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ASPECTS OF LITERARINESS IN NEW MEDIA WRITING

Abstract

Electronic literature has been established as a new, technologically enabled way of writing, through anthologies and awards such as the New Media Writing Prize. This paper analyses the four latest NMWP winners – Florence Walker’s *I Dreamt of Something Lost*, Everest Pipkin’s *Anonymous Animal*, Joannes Truyens’s *Neurocracy*, and Dan Hett’s *c ya laterrrr* – focusing on their literary qualities. Defamiliarization, self-referentiality, and dialogism are taken as the most prominent aspects of literariness, and the analysis aims to describe whether they are mediated electronically (through digital technologies) or literarily (through imagery and language). As the analysis shows, literariness persists as a defining feature of electronically produced works and can be used as a criterion for estimating their value and establishing linearity in electronic literary production.

Key words: electronic literature, New Media Writing Prize, literariness, defamiliarization, self-referentiality, dialogism

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1. Introduction

Literature as a form of art has faced major challenges and undergone considerable changes in the previous decades due to an unprecedented rise of digital technologies. The impact of these challenges and changes can perhaps be summarised as a series of radical breaks with linearity. The first break with linearity induced by digital technologies was the hypertext, described already in the 1960s as “the writing done in the nonlinear or nonsequential space made possible by the computer” (Coover 1992: 26). The most recent break caused by developments in digital technologies is the appearance of AI-generated literature.¹ It is not about nonlinear space but instead indicates a disruption in temporal linearity. Whereas written and printed books affected “our perception of time and history as progressing constantly forward toward a future that is infinitely far away,” AI-generated literature “cannot possibly be inserted into the same linear flow of ideas as leading to new ones in a presumed future.” (Danesi 2024: 24) It seems, therefore, that the constantly evolving interrelationship between literature and digital technologies breeds new forms and genres of literary arts, which are ever farther removed from the classic notion of literature. Critical approaches to and analytical overviews of these forms are often rooted in poststructuralist theoretical frameworks and post-classical narratology concepts such as transmediality or transdisciplinarity. This additionally blurs the boundaries between different forms of new art, or rather creates a break with generic linearity, as it becomes somewhat difficult to distinguish among works of literature, video games, archives, art installations, video performances, etc. – which in itself is certainly not a negative feature of modern art.²

However, despite the fact that digital technologies have brought forth an entirely different concept of literature and gave birth to art and narrative forms which are not easily defined or classified, the words *literature* or *writing* remain the determinant of a certain corpus of works produced in new media or through artificial intelligence. In other words,

¹ One of the most notable examples is Ross Goodwin’s 2017 *1 the Road*.

² For instance, O’Sullivan uses the terms ‘electronic literature’ and ‘literary games’ as synonyms (O’Sullivan 2019), and a similar approach is taken by Tavčar and Mitrović, who refer to video games as “contemporary narrative forms,” pointing out transmediality as their important praxis and “transdisciplinarity as valuable methodological approach for studying new narrative strategies.” (Tavčar & Mitrović 2022: 104)

disregarding presently the complex questions of generic determinations and terminology, electronic literature seems to insist on being styled as literature. The Electronic Literature Organisation was founded in 1999 and has since published four comprehensive volumes, i.e., collections of electronic literary works.³ The Organisation's definition of electronic literature includes "both work performed in digital media and work created on a computer but published in print," and states that a work of electronic literature contains "an important literary aspect that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer" (Hayles 2008: 3). Since 2023, in partnership with the British Library and Bournemouth University, the Electronic Literature Organisation has been organising the annual "unconference" on electronic literature. In 2010, Bournemouth University initiated the New Media Writing Prize (NMWP) competition, which selects the best works in several categories each year while all shortlisted works are archived by the British Library. Using as a starting point this practice of anthologising, institutionalising, and archiving works of electronic literature, this paper sets out to examine the distinctive "important literary aspect" in selected works of electronic literature. To this effect, our research relies not on the poststructuralist, but on the initially formalist and structuralist concept of literariness, which has over time been developed and reconsidered in accordance with the tendencies of writing in new or across different media. Given the scope of the present paper, the four latest winners of the Main Prize in the NMWP competition are analysed – Florence Walker's 2023 *I Dreamt of Something Lost*, Everest Pipkin's 2022 *Anonymous Animal*, the 2021 *Neurocracy* project led by Joannes Truyens, and Dan Hett's 2020 *c ya laterrrr* – with the aim of determining the elements and degree of literariness in these works.

2. Methodology

Initial considerations of literariness and the similar concept of poeticity are related to Russian Formalism, particularly to Roman Jakobson and Viktor Shklovsky as its representatives, as well as to the work of early structuralist Jan Mukařovský. Broadly defined, literariness is the quality of a work which

³ All volumes are available at <https://collection.eliterature.org/>.

makes it a work of literature. The assumption underlying this definition is that the work in question is composed with words, and literariness relies directly on the poetic function of language, defined by Roman Jakobson (1960: 350–377). While structuralist and formalist methods have not been applied frequently in the research of new media writing, a recent study titled *The Literariness of Media Art* (2019) stands as an exception. Not dealing particularly with new media writing but various forms of contemporary art produced in different media, its authors define literariness as “the dynamic between the automatization and deautomatization of language” which is “not limited to language and literature” (Benthien, Lau, and Marxsen 2019: 18) as the idea of literariness has already been successfully applied to film studies. Based on the comprehensive review of the formalist and structuralist theories of literariness provided by the authors of this book, several specific traits of literariness can be singled out: defamiliarization, self-referentiality, and dialogism.

Defamiliarization (estrangement or *ostranenie*) was introduced into literary theory through Viktor Shklovsky's 1917 essay “Art as Technique,” also translated as “Art, as Device.” The concept refers to making the familiar seem strange through art, whose chief purpose is to deautomatize perception. Starting from the definition of art as thinking in images, Shklovsky develops his idea that “estrangement is present almost wherever there is an image,” whereby “the goal of an image is not to bring its meaning nearer to our understanding but to create a special way of experiencing an object.” (Shklovsky 2015: 167) Defamiliarization is not only a crucial trait of a work's literariness, but can also “be considered a theoretical approach mediating between the arts.” (Benthien, Lau & Marxsen 2019: 33) In other words, any adaptation of a literary form into a different medium, especially one enabled by new technologies, bears an undeniable potential for deautomatizing perception. Therefore, reading electronic literature calls for a twofold approach to defamiliarization, examining on the one hand how the concept operates on a verbal level, and on the other hand how extralinguistic – audio-visual or multimedia – elements in electronic literature contribute to the effect of estrangement.

Estrangement as a technique for deautomatizing perception was used as the basis for the structuralist notion of ‘foregrounding’, introduced in 1932 by Jan Mukařovský. Foregrounding refers to the attention which verbal devices consciously draw to themselves in literary language – for instance, by repetition or conspicuous omission – thus making literary

language distinct from the language used in everyday communication. Significantly, foregrounding (and estrangement, by association) indicates a degree of self-referentiality of literary works, which in turn might expand into a variety of narrative or lyrical techniques whose purpose is usually to show that a literary work is conscious of its literary (or fictional) status. These techniques, as explained by Patricia Waugh in her book *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*, might show the process of constructing a literary work, offer a commentary on an existing literary work, style, or entire genre, or create new literary and linguistic structures based on the old ones. According to Linda Hutcheon, one of the genres through which self-conscious narratives are usually shaped is fiction based on the structure of the game, and all works of electronic literature could arguably fall into this category due to their distinctive qualities of immersion and interactivity (Hutcheon 1980: 31–33). Rooted in formalism and structuralism, Gérard Genette's classical narratology discusses the concept of 'metalepsis', "a shifting or transgressing between the diegetic and the non-diegetic world" (Benthien, Lau & Marxsen 2019: 27) which, in the same way as metafiction does, blurs the boundary or at least increases the ambiguity between the literary and the real, producing at the same time an effect of strangeness by insisting on the self-referentiality of an artistic work. Self-referentiality is, therefore, "a central feature of literariness" as well as "a dominant aesthetic device in media art, emphasizing the materiality of language as well as the properties of media technologies" (Benthien, Lau & Marxsen 2019: 26).

Finally, the above-given brief explanation of self-referentiality leads towards the notion of the dialogic nature of literary works, which originates from the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, a thinker influenced by Russian Formalism. The very idea that estrangement, through making a literary work self-conscious, indicates a certain semiotic ambiguity between the sign and its meaning, lies at the root of Bakhtin's concept of 'internal dialogism' in a (polysemous or polyphonic) word. However, the dialogic nature of literary works is not limited to single words. Instead, dialogism as an aspect of literariness refers to the coexistence of multiple voices in a literary work and the ways in which they are manifested. In Julia Kristeva's words, dialogism is an indication "that the discourse belongs doubly to an 'I' and to the other" (Kristeva 1973: 109). This might refer to narrators and characters (the narrator/character dialogism is most prominently expressed in the form of free indirect discourse as one of the markers of a text's

literariness⁴), but also to other forms of interaction, such as intertextuality, i.e., the dialogue between authors/narrators and other authors and their works. Such an intricate web of interconnected voices opens numerous possibilities for exploring the dialogic nature of electronic literature, in which literary language additionally enters into dialogue with audio-visual elements of the narrative, and the narrative itself inevitably enters into a more active and meaningful dialogue with the reader.

For the purpose of this research, these three elements of literariness – defamiliarization, self-referentiality, and dialogism – were analysed in the four latest NMWP winning works. Special attention was devoted to the medium in which these elements appear, i.e., to whether they are predominantly mediated electronically (through digital technologies) or literarily (through language and imagery).

3. Results

The 2023 Main Prize in the NMWP competition was awarded to Florence Walker's *I Dreamt of Something Lost*.⁵ The website presents the work as a game created using the Phantasos Template code library. Its users/readers navigate a functional fake desktop in the role of Jules, who receives a message from their ex-girlfriend, who died exactly a year ago. Readers go through Jules's messages and folders and communicate with their friends and family to find out what is going on, gaining insight into the problems Jules has been going through.

The 2022 NMWP winner is a somewhat different and more poetical work, Everest Pipkin's *Anonymous Animal*.⁶ It is a 15-minute browser poem, created using the web technology of iframes, that runs every hour. In the 45-minute interval, graphics of real and imagined animals appear on the screen, melting into one another. The poem which appears on the hour addresses the readers directly, leading them on a journey through

⁴ Free indirect discourse can serve a number of purposes, including polyvocality. Perhaps the most important observation regarding free indirect discourse is that “it functions as an index of literariness,” meaning that “it serves as a register-marker for the register of literature.” (Leskiv 2009: 53)

⁵ Available at <https://bodypoetic.itch.io/i-dreamt-of-something-lost>.

⁶ Available at <https://anonymous-animal.neocities.org/>.

different loaded web pages and simultaneously directing their attention to the fragility of data in the spaces of the World Wide Web.

The 2021 NMWP winner, *Neurocracy*,⁷ is a project led by Joannes Truyens, involving numerous contributors as writers, illustrators, or developers. It is a piece of dystopian and cautionary interactive fiction, created using Drupal. The narrative is set in 2049 and organised as a network of interrelated Omnipedia articles – Omnipedia being the imaginary futuristic version of Wikipedia. Omnipedia's interface resembles that of Wikipedia, and it is filled with AI-generated illustrations. Browsing the articles, the reader pieces together the events of 2049 – including environmental and political issues, natural disasters and health concerns, the development of reality shows and data management – to get a clearer picture of what this fictional future looks like.

The 2020 NMWP winner, Dan Hett's *c ya laterrrr*,⁸ is described by the author as a hypertext game. It is composed in Twine, and the narrative is inspired by the author's experience of loss and grief after his younger brother was killed in the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing. *c ya laterrrr* offers one single ending, but to reach it readers have to choose between branching routes and alternatives, which reflect the author's thoughts and preoccupations as he faced his brother's sudden death.

Table 1. Types and methods of mediating literariness
in electronic literature

	Electronically mediated (method)	Literarily mediated (method)
Defamiliarization	<i>Neurocracy</i> (interface) <i>I Dreamt of Something Lost</i> (interface) <i>Anonymous Animal</i> (illustrations)	<i>c ya laterrrr</i> (second-person narration) <i>Anonymous Animal</i> (verbal imagery)
Self-referentiality	<i>Anonymous Animal</i> (inline frames, illustrations) <i>I Dreamt of Something Lost</i> (iteration)	<i>c ya laterrrr</i> (metalepsis) <i>Neurocracy</i> (iteration)

⁷ Available at https://omnipedia.app/wiki/2049/10/01/Main_Page.

⁸ Available at <https://danhett.itch.io/c-ya-laterrrr>.

Dialogism	<i>Neurocracy</i> (hyperlinks) <i>c ya laterrrr</i> (hyperlinks) <i>I Dreamt of Something</i> <i>Lost</i> (messaging application)	<i>Anonymous Animal</i> (intertextuality) <i>c ya laterrrr</i> (polyphony, free indirect discourse)
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Table 1 summarily shows how the three described elements of literariness are manifested in these four works of electronic literature. It classifies the works according to the dominant method or technique through which each element of literariness is achieved, indicating – without intending to favour either – whether this method is predominantly enabled by technology (i.e., electronically mediated) or by language and imagery (i.e., literarily mediated). A more detailed descriptive analysis of the results shown in Table 1 is given below.

Defamiliarization

There is a strong visual aspect of defamiliarization in *Anonymous Animal*. When the poem begins, the illustrated animals are still shifting, and at a certain point the speaker asks the reader (in words typed above the changing images) to touch the head of the animal with the cursor. This involves tracking the animals' shifting forms and forces the reader to focus on the images. As soon as the pictured animal becomes recognizable, it instantly changes its form, whereby estrangement immediately takes effect. Defamiliarization is, therefore, related to animal imagery, visual as much as verbal. Namely, the poem opens with the words “welcome, **animal**,”⁹ and the speaker goes on to address the reader as an animal several times throughout the poem. Readers are thus invited to shift into animals themselves, and this estranging effect builds up to the point at which, when asked by the speaker to touch the face, we might wonder whether we should touch our own face or the one shown in the iframe. The speaker additionally indicates the relationship between estrangement and animal imagery through the part of the poem (accompanied with a video of trains) in which they relate an experience of being on “a train moving slow” and seeing a “strange dark mass” through the window, which soon turns out to be a pack of dogs. There is a parallel between

⁹ Letters in this and following examples are bolded in the original.

this “strange mass” and numerous anonymous users who might be reading the poem with us, of whose presence we remain unaware. The fact that we have a lot in common is, perhaps paradoxically, made clear through defamiliarization.

Second-person narration, alongside the use of the present tense and imperatives (also featured in *Anonymous Animal*) is far more common in different types of electronic than in print literature. While in works of interactive fiction it is described as ‘the textual you’ which instructs the readers/players in the ways of playing their roles, in hypertext fiction (an example of which is *c ya laterrrr*) it can be “employed in a more literary scenario (...) as a means of drawing attention to and harnessing the reader’s somewhat unique function in the text.” (Bell & Ensslin 2011: 313) It can be described as ‘the deictic you’ – a form of address – or a combination of the textual and deictic person. Additionally, in classical narratology second-person narration is described as disguising the “I” as “you” and distancing the narrator from the third persons in the narrative (Bal 2017: 21–23), as well as obfuscating the fact that it is the reader “who is the narrative’s ‘second person.’” (Bal 2017: 23) It is largely through the latter perspective that the second-person narration in *c ya laterrrr* creates estrangement of the narrator. Initially the readers might think that the narrator is addressing them, especially because each page of the work offers branching routes and invites readers’ reactions and choices. Since the work is autobiographical, the readers soon realize that “you” is “I” made strange, used perhaps to help the narrator deal with the pain and shock of his brother’s death.

On the other hand, defamiliarization in *Neurocracy* is largely electronically mediated. At first glance, the interface of the project looks exactly like Wikipedia, with the dominant blue colour, hyperlinks, sidebars, search engine, and photographs. A second look, however, reveals that the photographs are exaggeratedly AI-generated and that some of the hyperlinks explain unknown phenomena. The main page indeed states that Omnipedia is a successor to Wikipedia “as ‘the encyclopedia of everything.’” As readers follow link after link, they are informed in familiar surroundings and style of equally familiar events and names, but they soon realize that G6 is “The Global Secure Information Exchange System” instead of the group of six EU countries, or that the Athabasca Glacier has disappeared, that there has been an outbreak of fictional Cariappa-Muren disease, and that super summer in Europe has killed half a million people.

Warnings of possible catastrophes are already present in the reality of the internet, so none of this seems entirely unbelievable. Interestingly, Google search of *Neurocracy*'s fictional names and terms (e.g., Denis Molchalain) lists Omnipedia among the first result, thus additionally blurring the boundaries between the familiar and the unfamiliar, reality and fiction.

In *I Dreamt of Something Lost* the effect of estrangement is achieved in a similar way. The readers are presented with an interface that looks strikingly similar to their own desktop: there are several basic icons and a toolbar, almost all clickable and searchable. As soon as the readers start exploring the familiar interface, it becomes defamiliarized since it belongs to another person – the well known setting is used to lead us into the unknown realm of this person's life. Clicking on the www icon opens a set of actual Wikipedia pages, one of which is “Derealization,” redirected from “Unreality.” It is, as Wikipedia states, “an alteration in the perception of the external world, causing those with the condition to perceive it as unreal, distant, distorted or falsified.” The description evokes literary defamiliarization and is accompanied by yet another effect enabled by digital technologies: all the letters in the article are blurred, which further hinders instant recognition.

Self-referentiality

Anonymous Animal makes references to its own status as a work produced through digital technologies. The poem's speaker directs the reader towards the images or videos given as iframes until one of these iframes appears as a broken link. At this point the speaker starts musing that in several years' time a lot of the inserted material will not be available; content will be removed from the web and permissions denied. As the speaker puts it, “it's *all* degrading.” The work, in other words, shows awareness of its instability in the digital world. On the other hand, addressing the reader as an animal is a more poetic self-reference. However, since the work is populated with stories, images, illustrations, and videos of animals, it is also a reference to the potential of a digitally-born work to go beyond language in showing its aesthetic dimensions.

In *c ya laterrrr* self-referentiality is literally mediated. Throughout the work, its narrative draws attention to how much people depend on smartphones, electronic communication, social networks and mass media. The narrator first realizes that something is wrong because his mobile

phone is full of messages; he also thinks carefully about how to announce his brother's death on the internet. As he puts it, "This little device was your window into the catastrophe, and then when you got closer it became almost the sole means of transmission and reception while this was unfolding." Paradoxically, though, the work itself is not recommended for mobile phones – on the work's website, the author suggests a desktop browser, and the work could even be easily translated into a print form. The ending additionally indicates the self-consciousness of the narrative as the narrator transgresses between the diegetic world (in which he is the victim's brother) and the non-diegetic one (in which he is the author of the game): "**I always assumed you're not supposed to break the fourth wall when it's something serious, and yet here we're [sic] are. I hope you're doing okay, reader. You made it through.**"

Neurocracy similarly relies on literary aspects in achieving self-referentiality. The initial effect of estrangement, based on the similarity of the interface to Wikipedia, soon gives way to literary and aesthetic repetition as a means of self-reference. As the repetition of signs, symbols, motifs, etc. frequently indicates a degree of self-referentiality in a work, *Neurocracy* illustrates a case of 'paradoxical iteration,' "where a sign relation is projected back on a higher level." (Benthien, Lau & Marxsen 2019: 27) It resembles the situation in which a fictional character invents its author: in *Neurocracy*, fictional events invent their own media coverage. The metafictionality of the work is reflected in its blurred boundaries between the literary and the real, as well as in the new linguistic structures based on the old ones, i.e., the structures and style of online encyclopedia articles.

Blurring is also present in *I Dreamt of Something Lost*, where the mentioned blurred letters reoccur beyond Wikipedia articles. Even before the readers access Jules's computer, the screensaver informs them: "The safety of the archive, walls so high and round" and, scrolling down, "Community. My footsteps on tarmac. The feeling of being outside," "I dreamt of something ending," "I dreamt of the panic attack. Of data loss. Of nothing left behind," "No historian will find us," "Nothing will remain." After each message the letters get increasingly more blurred. The doubling/blurring of letters as well as repeating this technique reveals what the work is preoccupied with: as in the case of *Anonymous Animal*, it is the fragility and vulnerability of the trace we leave online. This work presents a case of 'recursive iteration,' "which comes about by means of a technological

feedback loop” (Benthien, Lau & Marxsen 2019: 27) which is also present in the image of Jules’s desktop which appears within the reader’s desktop. Similar to *c ya laterrrr, I Dreamt of Something Lost* is not available on phones despite the fact that its central narrative technique is chatting. It should be noted that, while these works express self-referentiality either through electronic or literary means, what they all self-consciously refer to is their dependence on new technologies and media.

Dialogism

The multiplicity of voices in *Anonymous Animal* is primarily reflected in the intertextuality which appears as different web pages and inserted media interact mutually and with the speaker’s words. The discourse of the poem thus belongs to the speaker as much as to the sources featured as iframes, while it also involves the reader – animal – as the ‘other’. A large part of the poem is given in the form of instructions or questions for the reader. In this dialogue between the digital lyrical subject and ‘the textual you’ the former is made exposed and vulnerable: the speaker sincerely confesses that they cannot actually see whether the readers follow their instructions. Indicating thus the powerlessness of the speaker, the poem emphasises the text itself with all its intertextual/intermedial references, whereby intertextuality is mediated through words and imagery while iframes serve merely as supporting tools in achieving it.

On the other hand, intertextuality in *Neurocracy* is mediated electronically, i.e., through hyperlinks. Based on hyperlinks, “[h]ypertext, which is a fundamentally intertextual system, has the capability of accentuating intertextuality, in a way that page-bound texts in a book cannot.” (Landow 2006: 55) As any “actual” or “real” hyperlinks, those in *Neurocracy*’s Omnipedia provide a platform which makes intertextuality an inherent aspect of an electronic work, stressing the importance of the medium in which this work is produced. Readers are immersed in the network in which one piece of data leads to another, and they can participate by choosing which links to follow (something they cannot do in *Anonymous Animal*) though their choice is limited by the given options. They are not allowed to edit or add the articles as they could in Wikipedia.

In *c ya laterrrr* dialogism initially also seems to be electronically mediated. The branching routes after each segment of the narrative, given in the form of hyperlinks, form the basis of its dialogue with the reader

as the latter chooses which path to take to complete the story. Some of the options include literal dialogue: “Call mum back” or “Call dad back,” which allows the reader to determine interaction between the narrator and characters, or at least its order. However, the ending of the story is the same regardless of the chosen path. Additionally, it is significant that most of the choices left to readers will eventually be reduced to the one which requires them to use the mobile. What is different, though, is the voices of various major or minor characters the readers will hear or not, depending on the path they take. Hett’s *c ya laterrrr* is a largely polyphous work, in which voices are introduced with no specific marks apart from italics, such as in the following example: “Along the way, you’re stopped three or four times by old friends, workmates, strangers. / *Sorry for your loss. If you need anything, you know where I am.*” Perhaps surprisingly – because of the second-person narration – the work also contains examples of free indirect discourse: “She says the police have been amazing, even though it’s been so difficult – she and your dad have had to spend a long time answering questions about his characteristics and last movements. *Any identifying marks.*” These examples also indicate the predominantly literary mediation of dialogism in the work.

The entire narrative of *I Dreamt of Something Lost* is based on dialogues between Jules and their friends: Vi, who is dead; Paige and Theo; Melanie, who is blocked; their dad; themselves. These dialogues are presented in the form of the FriendChain messaging application and serve as the guidepost for the readers to establish, by referring to the dates of messages, the timeline of events. The voices are presented in the form typical of chat language: “Where. Are. You. (...) im in FriendChain (...) u sant save smth that doesnt want to be saved (...)” and the readers can browse through them while waiting for replies or initiating conversations on Jules’s behalf. The messaging application channels even the voice of the dead (as in the quoted example), thus proving to be a powerful narrative device for electronic mediation of dialogism as an aspect of literariness.

4. Discussion

Among the limitations of the presented research is certainly the number of selected works of electronic literature as the Electronic Literature Organisation anthologies contain dozens of them. Another limitation might

be imposed by different types of electronic literary works, e.g., hypertext fiction, interactive fiction, digital poetry, etc., whereby further research might be directed at determining whether certain types of electronic literature tend to mediate literariness in specific ways. Further research might also consider any of the given aspects of literariness in more detail or attempt to define its other aspects which potentially bear relevance for electronic literature.

The selection of works is nevertheless justified by the award they received. Analysing the latest winners of the New Media Writing Prize has shown that crucial aspects of literariness, defined as defamiliarization, self-referentiality, and dialogism, appear in all of them. These aspects are mediated to an almost equal extent through electronic and digital technologies on the one hand, and linguistic devices and verbal imagery on the other – in a more traditionally literary way. This proves that literary writing in new media can and does rely on new technologies to achieve the effects of literariness, which in traditional literature pertain to the written word solely. On the other hand, the written word survives in electronic literature as a significant bearer of its meaning and expression. The implications of such a conclusion are that new media writing in any form, potentially including AI-generated literature, does not necessarily have to indicate any break with linearity. Linearity, either spatial or temporal, might be reinstated if literariness is established and maintained as criterion for estimating the works' literary value and impact, regardless of their genre, form, or medium in which they were produced.

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