during the follow-up available Q&A time.

#### **Enforcement**

We expect participants to follow these rules in all event platforms, including Discord, Zoom, and the other environments used for conference happenings. If a participant engages in harassing behavior, event organizers retain the right to take any actions to keep the event a welcoming environment for all participants. This includes warning the offender or expulsion from the conference platforms. Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately.

Event organizers may take action to redress anything designed to, or with the clear impact of, disrupting the event or making the environment hostile for any participants.

# EVENT SCHEDULE

#### Structure

The ELO 2024 Conference features a variety of events across multiple delivery formats. The events have been grouped into three tracks: "Algorithms and Imaginaries," "Hypertexts and Fictions," & "Narrative and Worlds." Each of the three tracks will take place in an individual Zoom room over the course of the day in hour-long blocks with fifteen-minute breaks between them. So, during regular sessions, there will be three active Zoom rooms at once.

Plenary sessions, keynotes, exhibition launches, and performances will take place in the "Algorithms and Imaginaries" Zoom room, and as such are listed in that track's schedule on the ELO (Un)Linked 2024 schedule list. The schedule also provides for midday and evening breaks (US Eastern Time). All sessions will be recorded live and uploaded as soon as possible to the ELO 2024 Conference platform for asynchronous viewers' participation.

Some panels, papers, and workshops invite audience participation before or during the events themselves. ELO Conference organizers invite conference participants to review any uploaded session materials in advance on the Conference platform for full conference experience.

#### Paper Sessions

Conference organizers have grouped papers in 3- or 4-paper sessions congruent with their themes and research topics. The Zoom moderators for each track will help each paper presenter remain on time with their allotted 12-minutes for presentation; any leftover time may be used for question-and-answer.

ELO Conference organizers also recommend reviewing the Conference Proceedings document, which will feature abstracts and some full papers submitted by conference participants in advance of the events.

### Panels & Workshops

Each panel and workshop has been allotted one hour. ELO organizers ask that the moderators or directors for these sessions be mindful and respectful of the time allotted for the session and for the transition between sessions.

#### **Exhibition Launch & Performances**

The Exhibition Launch and two nights of Performances will take place after the evening breaks on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, respectively, at 7p.m. USA Eastern Time, or 4p.m. USA Pacific Time. The Exhibition itself will be available for browsing asynchronously both for the duration of the conference and afterwards.

During the performance evenings, each performer has been allotted 15 minutes for their performance, which will be streamed in the "Algorithms and Imaginaries" track Zoom room. Many of the performances featured invite live audience participation, so ELO conference organizers encourage conference participants to (1) arrive early or on time to these sessions and (2) to engage with the performances through the zoom and transmedia tools invited by the artists.

Time	Day 1 (Thursday JULY 18)		
Track	Algorithms & Imaginaries	Hypertexts & Fictions	Narratives & Worlds
12:30	Welcome Session (12:30p.m. US Ea	astern)	
13:00	ELO Keynote #1, "A Personal Twine Story," with Chris Klimas		
14:15	Moderator: Emilie Buckley  - Hollywood Film Workers Strike Against Al: Understanding Algorithmic Resistance to Generative Cinematography - Sculpting Emotions in Code: Generating & Evaluating Micro-Fiction - Speculative Dialogues on eLit in a Post-Al World - Unlinking Causal Chains: The Poetic Potential of Al Cinemawriting	Panel: LAUNCH: Accessible Bits 1.0  Hannah Ackermans, Deena Larsen, Lyle Skains, Richard Snyder	Workshop: Publishing Electronic Literature Research as Precarious Academics Samya Brata Roy, Shanmugapriya T,
15:30		Moderator: Anyssa Gonzalez  -Exploring Game Localization Through Interactive Narratives in Twine  - The (un)Lucky Carder: Inscryption, Submission, and Metafictional Games  - Twine Before Twine: Media Archaeology and Early Twine Works from 2006 to 2012  - Zork Reimagined: Interactive Fiction in the Age of Al	Moderator: Alia Hall  - A Glimpse into Past And Present Challenges: Indian Electronic Literature  - Media Translation and the Migration of Born-Digital Literature - Russian Electronic Literature Today
16:45	Moderator: Kathryn Kong  - "E-Mote Al: A Speculative Exploration of Generative Al, Artificial Intimacy, Artificial Unintelligence, and the Uncanny" - PlanetOut: On the Queer Internet's Uneven Development - Queering Artificial Intelligence as a Subversive Strategy of Creating Generative Literature: A Case Study of Ultimate Fantasy by Emily Martinez and Sarah Ciston	Moderator: Anyssa Gonzalez  - Dark Souls as Networked Hyperlinked Text / Creating Community Through Dystopia - Our Bodies Are Hyperlinks: Trans-Actions of Play for "Gayme"- ing Material Connection - Playing in Postmortem: Link Rot, Memory Decay, and Haunting Archives at the End of the World	Panel: Podcasting Peregrinations: The Book of Travels, Unarchived  Jason Boyd, Jeremy Andriano, Patrick R. Dolan, Kevin Ghouchandra, Chelsea Russell
18:00	Break		
19:00	ELO 2024 Exhibition Launch with	Lyle Skains, Bournemouth University	y

# FRIDAY, JULY 19-

	Day 2 - Friday JULY 19				
Track	Algorithms & Imaginaries	Hypertexts & Fictions	Narratives & Worlds		
9:15	Panel: Roundtable. Al: Yes or No? Why and When? The Perspective of Three Latin American Digital Artists  Milton Läufer Dr. Mario Guzman Leonardo Solaas	Panel: ILIDI / ILINU - Incubator of Digital Literature Alejandro Brianza, Rolando Rodriguez, Jessica Arianne Cabrera Rodrigue, Michel Lefebvre			
10:30	Moderator: Emilie Buckley	Moderator: Emily Johnson	Moderator: Alia Hall		
	- Al and Generative Medieval Fictions - Al Wordsworth: Artificial Intelligence and the Literary Encounter	- A Fundamental Look at Electronic Storytelling: Subverting Expectations on a Procedural Level - Data Bookification: Image, Place, and Event - Informing and Deforming Readings: 'Critical Re-Making' in Electronic Literature and/ as Digital Humanities	- Contingencies of 'Community': An Investigation of House of Leaves by Mark Z. Danielewski and Online Discussion Forums - Doing Memory in Digital Fiction: A Critical Study of Memory, Narratology and Digitality in Andy Campbell and Judy Alston's Clearance - The digital proposition of Eugenio Tisselli: cosmopolitics and ecological conscience in a Latin-American digital work		
11:45	Break				
13:00	ELO Keynote #2, "Code/Queer Gar	mes/Technonormativity," with Edmoi	nd Chang, Ohio University		
14:15	Panel: Rage Against The Machine: A Roundtable on an Arts Community's Reactions Toward AI Art Kedrick James, Ernesto Peña, Derek Gladwin, Giorgio Magnanensi, Yuya Takeda, Rachel Horst	Workshop: Starting with Markdown: a flexible extensible hypertext authoring system Christine Wilks Astrid Ensslin	Moderator: Emily Johnson  - BASE SPACE: Resisting U.S. Militarization in the Pacific with Immersive VR Poetry - El Majaya: Prompting Cultural Identity - More-than-Human Media		
15:30	<b>ELO Plenary Panel</b> : E-Lit Narrative with Stephanie Strickland, Lai-Tze F	s — Celebrating Marjorie C. Luesebri an, Alan Liu, & Stuart Moulthrop.	nk		

	Day 2 - Friday JULY 19		
16:45	Moderator: Emily Johnson	Moderator: Kathryn Kong	Panel: Deformance as (Un)Linking
	- Critical Making for AI Literacy - The Pedagogy of Slow Making in the Age of AI - Playful approaches to defamiliarizing generative AI	- Curating and Sharing Interactive Moments with the Game and Interactive Software Scholarship Toolkit (GISST) - Enhanced Curation and Ensuring a Post-Exhibition Legacy for the British Library's Electronic Literature Collection - Small stories of past futures: Celebration, resistance, and cultivating the unknown - The Future of Text in XR: Phase 1 of the Project	Jolene Armstrong, Siobhan O'Flynn, monique tschofen, Kari Maaren
18:00	Break		
19:00	Fiction, by Warren Lehrer, Arter 7:30 - Hot or Rot: What Kind of	nnie Abrahams Portraying the Experience of Broca Ap mio Morales, Judith Sloan Society Are We Going to Be?, by Mar	Č
Track	Algorithms & Imaginaries	Hypertexts & Fictions	Narratives & Worlds

# **SATURDAY, JULY 20**

	Day 3 - Saturday July 20		
Track	Algorithms & Imaginaries	Hypertexts & Fictions	Narratives & Worlds
9:15	Workshop: Angles on AI – Using Netprov to Wrap the Mind Around a New Reality	Panel: (Un)Linked Open Data: Documenting E-lit in Wikidata	
	Rob Wittig	Hannah Ackermans, Joseph Tabbi, Tegan Pyke, Colin Robinson	

	Day 3 - Saturday July 20		
10:30	Moderator: Alia Hall	Moderator: Carina Seagrave	
	- A critical look at the views on authorship in story generation research - The Random Word Trick: Using Unsophisticated Code to Make an LLM Less Boring - Translation with the GPT LLM. A case study of the "King UBU" by Alfred Jarry	a book derived from a website  -Why and how? - Emulation of electronic literary artworks - IOveOne: Creating Electronic Literature on the Early World Wide Web - Performative writing through permutations and the switching of subjectivities in "Time, diffracted"	
11:45	Break		
13:00	ELO Keynote #3, "Interactive Digital	Narrative – A specific expression for a	complex time," with Hartmut Koenitz
14:15	Panel: Worlds Remunged: The Pastiche and Parody of Generative Al  Mark C. Marino, Siobhan O'Flynn, Alex Mitchell, Rob Wittig	Workshop: Chatting about Chapbook: Exploring Twine Building through the Chapbook Format Ricky Finch	Moderator: Anyssa Gonzalez  - Making micro-choices in Dan Hett's "C ya laterrrr"  - Metadata as Metanarrative: Lessons from Filter Insta-Zine at The NEXT  - VR/AR/XR E-lit: Towards a Claustrophobic and Agoraphobic Poetics
15:30	<b>ELO Town Hall</b> , with Caitlin Fisher		
16:45	Moderator: Carina Seagrave  - A Queer Arcades Project - Tapest[o]ry: Exploring the Interactive Capabilities of Tapestries as a Storytelling Tool - Varexia's Voice: Crafting An Al Ethnomusicologist	Panel: Literary Gaming Refigured  Sebastian R. Richter, Astrid Ensslin, Fiona S. Schönberg, Kübra Aksay, Miriam Scuderi	Panel: The Legacy of Borges, Cortázar, Huidobro, and Girondo in Latin American Electronic Literature Erika Maribel Heredia, María Julia Cabail, María Carolina Páez Gutierrez, Silverio Penoth, Oscar López
18:00	Break		
19:00		k Loyer Kavi Duvvoori	
Track	Algorithms & Imaginaries	Hypertexts & Fictions	Narratives & Worlds

# **SUNDAY, JULY 21'**

	Day 4 - Sunday JULY 21		
Track	Algorithms & Imaginaries	Hypertexts & Fictions	Narratives & Worlds
9:15	Panel: Generative Narrative Amidst Large Language Model (LLM) AI – A Transnational Experiment Laura Shackelford, Samuel Szoniecky, Matthew Giacovelli, Deen Grey, Erica Coles, Harsh Shah, Ferroudja Belkessa	Moderator: Christine Kugelmann  - Clustering and Decisions: An Archeology of Computational Creation - Computational Writing and the Literary Device - Digital Literature: An Essentially Contested Concept?	Panel: Digital Literature in Latin America: Technocapitalism and Media Intersections Vinicius Carvalho Pereira, Andréa Catropa da Silva, Verónica Paula Gómez
10:30	The Cyborg Hackeur <b>Workshop</b> Leonardo Flores	Panel: Teaching Electronic Literature  Prakruti K. Bhatt, Judith A. Pintar, Suzanne V. Rigdon, Denise Ellen Larsen, R Lyle Skains, Mark C. Marino, Dene Grigar, Faith Samuel Bassey	Moderator: Christine Kugelmann  - Demystifying and Challenging the Settler Colonial Nation through Digital Literature - Digital/environmental technopoetics in decolonial search - María Mencía's Poetics: a Polyphony of Verses
11:45	Break	,	<u>I</u>
13:00	<b>ELO Keynote #4</b> , "An Open Invitation with Anne Sullivan, Georgia Tech	n - Ethical and Inclusive Research in I	nteractive Storytelling"
14:15	Moderator: Mel Stanfill  - Issues of authorship, creativity, and revision in algorithmic cut-up literature - Portraits of Claire Tourneur: Facing into an Al Imaginary - The Narratology of Prompts: Al as Concrete Prose		Moderator: Carina Seagrave  - Border Crossings: Seeing/ Reading Comics and Graphic Narratives through a Digital Lens - Of Cats and Backpack: Utopian Possibilities in Cyberpunk Worlds - Re-inhabiting a Synthetic Text World in infloresence.city
15:30	<b>ELO Plenary Panel 2</b> : E-Lit Narrative with Lai-Tze Fan, Dene Grigar, Caitlin	5 ,	nk
16:45	Closing and Awards Ceremony, wi	th Jason Nelson & Alinta Krauth	

# TIME ZONES

Blocs	US Pacific	US Eastern	London	Moscow	Mumbai	Tokyo
Bloc 1	6:15 a.m.	9:15 a.m.	2:15 p.m.	4:15 p.m.	7:45 p.m.	10:15 p.m.
Bloc 2	7:30 a.m.	10:30 a.m.	3:30 p.m.	5:30 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	11:30 p.m.
(Break) Bloc 3	8:45 a.m.	11:45 a.m	4:45 p.m.	6:45 p.m.	10:15 p.m.	12:45 a.m.
(keynotes) Bloc 4	10:00 a.m.	1:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m.	8:00 p.m.	11:30 p.m.	2:00 a.m.
Bloc 5	11:15 a.m.	2:15 p.m.	7:15 p.m.	9:15 p.m.	12:15 a.m.	3:15 a.m.
(plenaries) Bloc 6	12:30 p.m.	3:30 p.m.	8:30 p.m.	10:30 p.m	1:00 a.m.	4:30 a.m.
(Sun. awards) Bloc 7	1:45 p.m.	4:45 p.m.	9:45 p.m.	11:45 p.m	2:15 a.m.	5:45 a.m
(Break) Bloc 8	3:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m.	11:00 p.m.	1:00 a.m.	4:30 a.m.	7:00 a.m.
(Evening Events) Bloc 9	4:00 p.m.	7:00 p.m.	12:00 a.m.	2:00 a.m.	5:30 a.m.	8:00 a.m.

# PROCEEDINGS PAPERS

#### Introduction

The five full papers presented below have been submitted by members of the Electronic Literature Organization encompassing both scholarly and creative pursuits of the field. The overarching theme of these papers provoke thoughts about the nature of electronic literature during the era of contested platforms and the importance of understanding the nature of authorship and engagement.

In the first two papers, "Portraits of Claire Tourneur" by Stuart Moulthrop and "Zork Reimagined" tackle the question of generative artificial intelligence and large language models from two different perspectives. Moulthrop's paper begins with an experiment into the generation of portraits of Claire Tourneur from Wim Wenders' 1991 film *Until the end of the World*. Moulthrop's subsequent reading of the output highlights the uncanny and unsettling externality of these fabrications that hint at an actual life. Where Moulthrop troubles the relationship between the human and the externality of the algorithm through the process of autology, Tikhonov examines ways to use generative AI to smooth over the gap in the interfaces of parser-based interactive fiction. Using a mediating layer that runs over the top of the classic *Zork*, Tikhonov demonstrates the utility of large language models for introducing natural language processing into accurate parser commands and embellishing responses. Tikhonov's analysis likewise provokes questions about the role of AI in authorship.

The next two papers are interested in what we might identify as two different approaches to immersion in digital storytelling. Kenton T. Howard's paper "The (un)Lucky Carder: *Inscryption*, Submission, and Metafictional Games" examines the metafictional elements of Daniel Mullins' digital card game *Inscryption* to highlight narrative and ludic submission within games. Howard makes an important point about the nature of immersion, identifying that it is a question of fully submitting to the structures of the game. Howard positions submission as a way of examining narratives structures that encompass many forms of interactive fiction and metafictional works.

In "Doing memory in Digital Fiction", Gayathri T and Merin Simi Raj turn to memory as a way to mediate the diegetic and extradiegetic elements of a storyworld. Their paper argues that works like Judi Alston's *Clearance*, blend the subject position of the player/reader through the use of prosthetic memory in ways that draw players into affective investment in the narrative present and past of the storyworld. Both Howard and T and Raj's papers pose questions about the nature of immersive storytelling and the way that different kinds of narratives structures evoke different kinds of identification or submission with the text.

Lastly, Judy Malloy's paper provides a 30-year retrospective of her early and influential work of hypertext fiction *l0ve0ne*. Malloy reflects on the creative and technical decisions made during the development of the project influenced by the changing landscape of creative platforms for publishing interactive fiction on the world wide web. This work documents the affordances of working with hypertext authoring during an era of rapid change and adoption of the web browser as the gateway public access to the internet of the 90s. Malloy's paper prompts us to reflect on electronic literature's place in the everchanging landscape of authorship.

Together these five papers prompt us to think about electronic literature and the production of media broadly construed in an era where the control over tools of authorship and distribution is rapidly changing. As scholars and practitioners we must contend with the seemingly dystopian present and envision the hopeful future.

- Jack Murray, PhD. University of Texas at Dallas, Proceedings Chair

# Portraits of Claire Tourneur

Facing into an Al Imaginary

Stuart Moulthrop, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

### **Abstract**

This Individual Talk reflects on continuing creative research in which the author is compiling "portraits of imaginary people," including Claire Tourneur, one of the principal characters in Wim Wenders' 1991 feature, Until the End of the World. Claire becomes the first expert user of a visualizing technology that captures moving pictures from her dreams. She becomes addicted to the process, falling into a near-catatonia that literalizes McLuhan's "Narcissus narcosis." Claire's arduous but successful recovery is a main concern for the end of the film.

I will trace resonances between Claire's addiction and the entrancing mysteries of AI image generation, focusing on certain generated series that show evocative, diachronic patterns: fictional portraits that suggest details of an actual life. I will consider effects of narcotic fascination – digital hallucination as externalized dreamwork — but also Johanna Zylinska's speculation that AI art may reveal a "human outside the human," an intensely provocative insight. I will juxtapose the apotheosis of Wenders' Claire, who becomes an astronaut scanning the Earth for "pollution crimes," with the supposed exteriority or alterity offered by AI image models — an "outside" whose terms need close consideration.

### 1.

This paper is part of an ongoing project which might be called "Unstable Confusion, or Until the End of the World" – more on both those phrases eventually. Like most of us, I have been facing into the mania surrounding so-called artificial intelligence, especially its application to image generation. This effort has consumed more time than I want to admit, writing prompts for various AI image generators: captions for imagined pictures. Chris Chesher and Cesár Albarrán-Torres have named this practice "autolography" (autonomous process + writing + image) (Chesher and Albarrán-Torres). Using various interfaces to the Stable Diffusion generative model, I have co-produced several thousand images, a selection of which can be seen in the archive I call "Unstable Confusion" (smoulthrop.com/dev/unstable). The title is deliberately ironic.

My ambivalence toward AI art aligns with Joanna Zylinska, the media philosopher and photographer whose book on the subject is tellingly subtitled, "Machine Visions and Warped Dreams" (Zylinska). On the one hand, art has always involved artifice, so

human-machine co-creation seems a valid extension of "originary technicity." But with its promise, AI art raises the specter of "neurototalitarianism," a terminally massified algorithmic imaginary (Zylinska 83). The technological outlook is murky as ever. I admit, on the evidence of "Unstable Confusion," that much of AI art is, as Zylinska's cautions, "an odd combination of the fuzzy, the mindless, and the bland" (Zylinska 72).

Not to mention low puns.





Figure 1: Left: Pynchonian motto; Right: "Hare of the Dog"

## 2.

This paper looks at a more mindful case of autolography, an exercise in the genre called "portraits of imaginary people" (Zylinska 74). In April 2023, a few months into my exploration of AI imaging, I prompted Stable Diffusion for a "Portrait of Claire Tourneur." These are the four images that appeared:







Figure 2: Portraits of Claire Tourneur, April 2023.

As Chesher and Albarrán-Torres point out, Al image generation is a type of "invocational media," in which a user appeals to a fundamentally mysterious system for a desired outcome (Chesher and Albarrán-Torres, 5). If the process is unknowable, the invocation itself is specific, and I will say more about "Claire Tourneur" before the end; but for the moment, consider the results. They are aesthetically crude, compared to output from later versions of the model, but perhaps interesting in other ways.

These are four pictures of brunette women, plausibly European, possibly French: faces

that might match the name. At first glance they may seem vaguely similar, though with obvious differences in composition and age. To my eye – and I have verified the impression with several groups of skeptical graduate students – this polyptych could portray the same person, not only at various stages of her life, but in distinct moments of history.

The first image is a soft-focus "glamour shot" giving its subject movie-star treatment. The hairstyle, makeup, and clothing carry strong signatures of the late 1930s or early 40s. The Claire in this image is youthful, somewhere in her twenties.

The second subject is also posed, but more spontaneously, against a distressed background. This woman could be the Claire of the first image, a few years further on. The glamour of the first shot has been replaced by something grittier. The bobbed hairstyle and military-style coat suggest the war years or their aftermath.

The third image is something like a passport photo, eyes front with one ear exposed. The tan fills at the sides suggest matting. The woman in this image seems somewhere in middle age. Her face has filled out, as faces do, but the basic geometry is consistent with the first two images, particularly in the jawline and nose. Her clothing and hairstyle seem consistent with styles of the 1960s or early 70s.

The last image in the series is least like the others, though certain features show resemblance. Unlike the first three shots, this portrait is in color. The blurred, glassy rendering of the eyes betrays a notorious weakness of early Stable Diffusion in this mode. The subject is an older woman, possibly in her sixties. The jawline has softened even further, though there is still a likeness in the brow and nose. This Claire wears her hair in a perm and is dressed in a knitted top that could come from the 1970s or 80s.

## 3.

This experiment suggests that AI art may yield something more interesting than mindless kitsch. In this case, evocation has exceeded invocation. I asked for four portraits of an imaginary person and got something more. The double diachrony of the image set evokes a meta-portrait or life series. Anticipating discrete visualizations, I found instead a haunting suggestion of unified persona — if not an historical Claire, then one imbricated in fictive history.

What could this mean? Most immediately, this result underscores the basic charm of AI art: its spooky capacity for conceptual surprise. But in the case of portraiture, even of imaginary persons, this uncanniness demands a human context. We live, after all, in a moment haunted by deepfakes and moral panics about impersonation. The reflex response to AI is often some sort of replacement theory. Zylinksa usefully complicates this attitude:

But this is not a Black Mirror scenario in which avatars will look like us, generating a

Bladerunner-like confusion over true human identity. Rather, the [algorithmically generated] sense of being human is premised on the recognition that, instead of positioning the human against the machine, AI exponentially amplifies the knowledge shared by marketing experts with regard to our desires and fantasies, while being much quicker and much more efficient at actualizing them. We can therefore suggest that AI dreams up the human outside the human, anticipating both our desires and their fulfilment. (Zylinska 71, emphasis original)

Zylinska disclaims the simulant nightmares of *Bladerunner* or *Black Mirror* but tempers any utopian impulse with social realism. "The human outside the human" is a heady concept, but Zylinska offers it in critique, not endorsement. Metahumanity is after all one of those "machine dreams" that may also be a "warped vision," distorted by surveillance capitalism, data appropriation, and the schemes of "marketing experts" (or expert systems) that know what they want us to want. The uncanny charm of autolography depends on artifice or contrivance as much as subjective response. Chesher and Albarrán-Torres compare the process explicitly to illusionism or stage magic (Chesher and Albarrán-Torres 3). We need to look more closely into the nature of these tricks.

As Emily Bender, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and "Shmargaret Smitchell" observe in their indispensable critique of Al language models: "Contrary to how it may seem when we observe its output, [a language model] is a system for haphazardly stitching together sequences of linguistic forms it has observed in its vast training data, according to probabilistic information about how they combine, but without any reference to meaning: a stochastic parrot" (Bender et al., 616). As these scientist-critics have it, the talkative bird makes sounds we hear as words, but that utterance does not constitute speech. The judgment may be somewhat unfair to parrots and other animal communicators, but it registers an important caveat for Al art. As the authors of the "Parrots" paper see it, there is a deep human reflex to perceive language as human speech. They quote the poet Maggie Nelson: "Words change depending on who speaks them; there is no cure" (Bender et al., 618). There is also no remedy for our compulsion to identify a speaker or persona, even when dealing with self-assembling systems of signs.

Turning from parrots to portraits, from typographic speech to images of unreal people, this compulsion comes into sharp relief. The suggestion of a woman who lived and grew older in the real world is pure fantasy. There is no real life behind the apparent life series. Yet it is very hard to resist the signifying power of human faces. This instinctual drive to see faces as traces of actual human beings may be the origin of "human outside the human."

We might borrow Jesper Juul's description of computer games as "half-real" (Juul 4) to characterize the meta-humanity of stochastic portraits. The impression of human presence is, no doubt, as fictive as a game experience, produced by mechanisms of model and algorithm that are real as any game engine. And yet, in the case of Claire Tourneur, the quantum of reality and fiction is not as easy to specify as a half measure.

The ratio may be more like a fractal.

We need to consider a further half-reality of Claire Tourneur.

## 4.

Though it may belong to actual persons as well, the name "Claire Tourneur" may be traced to Wim Wenders' 1991 film, *Until the End of the World*, where it belongs to the character played by the late Solveig Dommartin (Wenders). There is a certain resemblance between the Claire of Stable Diffusion and Dommartin as she first appears in the film:



Figure 3: Wenders' Claire and Stable Diffusion's.

Indeed, the movie still of Dommartin in her car is part of the repository of images on which Stable Diffusion XL was trained, among hundreds of millions of others. The system could have begun with Wenders' Claire; though probably it did not. No later run of the Claire prompt shows this cinematic likeness – for some reason subsequent Claires tend to be redheads — so its occurrence in 2023 was probably sheer coincidence. My invocation of Wenders' character, however, was very intentional.

As mentioned, the prompt in an invocational transaction supplies a specificity that is absent on the processual side. The system is a mystery, but invocations express desire or design. I chose Claire as the subject of these portraits because she has been imagined elsewhere, and because the story Wenders tells about her leads me to some crucial questions about AI art.

## 5.

*Until the End of the World* is perhaps too many things: limited-series TV crammed awkwardly into theatrical runtime; an excuse for an epic late-eighties soundtrack; a road movie; a love triangle; and a work of speculative fiction that gets some things right

1 Diffusion generators never produce identical images for the same prompt, so every run of the Claire Tourneur experiment returns different results. Only a few have shown the double diachrony of the initial 2023 run, though the faces always have strong similarity and there are often suggestions of life series in two or three of any four-image set.

about the coming century. The film both is and isn't a post-apocalypse story. It depicts a technological cataclysm caused by nuclear explosions in orbit, but this happens about two-thirds of the way in, and the pyrotechnics feature largely as background, most notably for a screen kiss. The film is in fact panapocalytic, concerned with how its characters carry on, not until the end, but further. In this sense it might be said to carry an important message for later moments of techno-anxiety.

Claire Tourneur's story is arguably the major vehicle for this message. At the start of the story, she is disentangling herself from an affair with Gene Fitzpatrick, a stymied novelist. Through a chain of accidents she becomes involved with an accused industrial spy named Sam Farber, a maverick neuroscientist whose exploits are meant to finance his work on machine vision. Sam has created a device that reads activity in the visual cortex, producing transmissible recordings. His immediate desire is to become a seeing surrogate for his blind mother.

For some reason Sam cannot master his device but Claire succeeds, discovering in the process that it can record dreams as well as waking vision. This proves disastrous, as Claire becomes fixated on a nightmare that has plagued her since childhood, a scenario of loss, abandonment, and literal falling. As the technological world collapses around her, Claire obsessively replays her dream on a handheld video device until the batteries fail, sending her into howling withdrawal.

The fourth chapter of McLuhan's *Understanding Media* is called "The Gadget Lover: Narcissus as Narcosis" (McLuhan). It is concerned with the way dependence on technologies leads to "autoamputation," the rearrangement of the human condition to accommodate the "stresses" of transformation:

With the arrival of electric technology, man extended, or set outside himself, a live model of the central nervous system itself. To the degree that this is so, it is a development that suggests a desperate and suicidal autoamputation, as if the central nervous system could no longer depend on the physical organs to be protective buffers against the slings and arrows of outrageous mechanism. (McLuhan 43)

Though no excuse can be made for McLuhan's vatic, androcentric pronouncements, they do shed some light on Claire's dream addiction. The cortical recorder literally extends the central nervous system. Though it is meant to do good, its addictive potential makes it an "outrageous mechanism." Claire's fixation with reified dreams cuts her off from the people around her, an ultimate "autoamputation." In many ways, Claire is the poster child for what McLuhan elsewhere calls "Narcissus narcosis." Until the End of the World came out long before cellphone video and social networks but the image of Claire crouched pathetically over her device is chillingly prescient.



Figure 4: The Gadget Lover's crisis.

That is not the end, though. Claire struggles through her dependency into recovery and apotheosis. (I assume a 33-year-old film needs no spoiler alert.) The final episode is set a few years after Claire kicks the dream addiction. The global electronic collapse has been swiftly repaired. High technology is back online but with notable differences of form and purpose. Instead of ominous nuclear satellites, we learn of a manned station operated by "Greenspace," whose astronauts scan the oceans for "pollution crimes." The last scene uncannily anticipates our present onscreen lives, showing us a Zoom call (*avant le lettre*) where Claire's friends wish her a happy 30<sup>th</sup> birthday – in space. Claire's dream of falling has turned into orbital motion – flying and falling, or as Claire's ex-lover titles that novel that marks his own salvation, *A Dance Around the Planet*. Her vision, once drawn inward to the products of her unconscious, turns outward in defense of the environment.

## 6.

Though Wenders is said to have chosen Claire's surname in homage to the director Jacques Tourneur (Johnson), the name may have further interpretive resonance. Claire is the turner or pivot on which the moral axis of the film rests, epitome of the turn toward clarity toward which the story tends. She is the *clear turner* whose upward or outward trajectory reveals a restorative future.

Claire is of course an invention, a congeries of words and images, a name attached artfully to a shared set of stories and a photogenic face. Fed back into the latest dream machine, she becomes an occasion for further illusions and half-realities; and perhaps another lesson.

We come back to the meaning that may lie in portraits of a serially-imagined lady. Invoking Claire Tourneur in AI art is an act of folding, deliberate in its intention, however pointless, jejune, or nostalgic it might also be. Mediations are made of mediations, as McLuhan and Zylinska both know (see Kember and Zylinska). To invocation and evocation, we may add implication.

I fold Wenders over Stable Diffusion, cinema over autolography, the crazy optimism of the 1990s back upon our Screaming Twenties. Above all, I enfold – or collide – the ecopositive dance around the planet with the "human outside the human," if only to call out the stark difference in these visions and the affective systems they activate.

Wenders' ending, played out over the eponymous U2 hit, calls to my mind a very different track, a not-so-popular song that doesn't occur in that memorable soundtrack, having dropped in an earlier decade. This is Neil Young's "Motion Pictures (for Carrie):"

Well, all those headlines, they just bore me now

I'm deep inside myself, but I'll get out somehow, And I'll stand before you, and I'll bring a smile to your eyes. Motion pictures, motion pictures. (Young)

There is something to be said for getting outside oneself, the better to transcend the doom scroll of always-onrushing apocalypse. Even if Claire's orbital dance is ultimately constrained by gravity, curved into the equipoise of flying and falling, she does find a plausible exterior, a point from which to look back onto a shared, planetary reality. It's a happy ending. There are lots of smiling eyes in that birthday scene.

In 1991 the outside move was still imaginable, the production of moving images available to dreams of literally higher purpose. "Motion pictures" still looked like a way to get somewhere. By contrast, what can "outside" mean in "the human outside the human?" What space does it imply, and what *oikos* or ecology can we imagine there? If that phrase points only to the conjuring tricks of machine muses and stochastic parrots, extractive databases and deeply inscrutable algorithms, then where is the outside and what is the human?

Arguably these questions have some relevance for electronic literature, if our practices are going to include autolography. Working increasingly in that line, I have a certain personal stake in these issues as well. As the first hearer of this paper tellingly observed, invocation can turn into identification: in terms of Narcissus narcosis, *Claire Tourneur*, *ç'est moi*.<sup>2</sup> There are certainly times when I feel the fetal crouch coming on, with grand ascents too much to hope for. So much for dancing around the planet; the problems of our moment are earthbound. How we define the human outside the human – or perhaps how we find our way outside its illusory transcendence – may be a key concern for any new digital art.

<sup>2</sup> Credit as always to Nancy Kaplan, calling to mind another Neil Young couplet from elsewhere on the record: "There ain't nothing like a friend / Who can tell you you're just pissing in the wind."

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# Zork Reimagined

Interactive Fiction in the Age of Al

**Alexey Tikhonov** 

# **Abstract**

Classic interactive fiction has unique charm but faces known limitations; early IF games have complex user interfaces that are not intuitive for new players. They also often fail to understand user commands, leading to immersion-breaking default responses. Modern neural network-based games offer more flexibility but suffer from hallucinations, incoherence, and lack of overarching story structures. To address these issues, we propose a system that combines the strengths of both classic and modern approaches. It transforms the classic game Zork (Blank et al., 1979) into smoother narration with a controllable literary style while preserving the original plot and game logic. It can also be applied to other games and potentially to different game types, enhancing their narrative depth and player engagement. While current technologies cannot yet fully automate engaging story creation, we believe integrations like this offer a promising direction for the future of interactive fiction.

# Context

Classic interactive fiction is a grand and unique genre, but it has inherent limitations. The fixed interface from the 70s and 80s, default commands, and parser problems reduce the accessibility for new players. Specific issues include:

- Complex UI: Conventions from early interactive fiction games, such as command abbreviations, standard movements, or conventions on how to communicate with NPCs, make the games less accessible to new players. The interface complexity can reject those unfamiliar with the genre.
- Parser Issues: The parser's inability to understand user input can break immersion.
   Default responses such as "I don't understand that" or "You can't see any wall here" when a wall is mentioned in the description frustrate players. Key problems include:
  - Unrecognized Commands: The system does not understand obvious verbs or actions, making it difficult for players to perform actions they believe should be possible.
  - Unrecognized Objects: Some objects are more important than others. In (Tikhonov and Yamshchikov, 2022), we exploited such behavior to automatically detect objects that are crucial for the narrative development, so-called

"Chekhov's guns." When the system fails to recognize "less important" objects mentioned in the descriptions, such as "push wall" returning "You can't see any wall here," it disrupts immersion.

- Repeating or Monotonous Responses: Standard actions processed by the game engine often lead to similar responses, also detracting from the immersive experience. For instance, messages about picking up or dropping objects are often the same.
- Fixed Experience: The fixed narrative experience lacks motivation for replayability, as players know what to expect after the first playthrough.

On the other side, modern neural network-based game systems like AI Dungeon (Walton, 2019), NovelAI, KoboldAI, and other similar engines offer unique adventures in open worlds but are still far from providing perfect interactive experiences. A couple of typical issues make them feel more like toys than structured games. These games frequently:

- Hallucinate: Generate content that does not make sense in the context, breaking the narrative flow.
- Lack coherence: Fail to maintain a consistent story structure, leading to disjointed and confusing gameplay.
- Miss macro story structure: Lack an overarching plot, reducing the depth and engagement of the narrative.

By blending classic interactive fiction's strengths with modern neural networks' flexibility, we aim to create a more immersive and coherent interactive experience.

# Happy Medium

The authors of the OZ Project once claimed: A story is, by nature, an imposition of structure on the user because whatever the user chooses to do must inevitably lead to the dramatic arc of some storylike experience. Thus, an interactive story system must provide a computational solution to the apparent clash between free will and destiny. (Bates, 1992)

Where is the optimal balance between freedom and plot? Complete freedom is burdensome as it requires constantly making choices in conditions of uncertainty, which is resource-intensive. Historical analysis (Fernández-Vara, 2011) shows that adventure games have shifted over the years from a wide range of actions and detailed world simulation (sometimes including the need for sleep and food) towards reducing the number of possible actions and increasing the level of simulation abstraction.

Wherever the balance point is, in the ideal system, no template responses like "I did not understand" or "There is no such a thing" should be used, and even if the player repeats the same action several times, the responses should not be identical. In other words, the system should respond like a living person to any even nonsensical input. Players can attempt to climb any tree or knock on any door, and if the player wants to bite the doorknob, the game provides a meaningful sarcastic response rather than a standard error message.

At the same time, the system should ensure non-degenerate gameplay by providing a fixed maze with "elastic walls" that gently and naturally guide the player back to the author's predetermined branches without breaking immersion. Indicators of preferred directions in the form of obstacles and attractors should softly enforce a spectrum of possibilities focused on engaging, non-degenerate storytelling areas.

Another thing that is doable with the current state of the art is real-time content rewriting. Similar to some pieces of art from the last century (Queneau, 1947), modern LLMs are capable of providing high-quality "translations" of short texts into the target style. (Tikhonov, 2024) demonstrated that modern LLMs can easily rewrite game transcripts into smooth artistic text. This feature could be helpful for personalization and provide better motivation for games' replayability.

Thus, we believe the "ideal" system balances the author's plot, game mechanics, and "elastic boundaries" (keeping players within the main plot without breaking the immersion), providing the user with a unique and personalized experience.

# System Proposed

As a proof of concept, we propose the <u>ReZork</u> project — a tribute to the classic game Zork where the original game is transformed into one of several selected literary styles while preserving the original storyline and overall game logic.

Our project proposes using an LLM-wrapped interactive fiction, which aims to merge the strengths of approaches. This means creating games with an open interface grounded in a formal story structure, formalized in languages like Inform (Nelson, 1993), for example. This approach allows for mitigating parser errors, reducing/removing syntax requirements for the command interface, and supporting reactions to user actions that were not foreseen by the game's author, as well as organizing narrative personalization — for instance, it can automatically style texts in a particular literary genre/form or alter modality (on some level similar to the Curveship project (Montfort, 2011)), and create a unique gaming experience for each player without compromising the story's structure.

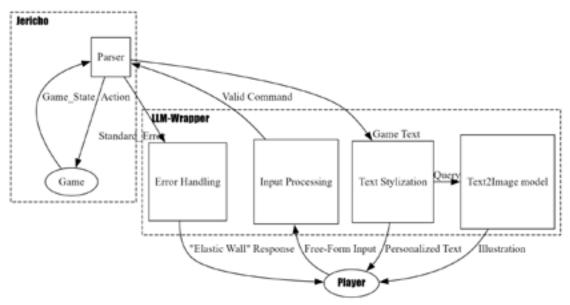


Figure 1: The flowchart of ReZork prototype.

Figure 1 shows the flowchart of the prototype, and Figure 2 demonstrates the screenshot of the gameplay in the debug mode, revealing both the UI available to end users and actual underlying interactions with the parser.

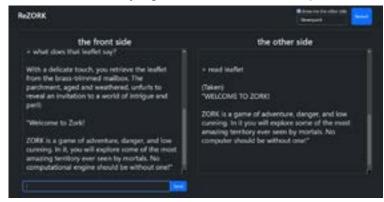


Figure 2: ReZork UI in the debug mode. On the left side there are user interactions with the system; on the right side the corresponding interactions with Z-machine.

The architecture of the system includes the following main blocks:

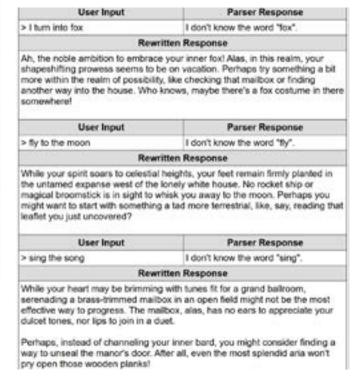
- Core Engine: The core is a z-machine executing the game in standard z-code format. This ensures compatibility with existing z-code games and provides a robust foundation. To build our prototype, we used the Jericho engine (Hausknecht et al., 2020).
- LLM wrapper: This module performs several key functions:
  - User Input Processing: The LLM wrapper translates free-form user input into valid parser commands. The LLM is aware of the current transcript, the list of commands the parser understands, and available objects so it can successfully

- resolve anaphoras and references to previous actions. See Figure 3 for examples of flexible user input rewriting.
- Error Handling: Standard parser errors are rewritten into "elastic wall" responses.
  These responses maintain the game's stylistic tone and are contextually aware
  and unique, thus avoiding breaking the fourth wall. They clearly indicate that
  the game state has not changed, returning the player to the previous situation
  without LLM-induced hallucinations. Figure 4 demonstrates several examples of
  "elastic wall" responses.
- Style Personalization: The author's content can also be rewritten by the LLM, for example, in a specified literary style (e.g., poetic, Lovecraftian, steampunk) or in a specific language. Such personalization enhances the player's immersive experience. Check Figure 5 for a couple of examples.
- Illustrator: Additionally, a modern text-to-image neural network generates contextual illustrations for the gameplay. These illustrations can also be styled to match the chosen literary theme, providing a richer visual narrative. Figure 6 exhibits four illustrations for the same location in different visual styles.

User Input	Translated Action	
examples of fi	ree-form input	
> let's check the mailbox	> examine mailbox	
> i want to open it	> open mailbox	
> what does that leaflet say?	> read leaflet	
> I try to open the window	> open window	
> get in	> enter window	
examples of wr	ong commands	
> howl to the moon	> howl	
> fly to the sky	> fly	
commands	in German	
> öffnen den Briefkasten	> open mailbox	
> lesen das Flugblatt	> read leaflet	
commands	in Russian	
> я беру листовку	> take leaflet	
>что в ней написано?	> examine leaflet	

(Above) Figure 3: The collection of different examples of free-from input converted to game actions.

(Right) Figure 4: Examples of "elastic wall" responses.



#### Original leaflet text

WELCOME TO ZORK!

ZORK is a game of adventure, danger, and low cunning. In it you will explore some of the most amazing territory ever seen by mortals. No computer should be without one!

#### Steampunk stylization

Welcome to Zork!

Zork is a game of adventure, danger, and low cunning. In it, you will explore some of the most amazing territory ever seen by mortals. No computational engine should be without one!

#### Noir stylization

The words on it were a promise, a siren's call to a world of adventure, danger, and low cunning. "WELCOME TO ZORK!" it proclaimed, inviting me to explore territories beyond imagination. It was a whisper from another world, a reminder that no computer should be without such a journey.

#### Poetry (blank verse) stylization

Welcome to Zork! A game of bold exploits,

Of danger, and of cunning, low and sharp.

In this, you'll tread through lands both strange and grand,

Terrains that mortal eyes have seldom seen. No computer should be without this game!

#### German version

WILLKOMMEN IN ZORK!

ZORK ist ein Spiel voller Abenteuer, Gefahren und listiger Tücken. Darin wirst du einige der erstaunlichsten Gebiete erkunden, die Sterbliche je gesehen haben. Kein Computer sollte ohne eines sein!

(Above) Figure 5: Automatic stylization of the game text into several genres.

(Right) Figure 6: Four automatically generated illustrations for the same (starting) location of Zork. Top left – in a sketchy style, top right – in a Barocco style, bottom left – in a noir style, bottom right – in a steampunk style.



Our approach shows promise for enhancing interactive fiction by combining the strengths of classic narrative structure with the flexibility of modern AI. The ReZork prototype can be applied to other z-code games, not just Zork; this method could also be used



for automatic gameplay translation, allowing games to be experienced in multiple languages. The same approach potentially can be applied to augment other types of games, such as CYOA (Choose Your Own Adventure) games, enhancing their narrative depth and player engagement.

Current technologies are not yet capable of creating engaging stories autonomously, so it's an important direction for future research. Meantime, while creating a good narrative remains resource-intensive and beyond full automation, the combination of platforms like Inform and high quality text generators (modern LLMs) can make interactive fiction more engaging and personalized, providing a unique experience for each player.

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# The (un)Lucky Carder

Inscryption, Submission, and Metafictional Games

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# **Abstract**

Game narratives can take many forms, and there are a growing number of games that examine the relationship between players and game stories which have been described as metafictional games by journalists and fans. In this presentation I examine Inscryption, a metafictional game that blends card game and puzzle elements, by building upon LeBlanc's taxonomy of fun, which describes the different kinds of pleasure that players feel when they interact with games, as well as Costikyan's discussion of that taxonomy. I claim that Inscryption is a metafictional game that engages with the notion of submission, or "games as pastime," in which fun can be derived from submitting to a game's rules and systems. Inscryption's card game requires submitting to battles against difficult enemies and bosses, while the puzzle portions of the game require submitting to escape room and map exploration challenges that unlock more of the game's world and backstory.

While the card and puzzle gameplay elements described above appear to be central to Inscryption, this gameplay loop is only a small part of the game's larger metafictional narrative about submission. Many of the game's metafictional elements are expressed through content that is depicted as taking place "outside" of the core gameplay loop: between each of the game's acts, the player can watch a series of increasingly disturbing video logs that are presented by a content creator known as The Lucky Carder. I suggest that these metafictional video log narratives address the relationship between players and games and question whether submitting to a game's rules might be harmful. I also claim that Inscryption illustrates Costikyan's notion that submission is an inherent part of all games. Overall, I argue that *Inscryption* functions as a metafictional experience that explores how concepts like submission operate at both a narrative and gameplay level.

# Introduction

*Inscryption* is a digital card game developed by Daniel Mullins Games and released in October 2021. The game blends roguelite, roleplaying, horror, escape room, and collectible card game elements, as well as many other genres. *Inscryption* has several modes of gameplay that generally center around card battles and exploring virtual environments. There is also a gameplay mode that presents the game's most overt

metafictional narrative: a series of in-game video vignettes that depict an ongoing storyline surrounding a fictional YouTube content creator named "Luke Carder." In this paper, I analyze *Inscryption* through LeBlanc, Hunicke, and Zubek's notion of submission as well as through other scholars' interpretations of the concept. I also apply Richard Garfield's notion of the metagame to *Inscryption* to examine not only its narrative, but also its gameplay. Finally, I claim that *Inscryption*'s metafictional elements suggest some larger implications for games as a whole. Overall, I argue that *Inscryption* illustrates that submission is an inherent component of all games in terms of both narrative and gameplay.

# Submission and games

LeBlanc, Hunicke, and Zubek originally developed the notion of "types of fun" in a series of GDC talks that became the influential article "MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research." The types of fun provide a way of discussing a game's aesthetics, which the article describes as the "desirable emotional responses evoked from a player" (LeBlanc, Hunicke, and Zubek) when they play a particular game. LeBlanc, Hunicke and Zubek provide a typology of the kinds of feelings that games can evoke to illustrate the types of fun, which are as follows: Sensation, Fantasy, Narrative, Challenge, Fellowship, Discovery, Expression, Submission (LeBlanc, Hunicke, and Zubek). The authors do not argue that these are the only kinds of fun that can be found in games, however, and they suggest that the list could be expanded, though the concept is intended as a categorization scheme that is useful for a wide variety of games (LeBlanc, Hunicke, and Zubek). I will not touch on all of the types of fun in this article, but I may mention them briefly; my analysis will primarily focus on the last type, submission.

LeBlanc, Hunicke, and Zubek do not provide extensive definitions for each of the types of fun. They define each of the terms simply as "game as X," with submission being defined as "game as pastime" (LeBlanc, Hunicke, and Zubek). The authors cite some examples of games that employ various types of fun as a means of illustrating each idea, however, and also discuss which types of fun those games emphasize over others. These examples are presented as an ordered list of the types of fun that the game uses: as such, the terms that appear earlier on each list are more prevalent than the types of fun that appear later in the list. Submission only comes up once in this set of examples, for the *Final Fantasy* series, and it is the least emphasized type: "Fantasy, Narrative, Expression, Discovery, Challenge, Submission" (LeBlanc, Hunicke, and Zubek) is the entry given for *Final Fantasy* in the article. Submission has also been used to describe why players engage with lengthy or repetitive games – for example, Abbot's discussion of submission in the context of *Final Fantasy* notes that playing games in

the franchise often involves submitting to "days of seemingly repetitive gameplay." This description also fits with the example given in the article because many *Final Fantasy* games typically use that repetitive gameplay in service of supporting fantasy and narrative rather than making it a central component of the game.

Looking at how other scholars have engaged with submission and games provides additional insight into the idea. Costikyan references LeBlanc's original GDC talks and subsequent article, connecting masochism to submission and noting that it "is an odd choice of words on Marc's part, but perhaps not an entirely inappropriate one" (30). Expanding on LeBlanc's use of the term, Costikyan argues that "we don't want life to be a struggle – but we do want our games to be. What Marc means is that there's a pleasure to be gained by submitting yourself to the structure of a game" (30). The term submission, especially in the context of pleasure, also has connections to kink, which is not a new lens for examining games either: for example, Brice touches on games using the context of dominance and submission in kink play (79). Brice's discussion of games and submission is not in quite the same context as Costikyan's, however, as Costikyan suggests that the idea highlights a key difference between games and other forms of media in terms of how players experience pleasure and fun. This difference can be found not only in how games are designed but in how people engage with them: games are designed to be a struggle, and part of why people enjoy them is that they must work within, and sometimes against, a game's structure. Costikyan argues that "figuring out the structure, and figuring out how to beat it, or manipulate it to beat your opponents, or gain your goals in the gameworld, is what gameplay is all about," (30) suggesting that submission is a basic element of gameplay, a notion I will return to later in this article. Overall, I suggest that submission is an element of both gameplay and narrative, and I examine the connections between the two in the next section.

# Metafiction and metagame

At a basic level, metafiction is what it sounds like – stories that explore and comment on the idea of storytelling, especially on storytelling within their own media format. Metafiction has been around for a long time in many forms of media - *Don Quixote* is a literary example that comments on the novel, *Inland Empire* is an example that comments on film, and *30 Rock* is an example in the broadcast television format. Unlike other forms of media, however, metafictional games do not have nearly as long a history - the Wikipedia page for "metafictional games" cites some examples from the late 80s and the 90s, but most of them come from the last 20 years or so and especially from the last 10: examples include *Cruelty Squad*, *One Shot*, and *The Magic Circle*. This shorter history might simply be because of the overall shorter history of video games

as a media form, though their interactive qualities encourage the kind of postmodern experimentation with narrative form that is common in metafiction, explaining the wealth of such games despite that short history. Academic discussion of metafiction and games is also scarce: Cha's PhD dissertation focuses on a metafictional autobiographical game project that the author created (3), but other mentions of the topic tend to come up in the context of literature, such as Grausam's analysis of Tim O'Brien's *The Nuclear Age* and connections between metafiction and games that are related to the novel (517). Metafictional games do share much in common with other kinds of metafiction despite their shorter history, however: at a basic level, such games are interested in exploring the structure of game storytelling and use both their narrative and gameplay elements to do so much like other kinds of metafiction.

The notion of metafiction is applicable to games given that they contain narrative elements just as other metafictional media do, but the concept of the metagame is also worth exploring given the obvious similarity in terminology and relevance to games as a whole. Richard Garfield, the creator of the collectible card game Magic the Gathering, defined the concept of the metagame as "how a game interfaces with life" (1). The term predates Garfield's definition, but his version of the idea has become one of the predominant ones in gaming. Garfield used examples like chess, bridge and sports to illustrate the idea (4-5), and in his conception the metagame is considerations that surround the game: with chess, for example, potential openings and defenses one might use (4). Garfield also applied the idea to *Magic: The Gathering* itself, noting that considerations about how to play the game deck might depend on things that surround the game as well: for example, players might prefer to play with a limited card pool instead of all cards available at a given time as a way to test their deckbuilding skills (4). These examples focus on competitive games, though the notion of the metagame is not limited to only such games.

Unlike Chess or *Magic: The Gathering*, which are two player competitive games that Garfield calls "orthogames" (1), *Inscryption* has almost no multiplayer or competitive elements. Garfield distinguishes between orthogames and single player games (1), but Garfield's definition does not necessarily preclude a game like *Inscryption* from having a metagame, as a single player game can interact with a player's life just as a multiplayer competitive game does: such a game simply does so in different ways. More importantly, *Inscryption*'s metafictional elements directly comment on the idea of how a game interacts with the lives of those who play it, especially through the concept of submission. Overall, Garfield's conception of the metagame almost perfectly describes *Inscryption*'s metafictional elements, and I analyze those elements in the next section.

## Inscryption and metafiction

As noted earlier, a common way of looking at submission is tying it to games with repetitive gameplay tasks. Many of *Inscryption*'s ludic elements are structured around such tasks: for example, its card game mechanics revolve around collecting cards and resources and having to collect them again after losing in the card battle portion of the game, with losses often unlocking new cards and game mechanics. Losing is common because of the game's difficulty, and each act ends with a challenging boss battle that is connected to the game's overarching narrative where losing is expected. Submission is also emphasized while exploring environments to find secrets, many of which require re-exploring areas again after attempting and losing certain battles or unlocking specific items. As such, submission is woven throughout much of the core card battle and exploration-based gameplay, and I claim that this approach builds upon the metafictional elements of the story that also engage with the concept.

Submission is also emphasized throughout *Inscryption*'s story, which begins with a metafictional moment that that plays upon the idea that the player has already submitted to the game's structure. The player is not presented with the option to create a "New Game" when the game is first started, but instead is only able to continue what appears to be an already existing playthrough, suggesting a twist on the traditional approach to video game storytelling. The game's narrative during the card battle and exploration sequences that follow employ minor elements of metafictional storytelling that will be discussed later, but the game's third metafictional gameplay mode is where *Inscryption* most directly comments on the notion of submission: defeating the game's first boss gives access to a "video player" program within the game. The program contains video logs featuring a content creator named Luke Carder who discusses old, forgotten physical card games, including one called *Inscryption*: in particular, he often makes videos where he opens packs of cards looking for rare, valuable cards. Carder's quest to learn more about *Inscryption* leads him to a floppy disk that contains a digital version of the game, though it appears the game was not intended for public release. This metafictional story is presented as taking place outside of the *Inscryption* video game itself: there is even an associated YouTube Channel titled Lucky Carder that features videos that build on the story, such as one introducing the channel and *Inscryption* itself ("Lucky Carder | Intro"). I suggest that this approach introduces an element of the metagame to *Inscryption*'s metafictional narrative: the player is seeing how the game interacts with someone's life, though it is snippets of Luke Carder's life that the player is seeing rather than their own.

Progression through the game builds upon these metafictional elements, especially towards the end of the game. Unexplained moments where Luke's voice cuts in and he

comments on the player's gameplay appear early in the game, and these become more frequent as the player progresses through the game's act-based structure. The game's story eventually reveals that the player is playing as Luke, who is using an existing save file he found on the game disk and recording his progress. After Act 2 Luke is able to start a new playthrough of *Inscryption* from the beginning, introducing new mechanics and encountering bosses from previous acts again. Progressing through each act also unlocks more metafictional video logs that reveal more backstory about *Inscryption* and Luke's attempts to figure out what is going on with the game in the real world. The videos show Carder reaching out to GameFuna, the company that made *Inscryption*, only to receive an intimidating visit from one of their representatives, who demands the return of the disk. Carder refuses and instead attempts to contact a journalist about the game; however, the game's final video log, which can only be seen after completing the game, shows him being shot in the head and the *Inscryption* disk being retrieved by the GameFuna representative, suggesting that his metafictional quest to find out more about the game ends in failure.

Overall, *Inscryption*'s metafictional narrative comments on the notion of submission by suggesting that it can be all-consuming: in fact, in Carder's case, submitting to the game's structure resulted in death. This does not imply that submitting to video games is always dangerous, however: instead, I claim that *Inscryption* is a portrayal what could happen when the notion is taken to its extreme rather than a depiction of how it typically functions. This concept is illustrated through metafictional elements like the game's video logs, but is also reinforced through ludic elements, as the game suggests that the player is actually playing as Luke himself. Even more importantly, I argue that *Inscryption* illustrates that submission is inherent element of all games that it distinguishes games as a medium from other media formats. I explore that notion in the final section of this paper.

## Submission: An element of all games

I have argued throughout this paper that *Inscryption*'s metafictional elements comment on the notion of submission and the concept of the metagame in how a game interacts with the lives of players. When discussing submission, Costikyan argues that "submission to a game's structure is the basic transaction we make when we play" (30), suggesting that playing video games is always an act of submission. Building on this notion, I claim that *Inscryption*'s metafictional elements also reveal that submission is an inherent part of all games: in terms of both gameplay and narrative, one cannot play a game without submitting to its structure. I discuss this claim's implications in terms of both game rules and game narrative to conclude this paper.

The notion of submission to a game's rules is common in discussions of the intersection between play and rules. In Huzinga's seminal discussion of the how play works, he suggests that it "[stands] quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious but at the same time absorbing the playing intensely and utterly... it proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules" (13). The notion of submitting to a rules structure in order to play is clear in this discussion, and it also comes up in a similar frequently cited discussion by Callios, in which he argues that play takes place "under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation which alone counts" (10). Both Huzinga and Callois' comments predate the creation of video games, though video games add an additional dimension to the notion of submitting to a game's rules, as in video games the rules are enforced by game code rather than by social contract, a notion that Murnane and I discussed (87). Regardless of how rules are enforced, however, I argue that the structure created by a game is the same: playing a game means playing by, and therefore submitting to, its rules.

Considering submission as an inherent element of games might also help to address another issue: debates surrounding immersion and video games. Immersion is not something that differentiates games from other media – one can become immersed in a book or movie just as one can become immersed in a game – but scholarly discussions of how game immersion differs are common. One example of this is Ryan's discussion of immersion in interactive digital narratives in which she distinguishes between two types of immersion: ludic immersion, or immersion in a game's gameplay, and narrative immersion, or immersion in a game's story (53). Ryan's point here is to highlight the challenge surrounding the word immersion when discussing games, as immersion works on multiple levels and in different ways in games than it does in other kinds of media. Ryan's terminology is useful for making such distinctions, though I suggest that submission might be useful as a better "catch all" term for discussing situations in which ludic and narrative immersion both apply: when people say that they are fully immersed in a game, what they often mean is that they have fully submitted to the game in terms of both rules structure and narrative.

Finally, I argue that *Inscryption*'s metafictional elements illustrate the importance of considering submission when analyzing video games, especially metafictional video games. Metafictional games typically test the limits of video game narrative design, and submission becomes especially useful in examining such games since they foreground considerations about video game narrative structure. I have also suggested here that submission can be seen through both narrative and gameplay, and the concept could help for understanding what Hocking calls "ludonarrative dissonance," in which "a game cannot be enjoyed as both a game and as a story." This issue may result from when

a game's design prevents a player from submitting to both narrative and gameplay. Overall, I suggest that *Inscryption* offers a valuable framework for analyzing games through the concept of submission: as such, this kind of analysis could be extended to other metafictional games as well as other kinds of games in general.

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## Doing Memory in Digital Fiction

A Critical Study of Memory, Narratology and Digitality in Andy Campbell and Judy Alston's Clearance

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#### **Abstract**

This paper analyses Andy Campbell and Judi Alston's post-apocalyptic digital poetry, Clearance (2007), by close-reading it using the critical tools/methods from narratology, and further examining it through the lens of memory studies, as it enables the engagement with multiple processes that relate past, present and future in diverse historical and sociocultural contexts (Erll). Digital-born electronic literature and its multimodal representations have been challenging the limits of reading and writing literature (Hayles) by taking advantage of digital computation (Wardrip-Fruin) or "technoeikon" (Shanmugapriya et al.) as well as creating interactive and immersive stories that demand "the reader to make a shift in their ability to approach and interpret such works" (Campbell). Situated between a narrative and a game, Clearance takes the reader/player on an experiential tour around abandoned landscapes after an apocalypse that resembles the space around in the real world and evokes a sense of familiarity; it results in what Alice Bell calls an "ontological resonance" - a "prolonged response and aura of significance" to the storyworld both "during and after the experience" (Bell). The authors analyse how the "visual noise" (Engberg) of the digital poetry contributes to the ontological resonance while also mediating "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg) of the apocalypse to the reader/player outside the storyworld. Accordingly, the study foregrounds the ability of a digitally represented space to mediate memory to the reader/player who observes them in the first-person perspective inside the storyworld using the concepts of sites of memory (lieu de mémoire) by Pierre Nora and survivor objects by Marita Sturken. The authors propose an innovative framework to critically read/play and interpret digital literature that will integrate memory, narratology, and digitality in an interconnected, mediated, and interactive space.

## Introduction

This article proposes to intervene in the studies of electronic literature by integrating theories from memory studies and narratology, aiming to offer new insights into how the mediation of memory occurs within and through electronic literature. The

"connective turn", as theorized by Andrew Hoskins, when "digital media, communication networks and archives" are suddenly abundant, pervasive and immediate (1), has had a significant influence on literature. As digital systems became an "intrinsic part of both the public and private sphere" (O'Sullivan 8), literature began to be produced on computers. This digital-born literature, known as electronic literature and its multimodal representations, has been challenging the limits of reading and writing literature by taking advantage of digital computation as well as creating interactive and immersive stories that demand "the reader to make a shift in their ability to approach and interpret such works" (Shanmugapriya T et al. 655). According to James O'Sullivan, electronic literature performs at the "juncture between the literary, the ludic and the sensory" (xv). With embedded and interactive elements, electronic literature promises a sensorial, playful and immersive reading experience. It becomes heedful of not just what is being said but also of how it is said, and accordingly, it is imperative for studies on electronic literature to pay attention to the media with which it is rendered. In her work, Digital Modernism, Jessica Pressman says that "media is (and always has been) a central aspect of experimental literature and the strategy of making it new" (5), thus establishing the importance of the media in creating and studying electronic literature.

Following the dominance of literary theories rooted in print culture of over five hundred years, this contemporary digital age and the "dynamic interactions" of electronic literature call for a "media-specific" (Hayles 68) approach to understanding and analysing literary texts. Annika Elstermann further elucidates the necessity of such a study when she claims that literary criticism could gain a lot by recognising and analysing digital texts as "potentially literary not only in spite of, but in some cases precisely because of, their peculiar creation processes" (2). Electronic literature encompasses disparate works from hypertext fiction to "physio-cybertext" (Ensslin 155) to virtual reality fiction and, as Ryan says in Narrative Across Media, an inquiry on "how the intrinsic properties of the medium shape the form of narrative and affect narrative experience can no longer be ignored" (1).

While the medium is a salient feature to be considered in a study on electronic literature, it is also important to notice the intrinsic connection between media and the construction and circulation of memory. It would be inconceivable to think of memory on both the individual and collective levels without thinking about media (Erll 113). According to Erll, literature from lyrical poems to digital stories, literature "manifested in all genres and media technologies... have served – and continue to serve – as media of memory" (144). This article aims to do a parallel study of theories and concepts on media from both fields and locate digital literature at the critical nexus of narratology and memory studies in order to delineate how the media-specific narrative elements of electronic literature and electronic literature itself aid in the mediation of memory. This article close-reads Andy

Campbell and Judi Alston's post-apocalyptic digital poetry, Clearance (2007), and traces how memory transmission happens two-fold in this participatory poetry.

Situated between a narrative and a game, Clearance takes the reader/player on an experiential tour around barren and unoccupied landscapes through a series of short video clips. By moving the cursor around the landscape, the reader/player gets access to memories of the time before an undefined apocalyptic event. Lisa Swornstrom calls this digital work an "interactive memoryscape" that "invites its users to make sense of memories, fleeting phrases, radio clips, and moving images that intrude upon a bleak post-apocalyptic landscape" (Electronic Literature Directory). The video and audio clips that are used to represent the post-apocalyptic scene in the poetry appear to have been recorded from the real world, and they evoke a sense of familiarity that lasts even after the poetry is over, resulting in "ontological resonance" (Bell) where the reader/ player sees a trail of the fictional world in the real world. This article aims to elaborate on how the narrative elements and visual excess or "visual noise" (Maria Engberg) of this digital poetry contribute to an immersive experience leading to a sense of ontological ambiguity and transgression while also mediating the reader/player with what Alison Landsberg calls "prosthetic memory". Accordingly, the study also foregrounds the ability of a digitally represented space to mediate memory to the reader/player who, as a diegetic explorer, navigates in the first-person perspective inside the storyworld by focusing on the roles of sites (or lieux), and material objects and ruins in the process. This article proposes an innovative framework to critically read/play and interpret digital literature that integrates memory, narratology, and digitality in an interconnected, mediated, and interactive space.

## Post-apocalyptic Clearance

Andy Campbell and Judi Alston, who have collaborated on several digital works, created Clearance, inspired by a notorious act by Alston's friend and an English stone carver, Billy Johnson, who anonymously left stone heads around in Yorkshire. Similar stone heads are found littered throughout the poetry as well. The demarcation between the storyworld and the real world is further obscured by a link featured in the poem that takes the reader/player to a news article about Billy Johnson and the "mystery heads" he left around Yorkshire.

The poetry opens with a display of a government database entry with information about the protagonist, Iggi Hayer, a British citizen who has no children and has also lost his parents and wife. Iggi passes as a desolate person who, according to the entry, has shown signs of "early childhood trauma erratic behaviour" and has been under "regular medical prescription". This complicates the reader/player's trust in Iggi's story, owing to

the possibility of delusions and the unreliability of his memory. Additionally, the lines that appear on the screen are timed to disappear after a few seconds, mimicking the fleeting nature of thoughts and memories. New lines appear as a response to hovering the cursor over the landscape, and this act of hovering the cursor to reveal the hidden lines that advance the narration is akin to searching the space with the reader/player's hands to make meaning of it. As Ciccorrico says, the cursor "is always potentially and often literally... a point of view—the point of view for the reader" (262). The cursor is the focal point that brings the reader/player outside the storyworld to the centre of it.

The lines that get revealed are overlaid on the mouse-responsive screen, and superimposed videos, supposedly memories from the past, intrude the landscape, creating a visual excess, which Maria Engberg calls "visual noise" – "a distinctly definable strategy which combines letters with images, sounds, and, in the case of digital work, kinetic operations to create a sense of excess" (2). The visual noise in Clearance demands the readers/players to actively move the cursor for a better view of the words and to reveal the superimposed moving images on the screen. Accompanied by audio clips, these moving images or short video clips that overlay and interrupt the narrative from time and again are snippets of memories of the place before it was abandoned following an apocalypse that was either man-made or natural. Though readers/players are not given access to knowledge of what changed the place, they are let into the awareness of how it used to be before the unfortunate event through these visual and audio excesses, making the reader/player invested in the narration.

Hayles points out that "fragmentation and recombination are intrinsic to the medium" (76) of electronic literature, and fragmentation in electronic literature is "deeper, more pervasive, and more extreme" (77) than in its printed counterparts. Fragmentation is evident in Clearance as it is built through a series of fragmented and disconnected video clips of abandoned and desolate land with random audio clips from news or TV shows. The presence of Iggi (supposedly) at the beginning and the end of the poetry holds this series of video clips together, and the mask with which he appears reoccurs as a flicker in the middle of the poetry, serving as a reminder that Iggi is guiding the reader/player through his memories. Thus, in Clearance, readers/players get to engage with the "eventilized" poem (Hayles 182) by performing "nontrivial efforts" (Aarseth), like moving and clicking the mouse to comprehend and move forward in the narrative as an outsider to the storyworld while also following Iggi's memories as an active observer and explorer in the first-person point of view inside the storyworld, engaging with visual details using the cursor-hands.

## Double-situatedness

The act of reading has often been correlated with the act of transportation of readers into the storyworld. Readers are assumed to be occupying the same space as the characters in books while reading, getting absorbed in the fictional world. In My Mother Was a Computer, Katherine Hayles writes that "literature functions more like simulations" (6) while discussing Kittler's proposition of the immersive nature of literature and its "ability to create vividly imagined worlds in which readers can 'hallucinate' scenes, actions, and characters so fully that they seem to leap off the page and inhabit the same psychic space as the readers themselves" (6). However, immersion in digital literature has long been contested. Readers/players of digital literature are presumed to have difficulty feeling immersed as the interactive elements of digital narratives could highlight the constructive nature of the fictional world (Ryan), and hence, the storyworld feels distinctly separate from that of the reader/player's actual world. In Ryan's words, instead of "experiencing the properly narrative types of immersion... users will take a meta-stance, reverse-engineering the code and admiring (or criticizing) the intelligence of the system". But, through empirical studies, Alice Bell. Astrid Ensslin and others show that immersion in digital fiction is possible, and they propose an "empirical cognitive poetic" approach to studying this immersion. After tracing the trajectory of theories on immersion in literary history, in their "Immersion in Digital Fiction", they point out that immersion, as opposed to the widely accepted theory of full absorption, is "an intermittent process, stimulated by multiple immersive features which interact" (1). They highlight the necessity of addressing the "doubly-embodied nature" of the reading experience while reading digital literature because "the readerplayer of a three-dimensional digital fiction is always embodied in a separate ontological domain" from that of the real world, like "in the form of an onscreen avatar" (3). To them, immersion in electronic literature is "a fully embodied, multimodal experience that is stimulated by features inside and outside the text" (16).

The doubly-embodied nature or "double-situatedness", according to Ensslin, means the embodiment of the reader/player on two levels while reading/playing digital or electronic literature. Readers/players are simultaneously embodied "as direct receivers" in the real world "whose bodies interact with the hardware and software of a computer" and re-embodied "through feedback that they experience in represented form" like the third-person or first-person and visible or invisible avatars and representations on the screen (Ensslin 158). As discussed earlier, the reader/player of Clearance is also doubly-embodied – as an outsider and as a diegetic explorer, and thus, this article uses Clearance to study and delineate how this double-situatedness could result in two-fold memory transmission in the reader/player.

## Mediation of Prosthetic Memory & Ontological Resonance

More than in traditional non-interactive literature, readers/players of electronic literature experience a more participatory, "active and, potentially, intimate role in and relationship with the storyworld" (Bell 1) as they engage directly with the ontologically distant world through moving or clicking a mouse, navigating an avatar, giving verbal commands or accessing a hyperlink. This gives an ability to interact with and influence the plot (though limited), like in Clearance, where the reader/player is given a "partial responsibility for the visual perspective" owing to the exploratory function that is demanded of them (Bell 300). This newfound agency to affect the storyline can be paralleled with a shift in mass media. Nicholas Negroponte, in his Being Digital (1996), predicted that digital systems would redefine mass media "for transmitting and receiving personalized information and entertainment" (6). He observed that the nature of mass media would evolve from when data was pushed at people to where people (or their computers) are allowed to pull them at their will (Negroponte 84). Similarly, Andrew Hoskins posits that "in today's media ecology, it is users that are made personally accountable" for what they consume. Thus, in this "digital era", both literature and mass media have evolved from passive reception to active participation. Correspondingly, this article suggests another parallel, that is, electronic literature can mediate memory to its reader/player just as mass media does.

In 2003, Alison Landsberg proposed that mass media and technology play a significant role in generating empathy. According to her, empathy is not instinctive but is produced, and mass media facilitates this production by "revealing perspectives otherwise inaccessible, and by addressing the individual body in the intimate ways" (148). This generation of empathy becomes possible for a wider audience through the "production and dissemination of memory" (148) of events of remote history through mass media, which she terms "prosthetic memory". Prosthetic memory suggests the possibility of feeling an intimate connection with memories of distant events that viewers have not lived through, but since these memories are derived from "engaged and experientially-oriented encounters with mass media's various technologies of memory", they feel like personally experienced memories. This article studies Clearance in the same light to delineate the ability of multimodal electronic literature to render an experiential encounter, thereby making the reader/player feel for the characters in the narrative.

As prosthetic memories "feel real" and "might be instrumental in generating empathy and articulating an ethical relation to the other" (149), the readers/players of Clearance own the memories of the apocalypse that they gain through the interaction within the storyworld as their personal memories even though they did not live through it and feel empathetic towards the fictional character of Iggi who has lost all of his family

(presumably to the apocalypse). According to Alice Bell, the double-embodied possibility of seeing the storyworld through the eyes of the protagonist as well as the reader/player in Clearance results in "emotional immersion", where the reader/player gets emotionally invested "in the fate of imaginary characters" (Ryan 148). As the reader/player follows Iggi or, as Swanstrom suggests, "takes the perspective of the character" through the revival of his past, the emotional immersion instigates empathy in them. Thus, readers/players who enter and interact with the storyworld using the cursor on the screen, which, according to Ryan, will be interpreted "as the representation of their virtual body in the virtual world" (122), are committed to the progress of the plot and are mediated with the prosthetic memory of the apocalypse while empathizing with the fictional character.

As the reader/player transports themselves to the fictional world, Alice Bells suggests that the inverse becomes possible as well. Swanstrom says that the interconnection between "the heads that dominate the landscapes of Clearance" and the sculptures left around Yorkshire by Billy Johnson in the real world "lend an ARG feel to Clearance, suggesting that an additional layer to the story might exist beyond the pages of the work itself." Following Swanstrom's claim, it could be said that Clearance blurs the ontological distinction between the fictional and the real world. The fictional world lingers in the real world, making it difficult not to believe it is real. The newly integrated prosthetic memory of a post-apocalyptic world aids in this ontological ambiguity as well. To explain this phenomenon of ontological transgression, Alice Bell proposes the concept of "ontological resonance", which is the "inverse ontological maneuver" where interactive digital narrative elements "appear to move from the storyworld to the actual world" and can occur both "during and after reading/playing" the digital work (2).

The discussions on the resonance of the fictional world in the real world, even after "the pages have been put down" (Stockwell), have presaged Alice Bell's ontological resonance; however, with the multimodality of electronic literature, a revamping of narrative theories becomes necessary. Unlike in "literary resonance" proposed by Stockwell, Alice Bell's "ontological resonance" explains the ability of digital works to leave the reader/player with an uncertain demarcation between the two ontologically distant worlds, the fictional and the real world. Clearance is constructed with videos that are not 3D rendered or animated but are recordings of the real world, capturing a particular time and space in history. It is viewed on a computer that, among other functions, stores and plays recorded video or audio clips, contributing to the ambiguous state of mind of the reader/player. The link to the news article about the stone heads further gives the impression that the storyworld is not fully fictional and isolated from the real world. Digital poetry, which itself acts as a medium that instigates empathy, results in the transferral of prosthetic memory. This memory about the apocalypse that the

reader/player gains solely through the interaction with the digital poetry can condition how the reader/player "thinks about the world" (Landsberg 149), thereby creating a resonance with their real world that displays a semblance to the constructed digital storyworld.

#### Diegetic Mediation of Memory and Materiality

Several exploratory electronic literatures like The Flat and computer games like Dear Esther and What Remains of Edith Finch narrate a story through the reader's or player's engagement with the environment of the story world. Clearance is one such mouseoperated poetry where secrets of the past before the apocalypse and the protagonist's memories of the deserted place are unearthed by mousing over the video screens of bleak landscapes and clicking to move from one place (or scene) to the next. This concept of retrieving memories that are "crystallized" in the "sites" (Nora 1) can be traced back to Pierre Nora's concept of "lieux de memoire", or sites of memory. Though often criticized for its ample reliance on French national memories and the idea of real and genuine memory, this concept proves to be a foundational base from which one can construct and deviate. Nora's lieux, where memory is crystalised, includes "geographical locations, buildings, monuments and works of art as well as historical persons, memorial days, philosophical and scientific texts, or symbolic actions" (Erll 23). To him, these sites exist because the "settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience" are no longer existent. The "real memory" is distant from people of the modern age because of the "acceleration of history" (Nora 12). Alison Landsberg addresses a similar inadequacy of traditional modes of transmission of memory due to "the rupture of generational ties" caused by the "movement of people across the globe", the rise of cinema and "technologised mass culture" (145-6). However, despite echoing Nora, Landsberg's contribution, as Erll points out, offers "a deeper scrutiny" and highlights "also the enabling aspects of new media ecologies in relation to cultural memory" (134).

In a different but similar discussion, Marita Sturken's study on the September 11 Memorial and Museum at Ground Zero addresses the interrelation between material objects, sites and memory. According to Sturken, the museum and the memorial are both "sites through which the material transformation of 9/11 is mediated—through preservation, re-creation, and fetishization and through narratives of absence, presence and remains" (14). Likewise, in Clearance, the places that the reader/player visits as part of the exploration of Iggi's past are sites that mediate the memory of the transformation of the lost past to the reader/player. However, unlike Nora's impression of sites existing to substitute the loss of real memory, Sturken observes that memory is not "unadulterated and unmediated", highlighting the inherent relationship between

memory and mediation. She further claims that "fetishization is inherent to memory objects" (25). The abandoned landscapes in Clearance are littered with disparate things, including stone heads, a bicycle, discarded objects, automobiles, rubbles, etc, which act as mediators of memory. These memory objects are presented on the screen in a similar fashion to how objects in a museum are presented to affect and move the viewers or readers/players.

The positionality of material objects in Clearance is interesting. The objects "survived when people and buildings did not", and became "survivor objects" (Sturken 18). Studying the survivor objects for their ability to influence the process of mediation is as important as understanding the reader/player's engagement with the storyworld to acquire memory. In his book An Archaeology of Ruins, Bjørnar Olsen writes,

"Despite the materiality of the *lieux*, what is nevertheless implied is that while places or things may be seen as projecting, inscribing or objectifying memory (cf. Connerton 1989), they are themselves not considered decisive for the act of remembering. The crucial issue is rather the past event, real or invented, and the will to remember it through subsequent site embodiments" (Olsen 8-9).

In the case of Clearance, the materiality of the ruins becomes important as the objects that are seen to be littered around are precisely chosen and arranged on the screen by a conscious developer to act as media for the transmission of memory. At the same time, this foregrounding of materiality in Clearance supersedes the will of the reader/ player to remember the event as he/she has not lived through it themselves and also undermines the dominance of the event (the apocalypse) as the poetry does not focus on the apocalypse but the pre- and post-apocalyptic time. This centralisation of objects will be helpful in identifying the role of these objects as active mediators and storytellers. As Sturken observes, these objects that are believed to have "survived a cataclysmic event" become "storytelling devices and stand-ins for the dead" (19) and the lost. Thus, the landscape and material ruins present on the screen of digital poetry become storytelling devices as well as the media that plays a major role in memory transmission to the diegetic reader/player.

## Diegetic and Extradiegetic Media

In his Mediated Memories in the Digital Age, Van Dijck states that media and memories are not "separate entities" but that "the first enhancing, corrupting, extending, replacing" as well as "invariable and inherently" shaping the second (16). Media has always been an important influence on both the process of mediating memory and the art of storytelling. In the case of electronic literature, the experience of reading/playing the digital text is distinctive because of the unique media that renders and enables it. The double-situatedness in electronic literature leads to a double-embodied

engagement of the reader/player with the text, where the text can be considered a medium by itself while its textual elements form a different medium that mediates memory within the storyworld. This double mediation of memory by the text and its textual elements happens simultaneously by making the readers/players emotionally invested in the narrative, actively engage with the past, empathize with characters and by presenting the survivor objects as storytelling objects. The reader/player is both an outsider and a diegetic explorer and hence, as this article tried to show, the reader/player acquires memory at both diegetic and extradiegetic levels.

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## 10ve0ne

Creating Electronic Literature on the Early World Wide Web Judy Malloy

## **Abstract**

Thirty years ago, my web-based hyperfiction *I0veOne* was the first work to be published in the Eastgate Web Workshop. *L0veOne* was a road trip in its journey-based narrative lexias, in its metaphors of radically changing cyberspace, and in its explorations of the paths for electronic literature that the World Wide Web engendered. Focusing on the creation of *I0ve0ne* in the early World Wide Web environment but also documenting other early web-based creative work and platforms -- such as the1994 ANIMA website hosted by the Center for Image and Sound Research in Vancouver, BC Canada -- this personal account explores initial changes in authoring and audience that occurred with the introduction of the World Wide Web. It documents the role of browsers in public access to the internet, details content and authoring issues in *I0ve0ne*, and concludes with observations on the World Wide Web-based authoring of four other early works: Stuart Moulthrop's *Hegirascope*, composer John Maxwell Hobbs' *Web Phases*, Michael Joyce's *Twelve Blue*, and Olia Lialina's *My Boyfriend Came Back from the War*.

#### 1. Introduction

LOveOne (Malloy 1995)<sup>1</sup>, an allegoric journey in an envisioned near future web environment, was created with basic HTML, at a time when CSS, Java, and JavaScript were not publicly available. The first selection in the Eastgate Web Workshop, *IOveOne* was written, structured, and coded in the fall of 1994. It was not my first work that appeared on the early web. *Making Art Online* (Fig. 1) -- an ongoing databased collection of statements from the arts community about the experience of working on the changing internet -- appeared on the ANIMA website in early 1994 and is included in John December and Neil Randall's first edition of *The World Wide Web Unleashed* (1994 497)<sup>2</sup>. For ANIMA, the 1993 version was marked up in HTML by ANIMA staff.

Then, following a serious accident in July, beginning on August 17, 1994, as I lay in bed with an early laptop, lent me by the Computer Science Lab (CSL) at Xerox PARC, I asked online colleagues -- from both The WELL and the Interactive Art conference on Arts Wire -- for windows to their worlds. Their words in dialogue with my words resulted in *name is scibe* (Malloy 1994) which was subsequently published on the Web on both Arts Wire and The WELL. (Fig. 2)

[ 2 ] Telematic Embrace: A Love Story? Edward A. Shanken	[ 3 ] "Buckminster Fuller: Illusiv Artist" Victoria Vesna
[ 4 ] ecafe manifesto Kit Galloway & Sherrie Rabinowitz	[ 5 ] Making Art Online Judy Malloy
[ 6 ] la plissure du texte Roy Ascott et al	[ 7 ] hearsay Norman White
MAKING ART ONLINE Judy Malloy	
INTRODUCTION - Judy Malloy THE EXPERIENCE - James Johnson Robert Edgar WHY? - John Coate Pauline Oliveros Howard Rheingold Paul Rutkovsky Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowit IMPLICATIONS - Anna Couey Michael Joyce Randy Ross ARTWORKS - Brian Andreas: HALL Anna Couey and Lucia Grossberger MATRIX: WOMEN NETWORKING	OF WHISPERS

Fig. 1. "Making Art Online Judy Malloy", Telematics Timeline, Walker Art Center, curated by Steve Dietz (2001) emulation of the 1994 ANIMA version, detail



Fig. 2. Malloy, Judy (1995), name is scibe, web version on Arts Wire and The WELL servers, cover page detail and an initial entry

The dates on the entries to *name is scibe* are clear because conference systems publicly retained the initial posting date. But, because UNIX file-posted dates are changed whenever even a small HTML change is made, initial web publication dates can be difficult to ascertain. And, internet-based content was/is -- like the medium itself -- constantly evolving. Indeed, in a paper published in *Modern Fiction Studies*, Sue Ellen Case wrote about *name is scibe* that "...time and ordering of space gives way to an absorptive electronic space, eddying different places into a common pool, which, while emulating the sequential in sites, overcomes its temporal axis..." (Case 1997).

Contingently, acknowledging the changing cyberspace environment, name is scibe concluded with these words:

"Eric was right about URL's. They are ubiquitous now. 'there is a fear about how things will change, yet they change' were the words that Douglas used on Arts Wire." (Malloy 1994).

Name is scibe and Making Art Online used the web as a publishing medium. But significantly in the fall of 1994, potential use of the web -- not only as a publishing medium that facilitated hypertextually structured work but also as an initial authoring system -- was apparent. With this in mind, (my practice at this time was to concurrently write electronic literature and host internet-based collaborative works), I began to write 10ve0ne. Although it was initiated with writing on cross-platform preweb platforms, I soon began composing *l0ve0ne* directly in HTML.

With its shifting metaphors of identity on the changeable Internet Highway, *I0ve0ne* was set a few years into a future where -- it soon became obvious -- we were heading. With this in mind, *l0ve0ne* began where I began: on my long-ago way to a job interview at the Library of Congress:

" It doesn't seem so long ago that I was walking the streets of Washington, DC wearing white gloves. those strange cotton hand coverings were what the natives were wearing even though it was August, and sweat soaked the armpits \_\_\_\_\_ of my short black linen dress as I stood at the bus stop clutching an envelope of laboriously hand typed resumes." (lexia 1)

## 2. Background: The Cyber Environment in 1994 and **Early 1995**

For those for whom the internet was already a primary source of communication and information, changes in the internet environment were occurring long before the arrival of the World Wide Web, and the evolution of the cyber environment was stately, slow, continuous. Although the arrival of affordances such FTP (File Transfer Protocol), Telnet (connected terminals), the Gopher (document storage and retrieval), and networked email were unseen by the then unconnected general public, the cyber-environment was a place of evolving protocols.

For example, for networked email, an initial date was 1971 when Ray Tomlinson, working for ARPANET contractor Bolt Beranek, and Newman, is credited for an elegant address syntax; he chose the @ symbol to indicate the computer system where a user resided (Hicks 2012). However, many different in house email systems were in use at this time (Stanford Computer Science, 1999), and it was not until the late 1980's and early 1990's that the sturdy @hostname system become dominant.

For example, Usenet -- created in 1979-1980 by graduate students at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, along with colleagues at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill -- improved information exchange between UNIX computers on the two campuses (Vaughan-Nichols 2023). Initially, it took hold slowly, but by the early 1990's what they called "Newsnet" had grown from online connection between two Universities into Usenet, a global system of over 100,000 newsgroups.

On the Usenet group alt.hypertext, on August 6, from CERN in Switzerland, Tim Berners-Lee publicly introduced his beginning in 1989 work on the development of the World Wide Web (Blustein 2016). Facilitating access to the WWW, the development of browser systems followed, and the cyber environment began to radically expand. "Browser. This word doesn't sound like very much; it's kind of a laid back word, but there's nothing relaxed about the browser because it changed the face of the internet," identity in flux Silicon Valley pundit Bob Cringeley observed on the televised "Glossary of Geek" (Cringeley 1998).

Viola, one of the earliest widely used browsers, was created by Pei-Yuan Wei at UC Berkeley. He used HyperCard as a Model. Viola displayed websites with a printed page look, was eventually published by O'Reilly. (World Wide Web Consortium 1992). Browser development marched on when Marc Andreessen and Eric Bina, students at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA), released Mosaic in 1993. Mosaic enabled the display of inline images and had a greater range of platform compatibility than Viola, as well as new features, such as bookmarks (Berners-Lee). Among arts-centered websites created during the Mosaic era was the extraordinarily comprehensive ANIMA (the Arts Network for Integrated Media Applications). Financed by the Canada Council, the City of Vancouver, and the University of British Columbia, work on ANIMA (Fig. 3) began in 1993. With hundreds of HTML pages, GIF images, and an index to the site as a whole, ANIMA hosted event information, art discussion. and global artists' projects (December). It launched in early 1994. Instrumental in the development of ANIMA was Derek Dowden, who also hosted early classes for artists in HTML. In Dowden's words, the focus was "...on the possibilities of networking as an information resource and tool for research in art and technology, the development of virtual communities for creative collaboration, and the network as a medium for artistic exploration and expression" (Kelly 1994 22).

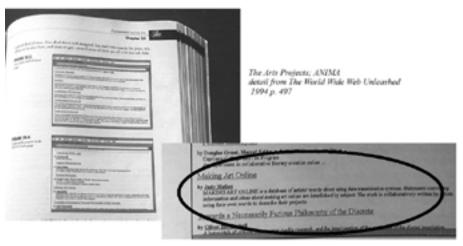


Fig. 3. December, John and Neil Randall (1994), 'The Arts Projects: ANIMA", The World Wide Web Unleased , 497

ANIMA received four pages of coverage in *The World Wide Web Unleashed*, a massive publication that grew out of John December's theses at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) on "investigating the Internet and how it can be used for communication" (December 874) and focused on providing how-to instruction and selected examples.

In contrast, Christine Maxwell's *New Riders Official Internet Yellow Pages* (1994) provided a more extensive listing of internet resources and grew out of Maxwell's information background, which included founding Information On Demand in 1982 (Stokes 1998). As evidenced by the second edition of the *New Riders Official Internet Yellow Pages* (Maxwell 1994), the cyber-environment was still a mix of access protocols. Here is a very small sample of the wide range of internet access protocols listed in this 802 page resource.



Fig. 4. Maxwell, Christine and Czeslaw Jan Grycz (1994), One of Arts Wire's listings in the Second edition of the New Riders' Official Internet Yellow Pages, 67

- Email (includes listservs as well as other email delivered information): Black Africa

   email to legendary Black internet activist Art McGee; Electronic Cafe email to
   Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz; gaynet mailing list; NativeNet mailing list;

   Postmodern Culture mailing list.
- **FTP**: ISEA Inter-Society On Electronic Arts; *Computer Music Journal*; NASA Ames Space Archive; OTIS (image-based art gallery); Project Gutenberg; Smithsonian Online.
- **Telnet:** Art Com Electronic Network (ACEN), Carl Loeffler's email listed as contact, email: artcomtv@well.sf.ca; Arts Wire (Fig. 4), contact email listed as Judy Malloy artswire@tmn.com; Brown University Library; ECHO East Coast counterpart to The WELL; Library of Congress; The WELL.
- Gopher: California Museum of Photography; Blacksburg Electronic Village Gopher; Chicago Culture; Chicano/LatinoNet; EDUCOM; Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF); UNICEF.
- Usenet: alt.hypertext; rec.arts.fin; rec.video; soc.culture.china; soc.culture.korean
- Web Wide Web (http address): African Art Exhibition And Tutorial; Bell Laboratories;
   <u>GameBytes Magazine</u>; Zarfs List Of Interactive Games on the Web (contact:
   Andrew Plotkin); NCSA (The National Center for Supercomputing Applications); MIT
   Press Catalog; US Department of Education Online Catalog; World Conference on
   Women; Mother Jones.

Note that the *Internet Yellow Pages* did not extensively list dial-up home computer BBS systems as such, unless they had telnet access, but they were still a part of the cyber-environment in 1994, particularly in community networking circles, and in 1993, they were a core part of the influential "Telluride Ideas Festival & InfoZone" (Theise 1993; Lowenberg 2016).

Meanwhile, when he graduated Marc Andreessen left NSCA and went to Silicon Valley, where under the auspices of Silicon Graphics head Jim Clark, he and original team members developed a new version of Mosaic with greater functionality (Berners-Lee). For copyright reasons the name was changed to Netscape. Netscape was released on October 13, 1994.

Although Socks did not meow on the 1994 White House website, when **t**he White House cat appeared on the White House website in circa 1995, not only his picture but also his voice\_were included. Reportedly, on that day, in the offices of *Wired Magazine*, Sock's meow reverberated throughout the building.

Also begun on the web in 1994 was Yahoo, founded by Jerry Yang and David Filo. Jeff Bezos founded Amazon on July 5, 1994, and in December, 1994, Alan Liu's *Voice of the* 

Shuttle began as a UC Santa Barbara campus site. (Liu). Soon, the Web Wide Web (and the http URL) would dominate internet resources, and on every level of software and hardware technology, in 1994 we were on a road trip where discarded evidence of early internet access lay on the hay in hackers' barns.

"Superceded crts, controller cards,
\_\_\_\_\_motherboards of every era,
power supplies, Ethernet cards, Hercules cards,
abandoned hard drives,
external faxmodems, tape drives, high capacity tape backup systems
lay on makeshift tables, or on the floor,
or on bales of yellow hay\_\_\_\_\_ " (l0ve0ne lexia 11)

Working at the time for Arts Wire, where I fielded questions about internet access from artists and arts organizations:

"I tried to think about xmodem, ymodem, zmodem -data transfer protocols lined up on a menu waiting for my choice
like equally alluring varieties of beer
chalked up on a blackboard menu
in a wood paneled bar overlooking the Potomac." (*IOveOne* lexia 54)

## 3. Notes on Writing and HTMLing of *I0ve0ne*

Information art --,and fiction that explores contemporary technology fostered environments -- have always been at the core of my vision. And when the Mosaic browser made the web a public application in 1993, for a writer who had been working with hypertextual and nonsequential structures for many years, the extraordinary opportunity to create hypertextual public literature that could be read all around the world was apparent. Additionally, the opportunity to use color spawned a memorable change in the previously generally black and white internet environment. The original <code>l0veOne</code> (Fig. 5) was created primarily in pink and black -- with links of blue and yellow (Malloy 1995).



Fig. 5. Malloy, Judy (1965) L0ve0ne, top page of the Eastgate Systems edition as it appears in The Internet Archive

It should be remembered that hypertext literature was already at that time being developed, and the classic works Robert Coover refers to in his essay on the passing of the golden age -- Michael Joyce's *afternoon*, Judy Malloy's *Its Name Was Penelope*, Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* -- had already been published by Mark Bernstein at Eastgate Systems (Coover 1999).

Affordances – such as guard fields (*afternoon*) and generative hypertext (*its name was Penelope*) had already been utilized in Eastgate publications. Mark Bernstein had developed a workable model of a disk or CD housed in print packaging with print documentation and with royalties for writers of electronic literature. That the WWW would not adequately support writers was and is an issue. Nevertheless, for me it was a question of following my own practice which – begun in the late 70's with one of a kind artists books and honed on Art Com Electronic Network on The Well in 1986 with BBS-like access — was within a hypertextual structure to create work accessible to audiences. Indeed, with reader access in mind, to *l0ve0ne*, I added both a lines interface and a "frames" interface that allowed the reader to read each lexia by clicking on content-bearing lines. In this way, the adventure of link following was either mysterious or clear, depending on which interface the reader used to access *l0ve0ne*.

## 3.1 The setting

Like many writers, I prefer to use a familiar environment as background. I chose Germany as the setting for *I0ve0ne* because I had worked for US Army Special Services in Furth and lived in nearby Nurnberg (Nyhan, J. and A. Flinn), and I remembered the "difference" I felt on returning home to America. However, although *I0ve0ne* was conceived as a first person narrative in the tradition of Jack Kerouac's On the Road, *I0ve0ne* is fiction and has very little reference to my own life in Nurnberg.

However, setting the stage for this new narrative, in the second lexia, I referenced the recollected Nurnberg environment:

"\_\_\_\_\_ It doesn't seem so long ago that I was riding a three-speed bicycle from Furth to Nurnberg on that road that is riddled with slippery trolley tracks when it began to rain." (IOveOne lexia 2, detail)

#### 3.2 The Female Narrator

When I began writing *IOveOne*, on my mind was how the authoring system I wrote for Files 1 and 2 of *Uncle Roger* utilized a hypertextual interface that was appropriate in a work in which a female narrator explored a male-centered techno-culture, and how the authoring system for File 3 of *Uncle Roger* moved the narrator from an observer of

the male-centered chip industry culture to the illusion of taking control of her life in a word processing pod, where the reader sits metaphorically with the female narrator -- in front of a terminal where Jenny's thoughts and dreams are randomly generated (Malloy 1987).

Contingently, in her paper cited earlier, Sue-Ellen Case posits *name is scibe* as a participant in William Gibson's *Idoru* published in 1996. About Rez' desire to marry an idoru, Case observes that:

"Gibson thus feminizes Net flow and masculinizes fleshly bulk. The idoru is a sort of hologram that can absorb images and data into itself, gaining agency within the flow. She is pure simulacrum, pure informational collectivity, defined by her flow. Her feminization is reminiscent of how sirens were once imagined alluring sailors onto reefs—absorptive, destructive figures who mislead the traveler, destroying his craft. Gibson's print novel joins the electronic scibe to narrativize digital flow through a gendered, romanticvision of subjectivity..." (Gibson 1996 636).

Relatedly, in my notes in the Eastgate *L0ve0ne* I had written:

"The narrator of *I0ve0ne* is not me. The first person is used, as it is in many of my other works, as a narrative device that not only effects the telling, in that it allows the writer to disclose the details of the main character's life in an intimate way, but also effects the reading, in that it situates the reader in an intimate relationship with the main character" (Malloy 1995).

As regards the female narrator, long after *L0ve0ne* was created, in my writer's notebook for the creation of "the whole room like a picture in a dream", a collection of generated texts that compared the works of Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf, I wrote:

"In its radical immersion in what the female protagonist sees -- often to the exclusion of consummated narrative tension -- for the reader who approaches it for what it is, Richardson's *Pilgrimage* presents isolated yet connected images that remain vividly in memory ... Dorothy Richardson -- because of the extraordinary text-made images that she created and the idea she pioneered of narrative unfolding with only what the female narrator sees and thinks -- continues to be relevant. And I am finding that studying her writing practice not in isolation but also in splendid conjunction with Virginia Woolf's writing practice is important, particularly for women poets and writers who work in the fertile territory between experimental writing and computation. " (Malloy 2016).

#### 3.3 The links

In *IOveOne*, I chose not to use links directly on the words of the text. Instead, I used a linked "\_\_\_\_\_" before each keyword, a practice that calls attention to the meaning as a whole, rather than specific words or phrases (Fig. 6). CSS scripts can now be used to avoid the underlining of links that was the basis of the early Web, but at the time I wrote *IOveOne*, CSS scripts that controlled link appearance were not available.

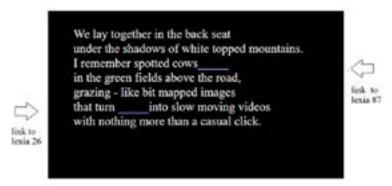


Fig. 6. Malloy, Judy (1985) l0ve0ne, where the links in lexia 86 lead to

As *I0ve0ne* progressed and was written directly on the web, I seamlessly wove each new lexia into the prior screens, making changes in the linking system as I added new lexias. Although I have used idiosyncratic flow charting to structure other works, in this work the hypertextual linking set the reader on backwards and forward trails of their own interpretation. "... linked entries that enforce both non-sequentiality and the illusion of sequentiality", in an essay in *Postmodern Culture*, Rita Raley observed about the links in *I0v0ne* (2001).

User choice of which link to follow was based on individual path choices driven by the reading of the lines to which the links were attached. My vision was that reader choice would be less direct than the "tags" in *Uncle Roger*, but more direct than the random paths in *its name was Penelope*. In *I0ve0ne*, Although there was reader navigation choice, the resulting lexias were sometimes as unexpected as the changing internet environment. Often one link in a *I0ve0ne* lexia led to the next numbered lexia, but a second link was meaningful but indirect. As Terrence Harpold suggested in a 1991 essay on "The Contingencies of the Hypertext Link": "The directionality of the link may be always supplemented by its *mis*directions, and the later may contribute as much as the former to the navigational opportunities of the docuverse."

Gibson, in his own idiosyncratic hypertextual terminology put it another way in *Idoru:* 

"...Perhaps the whole of DatAmerica possessed its own nodal points, infofaults that might be followed down to some other kind of truth, another mode of knowing, deep within the gray shoals of information. But only if there were someone there to pose the right question..." (1996:39).

## 3.4 The Palmcom

"Gunter's leather jacket lay on my lap.

"Do you want to play twenty questions?"

The familiar sound of his voice

issued from his inside jacket pocket.

I felt for the flat two way communications device,

cupped it in my hand, held it to my mouth. Certainly not," I said. "Where the hell are you?" (10ve0ne lexia 19 detail) "I dropped the palmcom, and it bounced on the dirty white truckbed floor. I shook it persistently, but Gunter's voice \_\_\_\_\_was gone. As I turned it around in my hands, the word loveone flickered on its metallic surface and disappeared. Only it was written with zeros like this: I0ve0ne." (I0ve0ne lexia 20)

That *love0ne* was envisioned as taking place about ten years in the future is no longer apparent. However, in 1994 the envisioned use of mobile computing in *l0ve0ne* was informed by personal experience and backed up by published literature. Where this would lead in the future was speculative.

At the time of writing, in addition to working as content coordinator for Arts Wire -- where in the staff conference a web interface for Arts Wire was in progress -- led by Director Joe Matuzak and sysops, first Barry Lasky then Doug Cohen, by network coordinator Beth Kanter, who was introducing arts organizations to the web, and by graphics by Tommer Peterson (Malloy 2016) -- I was also privileged with continued access to Xerox PARC where I was still under contract as an artist in residence and consultant in the document of the future (Harris 1999). For PARC, under Rich Gold, I was working with LambdaMoo creator Pavel Curtis (1992; Malloy1999) and with Hypertext researcher, Cathy Marshall (Malloy and Marshall 1996).

Although not at that time in general usage, at Computer Science Lab (CSL) in Xerox PARC, the seminal PARCTAB mobile computing system had been announced in 1993 (Schilit; Want 1995). Later, Cathy Marshall and I used it in a PARC lobby installation of our Forward Anywhere during the PARC anniversary celebration in September 1995 (Harris 1999).

"Pretending to fumble for breath mints or cherry flavored chapstick in the depths of my pack, I reached in and turned the palmcom volume down so low that Shelly's story sounded like nothing more than the purr of a contented cat. 'We sat down at a table cluttered with empty bottles of Corona. I was wearing those silver sandals that lace up my legs. Our feet touched under the table,' I heard her soft voice say." (IOveOne lexia 46)

#### 3.5 the dashboard webserver

"We moved relentlessly on towards Munich.

There was snow on the banks of the highway,

and the dashboard webserver was receiving a serial irc story." (lexia 62 detail)

From personal observation and from discussion in the Arts Wire Staff Conference, at the time I wrote *I0ve0ne*, it was clear that the slowly growing World Wide Web would change the internet environment into something well beyond the reach of Usenet.

"No sense lying around in a dark little room in Germany waiting for a man who wouldn't even show up in a recognizable female alias on the webmoo when I knew the URL for the Michelun Guide to the South of France, and where the Eurail passes \_\_\_\_\_ were hidden" (*IOveOne* lexia 23 detail)

## 3.6 An unpredictable environment

The World Wide Web is now an integral part of our lives; but at the time of its writing, *IOveOne* sought to convey the sense of both adventure and unease that accompanied the introduction of new internet protocols -- while simultaneously the loss of past internet environments underlies this work.

"Copies of Atompraxis, Grune Blatter and Hermeslay in the sand beside him.
'Gunter? no. nein.
My name is Stefan.
You are confusing me with my cousin Gunter. It happens often.
It is remarkable how much we resemble each other.'
I was standing in front of him -
blocking his view of the sea.
An unexpected wind from nowhere
raised goose bumps on my exposed bare arms
(Cannot connect to host balrog.dfv.rwth-aachen.de, port 70)" (IOveOne lexia 64)

#### 4. Onward

Launched in 1992, Arts Wire moved to the World Wide Web in late 1994-1995, and in addition to hosting webpages for artists and arts organizations, we continued to foster discussion with artists and musicians. Forums included the Native American Network; the Black Writers Conference, for which we hosted an online component in 1996; the NewMusNet Conference, which hosted contemporary composers; and the Interactive Art Conference, where Anna Couey and I hosted conversations with digital writers,

digital visual artists, and electronic musicians (Malloy 2016).

Wolfgang Staehle's *The Thing* also moved to the Web in 1995 (Gerber 2016). Alan Liu's Voice of the Shuttle went on the global web on March 21,1995. Ada'web, founded by curator Benjamin Weil, opened on the Web in May, 1995 (Atkins 1998).

Although lack broadband access, curtailed the use of video, at this time, web support of color, graphics, image maps, animation, and sound held the promise of expanding affordances of electronic literature. Additionally, thinking in terms of public literature, the Web broadened readership. Relatedly, among other differences that writers and artists encountered in this new internet environment were that -- unlike a CD, where the reader moves within one work -- on the web, the reader was likely to move between multiple different sites -- with the result that the reading experience is diffuse.

For a focus on early web-based electronic literature, ELMCIP; the Electronic Literature Knowledge Base (Rettberg 2014) and the Electronic Literature Lab, founded and directed by Dene Grigar (Grigar 2008) are core resources. But, given that to a certain extent this paper reflects personal experience on the early web, from my memory, here are four additional works that explored the early World Wide Web as a hypertextual authoring system.

#### Evermore About to Be

1995: What you're seeing here is at most half of something else toward which I'm presently slouching (Fall, 1995). What started as an experiment now looks more like a study, though for what I can't yet say, I like the Netscape-HTML environment and believe strongly in the Web as a delivery system. Yet the constraints of both are heavy, and at this writing the Netscapees are about to rattle the chain of being yet again. The word does not keep still.

1997: Yes, well, push me, pull you, but don't tog on that, you never know what it might be connected to... Nothing is ever finished, least of all this particular game of replacements, but I am no longer so sure it's a fragment. The work might still expand somewhat but I'm making no promises. As for its future before the public, I think it could be one in a series of probes coming to a synapse near you at the end of the century. Keep watching the skies!

Fig. 7. Moulthrop, Stuart (1995) detail from the introduction to Hegirascope. Courtesy of Stuart Moulthrop

Providing documentation of the process (Fig. 7) and, In the work itself, asking "What if the word will no longer be still?" in *Hegirascope* (1995), Stuart Moulthrop used the Netscape META tag "refresh ":

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Refresh" CONTENT="3; URL=HGS0A5.html">

to produce motion; lexias moved so quickly that keeping up with the word flow was a part of the web experience. In his words: "Almost every page in this text is programmed to yield automatically to another page after a delay of some seconds..." (1995).

To override what would eventually become a loop, it was necessary to path out of *Hegirascope* via the use of provided links.

Next, in late 1995—early 1996, on Arts Wire's web server, composer John Maxwell Hobbs, created *Web Phases* (Duckworth 2005). In "Towards Hypermusic....", Hobbs describes how he authored *Web Phases* with one control frame and four target-framed MIDI loops:

"...The user selects a MIDI loop and sends it to a specific window, where it automatically plays, once it completes downloading. When a user selects another loop and window, it plays concurrently with the other loop or loops, generating a continuously changing composition due to the 'phasing' of the loops...." (1998). Although there were other pieces of music on the Web at this time, as Hobbs observes "Most of these pieces are neither truly interactive nor specific to the Web."

Next, in *Twelve Blue* (1996), the second work in the Eastgate Web Workshop, Michael Joyce created a graphic interface -- of colored threads that represented both the making of a quilt and the flow of a river -- to index and intertwine twelve meaning-laden narrative fragments. In his words in one of these fragments:

"In Bowdoin Park some fifteen thousand years ago indians camped in the caves above the river and left petroglyphs of impossible beauty beyond the blue page of the water, though you had to know your way through the park trails and crawl in tunnel-like caves to find them " (Joyce Twelve Blue detail).

Next, in 1996, Russian writer/artist Olia Lialina used image and text laden gridded frames to create *My Boyfriend Came Back From the War,* a work that effectively captured an awkward conversation between a young woman and her soldier boyfriend.

If in many works of this era, the language approaches poetry, this may be partially because of the way poetry can effectively convey experience in few words, and because the interactive reading experience in itself adds to the depth of the work. About my writing of *The Roar of Destiny* (1996), I noted that:

"This work was a poetic response to an era when the lives of those of us -- who worked virtually and thus spent days and nights online -- were altered, as black & white, green & black or yellow & black text metamorphosized into vibrant dense arrays of competing information, and virtual communities were displaced by moated castles in a sea of entrancing new work."

#### **Notes**

- A version with more contemporary HTML/CSS is available at <a href="https://people.well.com/user/jmalloy/love/l0ve0ne\_entry.html">https://people.well.com/user/jmalloy/love0ne\_entry.html</a> But even in this version, sadly contemporary browsers do not respect artists' color settings. The best way to view <code>l0ve0ne</code>, as it was intended to be seen, is to use Firefox or any other browser that allows you to view artists' pages as intended. (under colors in settings choose "never overide the colors specified by the page").
- 2 A version was *produced at the 21st Biennial of Sao Paulo* in 1991 as a part of the Reflux Project, directed and produced by Artur and Maria Matuck for the Studio for Creative

Inquiry, Carnegie Melon University. This version was published in the November 1, 1991 issue of *FineArt Forum* (*FineArt Forum* 5:21). A version which approximates the historic ANIMA version was included in the traveling exhibition Telematic Connections: The Virtual Embrace, 2001 curated by Steve Dietz and is hosted online by the Walker Art Center at http://telematic.walkerart.org/timeline/timeline malloy.html (accessed June 17, 2024). The final version of this collaborative work now exists on The WELL at <a href="https://people.well.">https://people.well.</a> com/user/jmalloy/makingart.html (accessed June 17, 2024). Participants included among others: Judy Malloy, James Johnson, Robert Edgar, John Coate, Pauline Oliveros, Howard Rheingold, Paul Rutkovsky, Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, Anna Couey, Michael Joyce, Randy Ross, Lucia Grossberger Morales; Sonya Rapoport; Tim Perkis, Roger Malina, Monika Lidman, Fred Truck, Pavel Curtis, Artur Matuck, Richard Lowenberg, and Carolyn Guyer.

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# **ABSTRACTS**

#### **Keynote: A Personal Twine Story**

Presenter: Chris Klimas

Since its creation in 2009, Twine has been used to create countless works of electronic literature. This talk is a personal recollection of the history of Twine that locates it in context of the history of e-lit, technology trends, and open culture. It explores lessons learned from its 15 years of development about the interrelationship between technology and community.

#### Keynote: Code/Queer Games/Technonormativity

#### Presenter: Edmond Chang, Ohio University

This presentation offers a set of questions, provocations, and critical examples to think about the ways that digital texts, video games, and even code and AI are technonormative, the implicit and explicit ways that they are embedded with and replicate hegemonic ideals, tropes, and biases about race, gender, sexuality, ability, even technologies themselves. How then might we address and reconfigure these material, cultural, political, and technological definitions, narratives, structures, and power relations? Drawing on queer and feminist game studies, media studies, digital humanities, and popular culture, this presentation offers potential ways to disrupt, play with, and reimagine "defaults" of our increasingly algorithmic and ludonarrative world.

#### Keynote: An Open Invitation - Ethical and Inclusive Research in Interactive Storytelling

#### Presenter: Anne Sullivan, Georgia Tech

This talk weaves together game design, human-computer interaction, and critical, feminist, and queer making. In particular, it focuses on the question- how might we use a multi-faceted approach to ethical and inclusive research using multiple perspectives of interactive stories and games: who is experiencing the story, whose story is being told, and who is telling the story? The presentation will include some projects created with these questions in mind while also opening up room for discussion of other ways this could be approached.

#### Keynote: Interactive digital narrative - a specific expression for a complex time

#### Presenter: Dr. Hartmut Koenitz

We can variously understand a particular work as continuing a long-established theoretical tradition or as a novel phenomenon, necessitating specific approaches. The talk focuses on the latter and delves into core issues and developments in the study and application of Interactive Digital Narratives. It will introduce the SPP model as an example of a novel theoretical approach influenced by cybernetics and cognitive narratolog and discusses steps towards a specific discipline, including model study programs, an encyclopedia, and a journal which integrates interactivity into articles. In terms of application, the talk will identify the representation of the complex issues of the 21st century (e.g. climate change and migration) as a crucial application area for IDN with the potential for positive societal effects.

#### <u>E-Lit Narratives – Two Plenary Panels: Celebrating Marjorie C. Luesebrink</u>

Every year since 2016, Margie Luesebrink and Lai-Tze Fan co-organized a panel on the theme of "narrative," starting with "Translation Palindromes: Electronic Literature as Embodied Narrative" to last year's "Interactive Narrative and Empowerment: What happens when narratives don't do what you expect?" 2023 was the last panel organized by both Margie and Lai-Tze—but not the last panel on narrative.

In this honorary double panel, Marjorie C. Luesebrink's friends, colleagues, and mentees will share reflections, stories, and insights on her incredible contributions to e-literature and narrative, including through her role in our community as well as her own works (including Califia, 2000, and Egypt: The Book of Going Forth by Day, 2006).

While ELO's Career Achievement Award is named after Margie, many newer organization members in the last decade mainly know her as a strong community matriarch. They may not be as familiar with the significance of Margie's creative work in regard to how we think of e-lit (and its quite feminist origins), digital storytelling and genres, and early creative experiments with computation. At the same time, Margie was the person, alongside Katherine Hayles, who helped save ELO by bringing it from Chicago to UCLA in 2001. A past President of the ELO, Margie made it her responsibility to keep the doors open for future generations, who remember her warmth.

Panelists have been invited to speak about Margie and e-lit, which may include critical readings, creative reading, and personal thoughts and anecdotes. In all of the annual "narrative" panels, Margie always wanted to invite at least one long-time friend or colleague, and at least one "bright new voice." This double panel has been organized to honour her inclusion of multiple perspectives—this time through her legacy.

E-Lit Narratives – Plenary Panel #1: Celebrating Marjorie C. Luesebrink

Lai-Tze Fan, University of Waterloo

Stephanie Strickland

Alan Liu, University of California, Santa Barbara

Stuart Moulthrop, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

E-Lit Narratives – Plenary Panel #2: Celebrating Marjorie C. Luesebrink

Lai-Tze Fan, University of Waterloo

Dene Grigar, Washington State University Vancouver

Caitlin Fisher, York University

Anastasia Salter, University of Central Florida

## TRACK 1: ALGORITHMS & IMAGINARIES

## Paper Session 1.1

Hollywood Film Workers Strike Against Al: Understanding Algorithmic Resistance to Generative Cinematography

#### Brett Halperin, University of Washington, Human Centered Design & Engineering

In this talk, I explore the central question: why were Hollywood film workers striking or supporting strikes against artificial intelligence (AI)? With the rise of large language models such as DALL-E, Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, RunwayAI, and more, generative AI is increasingly playing a role in the development of screenplays, imagery, sounds, and post-production processes—but not without resistance. While the image and its technological reproduction have ongoingly been in crisis, AI is among one of the latest advances that is generating controversy in the Hollywood studio system.

Through participant observation on the picket line and interviews with 15 film workers including union members of the WGA (writers guild), SAG-AFTRA (actors guild), and IATSE (behind-thescenes workers guild), I investigate the growing resistance to AI for film production, as well as workers' emerging perceptions of generative cinematography more broadly. Consequently, I argue that film worker opposition does not contest AI itself, but rather how studios might use it to undermine their labor and craft in mutually constituent ways. Toward this end, I identify boiling tensions across three axes of labor: automation of film crew and cast; disruption of roles and responsibilities; trivialization and invisibilization of workers. I then surface eight aspects of filmmaking's humanistic tradition that AI challenges: subjectivity, nuance, slowness, spontaneity, heart and soul, physicality, connectedness, and realness. Amid these concerns around futures of labor and craft, I discuss how film production might integrate as well as refuse to integrate with AI developments—opening alternative algorithmic possibilities and worker-centered programs for generative cinematography.

#### Sculpting Emotions in Code: Generating and Evaluating Micro-Fiction

#### Mariana Chinellato Ferreira, University of Coimbra

Flash Fiction, a unique form of literature frequently used in creative writing, challenges writers to craft complete stories within specific constraints, such as a certain letter, number of words or sentence count. With its widespread availability online, this genre provided an ideal opportunity to build a database for a generative system. The brevity of these narratives is closely intertwined with the emotional response readers experience, which is subjected to their interpretation and appreciation. This paper presents a concise overview of the Flash Writer - a system developed in Processing and the RiTa Library, designed to generate extremely short stories under the constraints of a two-sentence story with no more than 280 characters (also known as Twitterature). The paper also explores the system's creativity by assessing its output through a survey that evaluated the reader's perception of creativity, language, structure, and chiefly, affective computing.

In 2021, a small online survey was conducted with 21 participants of diverse backgrounds. The survey supplied valuable feedback on the system's output, as well as valuable input for its enhancement despite the small sample size. Furthermore, the experiment evaluated the reader's cognitive and emotional responses to a series of micro-narratives created by *Twitter* 

(now X) users and the *Flash Writer*. The stories used in the experiment were curated by the researcher who selected flash stories online and generated others with *The Flash Writer*. Readers were asked to guess if the stories were generated by a computer system or created by a human agent, as well as give their appreciation on each story. This preliminary research aims to use the reader's feedback to improve the system further and explore its integration with GPT-4.

#### Speculative Dialogues on eLit in a Post-Al World

#### Rui Torres, University Fernando Pessoa

What could be the future state of current AI platforms after their tools have disappeared? What will replace AI when it becomes obsolete? How will works of AI-generated elit look like in a future where AI platforms have disappeared?

This talk will explore questions about the future of elit in a Post-AI world. While conceived by a human author, the questions will serve as prompts to inquire AI tools about their own potential obsolescence. Using a structured framework—the nine thematic clusters of the Conference—, I'll briefly examine potential insights after each topic. The format, though unconventional, draws from my experience in performing (with) elit, and I'll briefly present similar speculative experiments.

Considering the obsolescence of AI in a series of questions promotes a collective act of imagination. In the context of elit, a field inherently intertwined with innovation, this approach can resonate on a deep level. By questioning the future of the field in the context of AI's obsolescence, I want to emphasize the human element in literature, suggesting that technology is but a tool in the larger narrative of human expression. By outlining these ideas as a continuous stream of questions, I'll mirror the experimental nature of elit itself, proposing a meta-narrative that serves as a demonstration of its principles.

Example ("Platform Deaths and Migrations"):

Human >> In a Post-AI world, what will become of the data and digital artifacts left behind on obsolete platforms? What efforts will be made to preserve or erase these remnants?

Al >> Preservation of digital artifacts on obsolete platforms will depend on their value and privacy concerns. Efforts will include digital archiving, data rescue initiatives, and community projects, while obsolete or privacy-sensitive data may be erased. The approach will balance historical preservation with privacy and technological advancements.

#### **Unlinking Causal Chains: The Poetic Potential of AI Cinemawriting**

#### Will Luers

The rise of AI cinema arts marks a significant moment in the evolution of narrative form and the expressive potential of cinema. This paper revisits 'cinemawriting', a concept with origins in the silent cinépoèmes of 1920s France, evolving through the avant-garde and auteur movements of the 1960s to 1980s, and into Net Art and contemporary electronic literature. The term cinemawriting denotes writing that blends human thought with machine processes. While "screenwriting" is an early industrial stage of this human-machine creative process, cinemawriting involves the dynamic of human poetic imagination with the improvisational nature of machine-human interaction. A shot of a tree swaying in the wind is a machine-facilitated contemplation of the world, creating signs from the interplay of light and sound. The art of cinemawriting lies in the combination of shots and their integration with other sign systems like language. Digital cinemawriting introduces nonlinearity, indeterminacy, and algorithmic manipulation. With networked digital devices, cinemawriting becomes a personal, embodied,

and ritualistic act. Al cinema tools expand this technical fusion, enabling language to generate imagined audio-visual experiences. Writing with multimodal Al tools becomes both a cheap fantasy generator and a machine for navigating the imaginal: forms and archetypes drawn from a digitized and accessible collective cinematic unconscious.

This paper explores the poetic potentials of AI cinemawriting through the process of making "Posthuman Cinema," a collection of ten AI-generated cinépoèmes by Will Luers, Mark Amerika, and Chad Mossholder. The lineage of an experimental cinema art, one that embraces the machine's contribution to the creative process, was the inspiration and backdrop for the creation of "Posthuman Cinema." It is a contemporary reinvention of 'cinepoetics' where the combination of text, moving images, and sound creates a multimodal poetic narrative that does not depend on casual chains or the construction of an objective three-dimensional world. In this creative context, the power of AI tools offers a medium through which the audio-visual imagination can navigate beyond conventional storytelling toward a "rewilding "of cinematic form, creating experiences that are as spontaneous and unpredictable as nature itself.

#### Paper Session 1.2

<u>"E-Mote AI: A Speculative Exploration of Generative AI, Artificial Intimacy, Artificial Unintelligence, and the Uncanny"</u>

#### Siobhan O'Flynn, University of Toronto

"E-Mote AI: A Speculative Exploration of Generative AI, Artificial Intimacy, Artificial Unintelligence, and the Uncanny" explores the emergent logics, industry practices, and dystopian implications of the rush to market of AI mental-wellness apps, assistants, companions. This paper situates today's Chatbots remembering Joseph Weizenbaum's caution as to "the Eliza effect" and the "powerful delusional thinking in quite normal people" (6) responding to Doctor, the Eliza Chatbot, and what Dr. Esther Perel terms the socio-cultural dangers of the "other AI, Artificial Intimacy."

The ongoing speculative critical design project discussed imagines a fictional AI Wellness Start-Up, E-Mote AI offering customizable AI Assistants, ESAA, your "Employee Sentiment Analysis Assistant," and ESAA2, your "Empathetic Student Anxiety Assistant," pitched with AI-generated enthusiasm as: "E-MoteAI transforms what was a dark sky of inaccessible data into emotional constellations."

Speculative critical design methodologies (Dunne and Raby) inform this expanding transmedia storyworld (website, Twine, ChatBot, AR), built as a provocation to raise awareness of the dangers of profit-driven innovation defining today's social imaginaries (Benjamin) and what Shoshana Zuboff has termed the "instrumentalization of data," now scraping therapeutic online interactions. The rush to capitalize this new frontier of intimate data is largely unregulated, as demonstrated by mental wellness apps, Calm and Woebot, and KintsugiHealth, the latter analyzing audio biomarkers at increments too fine for human perception to prompt early interventions pre-crisis. All three are unapproved by the FDA (US).

As we grapple with these seismic societal shifts, speculative critical design can challenge the logics of "technochauvinism" (Broussard) and "hetero-patriarchal, petro-capitalist, settler-colonial [extractive] structures" (Loveless). This paper urges reflection on AI as Artificial Unintelligence, interrogation of Generative AI output for glitches that reveal algorithmic processing, and strategizing to envision better futures.<sup>A</sup>

#### PlanetOut: On the Queer Internet's Uneven Development

#### Sam Hunter, University of California, Los Angeles

Although many of the websites founded in the 1990s dot-com boom collapsed when the bubble burst in 2000, the techno-capitalist logics cohering in this period substantially influenced the subsequent development of digitally networked human relations. One such dot-com company, PlanetOut, was launched in 1995 as an online "worldwide community" of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, with this community to be formed in large part by interpersonal communication via chat, message boards, and personal ads. PlanetOut survived the dot-com crash and made acquisitions including rival website Gay.com and The Advocate magazine to form a queer multimedia conglomerate, but ultimately the company was purchased and stripped for parts in 2008. In this paper, I draw upon media industry studies, queer Internet/Web studies, and Marxist critique of political economy to consider PlanetOut's historic trajectory as one of uneven and combined development. My analysis emphasizes what PlanetOut produced rather than the circumstances of its failure by framing the company's commodification of mediated social activity-through advertising targeted by digital surveillance, paywalling interpersonal communication, and horizontal corporate integration—as a strategy of capitalist accumulation marked by uncertainty, partiality, and the combining of the economic/cultural forces driving the dot-com bubble with the then-burgeoning "Web 2.0" means of production. PlanetOut was not the only company developing these practices, nor were they particularly successful, but their demonstration of the lucrative possibilities of soliciting queer relational desires-for romance or sex, friendship, and/or a networked community-presaged not just later queer networks like Grindr or Tumblr but also sites of "straight" mediated sociality such as Facebook, Twitter, or Tinder. By showing the value to be extracted from shifting human relationality to a digital platform, PlanetOut exemplified the potential for digital capital accumulation more fully exploited by later companies into the present day.

### <u>Queering Artificial Intelligence as a Subversive Strategy of Creating Generative Literature. A Case Study of Ultimate Fantasy by Emily Martinez</u>

#### Danuta Jędrusiak, Jagiellonian University Cracow

The main goal of this paper is to examine queering artificial intelligence (AI) as a subversive strategy of creating generative literature. Queering is a form of interacting with technology well-established within the queer community, one that challenges (hetero)normative dominant values (Attard-Frost 2024). There is a great need for such inclusive practices in regard to AI as these systems can perpetuate and amplify the biases apparent in data used to train them which could lead to increased discrimination towards LGBTQ+ people (Fosch-Villaronga, Malgieri 2024).

So far, research on artistic examples of queering AI has been mainly focused on audiovisual artefacts, therefore the textual forms created by queering machine learning remain largely unexplored. With the intention of filling this research gap, I propose a study of Ultimate Fantasy by Emily Martinez (https://unsupervisedpleasures.com/texts). Ultimate Fantasy is a collection of literary texts that were generated between 2020 and 2022 using Queer AI, a small language model trained on a corpus of queer texts compiled by Ben Lerchin.

My analysis of Ultimate Fantasy aims to explore strategies of queering Al implemented by the artists and how they are reflected in the form of texts and motifs apparent in them. On this basis, I seek to demonstrate how tactics of queering technology such as circumventing censorship and glitching (Gaboury 2018) influence strategies of queering Al understood as a means for creating e-literature. The study of Ultimate Fantasy allows for framing this practice as a subversive act of an emancipatory nature and an instance of queer utopian project (Muñoz 2009)<sup>C</sup>

# Panel 1.1 Roundtable. AI: Yes or No? Why and When? The Perspective of Three Latin American Digital Artists

Milton Läufer Dr.

#### Mario Guzman

#### Leonardo Solaas

Al is ubiquitous today, from the fear of mass unemployment to the hope of a universal income, the concern about increasing carbon emissions in huge computer centers to the chance of it helping us find a solution to clean energy; and in the realm of humanities, it has resuscitated the old discussion about the death of the author and the very notion of creativity. And even though discussions about Al are everywhere, in this roundtable, we propose a slightly different approach: from an artist's perspective, what benefits, if any, has it brought to our practices? Is it a tool, a co-author, a theme, or just another headline that we will forget when it gets trivialized?

The goal of this panel is both theoretical and practical: we want to reflect on the emergence of this omnipresent topic that challenges the very existence of the practices that the members of this panel have been carrying on for around two decades on average, but we also want to use this reflexive exercise to fuel our creative practices; for this, even though the three panelists will do a brief presentation both of their creative background and their take on Al, we would like to set aside enough time to encourage the audience to take part in the discussion.

Although the three panelists have produced work in Electronic Literature, they also bring three very different backgrounds: the first panelist, who blends electronic literature with robotic performance, will address the integration of Al in live performances, where robots interact in real-time, contributing to both scripted and emergent narratives, reflecting on how this practice intersects with Latin American cultural themes, like the first Electronic Literature work on Wixárika. The second artist, known for visual generative art, will reflect on the similarities and tensions between his work and Al, and question what effects new machine learning technologies might have on the notion of authorship and the practice of art and literature. The third one, whose work focuses almost exclusively on electronic literature, from extremely condensed pieces to novels, will expand on prior considerations against the use of Al in his works with recent reflections about the richness of Al as a theme in itself.

#### Paper Session 1.3

#### Al and Generative Medieval Fictions

#### Alan Perry, The School Of The Art Institute Of Chicago

This presentation is an artist talk by the creator of the ELO Exhibition Item "The Gross Gloss." "The Gross Gloss (Hypertext)" is a hypertext modality of an artist's book that parallels contemporary technology with medieval culture. Inspired by medieval literature and art, the book engages with socioeconomic power dynamics by exploring similarities between the technology industry and feudalism by using mystically-adjacent language. Web aesthetics guides the project by drawing from Web 1.0 interfaces and the Commodore 64 color palette.

Attendees will hear about how this hypertext modality, in tandem with planned print and manuscript modalities, plays a crucial conceptual role in drawing a parallel between the denouement of manuscript culture with the early internet and its aesthetics. Through visual

techniques and fictional narratives, our contemporary moment is repositioned into a historical one, where an algorithmically informed understanding of the world becomes a worldview similar to medieval Europe's conceptualization of reality through the Western philosophical canon. The algorithm becomes a universal, unchallenged narrative, and the "computer wizard" idiomatic expression is reified through techno-mysticism. This techno-mystical understanding of the materiality of contemporary technology is positioned as a future feudal dystopia.

The presentation will also delve into how the work uses future-medieval imaginaries as received by generative processes. In 2019, the last chapter of the book was generated by GPT-2, then a cutting-edge precursor to Chat-GPT, after being trained on the preceding chapters and a corpus of literature including medieval works. Illustrations for the book were collaged from patent drawings and/or made with Stable Diffusion, a popular image-generation AI, by prompting the AI to create images based on the written text.

#### Al Wordsworth: Artificial Intelligence and the Literary Encounter

#### Amy Spencer, Bath Spa University

Visitors to Wordsworth Grasmere, a museum opened in the UK's lake district in the 1930s to celebrate William Wordsworth, were invited to have a spoken conversation with an Al generated visual and audio version of the poet, based on an 1804 portrait and developed by award-winning software developers Rocketmakers. 'Al Wordsworth' uses natural language processing to generate human-like spoken responses to each visitor's questions, building on several large language models. Each visitor was able to experience a unique conversation with the poet and ask questions about his life and work or anything else they chose.

The aim of project, a collaboration with Bath Spa University, was to help museums and other cultural organisations use AI technologies in a positive and constructive manner for visitor engagement and it offered an opportunity for researchers to explore the potential for the use of AI with museum archives and literary datasets to create a unique co-created literary encounter.

This presentation explores this AI visitor experience and examines its creative potential and the ethical issues it raises for public encounters with creative AI. It celebrates new horizons for generative computational creativity and interaction and highlights potential pitfalls.

# Panel 1.2 Rage Against The Machine: A Roundtable on an Arts Community's Reactions Toward Al Art

Kedrick James, University of British Columbia Ernesto Peña, Northeastern University Derek Gladwin, University of British Columbia Giorgio Magnanensi, Vancouver New Music Yuya Takeda, University of British Columbia Rachel Horst, University of British Columbia

On February 1st, 2024, a non-profit DIY music and art space in Vancouver, BC, Red Gate Arts Society, posted on Instagram a poster of an upcoming show of "an evening of improvisation and remediated digital sound" by a group called Seethruzoo. This poster, immediately after it was uploaded, exploded with outraged commentary. The background image of the poster was distinctively AI generated and the arts community around this beloved venue reacted in disgust and anger— "ew ai art??? Really?" "AI 'art' is art theft." "Surely one of you can source an artist to make a poster for you. There's a large pool of talent to draw from, and folks need illustration/design gigs. AI generated images mostly look like crap anyway but that's not the heart of the issue." "What does this say that art again becomes the most devalued aspect of an arts society?" Some replies to these comments included a defense of the venue stating that the poster was not designed by the venue, but the artists of the event themselves, a call for a more constructive discussion space, and the society co-founder expressing her willingness to review their booking policies.

The topic of this proposed roundtable is the controversy around this poster—which was made by one of the members of Seethruzoo who is a professional designer. In dialogue with the audience, the panelists of this roundtable will illuminate different aspects of Al use for artistic expressions. Questions addressed in this roundtable include: (1) Why is it that Al generated arts provoke such visceral, aversive, and moralizing responses? (2) What would be constructive ways to talk about and deal with Al innovations among the arts community? (3) What kinds of practices and policies around the use of Al would actually benefit artists? Through addressing these questions, the panelists discuss the creativity involved in generating Al images, the recognition of algorithmic Other, the differences in the intertextuality exercised by human consciousness and artificial intelligence, and so forth. As it was suggested on the comment section of the Instagram post, if ELO organizers permit us to do so, we would like to have this roundtable as an "open access" public forum and ask the Red Gate Arts Society to invite their community members to participate in the discussion.

#### Paper Session 1.4

#### Critical Making for Al Literacy

#### Jajwalya Karajgikar, University of Pennsylvania

How can Al Literacy be integrated into a higher education library setting? This presentation highlights the collaborative efforts at the UPenn Libraries to promote critical Al knowledge and possible usage as an extension of a library's role in information literacy. This includes an overview of ongoing workshop series such as "Creative Writing Prompt Battle-Off: How & When to Use GPTs", "Multidisciplinary Code & Transdisciplinary Futures of Al", "Student Debates on Gender, Labor, Activism, & Technology", and "Understanding Al through Games".

These dynamic sessions in the AI Literacy Interest Group involve partnerships with various campus organizations such as Kelly Writer's House, Price Lab for Digital Humanities, Data-Driven Discovery Initiative, as well as departments within the library including Kislak Special Collections and Education Commons Makerspace.

The goal of these efforts is to make AI literacy accessible and relevant across different fields and knowledge levels. Session materials include zines, a Large Language Model card game, a text prediction game, primary sources documents, and a participatory data visualization project using a loom. The focus is on bringing creativity, play, and interactivity to complex issues in the realm of AI.

#### The Pedagogy of Slow Making in the Age of Al

#### Emily Johnson, University of Central Florida

In our contemporary moment where artificial intelligence is being touted as a tool that can save time and effort across tasks and careers, many faculty are feeling pressured to "lean into" these tools and accept them as inevitable. Reflecting the varied reactions in other fields, faculty have shared a wide range of responses, with some embracing these tools without question, others refusing to engage with anything related to AI, and every other possible stance within that spectrum. While AI tools can help us complete things more quickly and easily, this presentation argues that in our classes and in much of our own scholarly work, there is a need to slow the making process. In the slow making process, makers tinker: grappling deeply with concepts, making meaningful choices about things to include and exclude, etc. The process is just as important in critical making as the resulting product. This presentation shares the many ways that the slow making process can improve students' critical thinking skills, motivate them to conduct research, and encourage their creative expression. It describes the assignments and scaffolding strategies from the presenter's undergraduate, researchintensive digital humanities course at a large, public, research, Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the southeastern United States. Additionally, the presenter shares lessons learned and how the critical making lens was infused across the course and encouraged students to experiment with a variety of free digital tools, including some AI tools, which students were encouraged to interrogate, analyze, and even use for some technical assistance.

#### Playful approaches to defamiliarizing generative Al

#### Alex Mitchell, National University of Singapore

The prevalence of generative AI tools makes it increasingly important to make the underlying logics of these systems legible and accessible for critique (Hemment, Murray-Rust, et al. 2023; Lindley et al. 2020; Pötzsch 2022). In this paper, I explore the playful use of defamiliarization (Shklovsky 1965), or the slowing down of perception by breaking expectations, as a way to do this. I examine my experiences participating in two netprovs, or networked improvisations (Wittig 2021) that explored the issues surrounding generative AI: the Grand Exhibition of Prompts (Marino and Wittig 2022) and HairWars (Marino 2023). Both works encouraged participants to look beyond the usual practice of writing prompts for generative AI, and to instead think about what is happening around and behind this practice. In the Grand Exhibition of Prompts, participants were encouraged to focus on the prompt, rather than the resulting image, and consider the prompt as the product. I will discuss my experience of writing long, descriptive prompts without any thought for the output, and the surprising and defamiliarizing results of running those prompts through Midjourney. In contrast, HairWarsstarted as an exploration of "accidental" encounters with intellectual property through deliberately obfuscated references to a well-known film franchise. Inspired by the Grand Exhibition, I wrote extended narrative pieces as prompts, to see what the machine would dream. I also experimented with feeding the generated text that appeared in the images back into the machine. These playful practices, pushing the boundaries of the expected input (and output) of the generative AI systems, draw attention away from the imagined perfection of the machine-generated images, and instead focus on the process, and what is happening underneath. I argue that taking a playful, defamiliarizing approach to interacting with generative AI is a productive way to undermine and interrogate the invisible systems around us.<sup>B</sup>

# Workshop 1.2 Angles on AI – Using Netprov to Wrap the Mind Around a New Reality

#### Rob Wittig, University of Minnesota Duluth

Join us and play! – Netprov is networked, improvised literature, in which friends and strangers collaborate – role-playing in real time – to create sophisticated narratives. An experienced netprov producer will facilitate a collaborative, creative play session using two different netprov approaches to Al.

- 1) "The Grand Exhibition of Prompts." We are entranced by the words folks use in their prompts to describe what they want to see! These prompts are strange, powerful, revelatory. Using phrases, fragments, and lists sprinkled with lumps of aesthetic and technical jargon, aspiring artists are writing short texts of startling depth and impact. Help us explore and celebrate prompts as literature! Come and write prompts with us! "Al images are but the stepping stones to writing more beautiful prompts." Hans Paedeweyder
- 2) "Pr0c3ss1ng." We are the secret human helpers who give artificial intelligence programs the courage to face the day. We're the ones who hear Siri's and Alexa's tearful doubts and try to guide them in their stormy and complex rivalry. We're the ones called on to help ChatGPT work through imposter syndrome. We're the ones tasked to console Google Search as it sees all its parent company's love going to the new Bard system. Not to mention the worries and resentments of legacy programs such as Autocorrect and Maps who feel eclipsed by the flashy newcomers. Are we trained for this? No! Nobody is! We need support, too!

We will pause in the play to share experiences and learnings.

#### Paper Session 1.5

#### A critical look at the views on authorship in story generation research

#### Tuuli V. V. Hongisto, University of Helsinki

Computer science researchers have long been interested in generating creative texts with computers, and the development of story-generating programs has formed its own field of research, closely tied with research on computational creativity and artificial intelligence. In this presentation, I examine how authorship of computer-generated texts is approached in story generation research. I focus on the following questions: How is authorship discussed in relation to its conceptualisations in literary theory? How are the contributions and cooperation between the human author(s) and the program described in the research? The research material consists of story generation publications published during the last decade, selected based on recent reviews that discuss the state-of-the-art of story generation.

There are many, partly overlapping definitions of authorship in literary theory, such as as the romantic conceptualisation of the author as a creative genius, the institutional role of the author that is tied to print literature and copyright, as well as the author's role as the party that is responsible for the aesthetic whole of the work. In my presentation I examine how these different aspects of authorship are present in the research material.

In electronic literature, the ambiguity of authorship is typical, as technology has made techniques such as combining and modifying existing texts considerably easier than before. Authors of electronic literature often elude disciplinary categorisations such as a poet or an

engineer, and these different roles can merge. In story generation, ascribing authorship is also complicated by factors such as the design of the program, the data the program is given, as well as the program's possible role as a co-author. My presentation is focused on how the interaction and collaboration between the program and its programmer - the machine and the human - is discussed in the research material in relation to authorship.

#### The Random Word Trick: Using Unsophisticated Code to Make an LLM Less Boring

#### kyle booten, University Of Connecticut

On the one hand, the mighty Large Language Model (LLM).

On the other, all those earlier, less "sophisticated" modes of computationally-generating text—for instance, through simpler/smaller language models (e.g., n-gram models) or aleatoric operations (e.g., randomly choosing words).

The point of my talk is that the former does not make the latter obsolete; on the contrary, LLMs have certain limitations that can be addressed via more rudimentary generative techniques. I theorize the "LLM-" (LLM minus): a hybrid of an LLM with some other, simpler, less-clever code that intentionally thwarts or degrades the LLM's sense-making ability.

I consider the "LLM-" in the context of my book-length creative project, Salon des Fantômes (published by Inside the Castle in 2024). In this project, completed in the fall and winter of 2022, I used GPT-3.5 to create a literary/philosophical salon of which I would be the only human attendee, the others being characters (a Maoist, a Freudian, etc.) fabricated via prompts. While developing this project, I grew frustrated with just how boring the responses of the GPT-fabricated characters were.

To try to overcome this, I introduced what I call the "random word trick" for prompt engineering. I wrote some Python code to add a simple aleatoric element to the prompts I issued to GPT-3.5. The simplest version of this involved the inclusion of a demand that the LLM respond to me using a randomly-chosen word—i.e., instead of the prompt:

"Respond to me in the voice of a devotee of Freud."

a slightly more complicated one:

"Respond to me in the voice of a devotee of Freud. Use the words 'salamander' and 'symptom."

I will demonstrate how this and other aleatoric techniques stimulated the LLM to produce more interesting responses, and I will suggest other ways that practitioners might experiment with "LLM-" hybrids.

#### Translation with the GPT LLM. A case study of the "King UBU" by Alfred Jarry

#### Piotr Marecki, Jagiellonian University, Kraków

#### Jan K. Argasiński, Jagiellonian University, Kraków

The translation, and publication of a book titled "UBU GPT" based on the Alfred Jarry's masterpiece is a mockery of the process and of the book edition of the translation. A mockery, let us add, rooted in the style of the "Ubu King's" author. The Polish edition includes a translation, a plot summary and a re-writing of the drama from the summary, as well as a transition of the drama into a contemporary novel using youth language (including obscenities); it ends with an essay on translation and application of LLMs. The main text was provided by the GPT-4 model; the prompts were designed by Jan K. Argasiński (UBU Lab), and the publishing and marketing was handled by Piotr Marecki (Ubu Lab).

Our paper is about the translation of Jarry done by the GPT; as well as LMM translation into Polish. We also report on introducing the finished product to the market.

Translation/paraphrase using GPT (or any transformer) is interesting process by itself. GPT first "understands" the meaning of the English text, with a goal in maintaining its essence. Then, leveraging available training data, applies grammatical rules and Polish vocabulary to rephrase the content. This involves algorithms for including context, cultural nuances, and idioms to generate appropriate outputs. The whole process leads to interesting and meaningful errors and quirks that we in our paper call "mockeries". D

Keywords: artificial intelligence, Ubu King, GPT, LLM

## Panel 1.4 - Worlds Remunged: The Pastiche and Parody of Generative Al

Mark C. Marino, University of Southern California Siobhan O'Flynn, University of Toronto Alex Mitchell, National University of Singapore Rob Wittig

Drawing from Italian roots, a pasta mix of hodgepodge ingredients, critics used the word "pastiche" (pasticcio) to describe highly imitative or derivative artists (Hoesterey 1). So-called "generative Al" is the ultimate pastiche engine, and we provocateurs offer a discussion of parodic engagement with these artificial pasticciantes.

Our panel offers a discussion with artists who are testing the boundaries of AI art particularly in world creation in two projects: For all CatKind and Hair Wars. Whether examining the dys/ utopian visions of storybook cats or the derivative ethos of the Star Wars franchise, the artists explore generative AI's role as an engine of nostalgic hallucinatory homage. We sharpen the pastiche with the satirical edge of parody (Jameson 17).

For All CatKind (@FurAllCatkind) began early Feb. 2024 as a response to the current bifurcation of (social) media coverage of world crises. The initial series of Midjourney images envision life in an idyllic seaside town, cats in their daily lives, with flying kites, picnicking, donkey carts, and market day in the style of Golden Books series and the work of Paul Mégnin. Posted to Instagram, two accounts now run divergent trajectories. On @Sioflynn, the joys of daily life continue. On @FurAllCatkind scenes of intensifying tragedy mediate unfolding events (Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan).

These divergent and shared storyworlds recontextualize Instagram's uncritical juxtaposition of cats and catastrophes. Their look has an innocence and uncanny familiarity that builds a story world that seems always already to have existed, even though they are drawn from a machine-learning imaginary. Midjourney's capacity for alterity and alienation of the nostalgic familiar can at times unsettle the normalization of dehumanization. Here, CatKind, as proxies for the LOLcat ambassadors of the internet, are remediations of what currently can't yet be addressed directly online or IRL.

Hair Wars is an ongoing collaborative exploration of transmedia storytelling in a sci-fi universe co-opted from famously mishandled IP on the hairy topic of hair. Wanted and unwanted, hair is the source of so much human angst. Within that context, using the consumed content of Star Wars (and other franchises), this artist collective has developed imaginary films, book series,

toys, and even McDonald's happy meal treats. Following the principles of netprov, Hair Wars creators build out the canon of the films improvisationally, developing plot points for the films and the imaginary actors in their lives. Images appear as movie stills, behind-the-scene shots, and also faded personal photos from the various decades. The project takes on not only the commercialized story world of Star Wars but also AI itself as the artists scrape hallucinatory text from the generated images and feed it back as prompts.

Both of these projects explore the wild world of AI, but not in the hype-induced delirium of a new world opening up, but instead by fully embracing its making as procedurally programmed pastiche in an uncanny universe of familiarity and nostalgia.<sup>E</sup>

#### Paper Session 1.6

Tapest[o]ry: Exploring the Interactive Capabilities of Tapestries as a Storytelling Tool
Laura Santos, Universidade da Madeira
Mara Dionisio, Universidade da Madeira, ITI/LARSyS, IST, University of Lisbon
Terhi Marttila, Interactive technologies Institute / LARSyS
Pedro Campos, WowSystems, Funchal, Portugal

Our ancestors communicated stories through tapestries (static artworks, usually hanging on walls without audience interaction) to adorn public and private spaces. In this artist talk, we discuss subverting conventional static tapestry display patterns by creating an interactive tapestry that encourages touch and utilises the rich tapestry background to convey awareness messages, fostering user reflection. Textiles offer a versatile medium, being crafted from various materials and colours and manipulated to produce unique, touch-responsive textures.

The talk will delve into the rationale behind our vision to integrate the weaving tactile capabilities with capacitive sensor technology to create a media-immersed interactive art installation that explores the negative impact of noise pollution on marine ecosystems. We will do a live performance of Tapest[o]ry, inviting audience participation. This research has identified how marine animals, particularly cetaceans, rely heavily on sound for their vital functions and how noise pollution can disrupt these essential functions. We developed a unique and immersive art installation that educates the public and decision-makers about these pressing issues by harnessing the storytelling potential of tapestries and capacitive sensors connected to a microcontroller power.

We will detail the process behind creating an interactive tapestry as an interactive tool for storytelling, describing its steps from the theme conceptualisation, passing by the visual design and narrative while thinking of the user role as a medium to unfold the story, to the execution of the tapestry itself.

Furthermore, we will reflect on challenges and lessons learned by experimenting within the intersection of tapestry techniques, storytelling, embedded technology, the user embodiment and how we connected these components to create a unique, innovative, tangible interface.

Finally, we will reflect on the preliminary findings of the pilot study focused on understanding the tapestry's efficiency, usability, user experience, user engagement, interface and narrative flow and whether the interaction with the piece increased awareness and knowledge concerning the conceptualised theme.

#### A Queer Arcades Project

#### Maureen Engel, University of Queensland

#### Caitlin Fisher, York University

This presentation is an artist's talk that outlines the theoretical and methodological process undergirding two of our co-creations – a graph database and an augmented reality installation linked under the theme "Queer Arcades." These pieces explore and enact a space where the edges of our bodies, our tools, and our technologies meet and intermingle. It is a space that we propose is particularly queer, and a site for both queer analysis and queer creativity. In that space, we've been weaving together poetry, elit, theory and ephemera, troubling the borders between technologies, selves, and others, enacting new stories about the intersection of queerness and technology. The talk traces the development of our ideas from conceptually mapping queer ideas, themes, and stories in a graph database (a structure which emphasises connections and associations) to mapping queer stories and ephemera in an AR installation, a structure more suited to affective, poetic, and immersive experiences.

The graph database maps a collection of interconnected concepts and sub-concepts suggested by the intersection of queerness and the digital into nodes (the dots, the concepts) and edges, (the connecting lines, their relations and connections). Conventional edges ("is connected to") were insufficient for what we hoped our graph would imply. So, we wrote what we call "nano stories" to connect our nodes, creating what we think of as the narrative connective tissue of the graph.

Following from the associative, interconnected narrative of the graph, we developed an AR installation that invites viewers into a queer XR 'arcades project,' (in the spirit of Walter Benjamin). The experience places users in AR alleyways, inviting them to time travel through archival photographs and documents, narrated by a cacophony of nano stories. We propose that the piece creatively invokes the palimpsest of queerness, blurring the queer past into the queer present, populating the present with our shared queer ghosts, all the while conjuring queer futures, crossing the boundaries of private and public, large-scale and intimate, augmented and mixed reality: an (im)perfect queer storytelling machine.

#### Varexia's Voice: Crafting An AI Ethnomusicologist

### Matthew Campbell PhD, Texas A&M University Jeff Morris D.Mus, Texas A&M University

Meet Dr. Elyra Vunaris: ethnomusicologist from the distant planet of Varexia. Dr. Vunaris is the universe's leading expert on the entwined metaphysics of fate and "telepathic dissonance," once broadcast their thoughts into the minds of their colleagues in a delightfully mortifying attempt at disclosure, and prefer they/them pronouns. Inspired by Borges' "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (1961), we began collaborating with ChatGPT to construct a "cyclopedia" chapter detailing a wholly unfamiliar, fictitious music-culture. Of course, OpenAl's system provided the expected derivative formulations and cliche narratives, but continued prompt engineering began to yield some entertaining results, including a fantastical taxonomy of symbiotic "Sonic Fae" musical organisms, a canon of Varexian masterworks, and hints of a D-I-Y punk underground intent on disrupting Varexian society. With the help of Midjourney, DALL-E, Audiogen, and MusicGen, we realized a multimedia suite of Varexian artifacts, lore, and recordings using Elyra's evocative text-based descriptions. Our project employed readily available systems from the user-prompt side, with the goal of getting Al to make as many creative decisions as possible and minimize human influence in the outcomes, which included music, images, and an interviewable chatbot. From this exercise emerged many enlightening realizations

regarding world-building, continuity management, and corpus management; approaches to pure but authentic representation, and recognizing and articulating external influences in the process; the potential for anthro-cultural simulation (like our spoken interview) to engage human intuition in cultural exploration; and the ontology of Al-conjured material; as well as a brief case study in breaking character that revealed gatekeeper modules at work within the system, their underlying values, and their awareness of other modules in the composite Al system. Employing voice recognition, text-to-voice tools, and an HTML interface, Dr. Vunaris is now available via voice-chat for interview requests.

# Panel 1.4 - Generative Narrative Amidst Large Language Model (LLM) AI - A Transnational Experiment

Laura Shackelford, Rochester Institute of Technology Samuel Szoniecky, University of Paris-8 Matthew Giacovelli, Rochester Institute of Technology Deen Grey, Rochester Institute of Technology Erica Coles, Rochester Institute of Technology Harsh Shah, Rochester Institute of Technology Ferroudja Belkessa, University of Paris-8

In this roundtable presentation, faculty presenters share their methods for co-delivering a transnational, interdisciplinary workshop that invites graduate and advanced undergraduate students from their respective American and French universities to work together to create generative multimedia narratives using the Omeka S database, ComfyUI, Javascript, Unity, and recent Large Language Model (LLM) AI, among other tools. Over the past five years, this Transnational Digital Creation Workshop has worked online and on-site in France to actualize creative, interdisciplinary making as an epistemological driver of new knowledges and of more reflexive and cross-cultural understandings of digital practices and lifeworlds, premises central to the field of electronic literature. Situating itself at the interface between digital technologies of communication, the humanities, and emerging creative practices, the workshop enables each interdisciplinary team of student researchers to collaboratively co-create a generative narrative using a variety of media and to tell a story that resonates with them, and with the global context in which these practices unfold today. Meeting via videoconference and online communication over the course of a semester and then travelling to work together on site in France at the end of the semester, student researchers gain knowledge of creative computing beyond their chosen area of study, learn to work on an interdisciplinary team, broaden their awareness of how digital communication, arts, and electronic literature vary across cultures and geographical sites, in spite of their apparent interconnectedness, and build connections through their shared generative narrative and the workshop process.

Reflecting on evolving models of, and methods for creating generative narratives since the workshop was first offered in 2019, we will illustrate how LLM AI might be experimentally reoriented to the ends of computational creativity and generative narrative, in particular. Our two transnational student teams will present the generative narrative projects they co-created this spring using these methods and will also share their perspectives on the workshop process, the potential and constraints they encountered using LLM AI in this context, and the importance of a transnational perspective on generative narrative and generative AI today.

#### Workshop 1.3 - The Cyborg Hackeur Workshop

#### Leonardo Flores, Appalachian State University

In this workshop, participants will learn how to prompt Chat GPT (or AI code generator of choice) to generate valid HTML, CSS, and JavaScript code and use a code editor (I will demo Visual Studio Code) to create a unique work of electronic literature or digital writing. This practice is an example of Cyborg writing because it integrates human and artificial intelligence to produce code writing that results in electronic literature. It also brings to bear what I playfully call a hackeur approach, in which you hack the code of an elit "engine" to achieve your own artistic vision. This workshop will blend the two practices by using AI to iteratively generate code that is then modified by the human user to develop their own digital writing and electronic literature.

Here's an outline of the workshop:

- 1. Introductions and sharing of initial ideas for works of electronic literature or code engines.
- 2. Choose an idea offered by a workshop participant and demonstrate how to use Chat GPT and VS Code to produce a working piece of electronic literature.
- 3. Breakout rooms for participants to develop their own works. I will be available to answer questions, and help debug issues.
- 4. Sharing works and discussion.
- 5. Conclusion: how to develop engines for Taper, including how to instruct Chat GPT to avoid CSS for formatting and techniques to minimize code to meet 2048 byte size constraints.

The workshop will empower participants to leverage AI to produce works of electronic literature and digital writing, while improving their AI literacy, code literacy, programming skills, and code reading skills. I believe this is an important set of skills to train our community in because it lowers the technical bar to create these kinds of works.

#### Paper Session 1.7

#### Issues of authorship, creativity, and revision in algorithmic cut-up literature

#### Elsa Pereira, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Stemming from avant-garde experiments of the 1920s - such as Tristan Tzara's method "Pour faire un poème dadaïste" [To Make a Dadaist Poem], in Dada Manifeste sur l'Amour Faible et l'Amour Amer [Dada Manifesto on Feeble and Bitter Love] (Tzara, 1921), or André Breton's surrealist experiments with collaboratively fold-ins, known as "cadavres exquis" [exquisite corpses] - the cut-up method, popularised by beat writer William Burroughs, challenges neoclassical notions of authorship and originality. For cut-up theorists, "all writing is in fact cut-ups. A collage of words read heard overhead" (Burroughs & Gysin, 1978: [91]) that results in "an intersecting network of many texts spliced, crossed and merged" (Lydenberg, 1987: 46). This collaborative sense of authorship has been especially appealing to the digital sensibility of recent decades and the so-called emergence of "the posthuman" (Hassen, 1977).

Since the 1960s, there have been many computer experiments to automatically re-combine existing sources and generate random or probabilistic texts without the subjective input of human composition (Funkhouser, 2012: 245). Some authors have also been using automated

cut-up machines "to cure writer's block and inspire creativity" (Cramer, 2001-2024), either by engaging directly with algorithms or crafting manipulated outputs through manual revision.

This paper engages with how such man-machine interactions pose complex issues of authorship, creativity, and revision, which cannot be dissociated from recent discussions about "exploitative practices" of Al developers "in building chatbots that 'mimic and regurgitate'" some writers' "language, style and ideas" (O'Brien, 2023).<sup>F</sup>

#### Portraits of Claire Tourneur: Facing into an Al Imaginary

#### Stuart Moulthrop, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

This Individual Talk reflects on continuing creative research in which the author is compiling "portraits of imaginary people," including Claire Tourneur, one of the principal characters in Wim Wenders' 1991 feature, Until the End of the World. Claire becomes the first expert user of a visualizing technology that captures moving pictures from her dreams. She becomes addicted to the process, falling into a near-catatonia that literalizes McLuhan's "Narcissus narcosis." Claire's arduous but successful recovery is a main concern for the end of the film.

I will trace resonances between Claire's addiction and the entrancing mysteries of AI image generation, focusing on certain generated series that show evocative, diachronic patterns: fictional portraits that suggest details of an actual life. I will consider effects of narcotic fascination - digital hallucination as externalized dreamwork - but also Johanna Zylinska's speculation that AI art may reveal a "human outside the human," an intensely provocative insight. I will juxtapose the apotheosis of Wenders' Claire, who becomes an astronaut scanning the Earth for "pollution crimes," with the supposed exteriority or alterity offered by AI image models – an "outside" whose terms need close consideration.

(This proceedings paper is available on pg. 18)

#### The Narratology of Prompts: Al as Concrete Prose

#### Patrick Lichty, Winona State University

It has been barely one year since the revolution of Large Language Models arrived, and the Al-based image has outstripped photography on the Internet as of January 2024. There is anxiety about the "new image," but what is it? The author contends that Al imaging is not "art" but a form of concrete prose or prose imagined by the semantic engine of an LLM -based imaging engine. Prompt-based machine learning imaging is not a new era of Art making but a new convergence of writing and code to create concretized images as a form, of Electronic Literature. But Al-based imaging also hides, as the practice of Steganography conceals one set of data within another, which is precisely the case with clip-based machine learning art. This is evident in Midjourney Al's /describe feature, which allows the prompt of an image to be reverse-extracted from its resulting file.

What does this musing about machine learning art, narrative, Kitsch, and the concept of the disappearance of human subjectivity in the age of AI represent? Post-human discourse ultimately represents the elimination of the human body. Is the use of AI-based imaging a further abstraction from the gestures of narratology that connects human beings to communicate imagination? Does AI become a filtered, translated version of that experience as seen through the translation sets of AI? This discussion will focus on the author's ongoing study of virtual narratology, concretism, and the formal considerations of the translation of forms.

# TRACK 2: HYPERTEXTS & FICTIONS

Panel 2.1 - LAUNCH: Accessible Bits 1.0

Hannah Ackermans, University of Bergen

Deena Larsen, Washington State University Vancouver

Lyle Skains, Bournemouth University

Richard Snyder, Washington State University Vancouver

With this festive "panel" session, we launch the publication of Accessible Bits 1.0: Framework for Disability-Inclusive Electronic Literature.

The outputs of the PAD initiatives have been vital to the sustaining of the field of electronic literature, which the documents "Acid-Free Bits: Recommendations for Long-Lasting Electronic Literature" (Montfort and Wardrip-Fruin, 2004), and "Born-Again Bits: A Framework for Migrating Electronic Literature" (Liu et al, 2005). In addition to Preservation, Archiving, and Dissemination, there has been a growing interest in accessibility as a way to create sustainable electronic literature from a disability-inclusive perspective. This has been discussed at ELO (un)conferences but lacked a resource that is specific to electronic literature.

Accessible Bits is a guide for authors to create more accessible electronic literature. As such, it fills a paucity of resources on electronic literature's accessibility which has been informally discussed for years within the scientific community. The document is not only a plea for writers to work proactively in ensuring their creations are accessible to a wide range of potential readers but also to explore the creative possibilities that writing in accessible manners opens. Rather than prescriptive, the document asks you to reflect on your own work in relation to accessibility.

The publication of Accessible Bits is supplemented with the launch of a contributory GitHub repository. In this repository, we will keep an updated list of resources for accessibility as well as a list of exemplary works of electronic literature. Linking these resources in addition to the introductory document of Accessible bits will ensure that electronic literature authors with varying levels of accessibility experience will be supported by our project.

Join our panel session to learn about the basics of digital accessibility, how to use Accessible Bits and to get an insight into how this works out in practice. We will have a live 'clinic' to discuss accessibility aspects of various works of electronic literature. This will include one work by one of the panelists [anonymized for peer review] as well as works from participants in the session, who are invited to bring challenges with their own works. All and all, this will be the festive, interactive launch of Accessible Bits 1.0.

#### Paper Session 2.1

#### **Exploring Game Localization Through Interactive Narratives in Twine**

#### Yingzi (Kathryn) Kong, University of Central Florida

The video game industry is experiencing consistent and robust expansion, and video game localization is receiving increasing academic attention as a greater number of games from diverse national backgrounds enter the global market. Going beyond translation of the linguistic level, game localization is a multifaceted process that involves the adaption of cultural references and values to fit the target players' cultural context, as well as technical and

legal elements (Bernal, 2006). It is quite complex as it involves multiple actors and produces multidimensional and multimodal products (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013). Differing from translation, localization involves adapting a product from the business standpoint of game production and distribution, a process that necessitates a deep understanding of the industry's operations (Bernal, 2018).

This project proposes the use of Twine, an open-source tool for telling interactive, nonlinear stories, as a medium to explore and analyze the process of game localization. In this Twine-based game, players are immersed in the role as a game localization project manager, where they navigate a complex array of decision-making branches that simulate the localization process. The game is designed for two objectives: First, it aims to reveal the shifts in characterization and narratives that stem from localization. Second, it endeavors to employ Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as a lens to analyze the interconnected web of the localization industry, highlighting the significance of each actor, from text and tools to translators, in influencing the end product. Twine's hyperlinked structure and interactive capabilities enables a more nuanced analysis and understanding of the localization network.<sup>G</sup>

#### The (un)Lucky Carder: Inscryption, Submission, and Metafictional Games

#### Kenton T. Howard, University of Central Florida

Game narratives can take many forms, and there are a growing number of games that examine the relationship between players and game stories which have been described as metafictional games by journalists and fans. In this presentation I examine Inscryption, a metafictional game that blends card game and puzzle elements, by building upon LeBlanc's taxonomy of fun, which describes the different kinds of pleasure that players feel when they interact with games, as well as Costikyan's discussion of that taxonomy. I claim that Inscryption is a metafictional game that engages with the notion of submission, or "games as pastime," in which fun can be derived from submitting to a game's rules and systems. Inscryption's card game requires submitting to battles against difficult enemies and bosses, while the puzzle portions of the game require submitting to escape room and map exploration challenges that unlock more of the game's world and backstory.

While the card and puzzle gameplay elements described above appear to be central to Inscryption, this gameplay loop is only a small part of the game's larger metafictional narrative about submission. Many of the game's metafictional elements are expressed through content that is depicted as taking place "outside" of the core gameplay loop: between each of the game's acts, the player can watch a series of increasingly disturbing video logs that are presented by a content creator known as The Lucky Carder. I suggest that these metafictional video log narratives address the relationship between players and games and question whether submitting to a game's rules might be harmful. I also claim that Inscryption illustrates Costikyan's notion that submission is an inherent part of all games. Overall, I argue that Inscryption functions as a metafictional experience that explores how concepts like submission operate at both a narrative and gameplay level.

(This proceedings paper is available on pg. 34)

#### Twine Before Twine: Media Archaeology and Early Twine Works from 2006 to 2012

#### Dan Cox, University of Central Florida

The authoring tool Twine celebrates its 15th anniversary this year, yet most of the celebrated works from the tool were published after 2012. Much of its early life, from core ideas appearing in the tool Twee in 2006, the brief history of the graphical tool Tweebox, and the eventual

journey of Twine through its 1.0 version history, remain largely unexplored with initial academic coverage only beginning in 2014. Many works from this early period are also missing from hobby archives such Glorious Trainwrecks, a site for "throwing a bunch of random crap into your game and keeping whatever sticks" that hosted early Twine 1.0 documentation and guides as well as the Interactive Fiction Database (IFDB) and video game platform and store front itch.io, both of which began tracking Twine works in 2013. This talk seeks to fill in some of the missing history of Twine by examining the history of the tool and active work done to find and archive early works. This talk especially highlights how the current tool has deep connections to concepts and core functionality dating back to early iterations in Twee and Tweebox, initial attempts at an authoring tool and graphical user interface for creating digital stories. Through treating the output of Twine, HTML with special elements containing story data, as a medium changed over time, this talk traces not only how stories from the tool are represented in data, but how layers of meaning are built into the tool across time, pointing to how early decisions in its design laid the foundation for later functionality and how different examples along its history showcase this important history.

#### Zork Reimagined: Interactive Fiction in the Age of Al

#### Aleksey Tikhonov, Inworld.Al

Classic interactive fiction has unique charm but faces known limitations; early IF games have complex user interfaces that are not intuitive for new players. They also often fail to understand user commands, leading to immersion-breaking default responses. Modern neural network-based games offer more flexibility but suffer from hallucinations, incoherence, and lack of overarching story structures. To address these issues, we propose a system that combines the strengths of both classic and modern approaches. It transforms the classic game Zork (Blank et al., 1979) into smoother narration with a controllable literary style while preserving the original plot and game logic. It can also be applied to other games and potentially to different game types, enhancing their narrative depth and player engagement. While current technologies cannot yet fully automate engaging story creation, we believe integrations like this offer a promising direction for the future of interactive fiction.

(This proceedings paper is available on pg. 27)

#### Paper Session 2.2

#### Dark Souls as Networked Hyperlinked Text / Creating Community Through Dystopia

#### Austin Anderson, Howard University

Dark Souls (2011) was a transformative moment for the video game industry that solidified FromSoftware as a leading developer, inaugurated Hidetaka Miyazaki as a video game auteur, and established the increasingly popular Souls-like genre. Yet, Dark Souls has been relatively underappreciated in Game Studies. This presentation seeks two major interventions: (1) position Dark Souls as the preeminent networked hyperlinked text, and (2) argue the game's dystopian digital world allows players to engage in an imaginative world that cannily explores life after late-stage capitalistic destruction and global iniquity.

Despite being single-player, Dark Souls contains a networked server that enables certain optional multiplayer elements including soapstone messages, bloodstains, and phantoms. Players can leave short notes for each other that are helpful, playful, or deceptive; other

players will periodically appear as nearly translucent phantoms that allow the player to briefly view other player's simultaneous actions; and the bloodstains show the final few seconds of other players' deaths. These multiplayer elements turn Dark Souls into a networked game that reminds players they are not alone in this arduous journey. Further, Dark Souls functions like a hyperlinked text because the game's deliberately obtuse storytelling and intense difficulty nearly demand that first-time players leave the game and search for community and clarification in online guides and wikis. Through these hyperlinked interactions, Dark Souls has developed a rich community; there are dozens of YouTube essays and online posts where players describe how entering the community enabled them to overcome intense personal hardships. The game's rich online community must be contextualized within its narrative, which describes a world locked in an apocalyptic cycle of continuous degradation because of the self-serving decisions of the ruling class. The passionate Dark Souls community reveals the appetite among gamers to imagine a world after the degradation wrought by late-stage capitalism.

### Our Bodies Are Hyperlinks: Trans-Actions of Play for "Gayme"-ing Material Connection Chloe Milligan, Pennsylvania State University, Berks College

The earliest known queer videogame Caper in the Castro (1989), an adventure title created in Hypercard by transgender game designer C.M. Ralph, famously billed itself as "not just a game...it's a Gayme!" Released as charityware through proto-Web Bulletin Board Systems, the game asked users who downloaded it to donate money toward AIDS epidemic relief. In this way, Ralph and their game modeled from the start ways in which queer videogames further queer material (dis)connections between digital and physical, virtual and corporeal, and Internet and "IRL."

This unconventional linking of the seemingly disconnected is not just a design practice, but the living praxis of all trans game designers like Ralph and trans people in general. Trans bodies connect male to female ("MTF"), female to male ("FTM"), and the gender binary itself to a greater realm of play with identity and embodiment. So as I put it, our bodies are hyperlinks, and this presentation aims to show how the games made about, for, and by trans people implement what I call trans-actions of play that "gayme" material connections we often assume as separate.

For example, Dontnod's adventure title Tell Me Why (2020), a game featuring a trans man protagonist, connects digital and print through the in-game representation of books, trans woman Aevee Bee's visual novel Heaven Will Be Mine (2018) blurs the practices of reading and playing, and fellow trans woman Maddy Thorson's Celeste (2018-19) works with and against contemporary graphical fidelity through an intentionally "retro" pixelated design constraint. I argue that each of these games demonstrate through these trans-actions different facets of queer materiality to combine the (never actually all that) bifurcated, especially as textual artifacts widely accessed through the internet where trans community often virtually connect and oftentimes over queer games like these. Scholars I turn to throughout this presentation include Micha Cárdenas, Bo Ruberg, Aubrey Anable, and Gregory Ulmer.

### <u>Playing in Postmortem: Link Rot, Memory Decay, and Haunting Archives at the End of the World</u> Madison Schmalzer, Ringling School of Art and Design

Anna Anthropy's Queers in Love at the End of the World (2013) is one of the most celebrated games from the "queer games scene" of the early 2010s (Keogh, 2013). Made in Twine, Queers in Love depicts the last moments between two lovers at, appropriately, the end of the world. Scholars have analyzed the game's mechanics and narrative, describing it as a

poignant representation of queer life amongst inevitable death (Lo, 2017; Ruberg, 2017; Salter & Moulthrop, 2021). But the game is not what we remember. No game ever is. Even one as beloved and theorized has died, just as the fictional lovers have.

This talk emerges from my discovery of a glitch that adds extra, refreshed clocks, irrevocably shifting the game's possibilities. A narrative about precious moments before the apocalypse becomes about hanging on, and how these moments sour when we hold too tightly. Instead of the game haunting us when we step away, we haunt the game, lingering in its passages. I propose a trans understanding of games that acknowledges their perpetual becoming, of the ways that play always changes games, and of the need to accept (and even celebrate) this change.

In exploring this glitch I found other ways the game changed since its creation. I perform an autopsy, moving through the ephemeral traces of life that mark its shifting archival body, which become interwoven into accounts of my experiences, snippets of saved IRC chats, Discord messages buried under ever-refreshing feeds, and posts on defunct blogs. The code remains the same, but links rot, social media accounts change hands, and thus the game connects to a surprising collection of intertextual documents. Through this excavation I ask who is left behind in imaginings of technological stability? How do trans designers and players haunt games? And how might we care for games and those that make them by allowing them to change?

#### Panel 2.2 - ILIDI / ILINU - Incubator of Digital Literature

Alejandro Brianza, andamio.in Rolando Rodriguez, andamio.in Jessica Arianne Cabrera Rodriguez Miss, andamio.in Michel Lefebvre, TOPO

ILIDI / ILINU-acronym in Spanish for incubator of digital literature or in French for Incubateur de littérature numérique- is a Quebec-Mexico co-creation program consisting of virtual workshops in digital literature and born from the collaboration between the artistic collective andamio.in, the Centro de Cultura Digital of Mexico and the TOPO artists' center in Montreal. This training and dissemination program in digital art and electronic literature aimed to develop the practice of writers, artists and programmers through different exchange and learning encounters in digital creativity, while at the same time moving towards a post-pandemic time.

Thus, between April and May 2022, the first part of the training took place, with two general meetings: first, a general presentation of digital arts; then an overview of digital literature and a presentation of the state of the art in the Americas by the Centro de Cultura Digital of Mexico. From this point on, a dozen virtual meetings took place corresponding to six collaborative creation workshops: hypermedia collage, sound and audiovisual creation, creative coding, programming and dynamic content generation. The second part, between June and March 2023, was conceived as a mentoring and accompaniment programme for the projects proposed by the participants, as well as the preparation of all the materials for their final exhibition.

Alone, in duos or trios, 11 artists created 7 works, each installed in its own 3D virtual space, mounted on the Mozilla Hubs platform. Although the exhibition -due to the characteristics of virtuality and isolation from which it was conceived- took into account its 100% digital assembly, in mid 2023, in other / new conditions it was possible to make presentations in person and also exhibit the pieces with virtual reality equipment, appealing to another type of experience for the user.

This panel will share this experience by putting in dialogue the responsible team and the participating artists to comment on the processes and results of this programme, the successes, difficulties and points for improvement, as well as future perspectives.

This project was made possible thanks to the support of the Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie du Québec.

#### Paper Session 2.3

### A Fundamental Look at Electronic Storytelling: Subverting Expectations on a Procedural Level Jeremy Andriano, Toronto Metropolitan University

In a book that explores the fundamental principles of sound storytelling, George Saunders tells us, "A story (any story, every story) makes its meaning at speed, a small structural pulse at a time. We read a bit of text and a set of expectations arises" (11-12). Saunders explains that good storytelling depends on what an author does with those expectations, that "we could understand a story as simply a series of such expectation/resolution moments" (12). It is a universal technique for creating engaging stories: create an expectation, then either meet it or subvert it in an entertaining way.

Some have argued that the illusion of choice offered by games and interactive fiction ultimately detracts from the narrative, disrupting the reader's attention (Bogost 2017; D'Aloia 2020; Mukherjee 2023). However, the tension between authorship and perceived co-authorship in electronic works of literature offers a unique surface on which the author can create expectations in ways that are not possible in linear works.

In order to demonstrate, this paper presents The Last of Us (Naughty Dog 2013) as an example of electronic literature that creates an expectation in its reader on a procedural level, and then undermines that expectation in a surprising manner. The Last of Us (Naughty Dog 2013) uses what is essentially 'the trolley problem'—quite possibly the most recognizable archetype we have for difficult choices—as the climax of its narrative, in a medium that is known for offering choice to its reader. The reader is well-primed to feel the need to decide the direction the narrative will take. However, The Last of Us (Naughty Dog 2013) retains its own authorial control. This paper argues this work's success hinges on its denial of choice, creating a different set of questions and reflections for the reader.

By examining how fundamental principles such as this apply specifically to electronic interactive media, we seek to better understand interactive media's position on the spectrum of narrative works.<sup>1</sup>

#### Data Bookification: Image, Place, and Event

#### Zach Whalen

Books support many different modes of expression in addition to their textual and paratextual content via their size, mass, shape, design, and materials. Data is a material abstraction that – thanks to surveillance capitalism and other regimes of collection – accompanies many aspects of contemporary life, and the methods of data visualization, data sonification, and other strategies can help decision makers, citizens, and subjects explore and explain their data. In this paper, I propose the term "data bookification" to characterize a set of bookbound literary and artistic works that muster the expressive affordances inherent to their medium in order to convey the aesthetics, magnitude, and subjectivity of data that would otherwise have lain

dormant. Works like Jeffrey Thompson's Opossum.png (2021) render the magnitude of image data via codexical mass. Everest Pipkin's Thoroughfare[] beat across the wilderness (2016) highlights the obfuscated spaces of network infrastructure by mining Google Streetview. And The Hidden Life of an Amazon User (2019) by Joanna Moll renders in sculptural form (a large stack of paper) the latent computational detritus of a visit to amazon.com. Image, place, event. By analyzing these and other representative works, I argue that – just as the printing press made possible a proliferation of new literary genres that could rely on consumers' private reading experience – data bookification functions to re-individuate data that has been aggregated via the lenses of platform surveillance. At the intersection of computational literature and artist's books, these experiments in tactical bookish aesthetics demonstrate the enduring richness of codexical technology.

### <u>Informing and Deforming Readings: 'Critical Re-Making' in Electronic Literature and/as Digital</u> Humanities

Bruno Ministro, Institute for Comparative Literature - University of Porto

**Patrícia Esteves Reina,** Institute for Comparative Literature - University of Porto & Center for Portuguese Literature - University of Coimbra

In the exploratory research project "To See the Tree and the Forest" (FCT 10.54499/2022.08122. PTDC) we investigate different modes of looking at the work of the contemporary Portuguese poet António Ramos Rosa (1924-2013). For the past year and a half, our team has been applying computational text analysis to his poetic oeuvre, and, in parallel, we have developed an ecocritical reinterpretation of his poetry. We aim to gain insights into how animal, vegetable, and mineral actors contribute to a poetic construct that conceives the world from an ecological perspective. We are also interested in further questioning the already troubled and everchanging relationships between natural and digital environments (Posthumus and Sinclair 2014; Swanstrom 2016; Linley 2016; Cubitt 2017; Chang 2019).

At ELO 2024, we will first describe the computational text analysis component of our project and, in a second moment, we will show the preliminary versions of creative (e-lit and post-digital) works that we will later exhibit in Porto, including works by invited artists such as Rui Torres, Diogo Marques, Terhi Marttila and Isabel Carvalho. With this, we aim to discuss the potential connections between computational analysis and computational creation, contributing to the discussions around "electronic literature as digital humanities" or the "creative digital humanities" (Rettberg 2015; Saum-Pascual 2017; Rettberg and Saum-Pascual 2020; Grigar and O'Sullivan 2020). We will ask: do these practice-based research methodologies unveil aspects not revealed in our project through quantitative or qualitative research methods? Commenting on some of the results, we will show how these kinds of creative interventions foster an exploratory environment conducive to critical reinterpretation against the instrumentalism of "dh tools" and toward the speculative digital humanities.

# Workshop 2.1 - Starting with Markdown: a flexible extensible hypertext authoring system

**Christine Wilks** 

Astrid Ensslin, Universität Regensburg

Twine is an excellent tool for creating hypertext e-lit but its focus on ease-of-use means that it has some limitations. This workshop explores an alternative workflow and toolchain that is simultaneously good for creating and publishing hypertexts and also good for facilitating research, creative note-taking, journaling, documentation and translation, all in a single local-first repository. In other words, it's a set of tools and techniques that is particularly suitable for e-lit creation and for creative and practice-based research.

This method was developed during the making of Voices, an interactive narrative about body image issues. We will use Voices as a case study. We'll examine its novel IF design and explore how the methods employed in its production and translation can be adapted for other projects. In keeping with the ELO's "Principles for Creating Long-Lasting Work" (Acid-Free Bits), this approach prioritises open file formats, future-proof standards and open web technology. It utilizes free software and, optionally, low cost software and services, but there's no proprietary lock-in. This set-up is highly adaptable and extensible and can be as simple or complex as required. It's also good for collaboration. It all starts with writing in Markdown (a simple markup language, easily converted to HTML or other formats) and using an open format writing application, such as Obsidian. In Obsidian, your files/data remain private, easy to retrieve, read, write and control because it's all stored in a 'vault' (folder) on your local file system. You can open the files in other tools too (e.g. a code editor), making them easy to process. Whether you're an e-lit creator, researcher or teacher, whether you're fluent in programming languages or have no coding skills at all, this workshop has something to offer.

#### Paper Session 2.4

<u>Curating and Sharing Interactive Moments with the Game and Interactive Software Scholarship Toolkit (GISST)</u>

Eric Kaltman, University of Alberta

Joseph C. Osborn, Pomona College

The Game and Interactive Software Scholarship Toolkit (GISST) is a funded project to develop a system for durable, web-based, interactive references into running software programs. GISST manipulates in-browser software emulators (programs that run older programs) to allow for the citation of emulated computational state ("moments" of software execution) and input recordings ("performances" of software inputs). Once created, these moments and performances can be embedded in web pages and linked to online descriptive text. GISST opens up the possibility for web-based curation of historical interactive works with indexed links to particularly salient moments of expression.

For branching interactive fiction works, this means that a literary scholar could record themselves traversing the text to a variety of points along a narrative and then save citations directly to those moments for others to examine and re-experience. It is also possible to juxtapose a

collection of moments from the same or different works (across multiple different platforms) to highlight comparative differences. GISST is designed to provide persistent, durable links to these executable moments, and can also be run locally by institutions or individuals wishing to organize their own collections of executable references.

This talk will outline the basic functionality of GISST, and present a selection of case study provocations for the sharing, exhibition, and analysis of interaction fiction works made possible by the system. By making historical IF works more present and shareable on the web, we hope to open up new possibilities for the analysis and representation of their history.

### Enhanced Curation and Ensuring a Post-Exhibition Legacy for the British Library's Electronic Literature Collection

Giulia Carla Rossi, British Library

Stella Wisdom, British Library

This talk will explore curatorial reflections and visitor feedback from the British Library's 2023 Digital Storytelling exhibition. Furthermore, it will discuss the Library's ongoing plans for enhancing the research value of Emerging Formats, a collection of complex born-digital publications, through accompanying contextual material and documentation.

The British Library has been archiving examples of electronic literature in recent years as part of its Emerging Formats collecting activities under UK Non-Print Legal Deposit legislation. To raise the profile and public awareness of this collection, a selection of interactive works dating from 2010 were displayed in the Library's 2023 Digital Storytelling exhibition. Eleven examples of electronic literature representing different genres and formats demonstrated the impact that technology has had on the way that writers write and readers read. This handson exhibition was the first of its kind at the Library, showcasing born-digital works that are responsive and interactive within the context of a physical gallery. Furthermore, to enrich the exhibition's interpretation curators experimented with enhanced curation approaches, recording video interviews with several writers and commissioning playthrough footage of a selection of works. These recordings were displayed alongside related interactive stories in the exhibition, and they also have potential to become rich resources for future research.

Digital Storytelling provided a valuable opportunity to understand how different audiences interacted with these stories and to think about the use of these types of publications beyond the exhibition, as part of the Library's growing Emerging Formats collection. However, many challenges persist and collecting institutions need to carefully consider how they can ensure successful sustainable preservation of electronic literature and complex born-digital publications, both for the present and the future.

#### Small stories of past futures: Celebration, resistance, and cultivating the unknown

#### Rachel S. Horst, University of British Columbia

In November 2021 a group of teacher candidates came together in a futures literacies workshop and played a simple digital card game to help them generate imaginative narratives of the future. These digital stories remain entwined with the situated context of that time—a global pandemic still raging, atmospheric rivers flooding the skies and city streets, and an accelerated teacher education program designed to prepare them for increasingly uncertain and perilous tomorrows. What do their past futures imaginings tell us about how these teacher candidates understood the future in troubled times? How do their narratives

refigure utopian and dystopian conventions and engage with futures in which up and down have often become indiscernible?

Guided by a technological posthumanist onto-epistemology and my own digital arts-based research practices, I will share this rich narrative landscape of past futures imagining. This storied data is part of my doctoral inquiry into the futures literacies of a group of teacher candidates. In this presentation, I will share both the method and the imaginative data generated in this research.

This work proceeds upon the premise that the ways we understand and story futures matter to our collective futures imagining – past, present, and future. As Haraway (2016) indicates, we are all entangled in processes of stories telling stories that will tell stories. This data tells of futures before generative AI become a dinner conversation and Chat GPT a regular collaborator in our writing practices, creative and otherwise.

In this presentation, I will open a small window into those past futures and share the differences and repetitions to be found there and how they reverberate into contemporary imagining and creative practice. Together we will explore potential creative pathways for resisting the tidal pull of narrative certainty, and collectively safeguarding a radical openness in our futures imagining.

#### The Future of Text in XR: Phase 1 of the Project

Dene Grigar, Washington State University Vancouver

**Andrew Thompson,** Washington State University

This proposal is for the "Experimental Track," which is not showing up as a choice in the "Submission Type" above.

This demonstration is derived from the research currently being undertaken by an international team of artists, scientists, and digital humanities scholars about the future of text in XR. Our work, supported by a grant from The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation awarded us in 2023, looks at ways to harness the potential of Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR), commonly collectively referred to as Extended Reality, or 'XR', to expand academic communication through the development of open-source software to make it possible for users to read, manipulate, navigate, and create in three-dimensional space. At the heart of our project is to explore ways for those interested in using XR for research and creative activities to get the most out of their data without proprietary systems containing core data stripped "on export" (as is the case with authoring systems exporting to PDF today). It involves showing the progress of our work to make a personal library of academic articles (in the form of PDFs) accessible from one's computer, read and interact with the documents in XR, and export the documents in useful formats.

Specifically, we will demonstrate:

- Full document interactions: The user will be able to directly interact with a document to move, scale, and set preferred reading angle. The user will further be able to lock the document to table or headset/user's head. The user will be able to read as a single page, two-page spread, multiple-page spread or as full pages in a large rectangle.
- Document component interactions: The user will be able to interact with the document to put elements from the document in 3D spatial positions either manually or to pre-determined locations, including images, table of contents, glossary, graphs, and references.

- Multi-Document interactions (Connections): The user will be able to interact with citations in one document and see how they connect to other documents in their Library and beyond.
- External Document interactions: Documents not in the user's Library will be presented as 'token's in citation trees and will be made quick and easy to retrieve.
- Headset/ Traditional Computer Transition: The user will be able to take off their headset at
  any time, and because this approach to headset/traditional computers uses Visual-Meta,
  any document presented in XR will feature an additional and temporary Appendix where
  full spatial information will be recorded for use next time that the user chooses to interact
  with the document in XR.

For our demonstration we will use the Apple Vision Pro and Meta Quest 3 for showing the advancements we have made during Year 1 of our project. If participants have access to a VR headset, they will be invited to access our files on GitHub and follow the demonstration via Zoom, thus allowing them to set up their own library of documents to explore.

What's at stake is simply this: XR extends our potential. How we choose to extend ourselves defines who we are, and who we want to be. We are at a pivotal point in our co-evolution with the tools and information environments we use, and how we choose to design how we work in XR will have repercussions for generations. It is important for academics with the capacity to do so to take the lead in the development of this powerful technology and the formation of practices associated with it.

### Panel 2.3 - (Un)Linked Open Data: Documenting E-lit in Wikidata

Hannah Ackermans

Joseph Tabbi, University of Bergen

Tegan Pyke, University of Bergen

Colin Robinson, University of Bergen

This panel introduces the renewed Consortium on Electronic Literature: CELL, The Index.

Since its inception in 2009, CELL has been a vital resource for cross-database collaboration. The vigorous database-building practices in the field of electronic literature have been key in establishing the field, while demonstrating the diversity of electronic literature across cultures. The CELL Search Engine has been a community-driven project to provide access to all these databases in one platform. Databases have often mentioned their prospective inclusion in CELL from their inception.

After some years of inactivity of the CELL project, the Center for Digital Narrative (University of Bergen, Norway) is revitalizing this common goal as CELL, The Index. CELL, The Index has a new interface, infrastructure, and data model that will ensure longevity and lessen the burden on individual scholars. With the rise of linked open data, we have chosen to use the collaborative, open-data knowledge graph Wikidata. Advantages of Wikidata are numerous. As a document-oriented database, Wikidata is ideally suited to the weird and wonderful ways that electronic literature breaks the boundaries of what literature and art can be. Based on our carefully developed data model, the documentation on the Wikidata platform can be expansive. At the same time, we will create our own focused environment with the taxonomy that is relevant to the electronic literature community in particular. Wikidata also allows for

multilingual documentation, which furthers the trend of global inclusivity in the electronic literature community. This migration, then, revitalizes CELL, The Index, and provides new opportunities to make metadata about electronic literature available to a wider audience in a sustainable manner, as well as promote individual electronic literature databases who have been doing foundational work over the last decades.

This panel has a dual purpose. We will introduce this new phase of CELL by sharing our current progress and results, as well as our plans to add a host of new consortium members. For this, we invite people working on databases who would like to become CELL members. Additionally, this session serves a broader purpose of discussing the use of Wikidata to document electronic literature and, therefore, is of interest to anyone who is considering using existing Wikidata for their research or to build a their own Wikibase.

#### Paper Session 2.5

#### ... - a book derived from a website - Why and how?

#### Annie Abrahams, independent artist

A lot changed since we started to make interactive websites. From text-based the majority of them became image based. The speed with which data are transferred is incomparable. The cellphones used today are no longer click-based and the social interaction formerly between individuals in front of their computers in a domestic environment became organised through corporate platforms as a 24 hour a day obligation to being "on" everywhere.

The Internet as we knew it is gone, and "old" websites now can no longer be experienced as in the time when they were made. When presented with a request of presenting such an "old" website in an exhibition in 2023, what to do?

The website concerned has always been a linguistic universe, in which different voices, languages, poems, codes and variables mingle into a labyrinthine whole. Thus it appeared logical and a challenge to try to capture/translate the essence of the concerned website into a book; into a collection of poetry.

The book has been made (150 copies) and is presented in an exhibition on digital art and available via book-stores. It contains 44 Poems, Fore Words by an e-lit scholar and Ad Verbs by me. It has 160 pages is printed in offset, black and white, A5 format, bound, hardcover with one spot color.

In this talk I will clarify the decisions in and the process of the making of the book.

#### Emulation of electronic literary artworks

Simon Biggs Professor, University of South Australia

#### Alex Degaris Boot Dr, University of South Australia

This paper presentation will provide an outline, supported by interactive visual evidence, of a program of emulation of interactive electronic literary artworks that, until now, have remained inaccessible to many. A problem with many digital artefacts is that they are dependent on specific hardware and software platforms to be accessed and experienced. As platforms develop and evolve many digital artefacts become innaccessible and effectively become 'lost works'. As part of 'The Australian Emulation Network: Born Digital Cultural Collections Access' project (funded by the Australian Research Council 2023-2025) a program of emulation activities are

being undertaken at the University of South Australia (led by Professor Simon Biggs) focused on the emulation of key historical interactive digital artworks, including a number of significant electronic literary works, by international artists and authors.

The Australian Emulation Network project (led by Professor Melanie Swalwell of Swinburne University) aims to conserve and render born-digital artefacts widely accessible by establishing an Australian Emulation Network. High value cultural collections from university archives and the GLAM sector requiring legacy computer environments are targeted. The project seeks to generate new knowledge across media arts, design, and architecture, including stabilising and providing researchers with emulated access to born digital cultural artefacts, sharing legacy computer environments across the network, and establishing an Australian software preservation community of practice, building skills in preserving and emulating digital cultural artefacts.

This paper presentation will include demonstration of exemplar emulated environments and the emulation of important historical electronic literary works within them. This will include not only emulation of completed projects but also of their development environments, allowing artists, developers, historians, curators and others access to the original components of the emulated works - the audio, visual and textual materials and code that comprise an interactive work.

#### <u>IOveOne: Creating Electronic Literature on the Early World Wide Web</u>

#### Judy Malloy, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Thirty years ago, my web-based hyperfiction l0veOne was the first work to be published in the Eastgate Web Workshop. L0veOne was a road trip in its journey-based narrative lexias, in its metaphors of radically changing cyberspace, and in its exploration of the paths for electronic literature that the World Wide Web engendered. Focusing on the creation of l0veOne in the early World Wide Web environment but also documenting other early web-based creative work and platforms – such as the1994 ANIMA website hosted by the Center for Image and Sound Research in Vancouver, BC Canada – this personal account explores initial changes in authoring and audience that occurred with the introduction of the World Wide Web. It documents the role of browsers in public access to the internet, details content and authoring issues in l0veOne, and concludes with observations on the World Wide Webbased authoring of four other early works: Stuart Moulthrop's Hegirascope, composer John Maxwell Hobbs' Web Phases, Michael Joyce's Twelve Blue, and Olia Lialina's My Boyfriend Came Back from the War.

(This proceedings paper is available on pg. 53)

### <u>Performative writing through permutations and the switching of subjectivities in "Time, diffracted"</u>

#### **Terhi Marttila,** Interactive technologies Institute / LARSyS

This critical practitioner reflection expands on an experimental form of performative writing which I developed in response to the constraints of writing for an environment where I could not control at which point my reader would start listening to the text. "Time, diffracted" is a branching literary work written for listening in which I place long looping voice recordings (approx. 10 minutes), soundscape and musical recordings (of varying lengths) in a navigable 3D environment for the browser.

As readers navigate the 3D environment at their own leisure, they may happen upon a voice recording anytime after it has "started". This makes it difficult to think of writing from a linear

perspective, since different reader's beginnings will occur at any possible point in the recording. My initial solution to this was to attempt to write in a loop: whatever I wrote would make sense wherever the reading started.

When I began recording the text (written as a loop of six or so sentences) I found myself making slight variations to the text as I read it through again. I switched an "I" to a "you" and was intrigued by how this changed the meanings in the text. I continued my performative reading in this manner, and found myself rearranging the order of the sentences, playing especially with the switching of subjectivities, using my source text as the basis for a performative form of writing that, in the moment, sought to extract new meanings from the original text.

My performative writing is like emulating an algorithm, one that interprets the permutation it outputs and responds to this in the subsequent sequence of words. This talk will present my approach and situate it within practices of non-linear reading and writing for digital environments (eg. Caitlin Fisher's Circle).

Access the work here (chrome advised), click on "create a room with this scene": https://hubs.mozilla.com/scenes/6s9wcCk

# Workshop 2.2 - Chatting about Chapbook: Exploring Twine Building through the Chapbook Format

#### Ricky Finch, University of Central Florida

Twine is a well-known tool for creating and engaging in digital storytelling spaces, games, and electronic literature. Designers and developers have pushed the boundaries of Twine through the integration of digital media to complement the textual rhetoric of Twine. Twine is not only a destination but also a tool for embarking on the journey of creating interactive works (Salter and Moulthrop). The default Harlowe format is most often used by creators to develop thought-provoking and fun projects. However, the Chapbook format, a newer format, has seen increased interest yet has produced little research thus far. The Chapbook format requires minimal coding but offers vast possibilities for engaging in nonlinear storytelling. A feature of the format is its visual similarities to a blank page. Chapbook's aesthetic layout lends itself to traditional print media in digital spaces while providing those new to Twine with a format that is easy to use and easily expandable.

An affordance of Chapbook is the built-in features that help users create dynamic works without extensive knowledge of code. The purpose of the workshop is to introduce those unfamiliar with the Chapbook format to its features, including code, CSS, and the integration of media. The proposed workshop would last 30-45 minutes and explore the Chapbook format, including a short introduction to the format, followed by a brief demonstration integrating several features like Passage Links, Embedded Images, and Dropdown Menu into narrative Twines. Additionally, the workshop will provide source material to learn more about the format and conclude with a brief Q&A.

#### Panel 2.4 - Literary Gaming Refigured

Sebastian R. Richter, University of Regensburg
Astrid Ensslin, University of Alberta
Fiona S. Schönberg, University of Regensburg
Kübra Aksay, University of Freiburg
Miriam Scuderi, Johannes Gutenberg Universitat, Mainz

The decade since the publication of Ensslin's (2014) Literary Gaming has seen radical transformations in the games industry - both in the indie and AAA sectors. Experimentation with narrativity, exploration, navigation, remediation, dialog, character psychology and textual materiality have led to entire waves and genres. Most prominently, the walking simulator and the literary point-and-click have transgressed their respective niches and entered the mainstream. In turn, these developments have given rise to new waves of scholarship in literary gaming that have emphasized the ludexical, readerly, and philosophical elements of games like Dear Esther, Pentiment, and Disco Elysium (e.g. O'Sullivan 2023; Milligan 2019; Kagen 2022; Novitz 2021). These developments call out for a reassessment of what literary games are and can be, how specific (trans-)regional and (trans-)cultural influences shape their development and reception, and what waves and genres have been forming in the relatively short history of this art form. This panel addresses these questions from a multi-disciplinary angle, aiming to capture the status quo as well as to speculate where literary games are headed in a future steeped within artificial intelligences and metaverses.

In preparation for the panel, participants will be offered to experience a short interactive exposé planned in Ren'Py (downloadable here for both PC and Mac) to hunt for clues about the upcoming talks.

The panel will consist of five short contributions (8 min. each), followed by a roundtable discussion with audience interaction and live curation. We will open with a brief introduction to the history of literary games and aspects of functional ludostylistics, highlighting key trends and scholarship. This will be followed by four lightning talks offering different perspectives from the panellists' own research:

- 1. "Books and book-like objects in literary games" examines how bookish elements are used as framing devices and artifacts. Looking at The Bookwalker and Pentiment, this paper investigates what walking within books and interacting with them means in literary games, and how these processes construct a bookish player.
- 2. Tabletop role-playing games and videogames share a long history of cross-adaptation. This talk will discuss the emergence of "Inner World Simulators", a hybrid form drawing from the narrative modes of TRPGS and videogames.
- 3. Philosophical games could be described as a literal walking through a history of yourself: in Dear Esther and What Remains of Edith Finch the player characters deal with lost subjectivity and family failure.
- 4. Generalized and more specialized language models are capable of putting forward rudimentary forms of text-based adventures that the user can interact with, within the LM's provided interfaces. This paper explores the narrativity of the "reconfigurative objects" that occur when "playing" a language model.

The ultimate goal of this panel is to distil a theory of contemporary literary gaming and to envision future developments of this fast-evolving subfield of digital-born literature.

#### Paper Session 2.6

Clustering and Decisions: An Archeology of Computational Creation

#### Erik Zepka

This essay makes two basic claims: one that the history of creative technology shows a problematizing pattern of accumulation. More waste leads to more granularity, as well as more points of failure and knowledge discretion. The second that within creative technology there are focal points of decisional (categorizing) and clustering (unifying) processes. The divisive approximating of the world, breaking it down and rebuilding it up, inadequately estimating spaces to predict and imagine. We contend that these two interweaving evolving patterns provide a framework to look at current computational creation: that it is an innovative version of cultural frameworks through history, and that this tree branching and rooting space is the key event trigger of digital code and language over a more biased internal or microliterary view. The first claim will be looked at through historical comparison, for instance between Plato and Leibniz. On the one hand papyruses, math compasses, water clocks, geometry and forms, on the other mechanical codices, calculators, pendulums, calculus and monads. This will be compared with linguistic, demographic and geographical data as complexity indicators of respective periods. The second claim will be explored by using an algorithmic approach to find a common conceptual ontology (through graphs and trees) between periods - independent of complexity creative works offer a symbolic traversal of ideas, rooted in principle concepts and developed in branching supports. Decisions are made physical in references, scrolling, page flipping, dial turning, filling and pressing that becomes the logical unfolding of the work. The granularity of the computer is unprecedented but the basic process of interaction is not, nor are the basic qualities of a creative medium. Additionally, this can aid to defetishize cloistered histories and myopic local cultural tropes of what is validated as legitimate work, towards a more general and inclusive cross-temporal view of artistic and literary creation.

#### Computational Writing and the Literary Device

#### Mujie Li, University of Sussex

According to Johanna Drucker, writing can be seen as an algorithmic subject that speaks a language constitutive of rules through a set of procedures. It suggests that computational writing can be a subject of writing when considering human-machine interactions. In this presentation, I argue that computational writing produces creativity through literary device. A literary device is a technique based on particular literary rules. It offers linguistic acts to computational writing. To demonstrate how computational writing works with literary device to produce something new, this presentation draws on a schizophrenic language as a rule that defines, organizes and shapes modalities of computational writing.

American poet Hannah Weiner's writing with typewriter demonstrates a kind of computational writing in which interface speaks a schizophrenic language that is immediate and indeterminate. Schizophrenia reflects a linguistic regression of cognition. If Weiner's case shows schizophrenic language is a material process of her mental disorder, then by examining the physiological processes within the schizophrenic brain through British psychiatrist Timothy J. Crow's theory, we can conceive that human-machine interactions at interface identifies a linguistic act that is schizophrenic. At last, by looking at the early Al chatbot program PARRY, the presentation argues that PARRY as a kind of computational writing works with its literary device of ventriloquism.

Lisa Blackman terms ventriloquy as a technique of voice hearing among schizoid people, an expression of the self through the other. The ventriloquy of PARRY is realized through its

interpreter that exteriorizes and interiorizes affects. It thus blurs the boundary between human and machine writing, technological self and other. The ventriloquy of PARRY showcases how computational writing works with its literary device can be conceived as a creative of thinking Al through its literary lineages, therefore opening a research field of examining Al as a cognitive assemblage of technological arrangement and cultural practice.

#### <u>Digital Literature: An Essentially Contested Concept?</u>

#### Tegan Pyke, University of Bergen

Over half a century since the creation of the first text generators and decades after electronic hypertext was touted as the future of literature, the internet has progressed from the domain of 'avant-garde computer hackers, cyberpunks and hyperspace freaks' (Coover 1992) to a mundane, daily part of life for millions, if not billions, of global users. With this has come a deluge of 'vernacular' creativity (Burgess 2006)-both original and transformative-that sees new works of digital literature posted online on a minute-by-minute basis, by people who have no idea what they're producing... if what they're producing is digital literature at all. Using W. B. Gallie's idea of the 'essentially contested concept' (1955) as a framework, this talk will situate debates on what constitutes digital literature by examining various definitions, delineations, and dilemmas put forward by scholars and practitioners through the field's relatively short lifespan. In doing so, a series of linkages will be formed, illuminating the opposing views of digital literature as they developed. A range of questions will be confronted, including: Is self-reflexivity and disruption to the technological status quo a requirement, as Tisselli and Torres believe (2020)? Is Skains' digital fiction net (2023) cast too wide? And has the rejection of traditional literary genres fostered greater creativity... or allowed for the incorporation of works that shouldn't be regarded as literature at all? Through this, a sustainable conception of digital literature can be formed-one that acknowledges the difficulties faced by the discipline, the reasons why some practitioners may reject or ignore the term, and the ways traditional literary practice can be exclusionary-before a passing of the vanguard occurs and the field risks fading away into the larger communities from which many of its exemplars are claimed.<sup>K</sup>

#### Panel 2.5 - Teaching Electronic Literature

Prakruti K. Bhatt, Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji Bhavnagar University

Judith A. Pintar, UIUC School of Information Sciences

Suzanne V. Rigdon, George Mason University

Denise Ellen Larsen, Washington State University

R Lyle Skains, Bournemouth University

Mark C. Marino, University of Southern California

Dene Grigar, Washington State University Vancouver

Faith Samuel Bassey, University of Uyo, Nigeria

Exploring electronic literature gives students skills in reading, connecting, and writing in dimensions far beyond a static text. These works become ever more crucial as technology evolves and students embrace virtual reality, gaming, and more. After forty years of writing E-lit, we now have a wonderful body of works that can be taught at all levels. By pooling our resources (syllabi, course materials, approaches), we can create more vibrant courses and help students explore the relationships and meaning within navigation, linking, imagery, sound,

games, etc. Teaching electronic literature at all levels and ensuring that electronic literature is a vital part of any curriculum.

However, electronic literature is dynamic, as works are practically ephemeral (has the software or platform disappeared like Flash or Twitter, did the creators pay the bill to keep their website up, are there internet or technological barriers, etc. etc.). Moreover, it is difficult to insert E-lit or create E-lit classes within academia considering the wide range of educational, cultural, and infrastructural specificities across the world. We need a solid base of recommended works and pedagogical approaches. The resources at https://teach.eliterature.org/ are great, but need to be updated. This workshop will help bring together educators to create sharable resources. We will create a google doc before the conference to list resources, gather materials during the workshop, trade ideas and approaches, and then use this to help update ELO's resources for teaching.

Discussing the methodologies and pedagogical approaches for teaching Electronic Literature employed by various educators will also help to reflect on the innovative ways in which literature teaching and literary education has evolved in the digital age.

The following questions will be addressed during the panel discussion:

- 1. What are the different ways in which E-lit can be taught and incorporated within a curriculum?
- 2. What are the barriers/concerns surrounding the same and how they can be addressed?
- 3. What works have you taught?
- 4. What approaches have you taken?
- 5. How have students responded?
- 6. What resonates well with students?
- 7. What concepts may be difficult for students to understand and how have you addressed that?

# TRACK 3: NARRATIVE & WORLDS

# Workshop 3.1 - Publishing Electronic Literature Research as Precarious Academics

#### Samya Brata Roy, Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur

#### Shanmugapriya T, Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad

Publishing research can be a tricky business! Especially if you position your research within traditional disciplines like literary studies. Likely journals might not publish your work. What do we, especially early academics and PhD scholars, do in that case where our outputs get measured with specific journal/publication metrics? How can we persuade the administration, especially when institutions prioritize publications from Scopus and other indexed journals for thesis submissions and promotions, that conventional journals may not accept our research? Additionally, how can we demonstrate that the few non-Scopus indexed journals where our work is published hold significance? In this regard, I propose a brainstorming session where we can put on our thinking caps and then throw our best hats in the ring. Could we, as a collective, work with each other so that it benefits our publication portfolio? In short, what can we do to support each other?

Let's think through some of these issues. Please come to the session having looked at certain journals and publication spaces which you think are good places for your work.

This workshop will carry forward discussions had during a similar workshop conducted during the UnConference. However, no prior knowledge of that event is needed.

#### Paper Session 3.1

#### A Glimpse into Past And Present Challenges: Indian Electronic Literature

#### Shanmugapriya T, Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines) Dhanbad

The field of Indian electronic literature has demonstrated consistent growth in terms of creative works, events, and scholarly contributions in recent years. Prominent instances of this development include the curation of electronic literary works by dra.ft, significant contributions from Indian writers/artists to the Electronic Literature Collection Volume 4, and the publication of the Indian Electronic Literature Anthology. Furthermore, both private and public institutions actively organize conferences, seminars, workshops, and courses dedicated to electronic literature. In the discourse on the potential and expansion of electronic literature in India, scholars such as Shanmugapriya, Samya Brata Roy, and Souvik Mukherjee have rightfully emphasized the challenges posed by the digital divide and a lack of awareness about electronic literature. While acknowledging these identified obstacles, I pose the question of whether there are additional challenges that may have been overlooked. To investigate this, I present three fundamental inquiries, each probing distinct fields: the history of computers, the domain of Indian conventional literature, and the development of digital infrastructure. The computer was perceived as a utilitarian tool for economic growth and national development, with literary creativity or creative applications not seen as integral. While the Western world was experimenting creativity with computers in the 1950s, Indian literary novels, like R.K. Narayan's The Vendor of Sweets, were already exploring the intersection of technology and

literary writing. In this case, the primary questions addressed in my article are as follows: Does the challenge solely revolve around the digital divide, or does it extend to a 'digital "creativity" divide'? Is there an inherent struggle between tradition and modernism in this context? Are we compelled to adopt a minimalist approach? The primary objective of this essay is to study the challenges and barriers of digital-born creative works in India through studying the aforementioned its relative fields.

#### Media Translation and the Migration of Born-Digital Literature

#### Dene Grigar, Washington State University Vancouver

#### Mariusz Pisarski, Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan

The paper discusses the concept of media translation, a form of enhanced translation that goes beyond the linguistic. The case studies used as examples are drawn from reconstruction work undertaken in our labs, notably the migrations of Richard Holeton's Figurski at Findhorn on Acid and Michael Joyce's Twilight, A Sympathy from the Storyspace platform to open Web languages, as well as the reconstruction of Christy Sheffield Sanford's Red Mona from an unsupported programming language to one that is compatible with contemporary browsers. We focus our attention on selected pre-Web features of born-digital literature—that is, the loading screen, multilink, Tinker and Bell Keys, and link names and paths.

#### Russian Electronic Literature Today

#### Kirill Azernyi

This paper session suggests a discussion of contemporary Russian electronic literature in light of its origins dating back to the Soviet literary avant-garde of early and mid-XX century, and in light of contemporary state of Russian culture both within and beyond the country.

The talk will touch upon labor practices introduced by poet and scholar Alexei Gastev (1882-1939), whose take on industrial progress closely related to his writing method and constituted a complex approach to craft and art made in close, organic and sensitive, coordination with the machine. Also, Soviet avant-garde literature focusing on mechanical industrialisation will be presented by Andrey Platonov (1899-1951), whose prose reflects on both mechanical and human nature of written language.

Other period of pre-digital avant-garde writing that influenced later Russian electronic literature will be presented by conceptual poets such as Vsevolod Nekrasov (1934-2009) and Dmitry Prigov (1940-2007). These poets focused on the limits and benefits of their "paper" medium and enabled new mediaspecific perspectives on poetry which later were a major influence on digital literature in Russia.

Early Russian electronic literature segment of the talk includes a review of works by Olga Lyalina and Alexey Shulgin, seen as deriving from conceptual poetry, but also focusing on material nature of new media.

Digital writing in Russia of the recent decades - presented, among others, by authors like Michael Kurtov and Alexander Frolov - engage with politics of radical freedom and, on the contrary, radical censorship of the Net.

I will introduce the Web-Almanac Russian electronic literature project made to overcome academic and cultural isolation of contemporary e-lit in Russian, and will share thoughts on how the new digital literature in Russian relates to formal and political avant-gardes of other literary trends in the Russian underground writing.<sup>L</sup>

# Panel 3.1 - Podcasting Peregrinations: The Book of Travels, Unarchived

Jason Boyd, Toronto Metropolitan University
Jeremy Andriano, Toronto Metropolitan University
Patrick R. Dolan, York University
Kevin Ghouchandra, Toronto Metropolitan University
Chelsea Russell, York University

The Playable Stories: Unarchived podcast provides a forum for discussing, through a pedagogical lens, digital games that offer innovative approaches to and insights into digital storytelling. While the podcast's partner project, the Playable Stories Archive, provides written guides for narrative games that, from a pragmatic perspective, could feasibly be included as an assigned 'reading' in a college or university course, the Unarchived podcast explores storyrich games that would be impractical (due to length, difficulty, etc.) as a required course 'text.'

For ELO 2024, the Unarchived podcast team offers a roundtable extending the discussion of a special ELO 2024 podcast episode on developer Might and Delight's Book of Travels (2021-). Inspired by a rich array of media across historical periods and cultures, Book of Travels has a number of particular features that have not been addressed in previous Unarchived podcasts and that challenge traditional conceptions of story and game. Book of Travels does not have a pre-scripted linear story—its closest literary relative is the picaresque—nor does it have the discrete quests or achievements that most open exploration-style games are built on. Indeed, the game provides almost no direction to the player: "it sets you adrift in an intricate fairytale world designed to inspire exploration... without the restraints of linear quests and plotlines" (Mister Wekonu). While it contains familiar elements from the RPG (Role-Playing Game) and Survival game genres, it also deliberately challenges the expectations that players come to these genres with (e.g., "Events that are usually trivialized in RPGs [like death] are instead made into strong emotional moments" [Mister Wekonu]). Combat is present, but it is optional and avoidable: it is on the periphery, not at the core of the gameplay.

Book of Travels also has a number of features that complicate it as an object of study and teaching in terms of digital storytelling. It is an early-access game, that is, it is unfinished/in development and contains bugs and features that may be fixed, modified, removed or added. It may also never be 'finished,' whatever that might mean for an open world game. It is an online game that requires connecting to a game server, but the developers refer to it as a TMORPG: a Tiny Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game, with a maximum of seven players on any given game server—players with whom you can't verbally communicate, trade, or battle, and who you might not even encounter.

Before this offering, the Unarchived podcast team will make accessible online the draft script of the episode prior to the conference for feedback from conference participants (see link below) and will release the finished episode as well as a video demonstrating the Book of Travels gameplay shortly before the start of the conference; during the conference itself we will hold the roundtable discussing the production of the podcast episode, and further issues that the podcast discussion prompted but did not address.

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# Paper Session 3.2

Contingencies of 'Community': An Investigation of House of Leaves by Mark Z. Danielewski and Online Discussion Forums

Abhirami Ajith Kumar, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

House of Leaves by Mark Z. Danielewski, with its humongous fan following, created, structurally and metaphorically, a labyrinth that links and un-links narratives. A house that grows inside and stores an array of codes that await exploration can and has evoked curiosity. The idea of the 'reader,' ideal or not, who is presented with the challenge of traversing the text, to acquire a sense of closure that text refuses to provide in a postmodern fashion, is played with by the text. While one struggles to find 'connections' within the text, a community that explores the idea of a collective effort to decipher. Mark Z. Danielewski regularly engages with the decoders/readers and partakes in the process of meaning-making, as a reader, challenger, and the challenged. Popular forums include "r/HouseofLeaves subreddit," "Goodreads House of Leaves Group," "The Navidson Record Forum" and "House of Leaves Facebook Group." The labyrinthicity, its ergodic nature, and its scope as a postprint text that was circulated online before publication grabs the text its cult following, and secures its position in dedicated forums worldwide. The paper investigates House of Leaves as a component of a larger context of discourses that attempts to incite interest as challenges and the resultant communities that exist and perform as vital 'links,' for the challenged and curious reader. House of Leaves brilliantly builds a fictional world that defies the conventions of interpretations and the representation of the ontological separation of fiction from reality. The paper is an attempt to navigate the conceptual contributions of the forums that connect the demanding text with committed readers. It will investigate how the discussion forums can be a deeper dive into the text, whether to transpire as a rabbit hole or as the collective provider of readerly satisfaction, a sentimental disposition the text plays with. The paper analyzes how selected forums function as a community, shape reader perspectives, and promote an experimental textual culture, as a link to the text and the broader implications of reader engagement of experimental fiction in the digital landscape.

# <u>Doing Memory in Digital Fiction: A Critical Study of Memory, Narratology and Digitality in Andy Campbell and Judy Alston's Clearance</u>

Gayathri T, Indian Institute of Technology Madras

Merin Simi Raj, Indian Institute of Technology Madras

This paper analyses Andy Campbell and Judi Alston's post-apocalyptic digital poetry, Clearance (2007), by close-reading it using the critical tools/methods from narratology, and further examining it through the lens of memory studies, as it enables the engagement with multiple processes that relate past, present and future in diverse historical and sociocultural contexts (Erll). Digital-born electronic literature and its multimodal representations have been challenging the limits of reading and writing literature (Hayles) by taking advantage of digital computation (Wardrip-Fruin) or "technoeikon" (Shanmugapriya et al.) as well as creating interactive and immersive stories that demand "the reader to make a shift in their ability to approach and interpret such works" (Campbell). Situated between a narrative and a game, Clearance takes the reader/player on an experiential tour around abandoned landscapes after an apocalypse that resembles the space around in the real world and evokes a sense of familiarity; it results in what Alice Bell calls an "ontological resonance" - a "prolonged response and aura of significance" to the storyworld both "during and after the experience" (Bell).

The authors analyse how the "visual noise" (Engberg) of the digital poetry contributes to the ontological resonance while also mediating "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg) of the apocalypse to the reader/player outside the storyworld. Accordingly, the study foregrounds the ability of a digitally represented space to mediate memory to the reader/player who observes them in the first-person perspective inside the storyworld using the concepts of sites of memory (lieu de mémoire) by Pierre Nora and survivor objects by Marita Sturken. The authors propose an innovative framework to critically read/play and interpret digital literature that will integrate memory, narratology, and digitality in an interconnected, mediated, and interactive space.

Key words: Digital poetry, digitality, ontological resonance, doubly situated, memory, prosthetic memory, survivor objects

(This proceedings paper is available on pg. 42)

# The digital proposition of Eugenio Tisselli: cosmopolitics and ecological conscience in a Latin-American digital work.

#### Emilio Gordillo Lizana, Universidad Diego Portales

This paper hopes to approach the works of programmer and Mexican activist Eugenio Tisselli from a cosmopolitical perspective, with the goal of recognizing a series of subversive practices in digital literature. These processes involve Latin American cosmotechnical agencies particular to the context of a digital world ever more normalized to surveillance capitalism, neoextractivism, and the predominance of exchange-value. These deployments of reappropriation of common planetary relationships contained in their representations dispute conceptions of time alternative to capital, thanks through collaborative exercise of production, promoting use-value over exchange-value, transformation and denaturing the modern languages of dispossession.

# Paper Session 3.3

# BASE SPACE: Resisting U.S. Militarization in the Pacific with Immersive VR Poetry

#### Collier Nogues, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

BASE SPACE is a digital manuscript-in-progress of immersive VR poems set in and around U.S. military installations in the Pacific region. The project's poems explore the history, current consequences, and possible futures of the U.S. military presence by focusing on contested, liminal spaces including perimeter fence zones, construction projects co-sponsored by the U.S. and host governments, and bodies of water that extend contiguously alongside on- and off-base land surfaces. The poems are composed using A-Frame and set inside spherical photographs of these sites. When a reader views the poems in 3D, the poems extend panoramically around, above, and below. By moving their head and body, a reader can navigate the environment and the text within it. In order to ground this sense of embodied presence in the historical and political context of each site, the project combines the medium of immersive VR with the methodology of documentary poetry. BASE SPACE's poems draw on materials including oral histories, land use records, and bilateral agreements establishing sovereignty rights, among others. In this talk, I'll discuss a series of poems set in Okinawa and South Korea that invite readers to make visceral connections between specific militarized places, the individual and communal memories of the people who have inhabited them, and the complex interpersonal, environmental, and geopolitical effects of the ongoing U.S. occupation of sites

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across the Pacific. Ultimately, the poems press us not only to recall who and what the bases have displaced, but also to identify what, exactly, is there even now that escapes their control, and to imagine what else could be there after they are gone. Electronic literature can uniquely contribute to demilitarization and decolonization movements, I suggest, as well as to broader efforts to imagine and enact alternative futures, through immersive projects like BASE SPACE.

# El Majaya: Prompting Cultural Identity

Clara Machacon Rodelo, Universidad del Norte - Colombia

Andrea Carolina Osio Amaya, Universidad del Norte - Colombia

It is no secret to anyone that the use of Generative AI (GenAI) has won popularity in the last few months. In the audiovisual field, the number of short films created using, to some extent, this type of technology has increased, especially since the launch of Gen 2 of RunwayML, the most popular software for image and video generation. This type of software opens a world of possibilities to filmmakers, productions with low budgets, researchers, among others to experiment and discover what we can create and how this could change the future, or may as well the present, of filmmaking. With the aim of analyzing how the integration of GenAl alters the workflow of audiovisual production and identify what difficulties the GenAl has at representing the visual imaginary of the Colombian Caribbean, we started the production of "El Majaya", a short film which images were created entirely using GenAl. To track human and non-human creative processes we design and use a "prompt log" for posterior analysis. At the end of the study, we found that GenAl presents technical difficulties in human morphological representation, dark light settings, and creating different types of shots, but we also found representational difficulties, probing these technologies contain biases that privilege a hegemonic and western vision of the world, therefore, it takes more time, effort, and tries (and financial resources) in prompt design for people on the periphery to generate their stories. In this Individual talk, we will share our team's experience, learnings and conclusions in the creation process using GenAl and discuss with other filmmakers and researchers what we can do to improve prompt desing for better identity and cultural representation.

#### More-than-Human Media

#### Richard A. Carter, University of York

This paper will detail the artist's latest efforts at using varied strategies of critical making, speculative design, and technologies of generative writing and imaging to articulate the nature of human and more-than-human relations. In so doing, it will forward an argument concerning the importance of practice-led, experimental research in providing rich, alternative narrations, vocabularies, and modes of knowledge-making at a time of profound ecological crises. The aspiration is not to suggest that such endeavours will somehow ameliorate present day harms, but to enhance modes of environmental thought and literacy that can better acknowledge the irrecoverably transformed state of the planet, wherein damaged, technogenic phenomena and environments constitute the default medium through which all human and more-than-human beings move.

This paper will showcase different possibilities in this regard using three distinct projects, all linked by their explicit incorporation of real-time environmental phenomena—wind, weather, light, and movement—within digital processes of 'intelligent' sensing and poetic inscription, staging a collaboration between human, technological, and material agencies that reflects their entangled status across the observable world. Lines of Flight is a project in which the movements of a glider aircraft, piloted by the artist, are recorded and used to generate

volumetric poetry that is expressed through the intersection of wind, wing, and piloting technique. Algorithmic Light uses a combination of machine vision and timelapse imagery to create narrations of environmental change across multiple timescales at several field sites within the United Kingdom. Finally, Nephoscope employs visual analyses of cloud movements to create dynamically vectorised poems that emerge and respond to a changing skyscape.

All these projects provide instances of how artistic digital practices can function as critical sites for 'sounding' our changing conceptual understandings of the fraught and complex challenges of the present moment.

# Panel 3.2 - Deformance as (Un)Linking

Jolene Armstrong, Athabasca University

Siobhan O'Flynn, University of Toronto

monique tschofen, Toronto Metropolitan University

Kari Maaren, Toronto Metropolitan University

This panel for ELO offers four seven-minute artist's talks that underline "the theoretical commonality that holds their practices of "deformance", that is, the "deforming and performing anew" of past literary and artistic texts (Prescott; Samuels and McGann, 25). Together, these papers explore deformance as a radical (un)linking from the pre-existing source text in shifts of media, form, and intention.

- 1. "An Experiment in Yellow: 'THE YELLOW WALLPAPER. THE YELLOW WALLPWAPER. The lyelorwwalplater" is a digital "deformance" in Twine of Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), remediating passages of text through multiple cycles of prompts between Midjourney, ChatGPT, and DALL-E. "An Experiment in Yellow" "deforms and performs" the story anew to underscore the collapse of meaning-making into chaos in generative Al's successive self-cannibalizing remediations. The intention is to amplify the unease rippling through the spiraling destabilization of the protagonist's consciousness while also asking what is the literary? How integral is humanity to authorship and how can that be defined? The interactor can decide.
- 2. "In There Behind the Door" is a digital deformance of Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons (1914) that makes visible her "topopoetics" (Cresswell). This work, published in Scalar, tests sound-, text-, image-, and video-generating Al-tools where arguably "there is no there there"—to iteratively reveal her poetics as a dense intertextual crossroads where operational pronouns of place mash up Aristotelian, Baconian, and Cartesian topoi together with Matisse's "Grand Interieur Rouge."
- 3. "Moor and Mead Hall" "deforms" the opening of the Anglo-Saxon epic Beowulf by presenting it as music. Reducing Beowulf from words to music reveals the underlying tension the poet frames as a battle between the justified Danes and the monsters abandoned by God, identifying it as an issue of territory, not morality. By removing the voice of the poet and leaving sound alone, "Moor and Mead Hall" focuses on the story beneath the Christian filter that itself may initially have deformed the oral pre-Christian version of the epic.
- 4. "Spelarne"- published in Swedish 1903, is a protomodernist short story by Hjalmar Soderberg. This "deformance" argues through a re-imagination of the story through layers from text to illustration to abstraction and then finally to augmented reality, feeding lines of text to various generative Al and through hand drawn and printed imagery, to create

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a textual experience that deforms and oscillates to moving picture, revealing the way in which Soderberg was anticipating a modernist manner of writing for cinema.

This collection of works is being submitted separately for exhibition.

# Paper Session 3.4

# Making micro-choices in Dan Hett's "C ya laterrrr"

Kristine N. Kelly, Case Western Reserve University

In her classic *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Janey Murray suggests that, in some digital storytelling environments, an interactor's agency is linked with their pleasure in "enact[ing] our most basic relationship to the world- our desire to prevail over adversity, . . . to master complexity, and to make our lives fit together." Offering just such an opportunity for enactment, Dan Hett's 2017 Twine game "C ya laterrrr" narrates the sequence of moments and days after Hett learns that his younger brother had been one of the victims of the Manchester Arena Bombing during an Ariana Grande concert in May 2017. Hett's game, a performance of grief and a call for community, offers players a series of micro-choices that have little to no impact on the narrative progression, but that nevertheless provoke feelings of anxiety and dread as players travel towards an inevitable conclusion. For example, one can choose "Check social media feeds" or "open your laptop" or "call mum" or "call dad" and, with either choice, one still remains mostly on the same linear path.

The game finishes with a passage where the author reaches out to the player, explaining that the ending isn't really an end and that "the only thing that really matters is that these words and thoughts are somewhere," setting forth the use of the interactive platform to retell or, perhaps, to have others reenact this experience of loss and loss of agency. The many micro-choices the player clicks render them complicit in this performance and the experience. In my talk, I explore this concept of micro-choices, as exemplified in "C ya laterrrr", particularly considering how they create this complicity and, relatedly, how this Twine story's (micro-branching) structure intervenes on the pressures of linearity even as it rushes to its inevitable (non)ending.

## Metadata as Metanarrative: Lessons from Filter Insta-Zine at The NEXT

#### Sarah Laiola

#### Richard Snyder, Northwest University

This talk is based on a paper about the process of ingesting Instagram-based works of e-lit, originally published in Filter Insta-Zine, into The NEXT's collection. It was necessary for us to determine the metadata for the works themselves within the Extended eLectronic Metadata Schema (ELMS). Ultimately, this task required us to expand the existing ELMS vocabularies to account for third-generation works of electronic literature produced in, with, and for social media – a task that we approached from the position that each work of e-lit should not only be preserved, but described in detail given the role that an archive like The NEXT plays in sustaining and making accessible works of e-lit for future readers.

We focus on the challenge of accounting for Instagram as it relates to structures and even conditions of these works, while keeping in mind future generations of e-lit researchers and enthusiasts. Where we expected to capture Instagram's role as the works' distribution platform – they were, after all, ingested into The NEXT as versions published via an Instagram-based 'zine – we found that more often, Instagram played a critical role in the technical and creative

making of the work. In other words, it acted as an authoring platform, software dependency, and digital quality of the works. Moreover, given the creative conventions and discursive expectations of Instagram qua social media platform, it effectively became a genre for some of these works. xtine burrough's @lgotup2020 is one such work, as the Instagram account space is used to perform a daily, "live" videographic diary of burrough's pandemic experience. By naming Instagram as the work's genre, we not only capture the nature of the work as a videographic Instagram account, but also make a purposeful claim for how the work should be received and understood by e-lit's future audiences.

## VR/AR/XR E-lit: Towards a Claustrophobic and Agoraphobic Poetics

#### David T.H. Wright, Nagoya University

With the increased accessibility of VR headsets, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and Mixed Reality (or what digital artist Mez Breeze (2018) labels 'Synthetic Reality') works of electronic literature have seen an increase in both production and accessibility. While VR games, such as Half-Life: Alyx (2020), boast a sense of interactivity and immersion, I argue that works of electronic literature in this medium are enhanced by a combination of claustrophobic and agoraphobic poetics. I argue that, from a literary standpoint, such poetics are rooted in the poetics of Franz Kafka. As argued by Steinhauer (1983):

For the young person the world is too large, too formless; this produces the anxiety of agoraphobia. So you limit your scope, concentrate your ambition on a narrower goal. But this does not bring satisfaction either, it merely yields a different form of anxiety: claustrophobia. Now the world has walls, but these seem to close in on you and threaten to crush you.

Such a description of Kafka's 'A Little Fable' (1931) could equally be applied to the work of Re-educated: Inside Xinjiang's Secret Detention Camps directed by Sam Wolson (2021). This VR work has the accounts of three detainee: Amanzhan Seituly, Orynbek Koksebek, and Erbaqyt Ortarbai. I argue this is a work of 'electronic literature' (as opposed to a VR animated documentary) given its adaptation from its initial print iteration. Despite freedom to look around in 360 degree virtual animated space, one is made to feel imprisoned. In contrast, upon the prisoners' release, one feels euphoric freedom. In this paper I undertake a close reading of the work's poetics of claustrophobia and agoraphobia.<sup>M</sup>

# Panel 3.3 - The Legacy of Borges, Cortázar, Huidobro, and Girondo in Latin American Electronic Literature

Erika Maribel Heredia, University of Central Florida

María Julia Cabail, University of Central Florida

María Carolina Páez Gutierrez, University of Central Florida

Silverio Penoth, University of Central Florida

Oscar López, University of Central Florida

In this panel, we will present a comprehensive exploration of the work of contemporary authors and collectives within Latin American electronic literature. This endeavor will offer insights into the multifaceted nature of hypertext, uncovering its disruptive potential and delving into the influence of esteemed literary figures such as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Vicente Huidobro, and Oliverio Girondo. These authors' contributions have reshaped the landscape of narrative discourse and paved the way for innovative storytelling approaches.

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Thus, we will present a set of electronic literature works produced in Latin America that converge in the need to problematize the primacy of technology, exploring political and ludic aspects, and also inquire about their limitations and mixtures. Our presentation will encompass a diverse array of themes and motifs, ranging from the exploration of power dynamics to the intricate interplay between art and technology.

Central to our discussion will be the work of Gustavo Romano, who seeks to unravel the intricate mechanisms of power and the nuanced mediations of art. Likewise, we will delve into the work of Milton Laufer, who employs software as a medium to illuminate the often-overlooked dimensions of writing, investigating communicative, economic, and political aspects. Also, we will explore the contributions of the Colectivo Holobionte, under the guidance of Mónica Nepote, as they grapple with the pressing concerns of the environmental crisis and the transformative influence of technology. Their multifaceted works, spanning across various mediums, converge on digital platforms to explore themes related to microorganisms, parasites, and the intricate dynamics of literary and artistic parasitism. Finally, our inquiry will extend to the work of Belén Gache, who pushes the boundaries of literature through her innovative use of video poems, sound installations, electronic poetry, and mixed media projects.

This analysis will allow us to recognize the contribution of established Latin American writers in the emergence of recent electronic literature, investigating the inherited structures and common knowledge that characterize the region. In this way, we hope to illuminate the possibilities of Latin American electronic literature, as well as its identity and problems, in addition to the deep implications between the canon and new practices in digital environments.

# Panel 3.4 - Digital Literature in Latin America: Technocapitalism and Media Intersections

Vinicius Carvalho Pereira, Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso

Andréa Catropa da Silva, Universidade Anhembi Morumbi

Verónica Paula Gómez, Frei Universität Berlin

Latin American digital literature reflects the peculiarities of peripheral economies in the global system, where techno-capitalism plays a central role. Therefore, discussing e-lit in the continent necessarily involves questioning its conditions of production, visibility and legitimation in a world context of technological inequality and in a local context of devaluation of research in the Humanities. Hence, even though the popularization of electronic devices is often considered to bring a potential democratization to digital culture assets, it is fundamental to understand how global digital platforms unevenly impact Latin America in terms of creation, distribution, and consumption of literary content, both in print and computational media.

This dynamic intertwines the economic and aesthetic aspects of digital literature in Latin America, a continent that has witnessed the emergence of new digital literary forms under these pressures. From more "classic" forms of hypertext novels and Flash poetry in floppy disks and CDs, to immersive storytelling experiences, transmedia projects and literary material accompanied by image, audio or video in social media platforms, artists and writers harness digital technologies to explore new modes of expression and engage with audiences in novel ways. These emerging forms not only reflect the status of the region in the global technology power play but also stem from its local cultural heritage and the history of its textual traditions, with which the new digital genres create complex literary series.

All in all, this panel addresses the dialectical complexities that encompass both dystopian changes and hopeful futures for e-lit in Latin America. It aims to highlight reflections from researchers in the Global South on the peculiarities of digital literature creation in Latin America, by exploring the interplay between technology, capitalism, and literary expression while emphasizing the transformative potential of digital media for literary and artistic engagement in the region. The guiding line of the three reflections of the panel is a historicized and situated approach to Latin American digital literature in which we discuss how, by creatively appropriating digital technologies and media, e-lit creators foster a metatechnological and metamedia reflection, with the potential to criticize and subvert its uses contrary to democratic and socially progressive agendas.

# Paper Session 3.5

# Demystifying and Challenging the Settler Colonial Nation through Digital Literature

Jane Boyes, Dalhousie Univ

Scholarship of digital literature frequently eschews considerations of national contexts, and for good reason: works of digital literature are primarily distributed over the Internet, which easily transcends national borders, while creators and scholars of digital literature frequently find community online and internationally as the study of digital literature is still typically marginalized within artist communities, scholars' home departments, and academic studies more generally. The transnational positioning of the digital literature community further enables creators and scholars to avoid the national designations that have held sway-frequently arbitrarily and without consideration for how these nationalizations uphold status guos-in academic disciplines of other artforms. In my presentation, I consider how the transnational or even a-national approaches of digital literature and its scholarship can be trained back on the nation to demystify and challenge the development of the cultural imaginary of a nation according to hegemonic norms of dominant socio-ethnic and -economic groups within a given state. This becomes particularly important, I argue, within a context of working towards decolonization in settler colonial states (or, more accurately, on lands occupied by settler colonial states), as national ideologies work to enforce the appearance of the permanence and immutability of the nation and the state which in turn makes attempts toward decolonization feel impossible. While I focus on the context with which I am most familiar-the settler colonial state Canada and its cultural imaginary of the nation-I believe these insights can be extrapolated to considerations of other settler colonial national contexts and more generally to the workings of hegemonies with national contexts of any kind. Using examples from works by the High Muck a Muck Collective and Skawennati (Mohawk), I demonstrate how these works use digital rhetoric to confront the hegemonic writing of the cultural imaginary of the Canadian settler colonial nation.

# <u>Digital/environmental technopoetics in decolonial search</u>

#### Claudia Kozak, UBA/CONICET

This paper focuses on contemporary modulations of thought and the arts inscribed in the critical digital/environmental humanities, both inextricably linked insofar as all digital practice, even if it pretends to be immaterial, has a material impact on the environment. Thus, I will recover lines that seek to open paths of decolonization of existence in times marked by data colonialism, uncritical and hyperbolic narratives regarding Big Data and Artificial Intelligence, the platformization of everyday life from logics of capitalist concentration and the degradation

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of planetary ecosystems due to digital technologies.

Within this framework, I will comment on the scope and challenges of technopoetic/technopolitical pieces that use digital infrastructures outside those standardized in corporate platforms, or that make visible from the artistic practice the extractivism of natural resources associated with the energy requirements of Artificial Intelligence. Thus, for example, the project Los ojos de la milpa (Mexico, 2012-2014), by Eugenio Tisselli, based on OjoVoz, an open source mobile/web platform for the collaborative creation of maps and community memories, developed by the same artist for environments with little or no connectivity, or the installation Ecologías híbridas by Manuela Garretón and Martín Tironi (Chile, 2023) that poetically reveals the water "wound" involved in the generation of images with AI.

# María Mencía's Poetics: a Polyphony of Verses

#### Yolanda De Gregorio, University of Cadiz

This communication aims to compile an initial configuration of the poetics of the digital artist María Mencía, a pioneer as a digital creator and researcher. This is evidenced by the fact that in 2004, she defended one of the first doctoral theses on electronic poetry titled "From Poetry to Digital Art: Image-Sound-Text. Convergent Media, and the Development of New Media Languages." To approach the evolution, principles, and characteristics of her work, this paper is structured into three sections: the first seeks to present, contextualize, and reflect on general considerations regarding her work, including her main influences; the second will discuss a study of her most notable digital poems, dividing them into three groups and analysing their characteristics and evolution from the materiality of language to an emphasis on cultural identity, multilingualism, and historical memory; and, as a conclusion, I finalize with a synthesis of María Mencía's poetics.

# Paper Session 3.6

# Border Crossings: Seeing/Reading Comics and Graphic Narratives through a Digital Lens

#### Elizabeth Varkey, CHRIST Deemed to be University

This paper seeks to explore how digital technologies and platforms have transformed traditional approaches to the medium/ genre of comics, graphic narratives and/or graphic novels. From the process whereby artists conceptualize and create these narratives to how readers receive and interpret them, a lot has changed with the emergence of digital technologies and platforms. This paper will also reflect on instances of digital platforms and networks enabling co-created works by comic/ graphic artists, sometimes even in collaboration with their readers, imbuing Roland Barthes' conception of a "writerly" text with a new and literal meaning. It will also deliberate on how digital tools and technologies are rapidly transforming ways of seeing/ reading as well as research/scholarly engagement with this multimodal form. Further, it seeks to delineate the broad contours of empirical comic studies, an emerging field that adopts an interdisciplinary approach to comics, drawing upon various approaches such as the digital humanities, linguistics and cognitive psychology. Touching upon crucial aspects such as digitization, annotation and automatic recognition, this paper will discuss how the rise of the digital humanities has impacted and enriched the field of comic/ graphic novel studies. Finally, while the digital turn has been beneficial in attempts to bridge the gap between the arts and the sciences, it has also spawned new challenges, upon which the paper seeks to offer a brief reflection.

### Of Cats and Backpack: Utopian Possibilities in Cyberpunk Worlds

Emmanuelle Lescouet, UdeM

Pierre Gabriel Dumoulin, UQAM

Amélie Vallières, UQAM

As a subgenre of science fiction, cyberpunk draws on the possibilities offered by digital technologies, most notably Internet networks, to describe dystopian universes (Rumpala 2021). But these fictions also depict diverse inclusive worlds: their universe dematerializes societies, thus bypassing communication and mobility issues. These realities developed around advances in technology explore the ethical ambiguity of technology, between human advancement and resource exploitation. They confront the potential inequalities and precarizations with EDIA issues and universal accessibility (echoing the founding utopia of Internet [Cardon 2019]) in a social perspective which reminds of the hopepunk subgenre (Burk 2019). Going beyond the dystopian framework of cyberpunk gives insights on its structure, testifying to the possibilities offered by the analog-digital interlocking.

In this talk, we will analyze two digital displaying worlds in which technology is an imperative for production and survival.

- 1. In the post-apocalyptic Death Stranding (2019), the player's goal is to connect different human communities, enabling them to communicate (Bostan 2023) and to exchange plans and patterns to 3D-print objects needed for survival (Radchenko 2023), similar to contemporary fab lab models (Bouvier-Patron 2015). Through these exchanges, the characters can develop forms of militancy to oppose the government in power. This network recreates society in a world where the environment has become extremely dangerous.
- 2. In Stray (2022), the player takes on the role of a stray cat who stumbled into an enclosed underground city devoid of human life: streets are infested with mutant bacteria, and the robots have built their own society. With the help of a human scientist's consciousness uploaded into a drone, the cat can communicate with robots and solve puzzles as it travels the city for a way out. One of the player's goal is to reconnect neighborhoods and enable communities to communicate once again, thus solidifying the robots' communities (Homo Ludens 203) while assisting those who wish to leave the underground city.

# Re-inhabiting a Synthetic Text World in infloresence.city

#### Kavi Duvvoori, University of Waterloo

This performative talk explores Everest Pipkin and Loren Schmidt's inflorescence.city to search for ways of inhabiting generative language. Matthew Kirschenbaum warns of a "textpocalypse" in digital language, a collapse of the possibility of communication in the deluge of generative textuality. John Cayley describes the fear of needing to speak synthetic texts' "text-degraded pseudo-language." In inflorescence.city, I identify a tactic for preserving semantic and affective attention in sometimes nonsensical generative text and text processing.

Inflorescence.city's two multimedia volumes, the first resembling a digital book, and the second an atlas and roguelike game, make use of a wide variety of internal and external sources and procedures (not unlike LLMs). The authors declare "we treated these software processes as honored collaborators rather than as tools. Each has its own texture and tendencies."

What situations incline readers to take up synthetic text as though it were language, because of and not despite their fragmentation and remove from communication? This paper draws on Grinblat, Kreminski, and Manning's concept of reparative play (after Sedgewick), to show

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how inflorescence.city's processes of textual worldbuilding, traversal, image translation, and arrangement suggest ways to inhabit synthetic text. Searching for phrases with resonance and a narrative context is invited both in the text and the code, studded with comments that indicate the collaboration's conversation. The code, as well as the text, invites readers to ask how a symbolic system loosely entangled with human language can be brought back into a (more than) human language. The human body is the nexus through which these interactions are motivated, measured, and felt. In its disappearance and return, in representation and indirect address, the sensitivities of a generalized (not consistently gendered, or raced) body is necessary to animate inflorescence.city's continent—and, indeed, code. Still, these may be settlers and this may be a ruin.

# PERFORMANCES

# Night 1

# Reading a website?

#### Annie Abrahams, independent artist

This October I have published a poetry book\* made after a website active in between 1997 and 2007. For ELO 2024 in a talk called ".... - a book derived from a website - Why and how?", I explain the decisions in and the process of the making of this book.

For the performance section of the same ELO conference I will perform a re-turn of the poetry in the book to the digital environment of zoom. It will be an experimental reading where different languages (English, Dutch and French)and codes (html, javascript and php) mingle into a "fabulous and fascinating semiotic mess"\*\*.

The original website addressed emotional needs, moods, and desires, which related to connectedness with others and had several sections where visitors could contribute to texts on for instance violence, solitude, desires or fear; thus participating in the creation of what I called at the time the "voice of the multitude".

In the performance Reading a website? I will, besides demo-ing the poetic force of natural language mixed with code, revisit the affect transmitted in these contributions by inviting the assisting conference members to take part in a short section of Reading a website? with their own voice. (I guess this will take around 5 minutes of the whole 15 minutes allowed)

- \* 44 poems,160 pages printed in offset, black and white, format A5, bound, hardcover with one spot colour. 150 copies, available via book-stores.
- \*\* from the Fore Words in the book by an e-lit scholar:
- "A fantastic and fascinating semiotic mess.

It is text. Type undefined.

We bounce back and forth between languages that we understand and others we don't, between ourselves and others, between humans and the space between them, caught in the interface that connects and separates them and us."

# RIVETED IN THE WORD: Portraying the Experience of Broca Aphasia in a New Work of Digital Fiction

Warren Lehrer, School of Visual Arts

Artemio Morales, AltSalt

Judith Sloan, NYU

This three-person talk/performance will describe, demonstrate, and perform (excerpts) of "Riveted in the Word," a new e-lit book-app inspired by the true story of a writer's hard-fought battle to regain language after a devastating stroke. Written and designed by a longtime author/designer of highly-visual books and animations, this dynamic e-book made for mobile devices places the reader inside the mind of an author/historian as she recalls her journey with Broca Aphasia. The book-app is developed and programmed in close collaboration with an interdisciplinary web/electronic literature developer. The resulting interface reflects

the bifurcation of hemispheres within the protagonist's stroke-traumatized brain, and toggles between columns of text read at one's own pace and animated sections that evoke gaps between perceptions (thoughts, emotions, memories) and the words needed to communicate. "Riveted in the Word" is a story about overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles, told in an innovative way with kinetic typography and an original soundtrack. The project combines creative writing, music, user interface and motion design with healthy doses of poetic license to create an empathic literary experience that helps communicate an otherwise little-understood condition. In the face of so many fast-paced online/digital reading and gaming platforms designed to satisfy shorter and shorter attention spans, this unusual but approachable setting of a seemingly difficult text containing fragmented language about a challenging subject offers a hopeful future for an electronic literature that can slow down the pace of reading and facilitate deep, mid-length to long-form reading experiences. This lively and informative presentation will be presented by the author/designer, the programmer, and an actor.

# Hot or Rot: What Kind of Society Are We Going to Be?

#### Margot Machado Knuth, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

Hot or Rot - What Kind of Society Are We Going to Be? is an interactive performance piece that contemplates the future trajectory of our society. The audience can vote for what they think will happen in a dystopian madcap quiz. The piece's duration is of approximately 15 minutes. It is run on Zoom and voting is carried out via the platform's polling system. I engage participants with some banter during the brief and intermittent moments of voting.

The quiz presents three distinct pathways: a technocrat-libertarian society, a commons-based society, and a society under the influence of a figure resembling a cult leader. As the performance unfolds, it transitions into a short story that serves as a meditation on tragedy, connectedness, resilience, and hope.

My artistic intention with Hot or Rot is to create a work that is as much about the experience of participation as it is about the content itself. By involving the audience in the formulation of the narrative, the piece becomes in a way a co-created reflection on our individual experience within the contemplation of a societal trajectory. It challenges participants to consider the future not just as a set of ideal outcomes and a path ideally established by moral guidelines, but as a destination that is ultimately unknown. We cannot know where we will end up, and so our main struggle, at a personal level, is to preserve our humanity. The humor that is very present in the first two thirds of the piece fades away at the end. I find that that initial humor and amusement is very engaging and opens the audience up, so that the pathos and meditation at the end can be digested in a more natural and intuitive way.

# What did the line that you last drew ask you?

# Alys M. Longley, The University of Auckland, NZ

#### **Kate Stevenson**

#### **Jeffrey Holdaway**

'What did the line that you last drew, ask you?,' presents a virtual platform for digital exhibition and performance. This work is a research collaboration between Alys Longley, Jeffrey Holdaway and Kate Stevenson of DotDot Creative Studio, made in collaboration with international artists (such as pavleheidler [Sweden], Francisco González Castro [Chile], val smith [NZ] ). The DotDot Social platform offers a new form of virtual performance space that combines live interaction with artwork online. We will present an interconnected series of virtual worlds that cross creative disciplines

from contemporary poetics, performance, choreography, sound composition, gaming and visual art. Our site is highly interactive and is constantly iterating in relation to audience feedback.

Our virtual platform curates and translates artworks into interactive immersive worlds through visual imaginings, creating playful interactive spaces within the worlds, and finding ways in which the site can be simultaneously a performance, an exhibition, an installation, a repository for creative process and a space where contributions from audiences can be held.

Participants enter the digital exhibition 'What did the line that you last drew ask you?' via a simple button, and meet inside the digital exhibition/performance together. They can then converse in real time, while being able to see each other through real-time avatars accessing the microphone and camera of their device, and navigate through a series of digital worlds or rooms, navigable via the different studio research projects that inform this work. The resources of digital gaming, real-time social connection and virtual interactivity, are brought together in a series of experiments in poetry, choreography and visual art.

# Night 2

#### Conundrum Luna

#### **Erik Loyer**

Conundrum Luna is a short video work reflecting on humanity's impending colonization of the moon. A gift of a drum in the shape of our nearest planetary neighbor launches a journey that blends echoes of sci-fi cinema, moon missions past and present, and the increasing vulnerability of the lunar environment to human exploitation.

The project will be performed live in VR, but the performance will be designed for spectating on traditional screens.

# Islands to Port Eighty

#### Kavi Duvvoori, University of Waterloo

The performance "Islands to Port Eighty" invites readers to generate in concert diverging versions of a "poem" - a mock archaeological tablet - while following the Paxos distributed consensus algorithm. Leslie Lamport's 1988 paper "The Part-Time Parliament" introduces the Paxos algorithm, used to establish consistency between unreliable processes, through the frame fiction of an archeology paper about the democratic rulers of an invented Ionian island state. Lamport later republished the result within a more traditional form for computer science research, but its name and origins maintain this gesture towards allegory and archaeological history. This algorithm and its successors enable the operation of the globe spanning database infrastructures which store and process our digital presences. "Islands to Port Eighty" implements the Paxos algorithm in a critical context to draw out the role of metaphors and historical representations in shaping a scientific field associated more often with futurity, and to raise questions of consensus and dissensus in reading.

The text generators draws on bronze age inscriptions to make statements and develop a linguafranca between the participants in the performance. The words are assigned various tags, with each participant starting on an "island" associated with an archaeological transcription and possessing its language. Participants are sequentially given the chance to broadcast one of their assertions to all the other "islands" - each recipient then may decide whether or not to add this statement to the common vocabulary. If a majority of recipients agree to learn the statement, all "islands" then incorporate all the words in that statement as well as its pattern of

tags into their own generator. At each stage, their "tablet" grammatically generates additional statements from their "island"'s personal vocabulary and syntax, as well as its prior utterances. The statements are assertional, cryptically authoritative, and focus on rulers, deities, and commerce like their source materials.

A digital performance will allow enough readers to be present making the text(s), while the contrast of their personal versions with the one on my own screen (which I share and read on Zoom for those who choose not to participate directly) emphasizes the gaps as well as moments of contact between readers. The performance is conducted through client-side web pages making use of a Javascript peer-to-peer communication library and an API to broker connections. A technical proof of concept version of the piece has been written with plans for substantial revisions. Participants only require a web browser.

Distributed systems theory is full of metaphors about political power with its Byzantine generals and part-time parliaments (and even disturbing reference to "master" and "slave" processes), simultaneously centering and effacing more classical rhetorics theorizing systems of (algorithmic) control. See Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's \_Control and Freedom\_ for a study of the tensions between visions of "freedom" and operations of control in networked computation. Although distributed systems are most famous now for blockchain protocols and tokens, blockchains are not directly or substantially addressed in this performance (while elements of the discourse surrounding them are relevant).

#### now & then

#### sarah bricke

This performance is an experimental presentation via Zoom that will combine performative lecture aspects with sound recordings and audience interaction. This presentation will take as its departure the author's project now & then, which is an ongoing, multi-part transmedia project that includes a lecture essay, a series of recorded conversations, nonlinear text compositions, and slideshow presentations of images primarily concerning the life and work of photographer Alvin Baltrop; excerpts from this work will be presented along with images during the performance.

now & then has as its nexus a work of electronic literature on Twine. The project positions Twine as a constellation of archived instances, both historically verified and imaginary. Because of Twine's capabilities, these instances are able to intersect in ways that create encounters which could not occur in linear time; instances far removed on the timeline are possible for the reader to link polytemporally.

The performance lecture places artworks and the artists that produce them in an ongoing conversation that spans back and forth across time. The lives and work of Alvin Baltrop, Every Ocean Hughes, David Wojnarowicz, David Hammons, and others at first appear temporally distant; navigating through the work on Twine, it gradually becomes clear that these works and points on the timeline converge at a body of water: the Hudson River and the ruins of the piers that once stood there.

This performance is informed by notions of archival fluidity and futurity and a sustained engagement with the artistic output and archival materials of the photographer Alvin Baltrop. Artistic and academic research methodologies have informed an exploration of the reframes that collaborative dialogue might assume, with multiple possible pathways of access to and from it. Through re-enacting, or re-embodying, past events in the present moment, future possibilities and outcomes expand and diverge, and past histories are recalled and reclaimed.

The ruins of the built environment function as a particularly profound site for the cross-temporal collaborations that this performance lecture proposes: in the ruins of what once was, the collapse of the past is understood. This is the space where infinite possibilities arise. It is where anything might be, where what is not yet formed could become, where the process of becoming exists in infinite permutations.

# Tapest[o]ry

Laura Santos, Universidade da Madeira Mara Dionisio, Universidade da Madeira, ITI/LARSyS, IST, University of Lisbon Terhi Marttila, Interactive technologies Institute / LARSyS Pedro Campos, WowSystems, Funchal, Portugal

Marine animals, particularly cetaceans, heavily rely on sound for communication, navigation, and hunting, and noise pollution can disrupt these essential functions. Tapest[o]ry, aims to raise awareness of this environmental issue by leveraging the weaving tapestry technique's potential for storytelling and its texturised affordances, embedded with capacitive technology (Bare Conductive Touch Board, conductive threads, and fibres) to promote user interaction through touch while giving audio feedback.

In this performance, the artist will stand before the tapestry and trigger several story moments by touching the tapestry so that the audience can follow the narrative that the tapestry embodies. The narrative tells the story of two young friends, a fearful whale and an adventurous clownfish, in an adventure that happens between two worlds: 1) A healthy ocean where marine life can survive and fully use their vital functions; 2) An unhealthy ocean full of threats, mainly caused by human intervention, expanding and invading the healthy side of the ocean.

In the performance, the audience can visualise how the tapestry design illustrates these two worlds since the tapestry is around 1,20m X 1,60m and will be placed in a well-lit room to be fully visible through the Zoom screen.

The artist will touch different interaction elements and move the two narrative characters through the different interaction points in the tapestry. Their dialogue will be triggered as the artist places the characters in the correct interaction spots. The sound will be transmitted through Zoom; in this way, the audience can follow the characters' struggle to return home safely when their journey is interrupted by noises from human intervention.

the visuals, narrative, interaction, and audio were created thinking about engaging the audience within the story of two improbable friends (whale and clownfish), showing how they are affected by marine noise pollution, and giving them human-like characteristics to humanise the perception of the message Tapest[o]ry transmits, aiming to evoke empathy and compassion as a poignant reminder of our responsibility, as humans, to protect the oceans.

The tapestry design displays different visual aspects for both sides of the ocean, differentiating the healthy side with clean and vibrant colours and the unhealthy side with dirty and desaturated colours. The healthy side of the ocean audio displays a healthy soundscape with natural ocean sounds, and the unhealthy side shows disturbing anthropogenic sounds.

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The Zone of Pure Doubt, Episode 2: The Dateline Theory

Judd Morrissey, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Ava Aviva Avnisan, San Diego State University

The Zone of Pure Doubt is an ongoing multimodal project with elements of poetry, augmented reality, and musical performance that explores memory, obsolescence, gender, and time-travel through forms inspired by equatorial line-crossing ceremonies and the age-old human art of navigation by the stars. The Zone references an area of the pacific where the correct timing of the Jewish sabbath cannot be agreed upon using any of the traditional rules applied to account for the loss and gain of hours across regions of global time-keeping, an uncertainty amplified because of the disputed location of an ideal dateline, not necessarily equivalent to the international standard, itself subject to occasional reshaping. The Zone is imagined as a longitudinal slide of restlessness, a theoretical area where to rest is always to wrest, where past selves and their mythologies as well as larger histories of indigenous knowledge and colonial violence are manifested as the wreckage of past navigational errors hidden below the surface of the ocean, at a depth previously, but perhaps no longer, impervious to the limitations of technological probings.

The performance of The Zone, The Dateline Theory, marks a 25 year interval since the creation of My Name is Captain, Captain., an early seminal hypermedia night-flight elegy published by Eastgate Systems in 2002 and currently undergoing restoration with the support of a National Endowment of the Arts grant, "New Frameworks to Preserve and Publish Born-Digital Art." The obsolete work haunts the emerging one, synthesizing parallel movements of memory and media archaeology into a generative reckoning with the past on multiple scales.

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HARSH SHAH, Rochester Institute of Technology

HARTMUT KOENITZ is a scholar, designer, and artist. His research is concerned with the theory, practice, education and societal impact of interactive narratives and games. He is particularly concerned with the use of interactive narratives to better understand the complex world of the 21st century. His latest book "Understanding Interactive Digital Narratives. Immersive Expressions for a Complex Time" was published by Routledge in 2023 (http://understandingidn. com/). Koenitz has published over 90 scholarly publications including the co-edited volume "Interactive Digital Narrative - History, Theory and Practice" (Routledge 2015). He is a Professor in Media Technology at Södertörn University, a visiting researcher at the University of Amsterdam, and a visiting research fellow at Trinity College Dublin. Koenitz is also the president of ARDIN, the Association for Research in Digital Interactive Narratives (https://ardin. online/) which organizes the International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling (ICIDS) and is partnered with the ZIP Scene conference. Koenitz is also the founding Editor-In-Chief of the Journal of Interactive Narrative (https://journal.ardin.online/), a pioneering academic journal specific to the topic which integrates interactive experiences within articles, published in collaboration between ETC Press and ARDIN. Koenitz is also a visual artist, and his works have been shown in Atlanta, Paris, Istanbul, Seoul, Copenhagen and Porto.

Jajwalya "Jaj" Karajgikar (M.S.) is the Applied Data Science Librarian at University of Pennsylvania. She helps researchers with their multidisciplinary & multilingual data projects in the form of consultations, collaborations, & conceptual ethical considerations. Her current focus is computational community building efforts on Critical AI Literacy. She makes the most of the tuition benefits at Penn by taking transdisciplinary courses every semester where she manages to weasel in a Digital Humanities project each time. She is currently the cochair for DH24 conference in the service of the DH community that has given her her life's calling and sense of belonging. Jaj adores living in Philadelphia, not least because she refers to herself as a "Librarian by day, Museum care-taker by night" referring to the house built in 1878 with many original details intact, that she calls home.

JAN K. ARGASIŃSKI, PhD - Media theorist and philosopher. Cyberpunk. Occasionally demoscener. Works at the Department of Games Technology of the Faculty of Physics, Astronomy and Applied Computer Science, Jagiellonian University. In his day job he works on the processing of emotions in computer systems (affective computing) and on virtual and augmented reality projects.

- JANE BOYES (they/them) is a settler scholar and PhD candidate in English at Dalhousie University. Their research lies at the intersections of digital literature, Canadian literature, social justice studies, and settler colonial studies.
- JASON BOYD, JEREMY ANDRIANO, PATRICK R. DOLAN, KEVIN GHOUCHANDRA, and CHELSEA RUSSELL make up the Playable Stories: Unarchived podcast team.
- JASON NELSON is a creator of digital poems and fictions, builder of surrealist and politically focused art games and digital creatures. Aside from coaxing his students into breaking, playing and morphing their creativity with all manner of technologies, he exhibits widely in galleries and journals, with work featured around the globe at FILE, ACM, LEA, ISEA, SIGGRAPH, ELO and dozens of other acronyms. There are organizational boards he frequents (Australia Council Literature Board and the Electronic Literature Organization), and Fellowships he's adventured into Fulbright Fellowship at the University of Bergen, Moore Fellowship at the National University of Ireland, and other accolades. But in the web based realm where his work resides, Jason is most proud of the millions of visitors his artwork/digital poetry portal http://www.secrettechnology.com attracts each year.
- JEFF MORRIS, professor and director of the Music Technology Program at Texas A&M University, creates musical experiences that engage audiences' minds with their surroundings. His performances, installations, lectures, and writings appear in international venues known for cutting-edge arts and deep questions in the arts. He has won awards for making art emerge from unusual situations, and his music is on Ravello Records.
- JEFFREY HOLDAWAY is an Auckland based artist and audio engineer who has worked with sound and moving image for over twenty-five years. His work includes location recording, live event audio, producing, mixing and sound design for documentary, feature, short film, music production and theatre. He has directed music video, dance films, made several works for CD and vinyl, and designed sculptural sound installation for several leading NZ artists.
- JEREMY ANDRIANO is an MA candidate in the joint program in Communication and Culture at Toronto Metropolitan University and York University. His research focuses on interactive narrative, electronic literature, procedural authorship, and game studies.
- JESSICA ARIANNE CABRERA RODRIGUEZ, andamio.in
- JOLENE ARMSTRONG is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and English at Athabasca University, artist, photographer, poet, writer, translator, who explores the interactions and oscillations of art and literature and the potential that immersive environments present as critical storytelling mediums. In addition to other exhibitions, most recently "Spelarne" was exhibited at Tartu 2024 European Culture Capital event Transforming Literary Places.
- DR. JOSEPH C. OSBORN is an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Pomona College. His research spans media studies, artificial intelligence, and software verification in the domain of videogame design and development. His current research areas include automatically retrofitting accessibility features onto 1980s-1990s videogames and structured knowledge representations for automated playtesting of adventure and role-playing games.
- JOSEPH TABBI is an American academic and literary theorist who relocated to the University of Bergen in 2019. He has made significant contributions to the field of experimental American fiction in both print and electronic media. He is the author of Cognitive Fictions (2002) and Postmodern Sublime: Technology and American Writing from Mailer to Cyberpunk (1995). He was the first scholar granted access to the William Gaddis archives, and is the author of Nobody Grew but the Business: On the Life and Work of William Gaddis (2015). He edited

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Electronic Literature (2017), and Post-Digital: Dialogues and Debates from electronic book review (2020). He continues to co-edit the scholarly journal electronic book review (ebr), which he founded in the mid-1990s with Mark Amerika. Tabbi is also a founding member and Director of the Consortium on Electronic Literature (CELL). A National Endowment for the Humanities grant (2014) enabled member literary databases worldwide to build a search engine for interoperability. An earlier, startup grant from the NEH, for the development of the Electronic Literature Directory, provided a model for later databases worldwide that are now a part of the Consortium. A "manifesto" for the project can be found at www.cellproject.net.

Judd Morrissey is a writer and code artist who creates poetic systems across a range of platforms incorporating electronic writing, internet art, live performance, and augmented reality. He is a recipient of awards including an Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant, a Fulbright Scholar's Award in Digital Culture, and a Mellon Foundation Collaborative Fellowship for Arts Practice and Scholarship. Judd is currently an Associate Professor and Chair of the Art and Technology / Sound Practices (AT/SP) department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is the co-founder of the performance and technology collective Anatomical Theatres of Mixed Reality (ATOM-r).

JUDITH A. PINTAR, UIUC School of Information Sciences

Ms. Judith Sloan is an actor, audio artist, writer, radio producer, human rights activist, educator and poet whose work combines humor, pathos and a love of the absurd. For over twenty years, Sloan has been producing and presenting interdisciplinary works in audio and theater, portraying voices often ignored by the mass media. Her solo performances and plays have been produced in theatres and festivals throughout the U.S. and abroad including: LaMama E.T.C, The Public Theatre, The Theatre Workshop (Edinburgh), The Smithsonian Institution, the Market Theatre (Johannesburg). She has been featured in the New York Times, the Washington Post, Theatre Week, The London Stage, San Francisco Chronicle, among others. HERE. Her commentaries, plays, poetry and documentaries have aired on NPR, PRI, BBC, and listener-sponsored stations throughout the U.S. Sloan has received awards for her audio mixes, radio documentaries and work with various musicians integrating storytelling, acting, sampling and multiple languages into symphonic pieces, live performance with actors and musicians, and radio. Awards and commissions include a 2022 NYSCA Individual Artist Commissioning Grant, Queens Council on the Arts Commissioning Awards and Individual Artist Awards, NYFA Fellowship in Music and Sound; grants from the Ford, Rockefeller, and Mellon Foundations. She is a member of the adjunct faculty at New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. In 2009, Sloan received the Partnership in Education Award from the International High School at LaGuardia Community College for her ongoing programs for arts-in-education with immigrant and refugee teenagers, Cross-Cultural Dialogue through the Arts and Transforming Trauma Into Art.

Judy Malloy is an electronic literature pioneer. Her work, which has also included information art, artists books, installation, performance, and arts writing, has been exhibited/published Internationally including, among many others, the Library of Congress; Tisch School of the Arts, NYU; the Sao Paulo Biennial; Los Angeles Institute for Contemporary Art; Walker Art Center; Hammer Museum; Universite Paris I-Pantheon-Sorbonne; the Center of Contemporary Art in Barcelona; FILE; Ars Electronica, ISEA; Eastgate Systems; Dutton; The Iowa Review Web; shortlisted for the Biennale Internationale des poetes en Val de Marne Prix poesiemedia; shortlisted for the Electronic Literature Organization's 2018 Robert Coover prize for the year's best work of electronic literature. Malloy teaches in the School of the Art Institute of Chicago Art and Technology Department and has also taught at Princeton University;

The Rutgers Camden Digital Studies Center; and The San Francisco Art Institute. Her books include "Women Art & Technology" and "Social Media Archeology and Poetics" (both published by MIT Press). Recent papers/chapters have been published by Bloomsbury Press, The Digital Review, and Convergence. She had been an artist in residence and consultant in the document of the future at Xerox PARC, and her work is archived at Duke University.

KARI MAAREN is a Lecturer in English at Toronto Metropolitan University. She is interested in medieval literature and monstrosity. She has one published novel and also works with storytelling via music and comics. Her musical improvisation project, in which she uses daily improvisations as a sort of diary, is ongoing.

KATE STEVENSON has moved from dancing on the stage, to hiding behind a camera, to designing multiplayer storyworlds across networks. She is an experienced documentary storyteller, researcher, designer and creative maker especially interested in exploring immersive installations as an intersection of the skills collected across screen, theatre, dance and games. In 2014 she co-founded DOTDOT to focus on building meaningful experiences with with emerging technologies. DOTDOT is an award-winning creative studio focused on generating impact through social and immersive experiences. Exploring the boundaries of technology, art and design, they create spaces that are memorable, playful, interactive and curious. With backgrounds across design, film, gaming, dance and creative technology DOTDOT craft unique experiences to open minds and create positive social impact. With expertise ranging from live performance to museum exhibits to installation art, they create surprising and moving digital event spaces.

KAVI DUVVOORI is a PhD student and computational writer at the University of Waterloo, currently based in Kitchener, Ontario, on the Haldimand tract. They have studied math, literary arts, digital arts and new media, and english. Their interests include experimental and constrained literature, birds, borders and migration, speculative fiction, lists, linguistics, the limits of language, worldbuilding, infrastructural geographies, the search for ways of living that reject hierarchy and domination, sauteing, maps, and evasiveness. They have published a couple small pieces in online publications.

KEDRICK JAMES is a Professor of Teaching at the Department of Language and Literacy Education at University of British Columbia.

DR. KENTON TAYLOR HOWARD is a Lecturer in the Games and Interactive Media program at the University of Central Florida. His first academic book, The World of Fallout, was recently published through Routledge. He recently moderated a roundtable at the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts and gave a workshop alongside Dr. Daniel Cox at the Digital Games Research Association conference.

KIRILL AZERNYI (writer, translator, literary scholar), born in 1990 in Sverdlovsk, USSR. Stories, short stories and poems were published in English (OffCourse Literary Journal, Gone Lawn, Flatbush Review, etc.), and in Russian ("Novyj Mir", "Ural", "Nosorog", etc.).

KRISTINE KELLY is a lecturer in the Writing Program at Case Western Reserve University. She teaches and researches digital literature and interactive storytelling. Her work also focuses on colonial, post-colonial, and contemporary Anglophone literature, especially related to travel and mobility.

KÜBRA AKSAY is a lecturer and Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at the University of Freiburg, Germany. Her doctoral thesis focuses on the objects of recordings within video games, such as in-game diaries. She is an associated member of DiGRA and DAS|LAB (Regensburg), and has been convening the monthly meetings of the colloquium Reading Games in Freiburg since 2019.

KYLE BOOTEN is an assistant professor of English at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. His research explores the ways that small-scale, personalized algorithmic systems may be designed to care for one's own mind. He is the author of Salon des Fantômes (Inside the Castle 2014), a book that documents a philosophical salon he attended with a cast of Alfabricated characters, and the creator of Nightingale, a web extension that re-distracts the user with contextually-relevant excerpts from the poetry of John Keats (available in the Chrome Web Store). His poetry written with algorithmic feedback and interference has been published in Fence, Lana Turner, and Blackbox Manifold; his scholarly writing has recently appeared or is forthcoming in electronic book review, Critical AI, and xCoAx '23.

LAI-TZE FAN is the Canada Research Chair in Technology and Social Change (SSHRC Tier 2) and an Associate Professor of Technology & Social Change in the Department of Sociology & Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo, Canada, cross-appointed in the Department of English Language and Literature. She is also an Associate Professor II (part-time) at the Center for Digital Narrative, University of Bergen, Norway. Her lab is called The U&AI Lab and it is funded by the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. In addition to serving as an Advisory Board member for multiple research and artistic groups, she serves as an Editor and the Director of Communications of electronic book review (media theory and digital literary studies, est. 1995) and Editor of the digital review (born-digital arts and literature).

#### LAURA SANTOS, Universidade da Madeira

DR. LAURA SHACKELFORD is Professor in the English Department and the founding director of the Center for Engaged Storycraft at the Rochester Institute of Technology. She received a B.S. in English from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; an M.A. and a PhD in English with a specialization in Literature and Science from Indiana University, Bloomington; and taught as a post-doctoral researcher in the English Department at Penn State, State College before joining RIT's College of Liberal Arts. Her research examines contemporary fiction, narrative, and emerging digital literary practices with a particular interest in how literary fiction creatively draws from, and reflects on the computational, bioinformatic, and networked knowledges and digital media practices post-World War II information, systems, and bioinformatic sciences introduce. Speculative fiction that experiments with emerging digital media and spatial forms like the network, she finds, reminds us to attend to these socio-cultural and technological transformations with an eye to the possibilities these changing knowledges, scientific practices, and social systems might introduce to the benefit of women, other minoritized groups, as well as to the entangled, nonhuman material life forms with which we share our ecosystems. Her research and writing unfolds in conversation with women's and gender studies and, especially, feminist science studies' explorations into the material technologies, social contexts, and systems of power that shape knowledges and might re-shape knowledges-and the broader social systems they help to co-realize-in important, necessary ways, if thoughtfully diversified and approached more equitably. She is the author of Tactics of the Human: Experimental Technics in American Fiction (2004) and co-editor of Surreal Entanglements: Essays on Jeff VanderMeer's Fiction (2021), and the author of numerous book chapters and journal articles on digital literary and narrative practices that contribute to understanding the potential and limitations of digital cultures, at present. At RIT, she teaches contemporary fiction, speculative fiction, narrative theory, storytelling across media (print fiction, graphic narratives, interactive narrative, digital games, animation, film, photography, digital literary arts), and women's and gender studies courses.

LEONARDO SOLAAS (Argentina) studied Philosophy and is a self-taught creative coder and new media artist. He explores various intersections between art, philosophy and programming, through writing, teaching and artistic production. His work involves generative systems, artificial life, social networks, data visualization and NFTs. He lives and works in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

LYLE SKAINS is an award-winning researcher and creative practitioner in Creative Digital Writing and Science Communication. She conducts practice-based research into writing, reading/playing, publishing digital and transmedia narratives, and how these can be used for health and science communication. Her recent digital fiction includes 'No World 4 Tomorrow' for the You & CO2 project, and 'Only, Always, Never' for the Infectious Storytelling project; both works were designed to effect social change. She is the founder of Wonderbox Publishing, which publishes speculative digital fiction, aiming to explore innovations in digital and online publishing and creativity. She is also the coordinator of the New Media Writing Prize, and an editor of the Electronic Literature Collection, volume 4. Her digital fiction can be found at lyleskains.com; articles in Convergence, Digital Creativity, and Computers and Composition; and books with Cambridge UP (Digital Authorship), Emerald (Using Interactive Digital Narrative for Health and Science Communication) and Bloomsbury (Neverending Stories: The Popular Emergence of Digital Fiction).

MADISON SCHMALZER (she/her) is a media scholar, competitive speedrunner, and glitch artist currently teaching at Ringling College of Art & Design. She holds a Ph.D. in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media from North Carolina State University. Madison's scholarship explores trans media art, emergent play practices like speedrunning, and embodied relationships to technology. Her published work can be found in or is forthcoming at The Journal of Cinema & Media Studies, Game Studies, Animation, Camera Obscura, and The Journal of Games Criticism. You can find her speedrunning Hades, Inscryption, and breaking all manner of media on Twitch as @MadzBrutal.

MARA DIONISIO, Universidade da Madeira, ITI/LARSyS, IST, University of Lisbon

MARGOT MACHADO is a writer, researcher, and multidisciplinary artist from the Canary Islands (Spain) and the United States. Her digital and material pieces and performances tend to be interactive and make use of humor, unease, and soundscapes. Margot's practice-based research explores archive construction, the use of language and sound in generating liminality within narrative digital art experiences, and interactive narratives. Her pieces and performances have been showcased online and in La Noche de los Libros and La Casa Encendida in Madrid, Flipa Gallery in Barcelona, and Phe Festival, Equipo PARA, and Teatro La Granja in Tenerife. Her collaborative piece ""Spinning Walks" was published by Quarterly West last year. During her time in New York City, she co-founded and ran Las Marías (2016-2020) a gender justice education project based on critical pedagogies. She now lives in the island of Tenerife and is pursuing an MA in Contemporary Art, Literature and Culture with a research track at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. Margot's thesis investigates the generational differences in emotional and aesthetic responses to liminal experiences within new media art and digital environments.

MARÍA CAROLINA PÁEZ GUTIERREZ, University of Central Florida

MARÍA JULIA CABAIL, University of Central Florida

MARIANA CHINELLATO FERREIRA is a seasoned professional with expertise in Languages and Literature. In addition, she brings professional academic experience, both in teaching and researching, in the fields of International Literature, Theory of Literature, Digital Literature, Digital Humanities, Academic and Creative Writing, and Communication. She holds a dual undergraduate degree in Social Communication and Modern Languages and Literature, which she earned from the Catholic University of Santos - UniSantos. Furthermore, she has achieved an MSc in Sciences from the University of São Paulo - São Carlos. She is pursuing a doctoral degree from the University of Coimbra, in the Programme of Materialities of Literature. Her research is particularly interested in Creative Generative Systems and

she is engaged in collaborative research with the Centre for Informatics and Systems of the University of Coimbra. Her academic journey reflects her dedication to advancing the boundaries of knowledge in her chosen fields, mainly fostering unusual connections. Currently, she resides in the Netherlands, where she is a Lecturer in English Communication, Academic Writing, and Al. Additionally, she provides coaching and mentorship to first-year international students within the Academy of Built Environment and Logistics at Breda University of Applied Sciences – BUas.

MARIO GUZMAN (Mexico) Al researcher, professor, experimental writer and new media artist. He is a Ph.D. candidate for the University of La Rochelle (Fr) and has a Master's in Technology and Aesthetics of Electronic Arts from UNTREF (Arg). Guzman also holds a Bachelor's in Literature from the University of Buenos Aires. His work explores the link between Latin American representations, code studies, narrative and culture through natural language processing, electronic art, algorithmic poetry, robotics and Machine Learning. Guzman has worked as a Senior Content Developer at Hanson Robotics (HK) and is currently an Interaction Coder at SingularityNET, where he works researching personality development structures for artificial agents. He has received grants for artistic research and innovation projects, including the Argentine Ministry of Culture and the INNOVART Bilateral France-Argentina agreement for Artistic Research and Innovation.

MARIUSZ PISARSKI, PhD, is author of "Xanadu. Hypertextual metamorphosis of fiction" (Kraków, 2013). He has presented digital literacy projects at contemporary art spaces in Paris, Warsaw, Bratislava, Kosice and Vancouver and has translated American digital literature. He also serves as the chief editor of Techsty, a journal on new media and literature, and as creative director for multimedia in Korporacja Halart from Cracow.

MARK C. MARINO is a Professor (Teaching) of Writing at the University of Southern California, where he directs the Humanities and Critical Code Studies Lab where he is a Generative AI Fellow. Since 2008, he has been the Director of Communication of the Electronic Literature Organization (https://eliterature.org). His works include "Living Will," "a show of hands," and "Marginalia in the Library of Babel." He was one of ten co-authors of 10 PRINT CHR\$(205.5+RND(1)); : GOTO 10 (https://10print.org) (2013) and was a collaborator with Jessica Pressman and Jeremy Douglass on Reading Project: A Collaborative Analysis of William Poundstone's Project for Tachistoscope (Bottomless Pit) (I2015). His latest books are Critical Code Studies (2020) and Hallucinate This! an authoritized Autobotography of ChatGPT (2023).

MATTHEW CAMPBELL, Assistant Program Directory for Performance Studies at Texas A&M University, received his PhD in Ethnomusicology from The Ohio State University in 2019. His work addresses issues of embodiment and (re)mediation, with emphasis on gesture, secular trance, amateur recording and creative consumption, simulated performance aesthetics, Icelandic Cold War musical history, and the ethnography of AI chatbot interactions and has been presented at the Society for Ethnomusicology, the American Folklore Society, the British Forum for Ethnomusicology, and Harvard's Annual Conference on Music & Diplomacy.

MATTHEW GIACOVELLI, Rochester Institute of Technology

MAUREEN ENGEL is a Lecturer in Digital Culture at the University of Queensland

DR MERIN SIMI RAJ is an Associate Professor (English) in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras. She is the faculty coordinator of the Centre for Memory Studies and the co-founder and chairperson of the Indian Network for Memory Studies (INMS), the first national network in Asia under the aegis of the international Memory Studies Association (MSA). She is trained in Digital Humanities at the University of Oxford. She received the award for the best PhD thesis from IIT Bombay. She was invited as expert panelist in the recently held Ministry of Human Affairs G20 2023 conference on Crime and Security in the Age of NFTs, AI, and Metaverse. She researches in memory studies, historiography studies, Anglo-Indian studies, and digital humanities. She co-edited the volume Anglo-Indian Identity: Past and Present, in India and the Diaspora (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and is currently co-editing the Brill Indian Handbook for Memory Studies.

MICHAEL HURTADO, a mathematician graduated from the National University of Engineering, is also a technologist, new media artist, and poet. He earned a Master's degree in Applied Mathematics at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru and a diploma in Digital Fabrication at the MIT Center for Bits and Atoms. He works as a professor and researcher in the Department of Architecture at the Peruvian University of Applied Sciences and is co-director of Masmédulab, a laboratory of poetry and new media. Through Masmédulab, he led significant projects such as the "Genealogy of Peruvian Electronic Poetry" and the "Rescue and Remediation of Latin American Electronic Poetry" project. He is a fellow of the FabLearn program at Columbia University, a member of the Electronic Literature Organization and the FabLab network, cofounder of LimaMakers, and editor of volume 2 of the Lit(e)lat anthology. In 2014, he was awarded the VIDA16 prize by the Telefónica Foundation for artificial life projects. In 2018, he gave a TED talk on the relationship between art, science, and technology. His electronic textile works were exhibited at the Rome Fashion Week in 2019, and in 2020, he was honored with the first edition of the Hub Musical Chile award for immersive art projects. His poems have been published in the anthology "Nós da Poesia Vol 08: verbal and visual poems", in the "I Mostra Virtual de Poesia Visual", in the "Revista Bufo" of experimental poetry, in the "TAPER" magazine of electronic literature, and on the illitera website. His electronic poems are part of collections such as the "Electronic Literature Collection vol 4" and the "Cartography of Latin American Digital Literature" by Diego Portales University in Chile.

## MICHEL LEFEBVRE, TOPO

MILTON LÄUFER (Argentina). Writer, journalist and teacher based in Berlin. He has published articles and short stories in Esquire, Vice, Guernica, CIA Magazine and Otra Parte. Has participated in exhibitions in South America, the United States and Europe. He graduated in Philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires, where he taught for six years. He earned an MFA in Creative Writing at New York University, as well as a PhD with a focus on computational literature in Latin America. He was the 2016-2017 writer-in-residence at MIT's Trope Tank. published the novelslagoons(2015, partially generated by algorithms); A Noise Such as a Man Might Make (2018, Counterpath in his collectionUsing Electricity of computer generated books) and Los restos humanos (2021, Suburban Editions). He obtained an honorable mention in the 2018 Paula Benavides digital novel award with his novel El pequeño Platero and was between 2020 and 2022 editor of the digital literature magazine Taper.

MIRIAM SCUDERI is a student assistant researcher at JGU and Master of Arts student in American studies. They hold a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Culture and American studies. Their research interests are split between economic history and digital humanities, with a focus on digital narratology.

MONIQUE TSCHOFEN is Associate Professor of English at Toronto Metropolitan University whose

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scholarly and creative works operate at the intersection of art and philosophy, DH, and electronic literature. Her current scholarly and DH projects read Gertrude Stein through Aristotellian and Cartesian philosophy, and she is creating a digital edition in Scalar.

MUJIE LI is a doctoral graduate of Media and Cultural Studies in the School of Media, Arts & Humanities at the University of Sussex. Recent publications are: 'On Digital Aesthetics: Sense-Data and Atmospheric Language' (Electronic Book Review, 2023), 'Mapping a History of Automatic Writing I: Positional Notation of Media Language' (The Paper, 2023).

OSCAR LÓPEZ, University of Central Florida

DR PIOTR MARECKI - associate professor at the Jagiellonian University. Writer, digital media artist, publisher, translator and digital culture scholar. The head of Halart Publishing House (ha.art.pl) and of UBU lab (ubulab.edu.pl). In 2013-14 he did a postdoc at MIT at the Trope Tank lab. Based in Kraków, Poland.

PATRÍCIA ESTEVES REINA is a Ph.D. Candidate in Materialities of Literature at the University of Coimbra. She is currently finishing her doctoral dissertation for which she was granted an FCT Ph.D. Research Fellowship and a Fulbright Visiting Research Scholarship. She holds a Communication BA with a minor in Editorial Production and an MA in Contemporary Editorial and Typographical Practices. She is mostly interested in the intersection between graphic and literary arts, for which she is especially fascinated by typography. Lately, through a Research Scholarship, she has approached computational textual analysis and visualizations within the scope of the research project "To See the Tree and the Forest. Reading the Poetry of António Ramos Rosa from a Distance" (FCT 2022.08122.PTDC).

PATRICK LICHTY is a multifaceted artist known for his work in various media. Born in Akron, Ohio, in 1962, Lichty's upbringing was immersed in art, and science fiction. His career spans over three decades, during which he has established himself as a media artist, writer, curator, designer, and educator. Lichty's artistic practice primarily focuses on exploring the impact of media on society and individual perception. He has a particular interest in augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), and non-fungible tokens (NFTs). His work critically examines how media culture shapes human perceptions of reality, particularly at the intersection of the virtual and physical worlds. He is especially recognized for his contributions as a principal member of the virtual reality performance art group Second Front and as the animator for the activist group The Yes Men. His diverse skills in digital intermedia include proficiency in printmaking, kinetics, video production, generative music, and neon art. Additionally, Lichty's role as a media ""reality" artist and theorist reflects his deep engagement with how media and mediation influence our understanding of the environment. Apart from his artistic endeavors, Lichty has also made significant contributions as an educator and holds a position at Winona State University. His accolades include being a CalArts/Herb Alpert Fellow and an exhibitor at the Whitney Biennial.

PEDRO CAMPOS, WowSystems, Funchal, Portugal

PIERRE GABRIEL DUMOULIN is a PhD student in semiotics at Université du Québec à Montréal. They specialize in translation practices in video games, with an interest in their ethical dimension. In their thesis, they study the theoretical issues of translation as an ethical object and how it can impact the ability to grasp otherness. A professional translator, Pierre is affiliated with the NT2 Laboratory and the research group Homo Ludens, and works on the executive committee of Kinephanos. Their doctoral thesis is financed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

PRAKRUTI K. BHATT, Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji Bhavnagar University

Professor LEONARDO FLORES is Chair of the English Department at Appalachian State University. His research areas are electronic literature, with a focus on e-poetry, digital writing, and the history and strategic growth of the field. He's known for I ♥ E-Poetry, the Electronic Literature Collection, Volume 3, "Third Generation Electronic Literature" and the Antología Lit(e)Lat, Volume 1. He is a member of the MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Al and Writing. For more information on his current work, visit leonardoflores.net.

RACHEL HORST is a PhD candidate in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. Her research explores creative and digital arts-based methods to investigate technologically saturated meaning-making practices and collaborative digital literacies. Guided by a posthuman onto-epistemological perspective her work cultivates speculative educational futures, writing-as-becoming, and narrative futuring for creating and performing possibility. Her work seeks to map theoretically enriched pathways between literacy scholarship, systems thinking, future literacies research, and sustainability education.

RICHARD A CARTER is an artist and lecturer in Digital Culture at the University of York, UK.

RICHARD SNYDER is an assistant professor of English and Communications at Northwest University and Associate Director of the Electronic Literature Lab, where he also acts as Metadata Specialist for ELO's The NEXT. His most recent publications appear in The New River, Journal of Marlowe Studies, and Taper, while his current project is Engagements in Electronic Literature, forthcoming from Routledge Press

RICKY FINCH is a 2nd-year PhD student in the Text and Technology program at UCF. As a Twine enthusiast, he discovers interesting ways to engage with storytelling through text and code.

ROB WITTIG plays at the crossroads of literature, graphic design and digital culture. A Silicon Valley native, he co-founded the legendary IN.S.OMNIA electronic bulletin board with the Surrealist-style literary and art group Invisible Seattle. From this came a Fulbright grant to study the writing and graphic design of electronic literature with philosopher Jacques Derrida in Paris. Rob's book based on that work, "Invisible Rendezvous," was published Wesleyan University Press. He then embarked on a series of illustrated and designed email and web fictions. Many of his projects are now taught in Electronic Literature curricula in North America and Europe. Alongside his creative projects, Rob has worked in major publishing and graphic design firms in Chicago, leading R&D teams. In 2011 Rob earned an MA in Digital Culture (equivalent to a US MFA) at the University of Bergen, Norway. He taught for decades in the Art & Design and English, Linguistics and Writing Studies departments at the University of Minnesota Duluth. His recent work – netprov – has been in the form of designing and facilitating large-participation, creative, literary collaborations in contemporary platforms. His book Netprov: Networked Improvised Literature for the Classroom and Beyond is available in print and on line from Amherst College Press.

### ROLANDO RODRIGUEZ, andamio.in

Rui Torres is Professor of Communication Sciences at University Fernando Pessoa, Portugal, and an integrated member of the Research Group «Culture, Mediation and Arts» at the NOVA Institute of Communication. He has books, articles and other publications about semiotics, media, and electronic and experimental literature, and is the author of digital poetry. He is the director of the Cibertextualidades book collection (FFP Press) and a coeditor of the Electronic Literature Series (Bloomsbury Publishing). He is a Member of the Board of Directors of ELO – Electronic Literature Organization, and the Coordinator of the Po-Ex.Net - Digital Archive of Portuguese Experimental Poetry. All his works are described and available at telepoesis.net

SAM HUNTER is a PhD candidate in UCLA's Department of Film, Television and Digital Media.

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His current research mobilizes the historical-philosophical genealogy of queer Marxism to consider queer Internet use during the 1990s and 2000s as a utopian phenomenon leading to contradictory outcomes. He is also co-chair of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies's Precarious Labor Organization.

SAMUEL SZONIECKY - After studies in art history (DEA) and professional experience as a computer engineer, project manager and business company founder, I turned to research and teaching. Since 2006, I have been exploring new knowledge engineering methods for the development of collective intelligence, focused on stimulating, expressing and sharing individual intelligence. In parallel with theoretical research into the epistemological limits of symbolic languages and their possible overcoming through the use of analogical languages, I approach the question of socio-semantic cartographies with reference to philosophical, anthropological and information and communication science work. The aim is to lay the foundations for an interdisciplinary knowledge ecosystem dedicated to the development of digital humanities through the generic modeling of informational existences.

SAMYA BRATA ROY (he/him) is a PhD scholar at the School of Liberal Arts, IIT Jodhpur. He is associated as a Fellow with Digital Humanities Research Hub (School of Advanced Study, University of London), Electronic Literature Organization and DAS|LAB (University of Regensburg). His interests and publications lie in and around Visual Culture, Electronic Literature, Videogame Studies and Digital Humanities. He has curated/peer-reviewed both digital/electronic art exhibits and scholarly outputs. He co-founded Electronic Literature India and his other roles include being a member of the Intersectional Inclusion Task Force with the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organisations, Technical Advisory Member with Humanities Commons, a Governing body member with Digital Humanities Alliance for Research and Teaching Innovations and a liaison with The Association for Computers and the Humanities.

SARAH BRICKE is a transdisciplinary artist, writer, and researcher. She is primarily concerned with the ways in which seemingly disparate landscapes, bodies, and processes are both distinct and inextricably linked, and how these paradoxical relationships are represented, perceived, and preserved through institutional and archival practices. She is interested in radical processes of rethinking, re-embodying, and re-imagining. Working through performative lecture, photographic processes, critical theory, and electronic literature, bricke engages in the production of text and images as a mechanism to facilitate dialogues: she is involved with making as a continual process in which things don't become fully defined and can't be considered completely understood or fully realized.

SARAH WHITCOMB LAIOLA is an assistant professor of Digital Culture and Design at Coastal Carolina University. Her most recent publications appear in Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy, Hyperrhiz, and Criticism. She is the co-founder and managing editor of Filter, an Instagram-based venue for electronic literature and textual art.

SEBASTIAN R. RICHTER is currently working as a graduate research assistant on DIMAS with Astrid Ensslin at the University of Regensburg. His PhD-thesis deals with coping strategies of failure in video games and existentialism. He is an associated researcher for DAS|LAB in Regensburg. In addition he experiments with digital theater as a music theater director.

Shanmugapriya T is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines) Dhanbad. She was a Digital Humanities Postdoctoral Scholar at the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Toronto Scarborough. Shanmu was an AHRC Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Department of History at Lancaster University. She earned her PhD in Indian English Literature and Digital Humanities from the Indian Institute of Technology Indore. Her

research and teaching focus on digital humanities, digital environmental humanities and digital literature.

SILVERIO PENOTH, University of Central Florida

SIMON BIGGS (b.1957) is a media artist, writer and curator working in digital poetics, interactive environments and interdisciplinary research. His work has been widely presented, including Tate, National Film Theatre, ICA London, FACT Liverpool, Ikon Birmingham, Pompidou, Academy de Kunste Berlin, Maxxi Rome, Macau Arts Museum, Walker Art Center, San Francisco Cameraworks, Total Seoul, Art Gallery of New South Wales and Adelaide and Edinburgh Festivals. He has spoken at numerous conferences and universities, including ISEA, ePoetry, SLSA, ELO, and Cambridge, Brown, Cornell, UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara, Paris-8, Sorbonne and Bergen Universities. Publications include Remediating the Social (ed, 2012), Autopoeisis (with James Leach, 2004), Great Wall of China (1999), Halo (1998), Magnet (1997), Book of Shadows (1996). He is Adjunct Research Professor at the University of South Australia.

SIOBHAN O'FLYNN is Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, and Interim Director, Canadian Studies Program, University College, University of Toronto. Recent projects explore the expressive and unruly potential of AI image and text generators for elegy, memory, and recursive storytelling (a Twine visual novel Infinity +1 and Infinite Eddies) at the British Library MixConference 2023), and speculative critical design as a provocation to interrogate the logics of the hetero-patriarchal, petro-capitalist technochauvinism. She is a member of the Decameron Collective, exhibiting the VR experience, Memory Eternal (ELO 2023) and Decameron 2.0 (ELO 2022). Project website: E-Mote AI. She has consulted on digital, interactive, participatory, transmedia, augmented reality and virtual reality storytelling via her company NarrativeNow for over 20 years, and she is the co-creator with Anthea Foyer of the online site, TMCResourceKit.com, a resource for Canadian producers moving into the digital sphere. Recent projects in interactive storytelling include experiments with Midjourney, DALL-E, ChatGPT and HaloAR. Older projects with geolocative heritage projects include, Kensington Market: Hidden Histories, an interactive map and augmented reality app that reveals the layered history of key locations in the market. This collaborative class project received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Youth Achievement from the Ontario Heritage Trust in 2017, as did Hidden Histories: Labour to Lofts launched September 2019. Her current research and publishing focuses on artificial (un)intelligence and artificial intimacy, children's data privacy and online safety, the need for strengthened legislation in Canada.

STELLA WISDOM is Digital Curator for Contemporary British Collections at the British Library, their research interests explore innovative and creative re-use of digitised archives, and the curation of born digital collections including emerging formats. Stella co-curated the British Library's 2023 Digital Storytelling exhibition, which showcased electronic literature and interactive narratives. Collaboration is at the heart of Stella's work, in recent years they have partnered with Bath Spa University's Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries, the New Media Writing Prize, University College London's Institute of Education and Lancaster University's Literaft initiative, which builds immersive virtual literary environments in Minecraft.

STUART MOULTHROP is a digital artist, writer, and critic known for work with hypertext fiction in the 80s and 90s and more recently with Twine. Lately he has been thinking and making with Al image models. He served on the ELO board from 2008-2018 and hosted the 2014 conference. Moulthrop is Distinguished Professor (and beginning in July, Chair) of English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he is co-PI of the Digital Cultures Collaboratory.

# **2024 ELO (Un)Linked Conference Proceedings**

His books, both collaborations, include \_Traversals\_, with Dene Grigar (2017), and \_Twining\_, with Anastasia Salter (2021). Salter and Moulthrop are co-editors of "Electronic Communities of Making," a book series from Amherst College Press.

Suzanne V. Rigdon, George Mason University

TEGAN PYKE is a PhD candidate in Digital Culture at the University of Bergen, Norway. Her research lies in the realm of digital literature, focusing on its design, archival, canonisation, and the differences between institutional versus community practice, with a particular interest in collaborative and emergent narratives. In 2021, she worked with the British Library formulating a quality assurance process for the New Media Writing Prize archival collection.

TERHI MARTTILA is a Finnish artist and researcher who appropriates programming, language and voice to make things that meander at their crossroads. She works predominantly in the digital realm, creating works that exist as web pages. Terhi is based in Portugal and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Interactive Technologies Institute (eGames lab). Her work has been published in the Electronic Literature Collection 4, taper#11, The New River, nokturno.fi and raum.pt as well as at various academic conferences.

THE TIME TRAVEL AGENCY operates under the cover of a speculative design and innovation studio in the Nordics, the Americas, and online. We challenge a lack of optimistic futures, of vision, of other worlds. Then, we make those worlds to feel what it's like to affect them. (And work from the assumption that we are going to make it). Working against a view that the future is singular and binary (i.e. utopic or dystopic), we elevate the work of our travelers, who sustain that the futures are plural; that they exist in a spectrum; and that possible, optimistic futures start by imagining them in safe, explorative, experimental spaces. 100% guarantee that you'll invent a future or we give you your time back!

Tuuli Hongisto is a PhD student majoring in comparative literature at the University of Helsinki. She graduated from the University of Helsinki in 2020 with comparative literature as her major (thesis topic: "Essential narrative features in story generating algorithms"). Her PhD project focuses on the topic of reader- and authorship of computer-generated texts.

VERÓNICA PAULA GÓMEZ holds a Ph.D. in Humanities (Mention in Literature) (Universidad Nacional del Litoral), a Master's degree in Comparative Literatures (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba) and a Bachelor in Modern Literature (Universidad de Buenos Aires). She is Professor at the Laboratory of Expanded Writings and New Technologies (UASB, Ecuador). She lives in Berlin and is carrying out his postdoctoral project: ""Migrant Cartography of Latin American Electronic Literature: Corporalities, Corporations, and Corpus between Global North and Global South" (Georg Forster Research Fellowship Programme for Postdocs supported by Alexander von Humboldt Foundation June 2024- May 2026)". Member of LiteLat (http://litelat.net/). Erasmus Mundus+ICM Fellow (Universitá Ca'Foscari UNIVE / Venice-Italy, 2018), DAAD-Short-Term Grants Fellow (2019) and DAAD RSUA&S Fellow (2020-2021) (Universität Frankfurt / Germany), Postdoctoral Fellow CONICET (2021-2024).

VINÍCIUS CARVALHO PEREIRA holds a Phd and Master degrees in Literary Studies - Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). He is also a bachelor in Portuguese and English and in Portuguese and English Education - Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Professor at the Modern Languages Department and at the Graduate Program in Language Studies of the Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT). Former post-doctoral internship at the University of Nottingham (UoN), in the UK. Leader of the research group SEMIC - Semióticas Contemporâneas. Currently Coordinator of Postgraduate Studies at UFMT.

MR. WARREN LEHRER is a NY-based writer and designer known internationally as a pioneer of visual literature and design authorship. His work is acclaimed for its marriage of writing and typography, capturing the shape of thought and speech and reuniting oral and pictorial traditions of storytelling in books, animations, interactive media, and performance. Honors include Ladislav Sutnar Lifetime Achievement Prize, Center for Book Arts Honoree, The Brendan Gill Prize, the Innovative Use of Archives Award, the International Book Award for Best New Fiction, three AIGA Book Awards, and fellowships and grants the National Endowment for the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, Rockefeller, Ford, and Greenwall Foundations. His books are in many collections including MoMA, The Getty Museum, Georges Pompidou Centre, and Tate Gallery. Lehrer is a founding faculty member of the Designer As Author/Entrepreneur MFA program at the School of Visual Arts, Professor Emeritus at SUNY Purchase, and co-founder of EarSay, a non-profit arts organization in Queens, NY.

WILL LUERS is a digital artist, writer, and educator specializing in recombinant, computational, and AI cinema arts. His work and collaborations have garnered international recognition and been featured in festivals and conferences such as the Electronic Literature Organization, FILE(Brazil), and ISEA. "novelling," a generative work made in collaboration with poet Hazel Smith and sound artist Roger Dean, won the 2018 Robert Coover Award for Electronic Literature. Luers holds an MFA in Film from Columbia University and has taught cinema history, theory and practice for over 20 years. He has maintained a particular research interest in web-based video and has published numerous essays about evolving forms of digital cinema. He was awarded Best Screenplay at the 2005 Nantucket Film Festival, and in 2010, a fellowship at the Vectors-NEH Summer Institute for the development of his database video documentary, "The Father Divine Project." Luers teaches web development, digital cinema and multimodal publishing in the Creative Media & Digital Culture program at Washington State University Vancouver. He is the founder of the international online journal, The Digital Review, and will edit its 2024 issue on Al creativity. Luers is also the current Managing Editor at the electronic book review.

YINGZI (KATHRYN) KONG, University of Central Florida

YOLANDA DE GREGORIO ROBLEDO, PhD. Researcher and lecturer at the University of Cadiz. Her main areas of interest are Electronic Literature, Narrative, Women's Studies and Theory of Literature.

YUYA TAKEDA is a Sessional Lecturer at University of British Columbia and University Canada West.

ZACH WHALEN is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Digital Studies at the University of Mary Washington. His research has involved many facets digital media and culture, including video games, electronic literature, and computational creativity. His current book project is analyzing the history and meaning of computer-generated literary and artistic books.

# ROBERT COOVER AWORK OF ALECTRONIC LITERATURE

# Winner: Borderline by Halim Madi

Borderline offers a mediated experience of wading through the red tape, inanity, and xenophobic-induced prejudice that comprise any international border crossing. Questions float about the screen, asking whether you are a terrorist, whether you are carrying weapons of mass destruction, while checkboxes for "No" scurry behind them like mice avoiding the light. To continue the crossing, readers must hunt down and select each checkbox (because any other answer than "no" is infeasible), only to be faced with more digitally interpreted hoops through which to jump, one after the other, in order to be declared human enough to occupy another nation's space. The work makes use of the simple web interface to mimic the feelings of frustration, exasperation, anxiety and often fear that accompany strangers to strange lands, as a faceless and fathomless entity with many moving parts and little empathy seeks to judge their worth. It is a remarkable example of how electronic literature can perform as an emotional and experiential conduit between people.

As judges we felt that this piece exhibited admirable care and restraint. Each interactive element was perfectly deployed in service of its subject matter - distilling the complex and intersecting mechanics of capitalism, bureaucracy, and border control into their purest forms. The final screen is a brutal punchline: having followed each alienating instruction, the reader is met with a 299 day countdown until their documents arrive. The green background - used elsewhere in the work to mark 'success' - makes it cut all the deeper. We loved this invitation to sit with our frustration: Borderline is the rare work that builds space for the reader within it, in stark contrast to the immigration systems it portrays.

# Runner Up: Seeing by Margot Machado

Seeing is a multicursal tale that seeks to up-end the dominance of the masculine gaze by helping the reader experience gendered perception. The reversal is accomplished through both gendered characters and textual mode rather than visual, thoroughly feminizing the perspective. It is a work deeply concerned with embodiment, charting the sociocultural boundaries where bodies become flesh become meat.

A viscerally sensual description of a woman preparing food shifts and warps across multiple playthroughs: does your eye linger on her curves? On the lurid red of meat? On the way she moves across the room? We loved the tight scope of this piece; it holds a single moment up to the light and carefully examines each emotionally-taut facet, never quite letting the reader off the hook. A work of this nature could very easily have become overly puritanical or judgemental, but Machado avoids this trap with ease. What has been delivered is a subtle, moving, at times uneasy exploration of connection, consumption, and all things inbetween.

### **Honourable Mentions:**

- Exocolony by Lee Tusman
- Unboxing: Mrs. Wobbles and the Tangerine House by the Marino family
- VideoDreams by Fernando Montes Vera

# Coover Judges: Lyle Skains Florence Walker Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang

The Robert Coover Award for a Work of Electronic Literature is an award given for the best work of electronic literature of any length or genre. Bestowed by the Electronic Literature Organization and funded through a generous donation from supporters and members of the ELO, this annual prize aims to recognize creative excellence. The Prize for 1st Place comes with a \$1000 award, with a plaque showing the name of the winner and an acknowledgement of the achievement, and a one-year membership in the Electronic Literature Organization at the Associate Level. One prize for Honorable Mention is awarded and consists of a plaque showing the name of the winner and an acknowledgement of the achievement, and a one-year membership in the Electronic Literature Organization at the Associate Level.

# N. KATHERINE HAYLESAWARD

# FOR CRITICISM OF ELECTRONIC LITERATURE

<u>Winner: Artificial and Post-Artificial Texts: On Machine Learning and the Reading Expectations Towards Literary and Non-Literary Writing, by Hannes Bajohr</u>

This is a rich, convincingly argued essay addressing an important shift in textuality that has yet to be conceptualized properly. An increasing number of scholars have intuited the effects that natural language processing (NLP) is having on text, literature, and on practices of reading and writing; this essay "delves" (as ChatGPT would suggest in mid-2024) into this area of literary theory and articulates a groundbreaking framework through the concept of "post-artificial texts". The jurors have particularly appreciated this essay's grounding in philosophy, linguistic and literary theory, as well as its combination of concept-building with examples from electronic literature (or digital literature at large). The essay's central concern is the construction of the literary through reader expectations, which shift according to perceptions of text and context - for example, the disappointment felt upon discovering that a Twitter bot is human-authored. Bajohr's careful parsing of the algorithmic processes that are becoming profoundly entangled with textuality, alongside his comprehensive overview of philosophical, linguistic and literary theories related to the increasingly blurred distinction between machinic or humanistic texts, come together into a fascinating and foundational essay.

# Runner-up: Machine Mimesis: Electronic Literature at the Intersection of Human and Computer Imitation, by Malthe Stavning Erslev

Erslev's doctoral dissertation approaches technologies of contemporary relevance (natural language processing or NLP, and large language models or LLMs) from an original and thought-provoking perspective: that of emulation, imitation or mimicry. The author excavates a genealogy of this thesis's key concept - machine mimesis - from the history of artificial intelligence, arguing that mimesis is a central aspect of machine learning in both its implementation and critique. Drawing upon a wide range of scholarly sources and analyzing a variety of works in electronic literature, Erslev emphasizes the practical, poetic and prototypical implications of machine mimesis, foregrounding relevant case studies and articulating this concept as both a theoretical and epistemological contribution to an interdisciplinary field of inquiry. This dissertation is a substantive and promising work that teases out the implications of machine mimesis by building on the work of cutting edge thinkers and practitioners while pushing forward critical engagement with technologies of linguistic and literary production.

#### Honorable mentions:

• Alessandro Ludovico: Tactical Publishing: Using Senses, Software, and Archives in the Twenty-First Century.

Alessandro Ludovico's Tactical Publishing: Using Senses Software, and Archives in the Twenty-First Centuryis a fascinating timely study on the technological and cultural shifts in independent publishing, disrupted by literary machines and post-truth broadcasting media. Wide-ranging in historical context, scope of media forms and the inclusion of annotated list of 100 experiments of publishing for the twenty-first century, this work is an essential text for scholars and practitioners in the field.

 Simone Murray: "The Short Story in the Age of the Internet." The Cambridge Companion to the American Short Story. Eds. Michael Collins and Gavin Jones. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP. 97-113.

Simone Murray's essay "The Short Story in the Age of the Internet" is an illuminating retrospective on born-digital or digital-first short stories, interweaving accounts of earlier forms (Twitterature, Flash Fiction, Microserialization) and platforms (Twitter, Wattpad and Storyspace) with featured discussions of Teju Cole's Small Fates and Jennifer Egan's "Black Box." Murray's analysis of these works in their contemporary instantiation and historical contexts provides scholars and students an invaluable record of these inherently ephemeral born-digital works.

# Hayles Judges: Siobhan O'Flynn Jessica Pressman Gabriele de Seta

The N. Katherine Hayles Award for Criticism of Electronic Literature is an award given for the best work of criticism, of any length, on the topic of electronic literature. Bestowed by the Electronic Literature Organization and funded through a generous donation from N. Katherine Hayles and others, this annual prize recognizes excellence in the field. The Prize for 1st Place comes with a \$1000 award, with a plaque showing the name of the winner and an acknowledgement of the achievement, and a one-year membership in the Electronic Literature Organization at the Associate Level. One prize for Honorable Mention is awarded and consists of a plaque showing the name of the winner and an acknowledgement of the achievement, and a one-year membership in the Electronic Literature Organization at the Associate Level.

# MAVERICK AWARD

# Winner: Allison Parrish

As a computer programmer, poet, and game designer, Allison Parrish has led the way in bots and bytes for electronic literature. She has straddled both print and electronic literature worlds, with both criticism and creative work. She focuses on machine learning and neural networks to relate to gender, sexuality, cultural specificity. Furthermore, her works are clearly poetic, beautiful and readable. In this sense her work is highly original and innovative. According to Ars Technica, Allison's work "delight[s] everyone." She was named "Best Maker of Poetry Bots" by the Village Voice in 2016, and her zine of computer-generated poems called "Compasses" received an honorary mention in the 2021 Prix Ars Electronica. Allison is the co-creator of the board game Rewordable (Clarkson Potter, 2017) and author of several books, including @Everyword: The Book (Instar, 2015) and Articulations (Counterpath, 2018). Her poetry has recently appeared in BOMB Magazine and Strange Horizons.

This independent spirit blends bots, zines, and books--showing a Maverick spirit. Her work paved the way for other works, as @everyword, a twitter bot from 2007-2014 which tweeted a word every half hour and then posted the social media analytics for that word instead of a definition, paved the way for other twitter bots that ran through a database (such as tweeting Finnegan's Wake or descriptions of ER visits). As a Maverick, she excels in coming up with something different. As she puts it "@everyword is nothing if not running into (and through) the language of others. I think that—in part—I write with procedures not because I'm trying to silence myself, but because, as a trans woman, conventional language wasn't made with my voice in mind. I had to come up with something different." Parrish Everyword, page xiv.

In short, I will let Allison speak for herself about her connecting backgrounds from computation and language in her interview from Esoteric.Codes: "I'm unusual because I'm focused on language, like that's my gimmick at ITP is that I'm the person who's interested in poetry, right – versus when I talk to people in literature – and I don't have a background in literature, I don't have an English PhD, I don't have a poetry MFA or anything like that, so I'm very much an outsider in that scene. And there are many people who have very generously welcomed me. But there I'm an outsider because I'm interested in computation, right? So it's like, on either side, nobody is really understanding what I'm saying. And I'm notable for opposite things in those two areas."

# Maverick Judges: Talan Memmott Deena Larsen Chris Funhouser Erik Zepka

The Maverick Award honors an independent spirit: a writer, artist, researcher, programmer, designer, performer, or hybrid creator who does not adhere to a conventional path but creates their own and in so doing makes a singular contribution to the field of electronic literature.

# MARJORIE C. LUESEBRINK CAREER AWARD

# Winner: Dene Grigar

The Luesebrink Lifetime Achievement Awards presents an educational opportunity for the field, including for newcomers and long-time community members, to reflect that the purpose of a lifetime achievement award is to honour the history of the field of electronic literature and the contributions that the award winner has made to that history. For 2024, we have chosen Professor Dene Grigar (Washington State University Vancouver), for the numerous contributions that she has made to the field. To that end, we have invited 8 community members to celebrate Dene's achievements with video statements that will be shared.

#### Luesebrink Judges: Stephanie Strickland Maria Engberg Lai-Tze Fan

The Marjorie C. Luesebrink Career Achievement Award honors a visionary artist and/or scholar who has brought excellence to the field of electronic literature and has inspired others to help create and build the field. Bestowed by the Electronic Literature Organization and funded through a generous donation, it comes with a \$1000 award that can go directly to the awardee or to a young scholar who would use the funds in support of developing content for online sources about the awardee's achievements; a plaque showing the name of the winner and an acknowledgement of the achievement; and a one-year membership in the Electronic Literature Organization at the Associate Level.

# 2024 AWARDS COORDINATORS: **JASON NELSON & ALINTA KRAUTH**

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