

Literature, Culture and Media
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Lecture – 52
Literature, Internet and Culture

Welcome dear friends. In this module, we shall discuss the interconnections which exist between and amongst literature Internet and digitalisation and the cultural products. We find that in the 21st century, there is a certain precariousness which is associated with literary fiction. There have been tremendous changes and developments in technology in the current century and that is why we find that there are dramatic shifts and changes in the market as well as in the marketability of different cultural products and attainment goods as well as products of literature.

The literary habits as well as tastes and preferences are also changing. We find that gradually preference for the print medium is diminishing and the reading habits of the people in terms of the time they are able to devote in reading a book and at the same time, the medium through which they prefer to read things are also changing. At the same time, we find that the preferences of the reading public are changing.

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Literary Fiction in the 21st Century

- Precarity of literary fiction in the 21st Century
 - Changes in technology
 - Dramatic shifts in the market for cultural products, entertainment goods
 - Changing literary taste and reading habits
 - Rapidly evolving preferences
- Position of literary fiction
 - Sales of literary fiction (in printed forms) have decreased in the past decade
 - Making a career from book sales alone is not tenable for most writers
 - Price of literary fiction texts have decreased over the past 15 years



If we look at the position of literary fiction in this context, we find that the printed copies sell less, there is a decrease in the sales of literary fiction in the printed volumes of the literary fiction

in the past decade and these are the sales records of almost every country. So we find that for many writers it is not a tenable option anymore to make a career simply by writing fiction. The price of literary fiction has decreased over the past 15 years and the profit margins are also dwindling.

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- Publishers receive less money from the sale of each copy
- Emergence and popularity of ebook formats: made up for the fall in print sales in the book market;
- Sale of genre, commercial and popular fiction dominates the ebook market
- Institution of large prizes have become important for sustaining literary fiction
- fall in advances for most writers
- Writing and publication of literary fiction dominated by 'insider networks'; difficult for new writers to enter this elite market
- Not-for-profit support for literary writing is insufficient

(Courtesy: Literature in the 21st Century: Understanding Models of Support for Literary Fiction, Arts Council England)



As a result of it, we find that publishers also receive less money from the sale of each copy. So emergence and popularity of e-book format is one of the major reasons of the decrease in sales of the printed copies of literary works, the fall in print sales in the book market is directly connected with the availability of e-literature on various platforms now.

In these e-book markets also, we find that certain type of books have better saleability, for example, the commercial and popular fiction sells more in comparison to serious books. Therefore we find that various large prizes have been commissioned and institutionalised to sustain the journals of literary fiction. Even though, there are several established writers who are still able to get attractive advances, but in general we find that the level of advances and the amount which is involved in advances is decreasing for most of the writers.

So we find that whereas these changes are taking place in the preferences of the reading public, the writing and publication of literary fiction has also come to be dominated by what is termed as the insider networks and it is very difficult for new writers to create a niche for them in this elite

market. Therefore, we find that not-for-profit support which is there for publication of a literary text is insufficient for most of the writers and depending on literature production as a career is not considered to be a viable option anymore.

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- Stating that literature has always been a contested category, Thom Swiss – to begin his argument in “Electronic Literature: What Is It?” (2007) – borrows a quote Joseph Tabbi has employed from Don DeLillo for the epigraph to his essay:
 - “You didn't see the thing because you didn't know how to look. And you don't know how to look because you don't know the names.”
- DeLillo's words contextualize Tabbi's concerns for defining the possibility and conditions of literature's persistence in digital environments
- History of literature in the last fifty years or so is entwined with the development of digital computers

It is pertinent here to refer to a work by Thom Swiss who has written a book “Electronic Literature: What Is It?” in 2007. This particular book brings our attention to various changes which are taking place in the field of literature, its publication as well as consumption after the introduction of digital technologies. He has stated that literature as such has always been a contested category, there always have been debates about what constitutes literature and how it should be appreciated and what should be the critical paradigms associated with it.

He has borrowed a quote which has been initially employed by Joseph Tabbi; Joseph Tabbi has taken an excerpt from one of the books of Don DeLillo for the epigraph to his essay and the quote is, “you did not see the thing because you did not know how to look. And you do not know how to look because you do not know the names”. So, the nomenclature is also important and in a way we can say that DeLillo's words contextualise Tabbi's concern for defining the possibility and conditions of literature's persistence in those environments which have come to be dominated by digital revolution.

We can safely say that history of literature in the preceding 50 years has been entwined with the development of digital computers in various formats.

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- Significant overlap with the print traditions
- practices, texts, procedures, and processual nature of electronic literature require new critical models and new ways of playing and interpreting the works.

Questions

- Is electronic literature really literature?
- Is the dissemination of literature through internet resulting in a "flood of useless drive"? (Tom Swiss)
- Is literary quality possible in digital media environment marked by easy and immediate participation and circulation?



When we talk about e- literature, e-fiction, e-poetry etc., we find that still there are significant overlaps with the traditions of the print medium. The practices, text, procedures of electronic literature at the same time, requires new critical modes and new ways of playing and interpreting the works because even though, the significant overlap exists we find that the print traditions alone in themselves are not enough to look at e- literature.

The questions which we normally have to face when we try to define e- literature are several for example, one of the major questions which is often asked is; whether electronic literature is really literature? Is the dissemination of literature through Internet resulting in what Tom Swiss calls as flood of useless drive? Is literary quality possible in digital media environment which is marked by easy and immediate participation and circulation?

So, these are certain questions which face us when we have to look at possibilities of looking at e- literature as a continuation of literature in print medium.

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- Despite overlaps with print traditions, these questions cannot be answered by using the lens of print only
- Divergences are also equally important
- Katherine Hayles says that electronic literature can be understood as “both partaking of literary tradition and introducing crucial transformations that redefine what literature is”
- Nature of computers is changing and literary community is using these capabilities
- Readers still carry the expectations they had from print – conventions and literary genres.
- Electronic literature must build on these expectations, even as it modifies and transforms them



Despite overlaps with print traditions, we find that these questions cannot be answered simply by looking at the traditions which were prevalent during the days of literary criticism in print media. The lens of print would be insufficient for it, so we have to look at the divergences because these divergences are equally important. It is pertinent here at this point to refer to another critic. Katherine Hayles has said that electronic literature can be understood as both partaking of literary tradition and introducing crucial transformations that redefine what literature is.

So, Hayles has brought our attention to the fact that the tradition is continuing but the transformations that have taken place within literary genres there have been crucial transformations in it and we now have to redefine what literature is. So both these aspects are equally significant. At the same time, we find that the nature of computers is also changing at a very quick pace and literary community is learning to use these capabilities to its advantage.

Majority of the readers is still carry the expectations they had from the print days. They still remember the conventions which were associated with appreciation of literature through print as well as their expectations from different literary genres are also still defined by their habits of the print medium except for the generation, which has been born and brought up in the 21st century, we find that the reader's expectations are still dominated by the expectations from the print medium.

So, electronic literature cannot ignore these expectations, electronic medium has to accept these expectations build on them, even as it learns to modify them transform them, change them and establish its own norms.

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- Simultaneously – as it works in a context of networked and programmable media, it is informed by the “powerhouse of contemporary culture”:
 - Computer games, films, animations, digital arts, graphic design, and electronic visual culture.
- Electronic literature is a "hopeful monster" composed of parts taken from diverse traditions that may not always fit neatly together.
- It is hybrid by nature, comprising of a trading zone (as Peter Galison calls it in a different context) in which different vocabularies, expertises and expectations come together
- Electronic literature tests the boundaries of the literary and challenges us to re-think our assumptions of what literature can do and be.



Simultaneously, we find that the electronic literature works in a context of network and programmable media and it is also informed by the powerhouse of contemporary culture. And when we look at the contemporary culture, we find that it incorporates so many diversities for example, computer games, films, animations, digital arts, graphic design and electronic visual culture as well as all the existing traditional parts of literary and cultural productions are available to us.

So, there is a powerhouse of contemporary culture that is why electronic literature has sometimes been termed as a “hopeful monster”, it is composed of parts taken from diverse traditions that may not always fit together and therefore it is ‘hybrid’ by nature, so it comprises of a trading zone in which different vocabularies, different types of expertise and different expectations come together.

We can say that the electronic literature test the boundaries of the literature of the literary production and challenges us to rethink our assumptions what literature is, what it can do and what it can be.

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Electronic Literature

- “Digital born” work of literature
- “A first generation digital object created on a computer and (usually) meant to be read on a computer” (Hayles 3).
 - Computer includes any computing device; smart phones, tablets, e-readers
- “Work with an important literary aspect that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer.” (The Electronic Literature Organization)
- Origins go back to late 1950s: Théo Lutz’s 1959 computer generated poem, called “Stochastische Texte”
- Commercially available since the 1990s with works published by Eastgate Systems

It is relatively difficult to define electronic literature. However, we can say that this is the digital born work of literature which can be given the name of electronic literature. It has been defined as a first generation digital object created on a computer and usually meant to be read on a computer and computer is any type of computing device, it can be a laptop or a desktop or a smart phone or a tablet or any other medium for e-readers.

So, it has to be created on a computer and it should normally be read on a computer screen only, it works with an important literary aspect that takes advantage of the capabilities and contacts provided by this standalone or networked computers. The origins of this type of a literature go back to 1950s, in 1959, Theo Lutz had generated a poem using the computers. Commercially, it has been available since the 1990s with works which are published by the Eastgate Systems.

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- Excludes printed works of art which are digitized for preservation and dissemination; hence the importance of the notion of 'digital born'
- Emergence and evolution linked to innovations and experimentations with different art forms like literature, visual art, performance, cinema
- Influenced by code and computer science platforms
- A hybrid art form: "requires its readers to utilize various sensory modalities, such as sight, sound, touch, movement, when experiencing it"
 - E.g. Music is not associated with a print text, but one becomes used to it while accessing web-based works.

So, electronic literature excludes those works of art which are in printed form and which have been digitalised for preservation and dissemination. And therefore, the idea of digital born is important because the electronic literature normally includes those works which are basically written on computer and are being read on a computer screen only. The emergence and evolution of electronic literature is linked to innovations and experimentations with different art forms including literature, dance performance, visual arts, cinema etc.

At the same time, it is influenced by the codes of computers as well as by the facilities and restrictions imposed by different computer science platforms. It is a hybrid form no doubt it requires its readers to utilise various sensory modalities for example, the sight, sound, touch, movement etc., while experiencing it. A very interesting example can be giving over here for example; in a printed text we find that music is never associated with it.

It can be described, musical notes can be described but the reader cannot actually hear the music in the background however, one becomes used to listening to musical notes while accessing web based works.

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- Many genres within electronic literature: hypertext fiction and poetry, interactive fiction and drama , kinetic poetry, generative text
 - Michael Joyce's *afternoon: a story*, Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*
- 'Key to understanding electronic literature is the construction of the genre's name—that is, a mechanic feature complementing a traditional literary genre, i.e. hypertext *and* poetry, kinetic *and* poetry, interactive *and* drama.'
 - Function and form are made apparent in a way that we fail to notice in traditional print forms
- Works written in 'Storyspace'
 - The hypertext authoring program first created by Michael Joyce, Jay David Bolter, and John B. Smith and then licensed to Mark Bernstein of Eastgate Systems, who has improved and maintained it.
 - Works created in it have come to be known as the Storyspace school



When we talk about electronic literature, we find that there are several genres which are covered under this loose heading. There are hypertext fiction and poetry, interactive fiction and drama, kinetic poetry, generative text etc. Certain examples may also be quoted over here for example, Michael Joyce *afternoon a story*, Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*.

A key to understanding electronic literature is the construction of the name of the genre, so it is not simply poetry but it is hypertext and poetry, it is kinetic and poetry, it is interactive and drama, so we find that a traditional literary genre is always preceded by a mechanical feature which complements it. So function and form are made apparent in the way that we fail to notice in traditional print forms.

At the same time, we find that the role of different programs is also to be noted in a significant manner, there were several works which were written in a story space, that was the hypertext authoring program, it was first created by Michael Joyce, Jay David Bolter and John B. Smith and later on it was licensed to Mark Bernstein of Eastgate Systems who has improved it and maintained it.

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- Limitations of 'Storyspace' – could not handle sound files and had limited color options
- A primary Web authoring tool, it still continues to be used to produce new works
- As the World Wide Web developed, new authoring programs and methods of dissemination became available
- Electronic literature renews the centrality of technology. Nature of electronic literature has also changed around 1995 (Hayles)
 - Early works – limited graphics, animation, colors and sound, use of hypertext links
 - Later works – better use of the multi-modal capabilities of the Web, using a variety of navigation schemes and interface metaphors



This particular software or this particular program known as the 'storyspace' also had certain limitations. It belonged to the early age of electronic literature and it had limited colour options and at the same time, it was not able to handle sound files, it was a primary web authoring tool. However, it is still used to produce new works, it has not become absolutely redundant even today but we find that as the World Wide Web developed new authoring programs and new methods of dissemination became available to literary writers.

So, electronic literature renews the centrality of technology. The nature of electronic literature has also changed and we find that around 1995, the second generation of electronic work started. Hayles has classified the early works with certain characteristics. These early works of electronic literature had limited graphics, they still had animations, they use colour and sound and they also used hypertext links.

In comparison the later works had a better use of the multimodal capabilities of the web and they used a variety of navigation schemes and interface metaphors.

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- Still a fairly new and young genre in the eyes of the public as opposed to printed forms of literature; awareness is on the rise
 - *Salon.com*: “After e-literature, there’s no going back”
 - *The Huffington Post*: “New Wor(l)d Order: E-lit Plays With Language”
 - Readings at The Kitchen in NYC in 2012 and 2013
- Mainstreaming with traditional literature at the Modern Language Association and Association of Writers and Writing Programs
- Growth of Digital Humanities: new computer based approaches to research, analysis and pedagogy



However, we find that electronic literature is still a fairly new and young genre. Even though critics are already talking about two generations of electronic literature, for most of the public it is still a young genre. Public which is used to the printed form of literature is now only becoming aware of its rise and we can refer to various institutionalised ways of referring to electronic media the ways in which it is combined together it is being presented for the benefit of the readers. For example, *Salon.com*: “*After e-literature there is no going back*”, *The Huffington Post*, *New Wor(l)d Order*, *E-lit plays with language* and *Readings at the kitchen in NYC in 2012 and 2013*, showcase that people are now becoming conscious of it.

At the same time, we find that it has been mainstreamed with traditional literature in various associations, for example, the MLAs conferences as well as association of writers and writing programs have combined it with the traditional literature, the growth of digital humanities which is a new computer based approach to research, analysis, teaching all aspects of pedagogy in fact has also brought a renewed awareness to the possibilities which are now available to us in the form of electronic literature.

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How we read and write in the digital age

- Books either written for the internet ,or authored by it, or influenced by it deeply
- Digital textuality and New Literacies
 - 'What happens to literature when it interfaces with the prospect of the digital – of digital technology and digital culture.' (Jessica Pressman)
 - Readers who become literate because of the screen rather than the printed page
- Literariness V/S New Literacies
 - Both are different
 - New Literacies: How people are reading in radically different ways online



In the digital age, the manner in which we read a text or write something has also changed, we are now talking about books which are being written for the Internet, books which are being authored by it or books which have been deeply associated with it or influenced by it in various ways. We have also learned to differentiate between digital textuality and new literacies. What happens to literature when it interfaces with the prospect of the digital of digital technology and digital culture has become a central point of view.

We also want to differentiate between readers who become literate because of the screen rather than the printed page and here we have to differentiate between literariness and the new literacies. These 2 words are different and new literacies refers to those people whose ways of reading is radically different from the traditional reading ways. And new literacy is refers to the capacity to read on the basis of the screen only and how quickly to scan the screen, how quickly to use the hypertext and how quickly to use different associations and the manner in which we learn and grasp new literacy is very different from the conventional and traditional literariness.

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- Shift from traditional forms of reading: investing in a single book and a single author over a period of time
- 'Reading in the Web 2.0 social networking ways' (Jessica Pressman)
- Reading hypertextually across pages
- Engaging with content from different sources; rapid movement between sources
- Producing their own content
- Interface between readers and writers -- writers turn readers; readers turn writers



So, we find that there is a shift from traditional forms of reading, in traditional forms of reading we find that one used to invest in a single book or in a single author over a period of time. But reading in the web, social networking ways has become an altogether different experience, so now we read hypertextually across pages and we engage with content from different sources and there is also a rapid movement between different sources.

Not only this we find that as readers, we can also produce our own content, so now we find that there is an interface between readers and writers, writers can become readers and readers can also become writers.

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Phenomena of digital literature

- Not located in the academy unlike traditional literary art
- International phenomena: not located at a particular place; unfolds on the internet; being created in different languages; internet allows anyone to publish and access these works
- Can achieve instant popularity; the phenomena of going 'viral' overnight
- Question of genre is complicated: experimental; some are considered art, film or performance more than literature
- Critics often pan it as 'postmodern joke'
- Young-hae Chang Heavy Industries' work: website is an example of digital literature



The phenomena of digital literature therefore is not necessarily located in the academy only. Whereas the traditional literary art and literary production was located in the academy, it is also an international phenomena, it cannot be located at a particular place. It unfolds on the Internet, it is being created in different languages and Internet allows anyone and everyone to publish and access these works either in the language of our choice or through translation.

One can now achieve popularity almost in an instantaneous manner and all of us are familiar with the phenomena of going viral overnight, so the question of the genre has now become complicated. It is an experimental genre and sometimes it may be considered as an art, sometimes it can be considered as a film or a media or a performance more than literature, there are various critics who are not comfortable with this new and emerging job.

And sometimes it has also been termed as the post-modern joke however, we find that the digital literature is flourishing and one interesting example is a website which is known as a *Young-hae-Chang Heavy industries work* website which is an interesting example of digital literature.

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- An example of digital literature is *North Korean Cunnilingus*
- Collaborative project between two writers
- Internet-specific: collaboration is associated more with the internet than the single author economy of print media
- Sophisticated and shocking, yet approachable and simple
- Intertextually enriching; politically and aesthetically sharp
- multi-media literary artwork: written word inseparable from image of text, sound or movement
- A textual performance: challenges how we understand and think of literature: difficult to talk about just in terms of written content



Another example of digital literature is *North Korean Cunnilingus* which is a collaborative project between two writers. This particular project is Internet specific and collaboration is associated more with the Internet than the single author economy of the print media. It is sophisticated way of working because it requires lot of a skills on the part of all the participants

and still it is shocking, one can find it simple and approachable, but the very idea is very fresh and very new.

So we find that with the help of the digital revolution, the inter textuality is becoming day by day enriching and politically and aesthetically it is also becoming sharper. We are looking at the digital literature in a context of multimedia literary artwork, where we find that the written word or the word which we look at on the screen is inseparable from image of text, sound as well as movement. So, the word is not a word anymore, it is not a simple word anymore, rather it has become a textual performance and it challenges how we understand and think of literature and therefore it sometimes becomes difficult to talk about digital literature just in terms of written content.

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- Another example of digital literature is Michael Joyce's *Twelve Blue*
- More conventional insofar as it's text-based; digital work about the sea
- Called the grandfather of hypertext; influenced by James Joyce—the writing flows
- Visual and verbal puns; sea metaphors
- Constituted as a hypertext – 'it's just text on screen in which there are lexias –it means a nonlinear narrative comprised of chunks of text connected by links that demand reader interaction to produce the plot.' (Jessica Pressman)
- Digital literature makes more sense if we just look at it; rather than describe it in words: implications about reading, writing and teaching digital literature are different



Another example in this context of digital literature which can be given is Michael Joyce's *Twelve Blue*. It is more conventional in so far as it is text based and it is a digital work about the sea but this work has been called the grandfather of hypertext. It is being influenced by the works of James Joyce because the writing style flows, it has the same poetic strain which we often find in Joyce. It incorporates not only verbal but visual puns based on sea metaphors etc.

It is constituted as a hypertext, it is just text on a screen in which the lexias have been used and lexias are the non-linear narrative comprised of chunks of text connected by links that demand

reader interaction to produce the plot. Digital literature therefore makes more sense if you just look at it, rather than describe it in words, so there are implications about writing, reading and teaching digital literature. And these implications are very different and almost revolutionary.

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- Different readers would read it in different orders; thus understand it differently
- Creates a highly flexible and open-ended text; uses its inventive form to create great content
- Readers forget that they are navigating a disorienting hypertext on their screen: immersive experience for readers
- Proto-hypertext (text-based hyperlinks) literature:
 - Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759), Nabokov's *Pale Fire* a 1962 novel presented as a 999-line poem, David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, a 1996 experimental novel with endnotes and characterized as an encyclopedic novel
 - Use of various techniques to create a non-linear reading experience



One has to be aware that when we say that different readers would approach it differently, we do not only want to suggest that the meanings which the different readers would take away are different but rather we would say that different readers would read digital literature in different orders and therefore they would understand it differently. The very approach has become different,

So it creates a highly flexible and open ended text. It uses its inventive form to create great content and readers may forget that they are navigating a disorienting hypertext on their screen, so it also becomes an immersive experience for the reader's. In the print medium also we find that certain proto-hypertext literature is also available, the earliest example which comes to our mind is of course *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne, a novel which was published way back in 1759.

We can also refer to Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, a novel which was published in 1962 which in fact presents a poem, a poem of 999 lines within it. Another example which immediately comes to our mind is *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace, an experimental novel which was published in

1996 with endnotes and it is often characterised as an encyclopaedic novel, this novel has used not only the end notes but various other techniques to create a non-linear reading experience for the reader's.

When we talk about electronic literature, we find that there are certain major genres in it, it may be treated as a combination of the genres of print literature as well as certain genres which are unique to network and programmable media. **(Refer Slide Time: 27:18)**

Major Genres of Electronic Fiction

- Varieties of electronic literature: combination of genres of print literature and genres unique to networked and programmable media
- **Hypertext fiction:**
- Characterized by linking structures
- Written in 'Storyspace', the hypertext authoring program (created by Michael Joyce, Jay David Bolter, and John B. Smith) and later licensed to Eastgate Systems; program of choice in the 1990s
- New authoring programs and methods of distribution emerge after development of WWW
- Early works: blocks of text called 'lexia', limited graphics, animation, colors and sound



The first genre which we can refer to here is the hypertext fiction. It is characterised by linking structures, often it is written in the stories space, the hypertext authoring program, but at the same time, various other authoring programs and methods of distribution have emerged after the development of the World Wide Web. In the early works we find that blocks of text which were called lexia were used, limited graphics were there but still we could use animation limited choice of colours as well as limited sound tracks.

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- After WWW, works of multi-modal capabilities become prominent: more contemporary and postmodern as opposed to first generation or 'classical' works of electronic fiction

Mutations into a range of hybrid forms:

- The picaresque hypertext *The Unknown* by Dirk Stratton, Scott Rettberg and William Gillespie: aesthetics of excess
- Caitlin Fisher's *These Waves of Girls*: use of sound, spoken text, animated text, graphics and other functionalities in a networked linking structure
- Stuart Moulthrop's multimodal work *Reagan Library*: features QuickTime movies with random text generation
- Richard Holeton's parodic *Frequently Asked Questions about Hypertext*: narrative develops supposed annotations to a poem

After the incorporation of the 'world wide web' revolution, we find that other works of multimodal capabilities became prominent, so more contemporary and post-modern genres as opposed to first generation or classical works of electronic fiction are now coming into circulation. So we can say that there are mutations into a range of hybrid forms and if we look at certain examples, this idea becomes clear to us.

So, there is a picaresque hypertext, *The Unknown* by Dirk Stratton, Scott Rettberg and William Gillespie, it is known for the 'aesthetics of excess'. Another example can be given of Caitlin Fisher's, *These Waves of Girls*, it is remarkable for its use of sound, spoken text, animated text, graphics and other functionalities in a network linking structure. At the same time, we can also refer to a multimodal work, *Reagan library* which is by Stuart Moulthrop's. It features QuickTime movies with random text generation, Richard Holeton's parodic *Frequently Asked Questions about Hypertext* also develops a narrative with annotations to a poem.

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- **Network Fiction:** David Ciccoricco introduces the term to define digital fiction that "makes use of hypertext technology in order to create emergent and recombinatory narratives."
- **Interactive fiction (IF)** -- contains stronger game elements
 - Differentiation between electronic literature and computer games is fuzzy: many games have narrative elements, many works of electronic literature have game elements.
 - In IF, user configures in order to interpret. (Markku Eskelinen)
 - Depends on inputs from the user
 - Nick Montfort in *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction*, prefers the term "interactor."



We can also talk about a particular genre which is known as ‘network fiction’, this term has been introduced by David Ciccoricco to define digital fiction that makes use of hypertext technology in order to create emergent and recombinatory narratives. The term ‘interactive fiction’ is also becoming prominent now and it is becoming more and more pertinent because it contains a strong game elements. There is a differentiation between electronic literature and computer games but at best this differentiation is only fuzzy. There are many games which have narrative elements and there are many works of electronic literature which have game elements. So in interactive fiction we find that user configures in order to interpret and depends on inputs from the user. Nick Montfort has preferred the term ‘interactor’ in his work, *twisty little passages* and *approach to interactive fiction*.

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- Essential elements of IF: a parser (the computer program that understands and replies to the interactor's inputs) and a simulated world within which the action takes place. The interactor controls the action by issuing commands. Instructions to the program are called directives
- Interactive fictions expand the range of literary techniques– incorporation of alternating between game play and novelistic elements, visual displays, graphics, animations, and clever modifications of traditional literary devices
- IF can also engage in self-referential commentary and critique
- The exploration of the Z-axis as an additional dimension for text display, behavior, and manipulation by artists like David Knoebel, Ted Warnell, Charles Baldwin and Dan Waber



So, we find that the essential elements of interactive fiction include a parser and an interactor, a parser is the computer program that understands and replies to the inputs given by interactor and a simulated world within which the action takes place. The interactor controls the action by issuing commands and instructions to the program are called directives. Interactive fictions expand the range of literary techniques. They incorporate alternative strategies between game plays and novelistic elements, visual displays, graphics, animations and clever modifications of traditional literary devices. It can also engage in self-referential commentary and critique and the exploration of the Z axis as an additional dimension for text display behaviour and manipulation by artists like David Knoebel, Ted Warnell, Charles Baldwin and then Waber can also be referred to here.

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- **Generative art:**
- Use of algorithm is to generate texts according to a random scheme; or rearrangement of pre-existing texts
- Philippe Bootz: his model makes clear distinctions between the writer's field, the text's field, and the reader's field
- Use of randomizing algorithms, visualizations
- Breaking coherent structures and syntax; cut-up and fold-in techniques
 - Eg: *The Set of U-* poem with text, pictures and programming and music; work generates a different text that is seen each time it is played through delicate deviations in the timing
 - Employment of the n-gram technique to find similar strings in the source and target documents, using them as bridges to splice together the two texts (Katherine Hayles 2007)



Another term with which we should be familiar today is the ‘generative term’, it is a use of algorithm to generate texts according to a random scheme or rearrangement of pre-existing texts. Philip Bootz has presented a model and his model makes clear distinctions between the writer’s field, the text field and the reader's field so, there is a use of randomising algorithms and visualisations.

It breaks coherent structures and syntax cuts up and fold in techniques are also used in it. Certain examples can be listed here for example, the set of U- poem with text, pictures and programming and music similarly, employment of the n-gram technique to find similar strings in the source and target documents using them as bridges to splice together the two texts.

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Electronic Poetry:

- Loss Pequeño Glazier: Founder of the Electronic Poetry Center
- Kenneth Goldsmith's Ubuweb: one of the premier online sites for electronic poetry on the Web
- In his book *Digital Poetics: Hypertext, Visual-Kinetic Text and Writing in Programmable Media*, Glazier argues the following:
 - Electronic literature as a continuation of experimental print literature
 - The medium allows us to disrupt traditional notions of stable subjectivities and ego-centered discourses
 - Experimental practice grounded in the materiality of the medium
 - His *White-Faced Bromeliads on 20 Hectares* uses JavaScript to investigate literary variants; new text is generated every ten seconds—disruption of narrative poetic lines



Electronic poetry is another genre which is becoming popular. Loss Pe glacier had been the founder of the electronic poetry centre, another premier online site for electronic poetry on the web is known as ‘Ubuweb’ which is handled by Kenneth Goldsmith. In his book *Digital Poetics, Hypertext, Visual-Kinetic Text and Writing in Programmable Media*, Glazier argues certain points. He suggest that electronic literature should be seen as a continuation of experimental print literature. It carries forward certain traditions of experimental print literature and builds further on them. This media allows us to disrupt traditional notions of stable subjectivities and ego centred discourses. The experimental practices grounded in the materiality of the medium, his ‘White-Faced Bromeliads on 20 Hectares’ use of JavaScript to investigate literary variants and a new text is generated after every 10 seconds and there is a disruption of narrative poetic lines.

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- Disruption of narrative poetic lines -- suggestive couplings, dynamic interplay between the lines and the operations of the algorithm
- "Code work"—a linguistic practice in which English is hybridized with programming expressions to create a creole evocative for human readers. Eg: Perl poems that literally have two addressees: humans and intelligent machines (Katherine Hayles 2007)
- "Transliterated morphing"—algorithms that transform source texts into target words letter by letter; emphasizes the discreteness of alphabetic languages and its similarities to the discreteness of digital code.
- "The computational media intrinsic to electronic textuality have necessitated new kinds of critical practice, a shift from literacy to what Gregory L. Ulmer calls "electracy." (Hayles)

Disruption of poetic lines; suggestive couplings, dynamic interplay between the lines and the operations of the algorithm are some of the features of the digital poetry. 'Code work' which is a linguistic practice in which English is hybridised with programming expressions to create a creole evocative for human readers is also being used, as an example we can quote Perl poems that literally have two addressees; human beings as well as intelligent machines.

'Transliterated morphing' which is basically logarithm that transforms source texts into target words letter by letter emphasises the discreteness of alphabetic languages and its similarities to the discreteness of the digital codes.

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Flash Fiction and Internet

- Flash fiction:
 - A type of a really short 'short story'
 - Concise, brief: below 2000 words
 - Usually offers character or plot development
- Many types are based on word count –
 - Six-word story
 - "Dribble" or "minisaga" (50 words)
 - "Drabble" or "microfiction"(100 words)
 - The 280-character story (twitter fiction)
 - "Sudden fiction" (750 words)
 - Flash fiction (1,000-2000 words)
 - Nanotale and micro-story



Some other forms which can be referred to here can be given under the title of 'flash fiction' and Internet, so flash fiction is a type of a really short, short story. So it is a type of really short, short story, it is concise and brief below 2000 words and it usually offers character of plot development in a nutshell. There are many other types of fiction now on electronic media which are based on word count, for example 6-word story which is a variation of the haiku poems we can say. 'Dribble' or 'minisaga' which is of 50 words, 'Drabble' or 'microfiction' comprising of 100 words, 'the 280 characters story' that is the Twitter fiction, the 'sudden fiction' which is 750 words, 'flash fiction' which is between 1000 to 2000 words and at the same time, 'nanotale' and 'micro-story' are available now on the digital medium.

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- Origins go back to the 19th century, popular amongst writers of short stories in the 20th century
- Unique literary quality: ability to suggest or imply a larger story
- Early Practitioners: Franz Kafka, O. Henry, Anton Chekhov, H.P. Lovecraft, Julio Cortázar, W. Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway, Arthur C. Clarke, Kurt Vonnegut Jr.
- Recent resurgence due to the popularity of digital culture: social media, Instagram, blogging, Twitter
- "Democratization of communication offered by the Internet has made positive in-roads" (Paulo Coelho)



We can see that the origins of literary experimentation as well as the origins of the short story go back to the 19th century and these type of plot structures were very popular among writers of short stories in the 20th century also. The short stories have unique literary quality because they have an ability to suggest or later on to imply a larger story. In literary history we have also seen how different writers develops a complete novel from a short story which was written by the earlier.

Some of the early practitioners whose work remained significant in these days in this particular context are Kafka, O. Henry, Chekhov, Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway, Arthur Clarke etc. So there is a recent resurgence due to the popularity of digital culture and when we talk

about digital culture, we find that it incorporates social media, Instagram, blogging, Twitter as well as several other options.

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- Role of social media in the growth of the genre:
- *The Anonymous Writer, Terribly Tiny Tales, Word Porn, The Third Word Press* use flash-fiction to create stories on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
- Print Journals: *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine* and the *Vestal Review*
- Online Journals: *SmokeLong Quarterly, wigleaf, Flash Fiction Online* and *Flash Fiction Magazine*



So, we find that the role of social media is significant in the growth of this genre. So we can refer to the anonymous writer, terribly tiny deals, Word Porn, Third Word Press which have used flash fiction to create a stories on social media platforms, so we also have print journals as well as online journals.

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- Hayles suggests that the formation we know as "literature" is a complex web of activities now and it includes much more than conventional images of writing and reading
- Exploring and understanding the full implications of what the transition from page to screen entails must necessarily be a community effort
- A momentous task that calls for enlightened thinking, visionary planning, and deep critical consideration.
- It is in these wide and capacious senses that electronic literature challenges us to re-think what literature can do and be.

Hayles suggest that the formation we know as 'literature' is a complex web of activities now and now it includes much more than conventional images of writing and reading, exploring and

understanding the full implications of what the transition from page to screen entails must necessarily be a community effort. It is a momentous task that calls for enlightened thinking, visionary planning and a deep critical consideration. It is in these wide and capacious senses that electronic literature challenges us to rethink what literature can do and be, thank you.