Children's Electronic Literature Criticism: Exploring Electronic Picture Books

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ABSTRACT

This paper researches the position and the genres of children's electronic literature within the larger context of electronic literature, focusing on its most representative form — electronic picture books. It explores their rich narrative possibilities and regards them as an autochthonous children's electronic literary genre, a gateway that leads a young reader into the world of electronic literature.

KEYWORDS

children's electronic literature; electronic picture books; children's electronic literature criticism.

RESUMO

Este artigo investiga a posição e os géneros de literatura eletrónica para crianças no contexto mais amplo da literatura eletrónica, centrando-se na sua forma mais representativa — os livros ilustrados eletrónicos. Explora as suas ricas possibilidades narrativas, considerando-os como um género literário eletrónico para crianças autóctone, uma porta de entrada que leva o jovem leitor ao mundo da literatura eletrónica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

literatura eletrónica para crianças; livros ilustrados eletrónicos; crítica de literatura eletrónica para crianças.

I.INTRODUCTION

O ver the last few centuries, children's literature has undergone quite a long and difficult transformation — from an educational and didactic tool, fun but often trivial literature, to, finally, acknowledged art, worthy of in-depth exploration and research. The recognition of children's literature criticism during the 20th century consequently influenced the growing production of higher quality literary work for a younger audience.

Today, in the post-print era (Hayles, 2007), digital media has become a platform for many works of children's literature as well. However, it seems that electronic children's literature is, again, being marginalized. Lack of criticism allows the market to be saturated with a lavish production of mainly trivial work, aimed at parents who wish to afford their children a digital experience of a literary work. This can be seen in the often used hypermediacy strategies (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) according to which the digital work incorporates the page-flipping scenography, reminding the reader that it is a work of literature and thus literary-worthy. At the same time, these types of work perpetuate the old trend, being labeled as "educational stories" providing an "interactive reading experience." Although labeled as interactive stories, these types of work are mainly digitalized picture books made in the tradition of print, where the promised interactivity lacks a meaningful interactor (Montfort, 2003).

It is interesting to note that the traditional picture book — often named "the first book" — has many qualities similar to those of a digital literary work which, in this process of digitalization, are forgotten. Picture books are multi-discursive, dynamic, ergodic and interactive works of art which explore the idea of creating an immersive reading environment that simultaneously engages many of the child's senses. From the 15th century's interactive books for adults (*volvelles*), to "touch and feel" or "pop-up" types of picture books, this literary form has always been a fruitful platform for exploring new ways of "breaking the fourth wall," achieving new ways of interactivity and sometimes even breaking the writer–work–reader triad. Certain kinds of picture books also require non-trivial effort to allow the reader to traverse the text, making them ergodic literature (Aarseth, 1997) — a term often used when describing electronic literature.

II.ELECTRONIC LITERATURE AND ITS GENRES

Works of literature created for exclusive use on a computer were, at first, called hyperfiction; in later literature, we can also encounter the terms "hyperliterature" or "hyperbook" (Keep, McLughlin and Parmar, 1993-2001, in Peović Vuković, 2004). In recent years, these works have been called digital or electronic literature. N. Katherine Hayles (2007) describes electronic literature in the following way: "Electronic literature, generally considered to exclude print literature that has been digitized, is by contrast "digital born," a first-generation digital object created on a computer and (usually) meant to be read on a computer." (n.p.).

Works of electronic literature are, therefore, those literary works created for a digital environment; they usually cannot be printed because the text is not their only component. They include hyperlinks, images, sounds, and often demand interaction from the reader, and therefore can only be reproduced on a digital device (Hayles, 2007). Hayles, furthermore, cites the definition of the ELO (*Electronic Literature Organization*), which describes electronic literature as "work with an important literary aspect that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer" (2007: n.p.).

Within electronic literature, Katherine Hayles (2007) defines several genres, such as: hypertext fiction (e.g. Michael Joyce, *Afternoon: a story*, 1990); network fiction (e.g. M. D. Coverley, *Egypt: The Book of Going Forth by Day*, 2006); interactive fiction (e.g. Donna Leishman, *The Possession of Christian Shaw*, 2003); locative narratives (e.g. Janet Cardiff, *Missing Voice (Case study B)*, 1996); installation pieces (e.g. project *Unheimlich,* 2006); Flash poem (e.g. Brian Kim Stefan, *The Dreamlife of Letters,* 1999); codework and generative art (e.g. Jim Andrews, *Stir Fry texts*); etc.

Electronic literature does not depend solely on technical progress (of computer hardware). Creativity of its authors is visible in the amalgamation of their art and the software they use. Taking technological progress into account, as well as the creativity of the authors, the aforementioned genres of electronic literature are constantly enriched with new forms (hybrids of the existing genre forms, and entirely new genre forms).[1]

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1 This classification has been partially supplemented in the official ELO website. Electronic literature includes: hypertext fiction and poetry; kinetic poetry presented in Flash and using other platforms; computer art installations; conversational characters; interactive fiction; literary apps; novels that take the form of emails, SMS messages, or blogs; poems and stories that are generated by computers; collaborative writing projects that allow readers to contribute to the text of a work; literary performances online that develop new ways of writing [online]. Available at: http://elitera-ture.org/what-is-e-lit/ [accessed 25 June 2017].

III. SUPPLEMENTING THE DEFINITIONS AND GENRE CLASSIFICATION OF ELECTRONIC LITERATURE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHILDREN'S ELECTRONIC LITERATURE

Form as an Integral Part of the Work

There is, still, an oversight in the existing definitions of electronic literature: wishing to separate electronic literature from literature which isn't electronic, the emphasis is on **form**, which "accentuates actuality — of the new form made possible by technology" (Peović Vuković, 2013 n.p.). On the other hand, a work of electronic literature "isn't the one which 'exploits the advantages' of the digital, networked environment, but rather the work where the (digital) medium is more than a recording medium, a literary object rather than a material-medial transmitter." (Peović Vuković, 2013)[2]. The physical features of technology change the natural and social environment in which they exist (Lister et al., 2009: 14). Therefore, the digital environment will not only be a medium of transferring a literary work, but also its integral part.

This moment is highly significant for traditional and digital picture books, which, unlike the literature occurring *in* books, *are* books themselves. In electronic picture books, the digital medium becomes an integral part — both of the narrative component of the picture book, and of the picture book itself as a material good.

Digital Adaptations and Traditional Poetics

Electronic literature is comprised of works created on digital media, for digital media. However, what happens to those digital works created on digital media, for use on digital media, but based on an existing (traditional) work of literature? This problem is particularly significant for electronic works of children's literature because many famous fairy tales, fables, fantasy stories, and the like, are being translated into digital media, with the intention of providing children and young adults with a high-quality literary experience. These works are not always adaptations, but original, "digitally-born" works, which make traditional stories come to life.

In order to interpret a work of electronic literature, we need new, digital poetics. But if we examine the large number of works based on traditional forms (poetry, fantasy stories, fairy tales, etc.), we shall see that in order to subject them to quality analysis, we need to have a good understanding of traditional literature, i.e. literary theory. In fact, this understanding is crucial — otherwise, the result is a lot of low-quality works, whose only function is to exploit the "possibilities of new media," entertainment (and better sales), without any sig-

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2 My translation. Original: "Digitalno ili elektroničko književno djelo nije ono koje 'iskorištava prednosti' digitalno-mrežnog okoliša, nego djelo kojem je (digitalni) medij više od medija zapisivanja, književni predmet, a ne materijalno-medijski prijenosnik."

nificant literary worth. This is especially significant for works of children's literature: just as with the advent of children's adventure dime novels,[3] digital media are full of works of questionable purpose and literary quality, aimed at the younger audience.

(Traditional) Literary Genre as a Medium

Drawing on the previous comment, the existing genre classifications takes the medium of reproduction in account rather than the idea of traditional literary genre (naming the works vaguely "story" or "poetry"). Can we, for example, talk about an "interactive fairy tale" or an "interactive fantasy story"? Medium is a part of the genre, but a literary genre also "does not belong to specific media, but rather can move between media." (Gregersen, 2011: 96).

Numerous *machinima* works show that the audience is indeed aware of the "algorithm," the convention of the work they consume. While the medium, or, for example, its level of interactivity will, perhaps, influence the initial excitement (am I going to just read the work, or also play it?), the final experience still greatly depends on accepting the conventions of, for example, the fairy tale, or the adventure story.

Video Games

The existing genre classifications fail to mention a whole gallery of digital works which can, conditionally, be called "games." Markku Eskelinen (2004) argues that "in literature, we may have to configure in order to be able to interpret, but in games, we have to interpret in order to be able to configure and proceed from the beginning to the winning." (n.p.).

Jenkins (2004) acknowledges that not all video games "tell stories," but many indeed have narrative aspirations. Today, there are more and more high-quality video games which hold a good narrative in high regard. These games possess more than just their *gameplay*. They often have a firm structure and a coherent meta-narrative, as well as many narrative segments, and sometimes the flow of the game depends exclusively on the characterization of the protagonist. In other words, the narrative and the game are mutually dependent.

This phenomenon is also important for digital works for children because they are often the target audience for many narrative-filled video games and interactive stories, in which the ludical and the narratological aspects are often mutually intertwined and conditioned. It is precisely through "role-playing" a character, exploring the space of the game, etc., that the discourses of the story are expanded, i.e. it impacts the flow and the experience of the narrative itself.

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3 Dime novels were serial novels for children, published in the 1920s. These novels were sold at newsstands, and were rather cheap, which contributed to their popularity. These works were often criticized because of the trivialization of the adventure genre, the quality of narration, as well as the questionable impact on the moral and value judgments of children.

Children's Literature

Although some electronic works of children's literature may be described using the existing genre classifications (e.g. interactive stories, hypertextual poetry), there are many works whose form, content, and purpose are not included in these classifications. The aim of this paper is to point out that the picture book — "a child's first book" — has from its earliest forms included elements which would later become the foundation of digital media and digital communication. These works, along with their counterparts in digital media, have not been, at least for now, mentioned when describing electronic literature, its genres, or its criticism.

IV. THE PICTURE BOOK AS A HYPERTEXTUAL, MULTILINEAR, AND INTERACTIVE WORK

The picture book is a child's first book — it is the portal to the world of the written word which enables the child to gradually travel from the concrete world into the contextual world of symbols. Learning how to read symbols is exceptionally important, not only for the development of the child's linguistic competence, but also for its capability of understanding symbolical abstraction, on which most of social and cultural communication is based on (along with the languages of other media).

The term picture book (germ. *Bilderbuch*) was, at first, used to describe any book with pictures, but since the second half of the 19th century, the term has been used for the books where illustration was key, and which were written for children. The predecessors of picture books, in the sense of their purpose, are considered to be the illustrated Bibles or catechisms for children, illustrated ABC books and spelling books and illustrated fables, until the significant work by Jan Amos Komenský, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658, Nürnberg, Germany), which is considered the first picture book. Today, the picture book is considered an autochthonous form of children's literature – however, the picture book as a medium has, from its beginnings, possessed features later present in digital media. Regarding these features, when discussing children's electronic literature, the most frequently mentioned key elements are multi-discursivity, hypertextuality, and meaningful interactivity.

The term *hypertextuality* is a term which describes the nonsequential relations between different types of data. A hypertextual work is observed in the relation of one (segment of) text to another (which can be connected to the term intertextuality, or according to Genette (1997), transtextuality). According to this view, a text is understandable only within the network of associations with other texts which are "above" or "outside" the text itself (Lister *et al.*, 2009: 26). The idea that the text does not gain its meaning only in relation to the outside world, but in relation to other texts as well, coincides with the structure of the hypertext where each element is potentially related to countless other elements.

Bolter and Grusin (2000: 272) therefore call the hypertext a remediation of the printed book, and Landow (1992) and Bolter (1991) describe hypertext as a sort of technological apotheosis of intertextuality.

Considering that the narrative of a picture book is built exclusively within the network of associations between multiple discourses and narrators (visual and textual), picture books can be regarded as hypertextual works. At the same time, they are a hypermedium[4] in which the medium of pictures and text permeate one another to the extent that they can only tell a story when coupled.

Reading and writing are often seen as sequential processes. Just as we put written material in a linear sequence, reading follows an established sequence put together by the author (Lister *et al.*, 2009: 29). Usually, hypertext is described as changing this experience because the reader is offered a certain number of *nodes*; following the links, the reader is transferred to a new segment of text, which creates a multilinear experience.

Reading a picture book is also a multilinear experience — the reader is not satisfied with merely reading the text of the story and then observing the illustrations, but in order to construct meaning in certain scenes, he/she reaches for the illustration, returns to the already read parts or illustrations. Picture book authors employ different strategies for changing perspectives (e.g. the two-part picture books offering an adult's and a child's perspective, like in Svjetlan Junaković's picture book *Love Saves Lives*), they use various textual and visual perspectives, create and interpret the mood of the scenes, or show dynamic, unfinished actions and movements which the readers complete in their minds, etc.

Because of all these features, many contemporary picture book studies indicate that the picture book is an interactive, ergodic, and dynamic narrative whose fundamental principle is dialogicality. The dialogicality springs from the interpretative possibilities of a dialogical relation between the reader and two narrators — the visual and the linguistic (Narančić Kovač, 2011: v).

The reader of the picture book is an interactor — using meaningful interactivity, reflected in the considerable effort in order to navigate the text (making the picture book an ergodic work), he/she continually unites narrative segments from multiple narrators.

The interactivity of the picture book is also reflected in its physical sense. From the 15th century's interactive books for adults — *volvelles*, which some consider an early example of a paper analog computer, authors have continually been trying out methods to increase the interactivity of the books and the readers.[5] According to their physical form, picture books can be play-books (picture

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4 Instead of the term *multimedia*, Bolter and Grusin (2000) use the term hypermedia which implies the "permeating and reforming of media," unlike using different media which "although used simultaneously, remain what they, traditionally, have been before" (according to Peović Vuković 2013).

5 Dean and Sons from London was the first publisher to create and produce "moving books" for children (late 19th century, England); Lothar Meggendorfer (Germany, late 19th century – beginning of the 20th century) and Ernest Nister (Germany, end of the 19th century) made pop-up books – imaginative books children could play with; Waldo Hunt (mid-20th century – beginning of the 21st century, USA) is considered the key revitalizer of pop-up books in the 20th century.

books of various shapes), *leporello* (accordion-shaped picture books), or pop-up picture books.

Exploring the interactive possibilities of picture books has been going on for several centuries. Therefore, we can conclude that the electronic picture book does not replace the traditional picture book, but is rather its expected heir.

V.THE ELECTRONIC PICTURE BOOK

Instead of using the term electronic picture book, we might use the term *hypermedia* picture book. Since digital media are generally described as multimedia (i.e. hypermedia, according to Bolter and Grusin, 2000), we find it needless to state this feature as a special feature of digital picture books. Furthermore, combining multiple different media is a feature of many digital works, but does not tell us enough about their internal redistribution in the work itself. The term *interactive picture book* would only emphasize a single aspect of the analyzed works (interactivity). The term *digital picture book* would indicate that the work was created for use on digital media, and the term *electronic picture book* connects it to electronic literature, pointing out the literary aspect of these works. The term *picture book* can denote works where the narration is based on visual elements (so-called wordless or pure picture books, picture books without any text) or works with a varying correlation of pictures and text. This paper focuses on the kind of picture book where there is a harmonic unity of linguistic and visual narration.

The picture book is basically a narrative where the discourse is realized by two communication channels — the visual and the verbal (Narančić Kovač, 2011: 12). The visual, i.e. the picture discourse shall mediate the story through iconic symbols, and the verbal, i.e. linguistic, through conventional ones (Narančić Kovač, 2011: 80). In the case of electronic picture books, we have to discuss the third crucial discourse — the auditory discourse. The auditory discourse of electronic picture books is twofold: it is comprised of music and sound effects following the story, and the voice of the narrator telling the story. Although the music can be switched off in most works, it often has an important role in building the mood and the experience of the story. The auditory discourse will include the narrator's speech, which at the same time belongs to the linguistic discourse, especially when the spoken words match the written text; however, the narrator's voice itself greatly influences the experience of the work (most often because of accenting, but also the timbre, even the gender of the narrator) which greatly influences the experience of the picture book.

Also, it should be mentioned that in both electronic and printed works, discourses possess certain attributes such as temporal position, shift, sequence, speed and frequency, narrator category, and viewpoint, i.e. narrative perspective (Narančić Kovač, 2011).

The traditional picture book itself is a highly complex hypermedium, regarding the permeation of picture and text where both discourses construct one story, and regarding the complexity of the image. Namely, the visual discourse itself is "manifold and polyphonic, and therefore also demands interactivity in its relation to the reader, transferring its features to the picture book as a whole. It is, therefore, no wonder that recent picture book theorists have been connecting it to the term *game*". (Narančić Kovač, 2011: 197).

Picture book authors are recognizing this ludic dimension and often use it to build the narrative. Interactive elements can be a part of the linguistic or the visual discourse. Well-designed interactive elements, therefore, become story catalysts — they expand and supplement certain discourses. Their role is multiple and can influence the form of the story and its development.

5. 1. Subgenres of Electronic Picture Books

The genre classification of electronic picture books can vary depending on the adopted criteria. On one hand, at the moment there is a type of classification of these works on the market that is related to the medium of reproduction (PC, iPad, Android). Such an approach is widely spread for practical reasons — users want the works which can be played on their devices. Another criterion the market follows is the criterion of interactivity, often implying the act of playing. However, if we were to start with interactivity, then many stories — hidden object games, clothing games, puzzles, etc. — could be understood as representative examples of electronic works for children. The amount of interactivity is not the measure of the artistic quality of a work.

In this paper, we would rather focus on the works which have a "meaningful" user impact on the narrative, which would mean that the readers/users are true interactors (Montfort, 2003) and picture books are their true hypermedium. The classification of electronic picture books according to the criteria of successful performance of the hypermedium (a high-quality permeation of media objects and various discourses) can, therefore, be as follows[6]:

5. 1. 1. Digitalized Picture Books

Digitalized picture books do not include scanned traditional picture books (into .pdf and other formats) because those are merely instances of digitalization of existing media. This group would include works created on digital media, which can be played only on a digital media device. Still, these works indeed seem like a picture book — they are comprised of mostly static, sometimes animated illustrations and text. Since all discourses are complete, their eventual expansion depends solely on the reader, which is in the vein of traditional picture books. These are works which the market is saturated with, because they are, generally,

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6 For more examples of children's electronic literature classification, see Gabelica 2014 and 2015.

rather easy to make. Also, these picture books are often incorrectly called "interactive stories," probably to attract users to a new, interesting experience of reading. However, the works which flaunt this title often hide a minimal amount of interactivity. Digital "leafing" through the pages with the click of the mouse is like leafing through an ordinary book's pages, and does not represent any noticeable interactivity.

Digitalized picture books can be found on many websites, and web stores (e.g. Google Play) and are, mostly, not works of high quality. Their lack of meaningful interactivity is often justified with a wish to provide users with a book-like experience. It is interesting that such picture books often use a background image of a real book's pages, which is an obvious instance of hypermediation, i.e. the readers are visually reminded of what a traditional book looks like.

5. 1. 2. Digital Picture Books — Interactive Stories

Some developers try to improve the quality of electronic picture books and pay more attention to the illustrations, animations, music, and interaction with the user. Further analysis shows that there is a key difference between works in this group, primarily on the level of meaningful interactivity through which the reader-interactor influences the flow and the building of the narrative.

1. Lower level of meaningful interactivity — the interactor's influence on the depth of experiencing the narrative

These works include media objects which are usually hidden, and enable the reader to uncover them, thus discovering additional parts of the story — sounds, images, or animations. The uncovered objects' purpose is not merely to illustrate the narrative, but rather to participate in its expansion. For example, the user plays a sound which reveals additional information or examines an illustration more closely, discovering its hidden parts and finding out more about the story itself. In the *Little Red Riding Hood*[7] picture book, there is an option to explore the illustration hidden behind the window in Grandma's room, which is in the forefront. This sort of search enables the expansion of the visual discourse and a deeper understanding of the story. The picture book *Cinderella – A Princess Story*[8] offers similar mechanics, but this time tied to the auditory discourse where the user has the option to explore images by touch, discovering hidden sounds. We can touch a part of the illustration and discover details such as a piano playing music, or a clock chiming noon or midnight. Occasionally, these sounds enable deeper immersion in the story and in its visual space (e.g. the squeaking of mice and the neighing of horses, the ticking of the clock in the living room), and sometimes it serves to emphasize a part of the narration (e.g. the clock chiming midnight as a signal of the Fairy Godmother's warning).

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7 XIMAD (2010), *Little Red Riding Hood* — electronic picture book for iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch devices.
8 One Hundred Robots (2011), *Cinderella: A Princess Story* — electronic picture book for the iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch devices.

These processes enable creating a picture book which surpasses mere game-play and enables users, if they wish, to further explore the story they have just read. In principle, this group includes works which can function without the interactor, and the interactor cannot influence the expansion or the flow of the narrative.

2. Medium level of meaningful interactivity – the interactor's influence on the expansion of the narrative

We shall encounter a medium level of meaningful interactivity in those works which cannot function without the interactor, and in which the interactor expands the narrative through his/her actions, although they still cannot influence the flow of the narrative.

As an example, we can mention the *Cinderella*[9] electronic picture book, by an English developer team, Nosy Crow. The majority of the interactivity seems to serve the purpose of entertaining, at first. Occasionally the narration will pause, and the reader will be asked to help Cinderella with her tasks, e.g. put the fruit in the bowl. In the act of the Fairy's transformation, the readers move the pumpkin and the mice, they choose the dress Cinderella or her sisters will wear. They can even change the song the Prince and Cinderella will dance to. Choosing the music influences the way they dance, which is very amusing.

Along with these entertaining, ludic elements, this picture book has an important element which enables discourse expansion. Namely, the reader can touch the characters and determine their speech (which appears in a comic-book-like balloon), thus modifying the dialogue between characters and in return, influencing the unfolding of the narrative.

3. High level of interaction – the interactor's influence on the flow of the narrative

This group includes works which enable the user to discover additional elements (sounds, dialogues, text, or illustrations) like at the previous level, but at the same time, the user has the possibility to change the flow of the narrative, which makes these works multilinear.

Little Red Riding Hood,[10] by the Nosy Crow team, is a picture book where the interactor discovers hidden dialogues which enable a further understanding of the characters and impacting the details within the story. Along with interesting ludic details where the user plays with the medium itself – e.g. blowing into the microphone enables blowing the seeds off a dandelion in the story, looking at one's reflection in a lake is done with a webcam, and pouring honey in a bowl is done by tilting the tablet – this story brings another element which provides a somewhat higher level of interactivity, and that is the map of the narrative flow. Namely, the user can choose the path Little Red Riding Hood takes on her way

9   Nosy Crow (2011), *Cinderella* — electronic picture book for the iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch devices.
10 Nosy Crow (2016), *Little Red Riding Hood* — electronic picture book for the iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch devices.

to Grandma's house. Although she always ends up in Grandma's room, the middle part of the story is left to the reader. In this way, the reader expands the narrative but also partly influences its flow.

A higher level of meaningful interactivity is achieved in works which allow a greater influence on the narrative flow, such as visual novels or hypertextual stories, where there is a larger number of user choices, which influence the characters' growth, different endings, etc. Clicking on the marked (usually underlined) keywords, the reader opens additional segments which can enrich the main narrative or take them in a completely unexpected direction. In this regard, there are many various text adventures in electronic children's literature, but the picture book has not seen this level of interactivity so far, probably because it is usually aimed at younger – initial readers, and true hyperactive works would perhaps require more text and a larger number of illustrations.

5. 1. 3. Hybrids of the Traditional Picture Book and Digital Media
This group represents works of high hypermediation, but a low level of hypermediality, because the traditional picture book medium and the new media content can, in fact, function separately.

These are mostly traditional picture books a child can read independently, and by using digital media, additional possibilities of the picture book are revealed, such as extra pictures, animations, text, or games. This group would, for instance, include picture books using the so-called OppTalk technology. These picture books look like ordinary picture books which come with a toy. By placing the toy on the marked circles in the book, the toy plays sounds. The OppTalk Company makes various toys, games, and picture books designed with the same principle. Such picture books are useful for learning foreign languages, naming images, etc., but so far, the market has not offered any high-quality literary works of this type.

This group of picture books would certainly also include Augmented Reality picture books. These are picture books which can be read like traditional picture books, but when pointing a webcam or a mobile phone camera at the book, the digital device's screen starts playing illustrative animations. From the first augmented reality works (e.g. the picture book *Dibidogs*, 2010, which gives life to the eponymous characters from an animated children's show) to the present day, the market has been offering many such picture books. The use of this technology is, for now, mostly for entertainment, so the majority of these picture books are of lower artistic value. However, certain picture books, such as *Fairyland Magic* (Carlton Books) bring very interesting stories, and artistically valuable illustrations, although the technology is used merely to illustrate, and not with any meaningful interaction.

VI. CONCLUSION – LITERATURE, CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND DIGITAL MEDIA IN A DYNAMIC REMEDIATION PROCESS

There are many studies on the relationship between traditional and electronic literature: from the expansive research of the authors who experimented with traditional literature announcing a new era, today's novelties in printed literature created precisely because of new media forms, to the idea that electronic literature has outgrown the existing literary theories.

Previous studies have made it clear – despite the autonomy of both traditional and electronic literature, their development is closely related and partially mutually conditioned.

In this context, a question arises: What about children's literature? Children's literature has, for a long time, been marginalized and treated as subordinate to literature itself. Many scholars and authors have accentuated the condescending stance toward the literature for children, and the impact that it had on literary production at the time. According to Alan Garner (1980 in Težak, 2002) there are three main – adult – intermediators that stand between a child and a story: the writer, the publisher and the parents. Jack Zipes (2002) agrees that children's literature does not belong to children, but to the authors, publishers and the market, and its production takes place according to the dictates of the market, mainly at the expense of the real needs and interests of the target audience.

Today, there is an abundance of digital literature for children and young adults in digital media. The reason for this phenomenon can be found in the fact that children and young adults are avid users of digital media, and they constantly seek relatable content. The market strives for publishing a lot of works, and is fairly open, because of the lack of research on children's digital literature as well as its criticism.

Today we understand the importance of children's literature — it influences the making of young readers, and in the end, future readers of "literature for grown-ups." What is, then, electronic literature without children's electronic literature? At the moment, it seems that one survives without the other – whereas electronic literature is studied at prestigious universities, the lack of criticism and the systematic research of children's electronic literature opened the way for production of works of varying quality, often at the expense of their literary value.

Children's literature is an organic part of literature in general – it is the medium from which everything begins, the medium which, most of all, influences the development of aesthetics, tastes, and literary expectations of young readers. As an integral part of literature, children's literature also needs its criticism, which follows it, directs it, and influences the development and the production of high quality works. This has been verified by history itself – the development of children's literature criticism has enabled a better production of literary

works for young readers. Thus, we may conclude that electronic children's literature deserves the same — active and proficient critics who help create digital works worthy of new generations of readers.

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