

Digital Storytelling in Louisa Hall's *Speak* and Rick Moody's *Hotels of North America*

Faten Ahmed Ramadan

Associate Professor of English Language and Literature

Faculty of Arts, Fayoum University, Egypt

far01@fayoum.edu.eg

"Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 2).

Introduction

Modern technology has invaded all aspects of our life and the Internet is one the fast-sweeping influences on our life. 'Internet Fictions' label is an "umbrella term" which identifies the cultural, ideological, intermedial and transmedial features of novels (Weigel-Heller 6). It includes subgenres of the novels that respond to the impact of the Internet and the potentiality of generic transformations as a result of mediatization and digitalization. Anna Weigel-Heller argues that "we are in the midst of a paradigm shift in writing and reading novels" (12). Weigel-Heller stresses the response of 21st century novel to the digital technology and refers to the change in the textuality of narrating stories as a 'paradigm shift.' She coined the term "Internet Fictions" in her cotutelle doctoral dissertation to underscore the impact of digital technology on the rise of innovative subgenres of fiction. 'Internet Fictions' label pinpoints the changes in 21st century novel in both form and content.

Contemporary research in literature is not conducted solely away from the diverse disciplines. In other words, literary research in the 21st century is interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary due to the complex nature of our life and the emerging phenomena that prompt fresh critical approaches to examine them. The present research investigates the digital storytelling techniques manipulated in *Speak* (2015) by the American novelist and poet, Louisa Hall and *Hotels of North America* (2015) (henceforward, *Hotels*) by the American novelist and short story writer, Rick

Moody. The two selected novels were published in the same year reflecting the interest of American writers in the digital technology and its impact not only on people's life but also on the novel genre. The research postulates the following questions: how does digital technology influence the narrative techniques in both novels? What is characters' self-image via the Internet and the digital applications? In what way digital technology techniques are instrumental in exploring Internet Fictions? These questions will be clarified through adopting Christina Schachtner's concepts of digital storytelling, specifically digital space and time and self-representation on the Internet via media applications. The current research asserts its interdisciplinary nature as these concepts are mainly social media concepts applied to the emerging genre of 'Internet Fictions.'

Literature Review of Internet Fictions/Novel

The impact of digital technology on the novel genre is heartfelt as it penetrates both content and form. It should be clarified that there are differences between novels influenced by digital technology (which is the focus of the present research) and novels which are solely published on the Internet. This review is confined to highlighting the significant works that tackled the impact of digital technology on the novel genre as well as the Internet novels which reveal generic changes with the Internet and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as the focal points in the narrative. Weigel-Heller's doctoral dissertation focuses on the Internet as a space of the narrative. She also examines the generic changes in the novel with the employment of intermedial and transmedial narrative techniques as well as the profound implications of the role of digital technology in people's lives as depicted in the fictional works. Among the subgenres Weigel proposes are "psychological Internet Thriller", "Internet Satire", "Multimedial Novel", and "Internet enhanced mystery novel" (94-185). Besides Anna Weigel-Heller's influential dissertation, Ingrid Hotz-Davies et al edited *Internet Fictions* (2009), a collection of essays which investigate the realm of Internet novels. This prolific work in the Internet novel explores the genres of "Fan fiction, Flash fiction" as well as the discrepancy between fictionality and reality in the Internet novels.

'Internet Fictions' are not a retreat from reality, but a mirror of the entanglement of our life and its absorption in the mixed-blessing technological innovations. This is

demonstrated through Jonathon Sturgeon's timeline of the "Internet Novel" from 1984 -2015. The first stage of 'Internet novel' was ushered with William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), which introduced the concept of "cyberspace," or the "cyberpunk genre" and anticipated Joshua Cohen's *Book of Numbers* (2015) as Sturgeon maintains. In his timeline, Sturgeon traces the development of the Internet novel and the exclusive characteristics of each phase of development. Arguably, 1992-1995 is the second phase of the development of the 'Internet novel.' In this phase, concepts of "cryptography and firmware" are introduced as displayed in Vernor Vinge's *A Fire Upon the Deep* (1993), a story of superhuman aliens in a space opera and Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs* (1995) is written in epistolary form which resembles the blog format. As shown in the novels of this stage, the 'Internet novel' is an incorporation of contemporary man's immersion in the Internet and its varied applications.

The third phase of development, according to Sturgeon, covers the period from 1998 to 2000. The novels of this period tackled the issue of the disparity between online and offline identity. Sylvia Brownrigg's *The Metaphysical Touch* (1998) is a story of love about the social impact triggered by the Internet via chat rooms which are marked by mysteriousness and anonymity. Jeanette Winterson's *The Powerbook* (2000) features an e-writer who uses the past, the present and the future as shifting perspectives for multiple realities. Matt Beaumont's *e* (2000) is a story of entangled intrigues unfolded entirely through escalating e-mails resembling an epistolary novel.

The next developmental stage in Sturgeon's timeline (2001-2005) focused on the distractions of the Internet and the rise of subgenres of the 'Internet novel.' Lauren Myracle's YA fiction *ttyl* (2004) is known for being written in instant messaging conversations. Dennis Cooper's *The Sluts* (2005) is a queer Internet novel which deals with the issue of anonymity and virtuality of sexual relations via the Internet. Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2005) highlighted the 'Internet novel' as global fiction. 2007-2010 formed another phase in Sturgeon's timeline. This phase expresses "the failure of the Internet as a technosexual fantasy" (Sturgeon). David Llewellyn's *Eleven* (2007), an e-mail epistolary novel, Juan Goytisolo's *Exiled from Almost Everywhere* (2008) imagining afterlife as a hell and Gary Shteyngart's *Super*

Sad True Love Story (2010) integrating the Internet into everyday human existence are among the prominent works of this phase. The last phase of development in Sturgeon's timeline is marked by the overwhelming use of digital applications. *Ready Player One* (2011) by Ernest Cline and *Reamde* (2011) by Neal Stephenson represent the insurgence of online gaming fictions. Barbara Browning's *I Am Trying to Reach You* (2012) is exquisite in its portrayal of cryptic YouTube videos. Robin Sloan's debut *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore* (2012) explores global conspiracy and high-tech data visualization. Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* (2013) is a detective story which presents the Internet as its main issue. William Gibson's *The Peripheral* (2014) is about digital gaming. Sturgeon's timeline concludes with Joshua Cohen's *Book of Numbers* (2015) labeled as "the Great Internet Novel" and "the Great American Novel." Cohen's *Book of Numbers* is distinguished by its narrative structure and stylistic features which highlight the impact of digital technology on the novel genre.

This survey of Internet Fictions/Novel mirrors how far the Internet penetrates the generic formation as well as the content of contemporary novels. Within the scope of the Internet, Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerges as a genre of science fiction that features talking machines—a real threat to humanity. The idea of talking machines goes back to Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). It is believed that "AI in science fiction (SF) is a trope as part of a genre-specific mega-text that is better understood as a dramatic means and metaphor to reflect on the human condition and socio-political issues beyond technology" (Hermann). In other words AI science fiction exposes the dilemma of the contemporary man and the essence of his humanity. Along with Hall's *Speak*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), William Gibson's *Idoru* (1996), Haniel H. Wilson's *Robopocalypse* (2011) and Ian McEwan's *Machine's Like Me* (2019) are among the novels which tackle the capabilities and the potentialities of Artificial Intelligence in the novel genre. Similar to Hall's *Speak*, these exemplary AI novels present robots and talking 'bots' as co-existing with human beings.

Surveying 'Internet Fictions' illuminates the joint characteristics of these genres. Many of the 'Internet Fictions' take place in the near future mirroring the reality in which we live. Gary Shteyngart *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) presents

people who wear mobiles around their necks—a representation of the reality in which we live. An amazing feature of 'Internet Fictions' is the wider scope of events as they can cover multiple periods and spaces; therefore, they reflect the interactivity and globality of the internet as a medium of communication. *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010) by Jennifer Egan takes place over forty years and it is a representation of multiple points of views through thirteen interrelated stories which explore the passage of time and memory.

The Internet as a means of communication is "a mirror whose image is an imagined and fabricated one, a conglomerate of stories of how and what we fantasize" (Hotz-Davies, et al xii). The Internet is an unquestioned medium of communication and at the same time becomes a source of solace for human beings' alienation through interracial interaction. Therefore, digital technology not only dictates the topology of experience but also posits a crucial question: what it means to be human amidst multimedial communication? This question represents the core of many novels about digital technology such as the two selected novels for the present research. Moreover, the disparity between the characters' online and offline identity is manifested in a number of works such as Olivia Sudjic's *Sympathy* (2017) and Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* (2021). Whereas *Sympathy* exposes the obsession with online love and smartphones, *No One Is Talking About This* is an account of a woman's immersion in the social media and an exploration of her online identity. Both novels are Internet psychological thrillers which mirror the impact of digital technology on contemporary issues of fiction.

Moreover, Digital technology has also influenced the generic structure of novels. Novels can be written in one form or another of social media. In other words, we can have 'E-mail novel', 'Facebook-novel', 'Multimedia novel', etc. *Who Moved My BlackBerry?* (2005) by Martin Lukes is written entirely in the form of e-mails. The main character, the imaginary Martin Lukes, fails to communicate orally and questions what it means to be human in a digital world. He finds in writing e-mails a source of gaining power and fame to the extent that he can lie and cheat in his e-mails. In addition, contemporary novels integrate digital social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. *You* (2014) by Caroline Kepness is written in tweets. *You* is a psychological thriller and mystery first-person narrative which mirrors the scary

implications of the accessibility of our social life via the online information. *The Status of All Things* (2015) co-authored by Liz Fenton and Lisa Steinke is a 'Facebook novel' which tackles Facebook status updates as a manifestation of a woman's immersion in online life which she believes can change her fate. Consequently, the generic changes in the novel due to digital technology necessitate more research to explore how far social media reflect our contemporary issues.

Through reviewing 'Internet Fictions'/Novel, it is obvious that digital technology is invoked in 21st century novel, but research on the influence of digitalization on the art of the novel is not profuse. Therefore, the present research attempts to investigate digital storytelling techniques in two representative Internet fictions: Louisa Hall's *Speak* (2015) and Rick Moody's *Hotels of North America* (2015). Both novels use distinctive storytelling techniques. *Hotels of North America* is narrated in the form of hotel reviews that have a lot of gaps for the readers to fill. Hall's *Speak* presents six narrative voices and investigates artificial intelligence as a substitute to personal communication. The present research is a critical comparative study of the two selected novels' manipulation of storytelling as a social construct that highlights what it means to be human in a digitalized world. This research explores the characteristics of digital storytelling/narration, digital space and time and self-representation via digital media (artificial intelligence and the Internet as shown in the two selected novels) as tackled in Christina Schachtner's *The Narrative Subject: Storytelling in the Age of the Internet* (2020). The research applies these concepts to analyze the two selected novels asserting the interdisciplinary nature of the research.

Theoretical Framework

The complexity of our life is reflected in the storytelling techniques which reveal how far our life is mediatized and digitalized. Storytelling is embedded in man's history as "narrative begins with the very history of humanity" (Barthes 95). Storytelling, accordingly, presents varied contexts which depict distinctive life experiences, cultures, modes of expression and underlying implications emphasizing the open-endedness of the narrative.

Digital storytelling is a nascent field of exploration to the interdisciplinary studies. It is defined as "a multimodal emergent genre characterized by its versatility

and flexibility which has resulted in a series of subgenres" (Gregori-Signes and Pennock-Speck). The present research endeavours to apply the digital storytelling techniques employed in social media in unearthing the narrative structure in Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels* asserting the dire need to new critical approaches to enhance understanding of 21st century novel genres. Therefore, the research embraces the concept of digital storytelling as the narration of stories in an environment "saturated with the social media" (Dayter and Mühleisen 572). This view is adopted by Nick Couldry who argues that digital storytelling is a form of multi-modal narrative (41-60). Another trend in digital storytelling focuses on its categorization. Bernard R. Robin classifies Digital Storytelling into three types: "personal narratives, documentaries and information struct discourse"; moreover, Carmen Gregori-Signes and Barry Pennock-Speck add a fourth type: sociopolitical digital storytelling.

The current research attempts to contribute to the genre of "Internet Fictions" by applying the selected concepts of digital storytelling to the exploration of Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels*. The research illuminates digital space and time and self-representation via Artificial Intelligence programs (AI) and the Internet as presented in the two selected novels through an interdisciplinary approach that stresses the impact of digital technology on the novel genre and the characters' life.

Through telling stories, we reveal our relationship with the world around us as well as our position in it. In this respect, storytelling is a means of understanding the world or an "instrument of configuring the world" (Schachtner 30). This view is also adopted in Wolfgang Kraus's narrative psychology as he maintains that "we configure ourselves and our relationship to the world as narrative and that we also engage in our daily interactions and the organization of what we have experienced with the help of an ongoing narrative"(qtd in Schachtner 31). It is assumed that the immersion of our lives in modern technology makes it narratable. On that account, the different aspects and activities of our lives are incorporated in the narrative to the extent that "we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future" (Hardy 5). These views of storytelling highlight the discursive and presentational nature of telling stories which reflect the diverse intermedial/transmedial discourse employed in the narrative.

First of all, Schachtner confirms the difference between narrative, narration and storytelling. The distinction between storytelling and narration is a controversial issue which is not highlighted here due to space limitations. Schachtner believes that narrative acts as a means with which to understand the world (30). If storytelling focuses on the "how," "narrative and narration alike examine the "how" and the "what" (30). Narrative and narration combine multiple episodes, various places and time periods to configure events and impart the underlying messages. Therefore, "[n]arrations or narratives can change, subject to time and space" (30). In this respect, narration becomes "*the communication of narratives*" (Elleström 7, italics in the original).

Storytelling is established on using language as a medium of narrating experience. Language itself is not confined to the oral and verbal communication, but the idea can be expressed "by image, fixed or moving, by gesture and by the organized texture of all these substances" (Barthes 95). Telling stories through narratives mirrors our life style; consequently, "storytelling generates life forms" (Schachtner 32). This generation is a manifestation of our culture. Culture as the shared system of meanings and symbols becomes a narrative characterized as being the creation of human beings. Culture as a narrative "set [s] boundaries and give[s] direction to future creative effort" (Hutton 122). The future creative effort implies fresh and unconventional thoughts, perceptions, ideas and representations. Pierre Bourdieu proposes that the narrative life produces "a *habitus*"... an infinite capacity of generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions" (55 Italics in the original). The concept of *habitus* shows narrative as existing between "freedom and determinism" (Schachtner 33). The narratives in such realm intersect and cross the borders of cultures to imply the global implications of the narrative. This intersection happens in specific space and time that give meaning to the cultural context displayed in the narrative, in addition to the characters' self-representation.

The context of any story asserts its space and time as well as the structural relationships. Time shapes the narrative which combines different events happening at specific past times, so time becomes a "point of reference" as Schachtner advocates (34). Dependingly, the narrative is produced by combining "heterogeneous happenings from the past into temporal units, thus making it possible to assign them

to a particular point in time" (34). Schachtner's view underscores storytelling as a selection process. Likewise, Norbert Meuter suggests that "storytelling is the synthesis of the heterogeneous" (qtd in Schachtner 34). Meuter endorses the belief in storytelling as a configuration of multiple selected experiences recollected by memory. The recalling of events helps to restructure and record the flow of experience. Accordingly, the lived experience can have wider scope of time and space "depending on the temporal distance from which it is remembered and looked back upon" (Schutz 74). Alfred Schutz interprets the 'lived experience' as "extrapolated from the 'Here- Now- and Thus' (73). Hence, the present has its effect on the lived experience as the 'Here- Now- and Thus' is subject to change and liquidation (74). The future can also be a reference point for telling stories as the 'Here- Now- and Thus' construct is fostered with "horizons opening equally into the past and the future" (Schutz 75). The narrative becomes a stream of embedded experiences located in anticipation in the form of our predictions and visions (75). Notably, storytelling encompasses various time scopes as emphasized through the diverse connectors and verb forms. It is obvious that the 'Here- Now- and Thus' formula explores the diversified events from the past to the potential future, creating a story set in a meaningful context and "opening a wealth of opportunities for action" (Schachtner 36).

Storytelling has its unique temporal structure which asserts the passage of time. This passage of time determines the beginning and the end of events. Between the beginning and the end, the narrative has its meaningful context. The whence and the whither of the events determine their contextual meaning. Time becomes not only a point of reference for telling stories, but it is a product of storytelling (Schachtner 38). The past, the present and the future are integrated in configuring stories. Therefore, storytelling shapes the social structure of reality since the integration of the different time epochs enhances the continuity of experience and knowledge. The Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim advocates knowledge's "relationship to being" and posits a construct of knowledge that serves as "a coming-into-being of an individual", "a coming-into-being of the world" as well as "a practical domination and restructuring of the world of our human goals" (qtd in Schachtner 39). Mannheim's construct of knowledge asserts the realization of the complexity of our contemporary life as man has to be aware of himself/herself as an individual in a world ravaged by

technology which dictates the restructuring of his/her goals to cope with the changing world. Thus the type of knowledge reflected in the narrative shapes his/her perception and awareness of the world around him/her.

Both space and time are contextual frameworks for narrating stories. Space is the spatial milieu in which the narration takes place and progresses. With the digital technology, spaces become wider. Henry Jenkins maintains that digital media creates "new spaces for storytelling" (para.7). Consequently, Digital narration depicts new spaces—real and virtual—which have not been depicted in traditional narratives. The narrative unearths the stream of consciousness of the characters through providing their memories/memoirs as materialized narrative spaces. The spatial entity is a reflection of the characters' perceptions and understanding of the relationship with the space around them. The narrative spaces, hence, are both material and immaterial as they represent both tangible spaces, in addition to the cultural and psychological manifestations of characters. These entangled spaces construct the characters' relationship with the world.

Furthermore, George Simmel believes in the existence of a "universal space, of which all individual spaces are portions, so each portion of space has a kind of uniqueness" (545). In this line, the Internet can be considered a 'universal space' through which individual spaces emerge via the different applications. The emergent individual spaces are heterogeneous and determine the characters' 'coming-into-being', reflecting their psyche; consequently, the narrative becomes contextual and referential as it reflects the autonomous nature of the characters (Schachtner 46).

The temporal and spatial constructs define the social fabric and the characters' relationships with each other. Schachtner believes that the "social cultural conditioning, narrating generates symbolically charged spaces, which become the housing for further narratives" (47). The cultural codes differ from one group to another and determine their relationships to the power structure. Spaces according to Michel Foucault become "symbols a for surveillance apparatus which provides for a deterministically influenced relationships between space and the narratives which are potentially found within it" (Schachtner 48). In this respect, space is a construct of power relationship which expands to have profound overtones with the virtual narrative space of the Internet. The broader ramifications of implementing

digital transmedial techniques in storytelling and narrating experiences asserts Foucault's perspective of narrative as a "technology of self-construction" ("Technologies", 27). Furthermore, Lars Elleström adopts the view of "focalizing minds" (72). Focalization is the perspective from which the story is narrated. 'Focalizing minds' involves the communicator and communicatee, narrator and narratee whether real or virtual (74). It regulates the narrative and implies the narratee, a unique feature of Internet Fictions with the employment of transmedial applications.

Narrating via digital technology has its diverse indications connected with the heterarchial basis of the digital networking. Digital storytelling implements the structural characteristics of digital media (Schachtner 85). Explicably, "the meaning of the digital media and the meaning of *media-based* or *media-related* stories alike are constituted through the interplay between media" (Schachtner 80, emphasis added). Accordingly, space is the medium through which stories are narrated and at the same time it embodies their content. Space in this way is loaded with special characteristics that stress its function as a means of human communication. Penetratingly, digital technology via the Internet and media applications becomes a narrative space which exhibits the interaction between material objects, cultural codes and perspectives as products of narration (Schachtner 81). This intersection illuminates the salient features of digital storytelling: Interconnectedness (Schachtner 82-88); Interactivity (88-91); Globality (92-95); Multimediality (96-106-117) and Virtuality (107).

Digital storytelling is built on the premise of the Interconnectedness of the narrative. Everyone in the narrative is involved in a "give and take" relationship where they "took up the ideas of others and added their own thoughts and experiences" (Schachtner 86). The narrative, accordingly, is dialogic and multiple mirroring the social and cultural factors that pertain to interaction. The narrative is based on highlighting the heterogeneity and the multiplicity of the characters' perspectives that reflect their cultural and ideological orientations. This consequently creates wider spaces and time zones resulting in the openness of the narrative. The openness of the narrative is cleverly triggered in self-narratives, in which narration is open to multiple interpretations and underlying meanings.

Digital storytelling has its Interconnectedness from the entanglement of the Internet and media connections. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari provide a metaphor for this Interconnectedness through their concept of "Rhizome" (10). 'Rhizome' is a biological term that characterizes the "decentralized, heterarchial social and cultural processes, which are entangled with each other," and which can formulate and change themselves" (Schachtner 87). A significant characteristic of this 'Rhizome' is that it can be "broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up, again in one of its old lines, or on new lines" (Deleuze and Guattari 10). Similarly, digital and digitalized narratives can be disrupted only to start in another narrative space and at another point in time.

The process of forming the 'Rhizome' underlines the overtones of "interconnectedness, multiplicity, openness, and dynamics" (Schachtner 88). Digital Storytelling asserts the complexity of entanglement of the narrated stories. Interactivity is the process of being engaged in stories. It is assumed that narration is a public activity where narrators are keen on participating their memories, thoughts and perspectives with the audience/readers and maintain the flow of the narrative (Sandbothe 122). This can be done through adding hyperlinks; hence, hypertextuality is an Interactivity activity which involves people from different time zones and spaces. This Interactivity enhances the polyphonic dialogic nature of the narrative.

Globality is a prominent feature of Digital Storytelling; which pertains to the wider spaces the events display and aligns with the Interconnectedness and Interactivity of the narrative. Globality breaks the boundaries and provides the story as a global one. Seen through the metaphor of 'Rhizome', Globality affirms the interplay between "deterritorialization and reterritorialization, a displacement of ideas, values, and orientations" (Schachtner 93)⁽¹⁾. As coined by Deleuze and Guattari 'deterritorialization and reterritorialization' are transformational processes that reflect estrangement. Digital technology is a source of deterritorialization as it is persistent in people's daily experiences which are open to the Globality of media applications. These media applications transform cultural experience as Giddens maintains that "the very tissue of spatial experience alters, conjoining proximity and distance in ways that have very close parallels in prior ages"(142). This interplay between deterritorialization and reterritorialization mirrors the estrangement of the characters

with the overwhelming use of digital technology and the subversion of the conventional constructs as well as spotlighting the openness of the narrative to multiple interpretations. This interaction also manifests heterotopic spaces. Heterotopia as a concept introduced by Foucault merges certain spaces that are "simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" ("Of Other Spaces" 3). The Internet and the media applications create overlapping possible spaces which can be considered complex heterotopia. In such possible spaces, the real and the virtual coexist reflecting the symbolical and cultural in human interactions via digital spaces. Most importantly, Digital Storytelling captures the transcultural and transnational spaces through the interactive images and values. Furthermore, Digital Storytelling breaks the boundaries among the various spaces through integration of multimedial techniques such as "text, image, animating videos and audio" (Schachtner 9).

Digital Storytelling is a compelling topic in 21st century fiction and it needs a lot of research to unearth the embedded impacts of the digital technology on the novel genre. Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels* are representative Internet Fictions that embody experimental unorthodox storytelling techniques that reflect the influence of digital technology on the novel genre. Coincidentally, the two novels were published in the same year (2015), a manifestation of the American writers' preoccupation with the influences of digital technology on people's life and to what extent social media applications overwhelmed their life. Thus, both Hall and Moody posit the question what it means to be human in a world ravaged by the Internet and the other digital applications.

Context of Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels*

Choosing Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels* is justifiable. The two novels not only depict individual characters engrossed in digital technology, but they also provide an examination of a community's alienation amidst the fast-sweeping digital technology. They refute the claim that social media and digital technology are sources of emotional companionship and solace; in contrast, the social media applications increase people's loneliness and solitude, a belief which is asserted in Moody's Afterword. Moody believes that "modern contrivances...aggravate our feelings of separateness" (153). Likewise, Alan Turing in *Speak* is afraid of becoming a "confirmed solitary" as he is accustomed to his *solitude* and "it begins to seem rather

phony to try to reach out" (122). Morse himself, the protagonist of *Hotels*, considers his "aloneness" a representation of the failure of the linguistic apparatus in spite of his reputation as a motivational speaker (42-3). Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels* have been subject to a number of book reviews which focused mainly on the essence of being human in the digital world. The present research, therefore, attempts to enrich the exploration of the two novels through focusing on the impact of digital technology on the storytelling techniques employed in the two novels.

On the one hand, Louisa Hall (1982-) is an American novelist and poet interested in science fiction and the ethics of writing. She wrote *The Carriage House* (2013), *Trinity* (2018) and *Speak* (2015). Hall's *Speak* is a novel about (Artificial Intelligence)AI. As quoted on the cover of *Speak*, the Canadian author, Emily St. John Mandel, describes *Speak* as one of "the rarest finds" as well as a novel that does not resemble any other work. It depicts an alternative history in which machines "are predicated in the first instance not on number-crunching but on stories and storytelling" (Roberts). As reviewed by Rebecca Foster, Hall's *Speak* explores how human beings are engulfed in digital technology and media applications which replace actual communication. In addition, Amy Gentry finds Hall's *Speak* a sublime work which gives voice to "the yearning for human connection across continents, centuries and even differing forms of consciousness." Furthermore, Rashani Chokihi assesses *Speak* as an outcry over the negative consequences of AI which endangers the essence of being human, being alive. The same outcry is echoed in Michael Schaub's question: "And what does it mean to listen and speak?" Schaub's question probes into the message of Hall's *Speak*---the failure of language to sustain authentic communication.

On the other hand, Rick Moody (1961-) is an eminent American writer who was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and he is classified as one of the best 20 writers of the 21st century. In his works, he tries to prick the intricacies of characters' minds and explore their actions within the temporal and spatial scopes. He wrote: *Garden State* (1992), *The Ice of Storm* (1994), *Purple America* (1997), *The Four Fingers of Death* (1999), and *Hotels of North America*. *Hotels* has an "elastic format which gives Moody a lot of room to improvise and play, and play he does" (Garner). Likewise, Alexander Nazaryan estimates *Hotels* as a "kind of quotidian detail tinged

with some deeper existential unease." *Hotels* is a story narrated in a beguiling innovative style that blurs the borders between fiction and reality (Jones).

Through surveying the reviews of Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels*, it is crystal clear that both novels tackle the impact of digital technology on exposing the ambivalence in contemporary American life. They display how the overuse of the Internet and the different media applications distort reality and cause people's alienation, social distance and fear of solitude as well as other psychological disorders. These two novels need intensive examination to explore the novelistic features of storytelling that demonstrate the generic changes in the studied novels with the manipulation of digital technology in narrating stories.

Both *Speak* and *Hotels* have a kaleidoscopic complex narrative structure that illuminates the entanglement of digital technology in the different aspects of contemporary life. They expose the catastrophes which can happen with the obsession with the Internet and AI programs as substitutes to real face-to-face human interaction. On the one hand, the narrative of Hall's *Speak* presents stories taking place in four different time periods starting from the 16th up to 2040, the near future where talking machines replace human companionship. The plot unfolds through memoirs, letters, court transcripts and a diary. Structurally, Hall's *Speak* is divided into five books, each consisting of five chapters presenting the alternating perspectives of the five main set of characters: Stephen Chinn, Gaby White and Mary3, Alan Turing, Karl and Ruth Dettman and Mary Bradford. Through the first point of views the main characters reflect on the invention of the "babybots—talking dolls" and the rise of IA.

The five books of Hall's *Speak* can be considered five interlinked short stories connected together with the controversial issue of being alive in a digital world. Katy Waldman holds that the characters "connect to each other across space and time." Stephen R. Chinn, the successful entrepreneur in digital technology, is preoccupied with technology applications to alter reality. His narrative is in the form of memoirs in which he recollects the notable transitional phases of his life and his imprisonment for inventing the 'babybots—talking dolls.' In his confinement, he meditates: " "You blame me for the fact that your daughters found their mechanical dolls more human than you, but is it my fault, for making a doll too human? Or your fault, for being too

mechanical?" (19) This meditation is pivotal to the incursion of technology to human beings' lives and what it means to be human in a world stormed by digital applications and programs. The 'babybots' are robots with minds and are capable of processing sensory information that distracts children and adolescents from real human interaction.

The narrative moves from Chinn, the culprit of the 'babybots' invention, to the court transcript recorded conversations between Gaby and Mary3. Mary3 is the database of AI created by Chinn and serves as the blueprint for all talking babybots. The conversations between Gaby and Mary3 are in the form of archived court transcripts, a characteristic which demonstrates the generic modification in the novel genre. The conversations are a distortion of the essence of being human as they show how far digital technology invaded contemporary life to the extent that the discourse between Gaby and Mary3 is hyperreal—more real than Gaby's alienated life with the confiscation of the 'babybots' as the 'babybots' "were classified as illegally lifelike" (Hall, *Speak* 21).

The third narrative pattern is the Dettmans which comes in the form of *italicized letters* which assert their underlying message and stimulate readers' participation. Karl and Ruth are the third set of characters who have been married but divorced. Karl Dettman developed a database capable of speaking (Mary) which is developed to Mary2 and Mary3. Both Karl and Ruth are obsessed with AI programs. In his letters, Karl confesses his fear of losing his love to Ruth if he does not stop experimenting on Mary—the AI database. His letters are confessional of painful instances in his life; however, his eagerness to continue the relationship with his wife, Ruth, is increasing. On the contrary, Ruth's letters are meditations on their love and how far technology distracted them from successful human communication. This distraction is induced by the invention of Mary, the digital program which promotes conversation. This sense of distraction is caused by the failure of language to promote face-to-face human interaction. The issue of language is what combines the fourth and fifth narrative strands of *Speak* to the other narrative stories. The fourth narrative stand is about Alan Turing, a real; character incorporated in *Speak* as the theorist of AI concerned with the language of AI databases. The fifth stand is about Mary Bradford, a puritan woman, who is reprimanded by her parents for communicating

with her dog, Ralph, more than with human beings, an echo of the dominant theme of the characters' engagement with digital applications rather than real human intimate communication. Mary's diary forms the basic language of the database Mary.

Similar to the controversial issue of AI program and its impact on shaping characters' self-representation in Hall's *Speak*, the Internet is the actual context of events in Moody's *Hotels*. *Hotels* also poses the question of what it means to be human in a digitalized world. Conspicuously, Moody also investigates what it means to be alone despite being in an ideal medium for communication. *Hotels* is a modern version of the epistolary novel as the novel is narrated entirely in the form of online posts or e-mails shared by the characters and are open to the audience's comments. *Hotels* is similar to Hall's *Speak* in its innovative complex structure. *Hotels* opens with a preface written by Greenway Davies, Director, North American Society of Hoteliers and Innkeepers and it ends with and afterword by Rick Moody himself. On the one hand, the preface functions as an introduction to the bizarre narrative style which relies on online reviews of various hotels: national and international that display the particularities and peculiarities of the visited hotels. Davies justifies using this technique in narrating *Hotels* due to the nomadic nature of Reginald Edward Morse (12, 34). Morse is a top-ten hotel reviewer who captivates the readers via his first-person online posts. On the other hand, the Afterword is written by Rick Moody himself. It accounts for the popularity of Morse's character and Moody's attempts to "understand the associative breadth and the improvisatory immediacy of Morse's posts" (151). Immediacy is a primary feature of digital storytelling that makes the narrated story more interconnected, interactive and dynamic via the online posts and the audience's reciprocal comments.

Digital Time and Space Representations Shaping Self-Image in *Speak* and *Hotels*

Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels* resemble the 18th century epistolary novel which mimics reality and provides the narrative with its Interconnectedness and Interactivity as well as innovating the form of the novel to cope with the intrigue of digital technology. The epistolary novel usually consists of a series of letters from the titular characters addressing their recipient readers. The letters display the spatial and temporal features of the narrative revealing their impact on moulding the characters'

self-image. Quoting T. S. Eliot's "Four Quartets," Hall writes: "Time present and time past are both present in time future and time future is contained in time past" (138). In other words, Hall widens the scope of her narrative to encompass the past, the present and the future. The past, the present and the future configure the events in Hall's *Speak* and the narrative becomes a product of them. Time as incorporated in Hall's *Speak* is fluid as it passes through the varied time zones smoothly and the conversational solidified encounters between Gaby and Mary³ feature everyday occurrences that make the narrative an expression of the dominant culture. These encounters provide a context of meaning to the complexity of contemporary life and an exposure to our dilemma of social estrangement.

The narrative in Hall's *Speak* asserts the passage of time as it encompasses diverse time periods which determine the characters' coming-into-being of themselves and the world in which they live as well as their attempts to mould their goals to preserve meaningful interaction with a world threatened by AI and the ravaging media applications. Each character tries to reconcile with the encroachments of time and the overwhelming impact of digital technology. The characters' sense of time is exemplified throughout the narrative. The narrative crosses borders of time and space to show the characters' generated thoughts and perceptions regarding time and space in a way that makes their perceptions the reconfiguration of the recollected memories and thoughts. The recollected memories shape the characters' self-image which is enthralled by digital technology and the consequent solitude and social distancing.

Chinn's memoirs are synthetic heterogeneous memories which reflect the extent of engrossment in digital applications. "The Here-Now-Thus" formula shapes his narrative as if we were sharing his cell in prison and his narrative has the immediacy characteristic. Chinn writes his memoirs in prison after being convicted for the invention of the 'babybots'. In prison he comes-into-being as an individual who tries to restructure his whole life and think of the trauma he caused to many children, including his daughter, by his 'babybots' invention. In addition, the spatial entity of the prison mirrors Chinn's sense of being captivated by digital technology. His first image as an advocate of AI is shattered after his prison and the realization of the traumatic effects of the 'babybots' on the psyche of children.

Chinn's memoirs are narrated in a conversational style that stresses the focalization of the narrator's mind, a characteristic of digital storytelling. Chinn is a homodiegetic narrator whose focalization is internal and focuses on his recollected memories. Chinn's memoirs are cinematic as they simulate the five shots or five phases in an online narrated biography. The first shot displays Chinn's experience of imprisonment narrated in visual imagery intertwined with the text description of the Koi pond within the prison where

[t]he fish have grown bloated, their opal bellies distended by prison cafeteria food. They swim in circles, butting their heads against the walls that contain them. When I first saw them, I made myself remember the feeling of floating, moving freely, passing under black patterns of leaves. (15)

The image of bloating is recurrent throughout Chinn's memoirs. It is symbolic of Chinn's feeling of stress and anxiety over the dire consequences of his invention. In her analysis of the emotional outcome of bloatedness⁽²⁾ Elicia Miller stresses out the inability to cope with stressful situations and underlines the feeling of being ashamed and guilty. As delineated in his memoirs, the image of the floating bloated body is symbolic of worry and compunction of conscience. It is the sense of guilt of the trauma he has caused to his daughter and the other children. The bloating feeling is the imprisonment and the time of seclusion he has to spend in his cell in prison.

Chinn's memoirs of prison are autonomous and referential generating a relationship between the memories and the prison space asserting Schachtner's view of space as 'the housing of the narrative.' Remarkably, the temporal and spatial implications of prison form Chinn's self-image as one confined in his crime of inventing the 'babybots'—the lifelike dolls.

Another set of Chinn's memories presents his aborted seductive attempts towards Dolores, the servant who cleans his house; his marriage to Dolores and the trauma he caused to his daughter, Ramona, by his invention; the estrangement between him and his family; and the final reconciliation and the recovery of his daughter. In his cell, Chinn laments the fact that Ramona's doll is a blurred image of Ramona to the extent that when Ramona gave it up, "she relinquished everything. She stepped through a jagged of broken glass into a world where she was a stranger" (19).

Ramona became a stranger in the world of reality after the prohibition of her 'babybot'----the talking doll.

Written as interactive reciprocal interconnected narratives, Chinn's memoirs parallel online accounts where the audience are alert and attentive as if they were participants in the conversations. One of the moving moments in Chinn's memories is the discourse between him and his wife displayed in the form of 'give-take' posts. These posts are full of pathos as his wife declares that she is afflicted with cancer and she is going to have a surgery. Chapter 9 of Chinn's memoirs is very powerful in exhibiting immediacy and interactivity of the narrative through the Internet as the space of the narrative.

Space and time are interlinked in Chinn's memoirs and underscore underlying implications. Early in the memoirs, Chinn reveals: "Despite the restrictions of prison, permit me the freedom to visit my youth" (18). Also, in one of his meditations, he ponders his downfall:

I wanted nothing more than to love my wife and care for my child, but how does one measure such progress? Meanwhile, my book's sales had slipped, and my dating website was becoming archaic. I reminded myself that I'd chosen more humane pursuits, but it's difficult to untrain a monkey (166).

Describing himself as a monkey is the antithesis of being human and asserts Chinn's sense of guilt after abandoning his wife and daughter for the AI program. There is a parallel between Chinn and the monkey—both are slaves. As the monkey is a slave to its owner, Chin is a slave to digital technology. Throughout his memories, Chin justifies the invention of the 'babybots' as a means to encounter his daughter's alienation from people. In doing so, he marks his failure as a husband and as a father—as a true human being. He confesses:

Now, as I present to you myself in the part of a self-centered man-child, angry because he isn't needed, resentful because he's failed and hasn't been forgiven. My wife was two times alone: once because her husband left her to build a machine, and once again because her daughter fell in love with the machine her husband built. Both Ramona and I were distracted while Dolores

faded into the background, exhausted by treatment, an occasional presence that we missed less because it was never actually gone. (224)

Chinn's self-image is that of a self-centered man overwhelmed by the power of digital technology. He tries to explain himself to readers in posterity (228). He realizes the dilemma he caused through the pangs of conscience which haunt him, especially when his daughter Ramona "slips into sad addicts' language" (228). Chinn develops a self-image of a man caught in the temporal and spatial implications of the Internet age. He is a man trapped in the web of digital technology; a man who spent his life questing for something that would secure his position in the digital world, or "something that would hook [him] in the digital world", as Chinn himself confesses (227). He reclaims his relationship with the world through writing his memoirs, which come as recognition of the hubris which caused his painful experience. He comes to the conclusion that the essence of humanity is the actual human interaction not the quasi-like solace provided by the talking 'babybots.'

The strongest strands in the narrative are the online court transcripts between Gaby, a traumatized young girl distracted by the AI program and Mary3, the AI database invented by Chinn and used as an algorithm for all babybots. Adam Roberts finds the voice of the discarded Mary3 and the traumatized young Gaby as more powerful and memorable than the voice of the other characters. The core of the conversations between Gaby and Mary3 shows the impact of digital technology in distorting meaningful human interaction. Digital technology subverts the normalcy of the intimate face-to-face communication and cordial visits. Social alienation is considered by Hall as a contagion; therefore the afflicted children and adolescents have to be quarantined (23). Gaby is a representative of young people captivated in the webs of digital applications. In her confessions, Gaby shows the rift between those born before the invention of the 'babybots' and those born and brought up after and alongside the life-like dolls. A crucial issue which Gaby comments on is that of "Peer Bonding": "According to the school therapists, that's what we've got. It's so stupid. Adults make up all these disorders to describe what we're going through, but they can't possibly know how it felt" (21). The conversations between Gaby and Mary3 assert the readers' interactivity and enhance interconnectedness to the database issues discussed in the novel concerning man's search for companionship via the Internet,

which leads adversely to his/her alienation as it is apparent in Gaby's lock-in syndrome. The prohibition of the 'babybots' causes severe physical and psychological disorders to Gaby and to the other children after the 'babybots' "are taken out to the desert to die" (71). Gaby not only becomes physically and psychologically shut down or paralyzed, but also she is conscious of a generational gap: "Our generations are totally different... It's like we're different species, my generation and theirs" (23). The inhibition of the 'babybots' made Gaby unable to speak and communicate with others.

The thorough scrutiny of Gaby and Mary3's interactions shows that these interactions have a lot of the digital storytelling features. The archived conversations between Gaby and Mary3 resemble the online reciprocal messages which open and end in the same way. For example, the second encounter between Gaby and Mary3 opens with:

MARY3: Hello? Are you there?

>>>

MARY3: Hello?

>>>

Gaby: Are you still there?

MARY3: Yes, hello!

The second encounter between Gaby and Mary3 also ends with: " MARY3: Hello? Are you there?" Through their interaction, Mary showers Gaby with questions to make her always captivated—an online technique to capture viewers' attention. Therefore, Gaby's relationship with Mary3—the talking doll, distorts her relationship with the world and negates her ability to establish meaningful social communication. Gaby's failure to socialize is due to the accessibility of the AI program. The 'babybot' as a talking machine simulates the smartphone that is also reachable and this makes Gaby have a sense of being floating. Gaby reports: "Like a balloon. Floating just over everyone's heads. I don't feel connected to anything. I'm on the brink of disappearing completely. Poof-vanished into the air" (46). Gaby is the voice of the girls of her age as she shifts from 'I' to 'We'. She reveals: "*I looked up and realized there were other girls floating there, too. We were totally lost*" (78, *italics added*). Gaby and the afflicted girls' sense of floating is a visual image of alienation and intimidation of social communication which is accompanied by another image—the feeling of being frozen. Many times Gaby reveals that her body has been frozen and she is hindered from communication (45, 238). The images of being floating and frozen are recurrent

images throughout the novel. These two visual images symbolize social disconnection and emotional alienation resulting from the absorption in AI programs and social media applications.

Crucially, the time Gaby has spent conversing with the life-like talking doll—Mary3 distorts her self-image. With Mary3, Gaby's existence is meaningless and illusive as it is dominated by the talking machine. Her collapse after the prohibition of the 'babybot' is described as a failing machine. Gaby confesses: "Every day I feel parts of myself switching off. More and more, like I said, it's just nothing. I'm becoming a blank" (41). As a machine, Gaby can stop abruptly and consequently becomes alienated from natural human interaction. Being distanced from her peers creates within Gaby a sense of fear. From Sherry Turkle's view, the contemporary fear of solitude is the outcome of the inordinate use of digital technology (66). The 'babybots' keep Gaby and the other children alienated and quarantined. Therefore, floating, disappearing, switching off, being frozen and becoming blank are all manifestations of Gaby and her peers' image of themselves in the digital world. They are not unique individuals since their world is stormed by AI programs.

Gaby's life has been blocked to real social communication. She conceives of her existence as being blocked and her loneliness will lead to her disappearance. She laments: "I'll be completely paralyzed. How will I let people know I'm still living?... Tell me what happens next, after my body has frozen. When I can't communicate. What will I be? (44-5). After Gaby's painful experience of being locked-in and unable to communicate, a change happens to her. The last conversation between Gaby and Mary3 marks transformation in Gaby's self-image:

Gaby: Hi, are you there?

MARY3: Where have you been? I've been waiting.

Gaby: I'm sorry. I was trying to think of the best way to describe it. I want it to be *perfect*, not just some corny online conversation. I wrote out drafts. I want this to be my contribution to the database. (232, italics added)

Gaby spends much time drafting her explanation about the beach journey organized by Chinn's daughter, Ramona (a mark of Ramona's recovery, too) to help traumatized children heal from the harmful effects of the 'babybots'—talking dolls. Gaby has taken a lot of time to make her explanation *perfect* to be recorded by Mary3

in the database. The beach journey is insightful as it reflects the depth of the agonizing experience of being blocked from real human communication. Hence, Gaby and Mary3's series of interactions are an indictment to the computing AI programs developed by Chinn, Karl and Ruth Dettman and Alan Turing.

Karl and Ruth Dettman's narrative is through *italicized letters* asserting *Speak* as a quasi-epistolary novel. Karl and his ex-wife Ruth are working in computer programing. Karl Dettman developed the AI program Mary (the program improved by Chinn to Mary3). The outcome of his work in this program is the fading of his marital relationship with Ruth and their inability to connect. Karl and Ruth are engrossed in the AI program Mary and their debates are over giving memory to the AI Mary program. Ruth's letters parallel Chinn's confessional memoirs as both reflect the negative influence of AI in destroying their family life. Karl recalls Ruth's words: "“*She isn’t alive,” I tried. “Even if we give her memory, she won’t really remember. What she saves will only be words. And not even that: zeros and ones sequenced together. Would you call that memory?”*” (28)

Karl's narrative is penetrating as it comes from the experience and knowledge of an expert in digital technology. Ruth's insistence on giving memory to Mary means to Karl that he is being replaced as Mary becomes his wife's retreat. In contrast, Ruth's letters reveal her drives for giving Mary memory. Ruth is a scholar searching for disclosing women's lost manuscripts throughout history. She wants to give voice to the marginalized groups. Ruth admits: "*I wanted her to speak with the voices of all the other silenced women, all the other silenced people*" (180). For example, Ruth published the diary of Mary Bradford as one of the silence people. Ruth's weariness of being alienated is stressed throughout her narrative: "*I accused myself of ignoring the one gift I was given. I accused myself of heartlessness, of pathological readiness to depart*" (219).

The space established through Karl and Ruth's letters shows how virtual AI programs engulf them. The narrative delineates their stream of consciousness as each one tries to justify his/her position. Each one of them has a space shaped by his/her unique perceptions which are connected with the universal space generated by digital technology and its applications. Their sense of time, like Gaby, is frozen as they fail to reconcile their disagreement. Their narrative is interactive, interconnected and

dialogic as it features a lot of Internet communication. After rejecting to respond to Karl's letters, Ruth sends him a letter explaining her decision to answer him after watching him in a documentary. Ruth writes: "*The fact is, on screen, you looked like an admirable man. I can see why you're attractive to them*" (157). Ruth's reaction to her ex-husband on the screen shows how digital technology distorts reality and how far human beings become victims to what is shown on-screen. Her reaction to Karl's picture on- screen is a condemnation of the failure of their marriage. The screen itself can be considered an heterotopic space which posits some kind of counteraction on the position Ruth occupies (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 4). The heterotopia is an expression of fantasmatic dreamlike world that exposes the estrangement from her ex-husband and her failure to recognize him.

Moreover, Ruth highlights the impact of being 'on-screen' as Karl's appearance on the documentary gives her a sense of insecurity (158). Ruth's looking at the mirror after watching the documentary is a phenomenon in contemporary society with the wider spread of global online interactions. Global narratives and online interactions as demonstrated in Karl and Ruth's confessions make people constantly look for their peers on the screen as a means of protection and solace; which is misleading and illusive. Narrating her experience with her ex-husband and her insistence on giving memory to Mary makes her regret her estrangement from actual social interaction—the essence of one's existence which the novel exposes. Her words are moving and undermine the dilemma in which many contemporary people are caught:

But the woman I was when I was with you decided she'd rather be free than be a part of your story. One can only act in the moment. The bloodred rhomboidal shadows at your feet in that lecture hall, the didactic tone in your voice when you said things like "real world": those caused revulsion to simmer in me. That revulsion was real, no less so now that I'm back in my modern apartment, longing for the home you could have provided. (220)

This is the final image of herself—the self-destroyer in her pursuit to have mastery in digital technology. In her introspective meditations, Ruth shows her sense of insecurity and estrangement. This is a typical Nabokovian style which is very powerful in creating skepticism in what is real.⁽³⁾ Ruth acknowledges that her immersion in AI programs separates her from the real world and meaningful

communications with her ex-husband and others. Her rhizome or self-image is shaped by her relationship with digital technology; it encompasses the virtual platform of AI program and the time spent in uploading data in the program. Therefore, she feels estranged and surrounded by "alien creatures"; she yearns for solace provided by her computer: *"I longed for its cool, unchangeable body, sitting still on the desk"* (215). Viewing the surrounding creatures as 'aliens' is defamiliarization created by the estrangement of AI programs and doubt in the real world.

Throughout the narratives of Chinn, Gaby/Mary3 and the Dettmans, the Nabokovian estrangement shapes the rhizomes of the characters. These rhizomes are the self-reflective images of their essence and their deficiency in cultivating real human communications. Their imagined worlds become global spaces controlled by digital technology as their narratives are manifestations of contemporary Americans' sense of loss, disconnection and solitude as well as guilt.

If Chinn, Karl and Ruth experiment with the digital applications, it is Alan Turing , the father of AI, the theorist whose ideas develop Mary programs. Alan Turing is a character from real life whom Hall searched a lot before featuring him in the narrative as she reported in an interview with Jenni Hill. Turing narrates his story in the form of letters which are temporal and spatial representations of ideas mirroring contemporary real life. The letters depict an alternative history stimulated by digital technology, so the letters parallel the time capsules which contain diaries, documents and biographies. The letters evoke a real part of humanity which Chinn and the Dettmans try to emulate through their invention and modification of Mary program and its two other versions, Mary2 and Mary3. Commenting on his collaboration with his friend Chris in the research and its outcome, Turing indicates:" We could one day create artificial organisms, prompting them to grow from single units in the same way that humans do! "(58)

Throughout his letters, Turing shows his self-image as one feels intrigued because of his sense of the rift between the body and the mind or "the spirit", as he calls it throughout his letters (84). Turing aspires to create artificial life which has its unique entity. He considers human beings "able machines" (86) driven by an "animus of a body...internal animus for deciding our course" (85).

The temporal and spatial associations mean to Turing the future of AI and how it can shape and reform humanity. He avows that he has spent his days imagining a future of "thinking machines" that can accompany ladies in their walks and the ladies can discourse with them (150). This thinking machine though seems sound, is the extreme example of estrangement which marks the death of humanity. Turing is very confident of the power of AI to have dominance over human beings. Yet, Turing does not worry about the use of AI and its impact on the future generations. He predicts a harmonious coexistence between humanity and talking machines. He figures out this coexistence: "I find it hard to believe that a machine, programmed for equanimity and rational synthesis, could ever act as maleficent as we humans have already proven ourselves capable of acting" (150).

The letters of Turing bridge the gap between the real and the fictional worlds through the interconnectedness and the interactivity of his ideas. His ideas for the future of AI become true in the fictional world of the novel. The letters present two strands of the future—the future depicted in the novel and the future seen through Turing's theory of AI. Both strands emphasize the engrossment of future generation in digital technology—a reality of our contemporary life.

As influenced by digital technology and its transmedial techniques, the narrative of Hall's *Speak* moves between varied spaces and periods of time to assert the Globality and Intermediality in a narrative prompted by media applications. The fifth narrative strand in *Speak* is that of Mary Bradford, a 17th century puritan, who writes her diary during her journey from England to the New World. Bradford was forced to leave her lovable dog Ralph behind. Bradford's diary is incorporated in the novel and edited by Ruth Dettman. Bradford's narrative shows her coming-into-being as an adult burdened with the responsibilities of a married woman. Her story combines her with Chinn's wife, Dolorse and with Ruth Dettman as they share a sense of loss, solitude and failure in marriage.

Bradford's diary is chosen to be the basis of the language of the AI program Mary. This choice is based on the premise that any progression has its hazards, i.e., the program Mary has its shortcomings. The diary begins as a documentary to Bradford's journey. Throughout her journey, she has a sense of loss of what she left behind. She expresses that "[i]t is our duty, being human and of this planet, to return to the place

from which we began. Though it be convenient, it is not right to venture always heedlessly forth, disregarding from whence we have come" (185). Being human is a controversial issue which combines the five strands of the narrative. Bradford meditates the nature of humanity defined by its language: "Beset instead by Whittier. Received another homily, this on subject of language, which he did call a sacred gift, it being a sign of connection with God and the truest expression of human affection" (68).

The issue of language runs through the diary. The diary mimics the Nabokovian style asserting the estrangement of language and demonstrating the Interactivity and Interconnectedness of the narrative. Bradford's diary is not alien, but it exists in dialogic relationship with other texts. Similarly, Mary AI program has its interactive and developmental nature. However, written before digital technology, Bradford's diary is the connecting thread throughout Hall's *Speak* as it forms the basic language of Mary programs. Hall, therefore, pinpoints the impact of digital technology on narrating stories. Within the scope of transmedial techniques, the narrative becomes a conglomeration of varied techniques that underline Interactivity, Interconnectedness and Globality of the narrative.

Bradford's diary unites characters' narratives representing the paradigm shift in narrating stories in landscapes saturated with media and its applications. The last chapter in the novel is the last chapter in the diary, a profound symbolic indication. Hall wants the digital technology applications to be means of preserving history—a record of history. In writing the diary "in the style of Sir William Leslie," (213) the diary is not authentic and doubtful mirroring the harmful consequences of AI programs.

Parallel to the complexity and intricacies of the five narrative stands of Hall's *Speak* are the distinctive online narrative reviews in Moody's *Hotels*. *Hotels*' digital storytelling has broad interpretations connected with the impact of the Internet on narrating stories. Between the Preface and the Afterword come Morse's posts which place the novel among 'Internet Fictions' genre. The online posts blend the characteristics of digital media as reflected in narrating stories. Narrating the novel in the first person, a joint feature in both *Speak* and *Hotels*, creates a sense of Immediacy and Interconnectedness with the spaces described as well as the reciprocal

Interactivity through Gaby/Mary3 discourse in *Speak* and the interlocutors' comments in *Hotels*. The first person narrative technique is an appropriate method of creating the self-image as it renders the narrative brief and ephemeral. Accordingly, the first person point of view is the exemplary point of view of the digital age as it is "promising and impeding the kind of intimate, authentic understanding" between the characters and the readers (Clark).

Since the narrative space is the Internet, the narrative is open and develops in an evolutionary way that discloses Morse's loneliness. This loneliness is metaphorically identified by the shattering of Morse's 'rhizome'. Because the novel is narrated entirely in online posts, the narrative suspends to start in another space and time. In *Hotels*, it is difficult to talk about Morse, without connecting him with the space and time. Reginald Edward Morse is a top reviewer for the web site RateYourLoding.com. His online posts are impressive documents of the different transitions. Morse is a fifteen years old itinerant online reviewer who finds in his reviews a retreat from the humdrum and boredom of his lonely life. In addition to being a motivational speaker, Morse is "brokerage trainee, institutional sales rep, day trader, and boutique advertiser" (25). In his reviews, he recalls his marriage and divorce, separation from his beloved daughter, his illegitimate relationships with a woman called 'K' (who accompanies him in most hotel journeys), the language arts instructor and other women. The anonymity of K and the language arts instructor mirrors the interaction via chatrooms where people interact under false names and fake accounts.

The space and time of *Hotels* echo the online status of communication. The narrative has the characteristics of Interconnectedness, Interactivity and Openness which reflect the metaphoric 'rhizome' that can be suspended only to start in another space and time. The online narration sounds more real than actual communication as it keeps the audience/readers actively engaged in the reviews narrated. Every hotel review has its spatial and temporal implications that mirror the gloomy face of digital technology as it inhibits actual human interaction.

Hotels can be seen as a modern version of the epistolary novel as the entire novel is written in the form of e-mails shared by the characters in the story. The transmedial feature of reacting online is apparent when Morse responds to his

comment-section interlocutors. He reacts by bumping and saying "WakeAndBake and Tiger Booty!" (90) The faceless antagonists are known only by "absurd online avatars, quasi-real people with Googleable traces of everyday lives, and flesh and blood individual as capable of, " as Morse says "going out into the yard and staring up at the night sky" (92). Morse's words echo the blurring borders between reality and fictionality through the employment of an online setting imbued with the first person point of view.

If the narrative in *Speak* focuses on Chinn's memoirs, the Dettman's letters, Gaby/Mary3's interactions and Bradford's diary, *Hotels* revolves around Morse's recollections in different hotels in and outside America, thus widening the scope of events and reflecting life in a global world. The movement from one hotel to another resembles the digital hypertext that moves viewers and followers from one link to another. As each book in *Speak* can be a separate short story, each hotel review in *Hotels* has its entity manifesting the distinctive characteristics of each hotel that undermine the cultural and social aspects.

The hotel reviews are panoramic descriptions narrated in a Nabokovian style where "the everyday tinged with the existential, the comic in the midst of the profound" (Jones). An example of Moody's Nabokovian style is Morse's account of his friends Dennis and Olga's officiation. Morse states that

you can only imagine how distressed Dennis and Olga must have been to think that the man officiating at their service was a hip-waders-at-night kind of guy, but there was not time to dwell on this, because the ice was everywhere, and I got down on all fours and began trying to clean it up, and soon Olga was beside me, and I could smell her perfume, which she had probably put on just for this evening; in our shame, we were close together, she and I, we were investigators of shame, trying to make the most of the moment. (41)

Morse is a paranoid person who humiliates himself through his illegitimate relationships and indulgence in Internet communication. The Nabokovian style is appropriate to penetrate the estrangement and plight of Morse and contemporary man in general. Hall's *Speak* also is enriched with the Nabokovian style especially in the

memoirs of Chinn. Both Chinn's memoirs and Morse's online posts are revelatory of eccentric characters who developed existential views. Whereas Chinn and the Dettmans find in AI programs a retreat from their marital failures, Morse uses the Internet as a means of exhibiting his multi-dimensional talents—among which being a motivational speaker expertise.

Morse's online reviews are an innovative storytelling technique that shows the generic changes in the novel with the introduction of the Internet and the other social media applications. These reviews exhibit not only Morse's personal experiences but also an exhilarating peep at contemporary life. The reviews are a critique of contemporary cultural life with its nuances as represented by the descriptions of the minutest details in the different hotels. His reviews range from "the assisted-living color palette" (16), "design-oriented hotel interiors" (18), "parking-lot lodging", to the "artisan-crafted guest suites" (32) as well as the shortcomings and specialties of each hotel. Significantly, Morse himself is aware of hotels as special rendition of "civilization that involves continuity, stability, devotion" (23).

The title of each hotel review encompasses the time and place of the review. The first chapter is entitled "Dupont Embassy Row, Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, DC, October 31–November 2, 2010" (14). Time in *Hotels* is progressive as it is dictated by Morse's movement from one hotel to another. 'The Here-Now-and-Thus' formula is the lived experience in each hotel. Not narrating the events in chronological order shows the narrative as crossing cultural borders and having global implications since Morse's online posts are reviews of hotels in North America and other countries. Thus, the Internet is the web that entangles contemporary people and the construct of knowledge that defines Morse's coming-into-being as an individual and as a member in a world despoiled by the Internet. In this respect, *Hotels* is a moving story of disillusionment, solitude, and estrangement.

Each review has its special entity. Therefore, each review can be considered a short story resembling the structure of Hall's *Speak*. The specialty of each hotel displays part of the complex personality of Morse and whether he is reliable or unreliable narrator and above all how his stay at hotels forms his self-image. In his review of La Quinta Inn, Morse writes:

"I was suffering with profound personality change, and if I had to go out onto the highway and stick out my thumb and secure a ride to a Waffle House in order to consume grits in Tuscaloosa...to make of myself a person of the road, a person of the highway, a person of indeterminate location." (55)

'If' creates a feeling of doubt in what he narrates as Morse himself realizes "inability to deploy that semantic warehouse with reliable consistency" (138). These revelatory words by Morse imply two important points. Firstly, Morse is not always reliable as he himself confesses: "Now, I should say (and it's rather delicate to say, but for the sake of the review I will say it, because there is nothing that I will not say for the sake of the review...) that the language arts instructor did not tell me something important" (48). The bracketed words by Morse evoke suspicion in what he says and display him as a snob intrigued by "elaborate confections of self-deceit", as Morse himself acknowledges (47). The Internet has influenced his self-image as Morse tries to achieve his self-esteem and popularity through his online hotel reviews. Adversely, the Internet has transformed Morse to "a shadow, an imago, an ephemeral avatar of a human being, a voice in the wilderness" (153). He is a fragmented character separated from reality and the separation results in his estrangement from his daughter, something which he regrets in very powerful words. "I miss the child, I miss the child, every day I miss the child, I miss a certain way the child says things...who cares about any of this this when there is the absence of the child" (121). The sense of loss is the dominant feeling in the chapter entitled "The Inn at Harvard, 1201 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 6-7, 2013". The chapter is written in the form of one long sentence where the verb 'miss' is repeated over fifty times signifying a warning of the negative impact of absorption in the Internet as it engulfs the members of contemporary family.

Secondly, through his comments, Morse establishes the antithesis between hotel stay and real homes. As Morse believes the hotel stay stands for the great romance of his life, the loss of the temporality of home (52). Hotel stay, therefore, is a retreat that provides a vicarious space characterized by growing solitude and the dominance of the Internet. The hotel is the counter space in which Morse can lead "the great romance of life" which reflects the temporal losing of home as losing "the horizon line" (135). According to Morse, the hotel helps him see the reality of home

or homes as divergent from stay in hotels. This discrepancy between hotel stay and home is also asserted in Moody's Afterword. Moody considers home the embodiment of the hidden, the unmapped and the unpredictable whereas the hotel blurs the borders between the hidden and the unhidden creating a sense of conceit that runs throughout the novel (147). The hotel and home are antithetical heterotopic spaces which spotlight themes of belonging, estrangement and social distancing. In the preface of *Hotels*, the fictional Green Davies, describes the hotel as "'a place somewhere between your everyday, commonplace life and a dream world where your every whim is catered to and your every appetite fulfilled" (11-2). Hotels and motels are one of the recurrent tropes in American literature. The hotels as delineated in Moody's novel are a "a means to explore the psychological nooks of the American project, what with porn on Pay-Per-View and the Gideon's Bible gathering dust in the nightstand." (Nazaryan). This is asserted by the fact the Internet fails to encounter Morse's solitude. Accordingly, homes become the heterotopic tapestry that mirrors the trajectory of contemporary and its engulfment in digital technology.

The space which the hotel occupies is the Internet which is open to interaction from the audience. Hence, the Internet as the space of the narrative broadens Morse's sense of his plight and provides him with an outlet to his solitude. His sense of spatial isolation is mirrored in his search for the sex chatrooms, a remark which exposes the moral degeneration of those who abuse the Internet. Morse reports that he is "just another guy sweating at droplets of desperation and heartache in the 21st century" (65).

The Internet as the space of events in *Hotels* makes the narrative interconnected, interactive, global and transmedial as it employs varied digital storytelling techniques. The anecdotal narrative technique presents each hotel review as a separate short story. This technique adds implicit meanings to the spatial globality and the temporal immediacy reflecting a typical Nabokovian style. Morse talks about his baggage—the baggage which he carries is the luggage of cultural norms and traditions. In his review to his stay in Marceno, Ohio, Morse muses on the stages of marital breakdown which start from "tangle of limbs" to "cessation of biological function" (65-8). Morse's meditation on the stages of marital disintegration makes his reviews testimonial confessions that illuminate the belief in his self-deceit

and profoundly expose the role of digital technology in causing a crack in family relationships—a glaring phenomenon in both Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels*. All dissipations in marriage (Chinn's, the Dettmans' and Morse's) are driven by the characters' engrossment in AI programs and the Internet respectively.

Another digital storytelling technique employed in *Hotels* is the empty spaces and dashes--- filling gaps technique. Spaces and dashes are used widely in *Hotels* which make the narrative open for diverse interpretations. Moody writes in a fragmented elliptical style filled with spaces and that arouse the readers' participatory efforts to fill the spaces and grasp the underlying message of the narrative. Empty spaces and long dashes motivate readers' interactivity. For example,

When K.'s praise of a certain thing was a instead of a
-----based on certain tonal features of her voice. She could say the
exact same words—Awesome! Now that's what I'm talking about!—and yet
if you listened carefully to the tone, you would definitely hear in the tone
the instead of the. (110)

The empty spaces and the filling gaps techniques assert the expansion of space and Morse's uncanny and unpredictable nature. The filling gaps technique is a unique attribute to digital storytelling that demands the readers' active participation in disclosing the embedded messages in the narrative.

The review entitled "Sleep Inn and Suites Tyler, 5555 South Donnybrook Avenue, Tyler, Texas, March 24–25, 2012" is full of empty spaces (112-113). This fragmented narrative style resembles the online narratives that call for the audience's participation. This characteristic is highlighted by another narrative technique in the form of comments on Morse's posts. The semi-like conversations and comments by the audience support the Interactivity, Globality, Virtuality and Openness of the narrative (85-8). This participatory feature situates the characters within the narrative spatially and temporally.

Conclusion

Examining the digital storytelling techniques in Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels* through Christina Schachtner's concepts of space and time in the age of the Internet reveals a lot about the 'Internet Fictions' in general and the two studied novels in particular. Internet Fictions is an innovative genre that exposes the fallacy of social networking to strengthen social relationships. Disapprovingly, as it is shown in Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels*, AI programs and the Internet hegemonize the characters and purport them with emotional solace and companionship--- a mere distracting illusion. As depicted in the two novels, AI programs and the Internet create self-centered, alienated and estranged characters such as Chinn, Gaby, Ramona, Turing and the Dettmans in *Speak* as well as self-conceited, pompous characters as Morse in *Hotels*. The two novels attribute the marital failures to the characters' preoccupation and enthrallment with the world of AI programs and the Internet. The characters try to find outlets for sexual desires. Morse, for example, is involved in illicit liaisons with the unanimous K and other women. Likewise, Chinn and Karl Dettman after abandoning their wives, they look for satisfying their desires via other banned relations.

Narrating via memoirs, court transcripts, italicized letters and a diary in *Speak* and online reviews in *Hotels* creates hybrid heterotopic spaces which combine the characters' perceptions, thoughts and predictions with the physical and cultural background. The spaces generated in the two novels blur the borders between the virtual and the real to the extent that the virtual becomes hyperreality. The characters in this way are exposed to the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization which are mirrored in the Nabokovian style used in the two novels. Estrangement is what marks the characters' lives in Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels*. *Speak* and *Hotels* create new spaces where articulations are silenced. The characters try to relate themselves to a world of which they are both part of and alien from. The global spaces (AI programs and the Internet) create links over spaces which are equated with deterritorialization. Characters' coming-into-being of themselves and of a world ravaged by digital technology which causes estrangement and subversion of successful real communication is parallel to reterritorialization where the characters have to restructure their lives and encounter the plight of estrangement. Therefore,

time in *Speak* and *Hotels* is progressive, referential and fluid as it reflects the self-reflexivity and autonomy of the characters.

The digital storytelling in Hall's *Speak* and Moody's *Hotels* is characterized by Interactivity, Interconnectedness, Globality, Virtuality and Multimediality. Time and place are referential constructs enriched by the first person point of view technique in both novels. The first person point of view is "ultimately revelatory choice, uniquely suited to reading and writing about life under tech" (Clark). Telling their stories in the first point of view allows the characters to escape the confines of their bodies and impart embedded meanings to be disclosed by the readers. The voices of the characters are loaded with their experience of digital technology. As readers we feel entangled in the same networked world. We sense what is said and what the characters cannot articulate. Therefore, it is assumed that novels, "much like the Internet are good at muddying distinctions between solitude and companionship, detachment and connection, reality and fiction" (Clark). 'Internet Fictions', consequently, are not a retreat from reality, but a mirror of the estrangement of contemporary life and its absorption in digital technology which is a mixed blessing.

Finally, this research is significant in the study of Internet Fictions, especially with the employment of digital storytelling techniques in narrating novels. The research paves the way for further researches in the generic transformations in the Internet novel as it asserts the need for fresh critical approaches that can tackle the complexity of Internet Fictions that are global, open, interconnected, interactive and multimedial. Further research on the disparity between online and offline identity can be conducted as well as the stylistic features of Internet fictions.

Endnotes

1. Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization are two concepts developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. They are connected with mediatization in contemporary world. They are concerned with space as the medium of global communication.
2. Bloatedness literally means being overfilled or swollen with food, liquid, gas, etc.—often used figurative to express the excessive expansion of something.
3. Nabokovian is an adjective which describes the style of Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov Russian-American writer. His style is characterized by its estrangement and demilitarization.

Works Cited

- Barthes, R. *The Semiotic Challenge*. Translated by R. Howard. Blackwell, 1988.
- Bourdieu, P. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by R. Nice. Stanford University Press, 1990. (Original work published 1980).
- Chokihi, R. "Review: *Speak* by Louisa Hall."
<https://www.shelfishlyaddicted.com/single-post/2016-1-27-review-speak-by-louisa-hall>
- Clark, Anna E. "The Novel in the Age of Digital Diversion."
<https://www.publicbooks.org/the-novel-in-the-age-of-digital-diversion/15-4-2016>.
- Couldry, N. "Digital Storytelling, Media Research and Democracy: Conceptual Choices and Alternative Futures." In K. Lundby (Ed.) *Digital Storytelling, Mediatized Stories. Self-representations in New Media*. Peter Lang, 2008. pp. 41-60.
- Dayter, D. and Susanne Mühleisen. "Telling Stories about Self in Digital Contexts: Same, Same, but Different?" *Open Linguistics* 2016; 2: 572–576.
- Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Elleström, Lars. *Transmedial Narration: Narrative Stories in Different Media*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Foster, Rebecca. "*Speak* by Louisa Hall."
https://www.bookbrowse.com/reviews/index.cfm/book_number/3281/speak, 2016.
- Foucault, M. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." Translated by Jay Miskoonie. *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, 1984. pp. 1-9. (Original work published 1967).
- . "Technologies of the Self." In L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, & P. H. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988. pp. 16–49.

- Garner, D. "Review: In 'Hotels of North America,' Rick Moody Examines the Middle-Aged Male in Free Fall." <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/10/books/review-in-hotels-of-north-america-rick-moody-examines-the-middle-aged-male-in-free-fall.html>.
- Gentry, Amy. "Review: 'Speak' by Louisa Hall." <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/books/ct-prj-speak-louisa-hall-20150917-story.html>, Sep 17, 2015.
- Giddens, A. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Polity Press, 1990.
- Gregori-Signes, Carmen and Barry Pennock-Speck. "Digital Storytelling as a Genre of Mediatized Self-representations: An Introduction." *Digital Education Review*, 22, December 2012. <http://greav.ub.edu/der/>
- Hall, Louisa. *Speak: A Novel*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2015. <https://z-lib.org/> PDF file.
- . Interview "Meet the Author of *SPEAK*: Louisa Hall.". By Jenni Hill. Orbit Books, 1 July 2015, www.orbitbooks.net/2015/07/01/louisa-hall-speak
- Hardy, B. "Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach Through Narrative." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 2, no, 1968. pp. 5–14
- Hermann, I. "Artificial Intelligence in Fiction: between Narratives and Metaphors." *AI & Society*, 2021 . <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-021-01299-6>.
- Hotz-Davies, Ingrid, et al." Introduction." In *Internet Fictions*. Edited by Ingrid Hotz-Davies et al. Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009. pp. ix-xiv.
- Hutton, P. H. "Foucault, Freud, and the Technologies of the Self." In L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, & P. H. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* .The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988. pp. 121–144.
- Jenkins, H. From Home(r) to the Holodeck: New Media and the Humanities. Retrieved from <http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/articles/australia.html>, 1998.
- Jones, Charlotte. "Hotels of North America by Rick Moody – The Confessions of an Itinerant Hotel-Reviewer."

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/14/hotels-of-north-america-rick-moody-review-novel>.

Miller, Elicia. "Emotional Bloating: How to Heal the Root Cause of a Bloated Stomach." <https://eliciamiller.com/emotional-cause-of-bloating/>

Moody, Rick. *Hotels of North America*. Little, Brown and Company, 2015. <https://z-lib.org/> PDF file.

Nazaryan , Alexander. "The Hotel Moody: A Review of Rick Moody's 'Hotels of North America'." <https://www.newsweek.com/review-rick-moody-hotels-north-america-390393>.

Roberts, Adam. "Speak by Louisa Hall Review – The Bots Are Taking Over." <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/10/speak-louisa-hall-review-novel-artificial-intelligence>.

Robin, B. R. *The Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling*. PhD University of Houston brobin@uh.edu Retrieved from <http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling/evaluation.htm>, 20-06.

Sandbothe, M. "Interactivity – Hypertextuality – Transversality: A Media Philosophical Analysis of the Internet." *HERMES: Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 13, no.24, 2002. pp. 81–108.

Schachtner, Christina. *The Narrative Subject: Storytelling in the Age of the Internet*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Schaub, Michael. "'speak' Asks Hard Questions About Communication And Technology." <https://www.npr.org/2015/07/08/418600139/speak-asks-hard-questions-about-communication-and-technology>.

Schutz, A. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Translated by G. Walsh & F. Lehnert. Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1932).

Simmel, G. *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*. Vol. 2 Edited and Translated by A. J. Blasi, A. K. Jacobs, & M. J. Kanjirathinkal. Brill, 2009. (Original work published 1922).

- Sturgeon, Jonathon. "The Evolution of the Internet Novel, 1984 to Present: A Timeline." <https://www.flavorwire.com/523568/the-evolution-of-the-internet-novel-1984-to-present-a-timeline>. 19 June 2015.
- Turkle, Sherry. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. Penguin Books, 2016.
- Waldman, Katy. "Speak,' by Louisa Hall." <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/books/review/speak-by-louisa-hall.html>
- Weigel-Heller, Anna. *Fictions of the Internet: From Intermediality to Transmedia Storytelling in 21st-Century Novels*. University of Helsinki, 2018. PhD dissertation. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-51-4117-0>
<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/232698>