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E- Literature Review Assignment

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Writing Electronic Literature 5081

Katie Schaag created a work that has captivated many who are involved in the world of E-literature. Her piece ***“The Infinite Woman”*** is an *interactive digital erasure poetry platform*, which uses the *n-gram algorithm* method to put two well known feminine books together to create a space for readers to create poetry. The n-gram algorithm method is a simple way to remix text or speeches and program them by words, syllables, phonemes, or letters, it is at the author's request. This piece allows for viewers, or readers, to create their own poetry and creates the online environment that symbolizes the feminine outlook of the world.

Ms. Schaag used the help of some of her students at Georgia Tech when it came to the development part. Reading the review Katie did of her own work I found out that this was a project for some of the students in a two-semester Junior Design capstone course for the computer science and computational media major. On the development team was one girl and 4 boys. Katie herself was the “client” to these students. She presented them with an idea she wanted to have completed and the idea of a creative writing piece and visual artwork was rare in this department, but accomplished it very nicely. This work has now gone on to be shown as a virtual exhibition at many different art shows , and even nominated at the ELO Media Art Festival.

The two books Katie chose as her texts for this e-literature piece are *“The Infinite woman”* by Edison Marshall and *“The Second Sex”* by Simone De Beauvoir. Both works are

two different perspectives of the “infinite woman” for Katie and this is exactly why she chose them. In her review, on the website www.thedigitalreview.com, she expresses the fact that these two books offer a contrast, but has the same language. *“I decided to move my tactile erasure of The Infinite Woman into a computational domain, and remix it with a work of feminist theory. Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex seemed an obvious choice for several reasons: its contemporaneity with its companion text (originally published in French in 1949, with the English translation being published in 1953); its clear ideological opposition to Marshall's novel; and its pleasingly symmetrical title allows for the works to be remixed together to produce this particular project.”*(thedigitalreview) I understood this completely after truly reading the text as it scrolled on the works website. Every other sentence was from the next book, but it all still flowed and created its own rhythm. I found this to be even more interesting as I dived into creating my own poetry in the text box on the right of the screen. Being able to randomly pick the sentences and then to read them aloud and it sounded as if it came from one piece allowed me to see how similar to the two authors of the books were, even though one was written by a man in the perspective of a woman, and the other was written by a woman herself seeking from her experiences and truths.

The work website offers two different ways for you to manipulate the feed of the text. The speed and the randomness of the sentences are controlled by the readers, and this makes it a bit more personal. You are able to drag and drop the sentences to a text box however you like, as well as blur some words to make it fit what you as the reader would like your poem to say. Under the text box there are three buttons that allows you to clear the fog on the screen, which appears at random, clear the entire canvas at once, or export the poem so you are able to save the poem you created to your files. I felt all these options offered great dynamics to this work, by allowing the reader to feel in control, and also grabbing the attention of the reader with the fog mist.

The most wowing part of this work was the fog that was able to appear at random as I stated previously. When I first started moving around the e-literature I was not completely sure what this actually meant. After reading Katie's review and analysis she explained the fog symbolizes the aspect that femininity is centered around which is being overshadowed by their counterparts. ". . . .materializing *"the misty mirror of the eternal feminine"* (Marshall + Beauvoir) and visually echoing the erasure poetry method. As an abstract ideal form, the eternal feminine resists concretization, and yet every line scrolling past attempts to capture some molecule of it. The encroaching fog signals the impossibility of ever directly apprehending the infinite woman."

<https://projects.cah.ucf.edu/mediaartsexhibits/uncontinuity/Schaag/schaag.html>)

I felt this speak spoke to me as I may not consider myself a feminist, but i do stand for everything that is woman. As a mom and a leader in most aspects of my life I have come to feel at some points in my life like an infinite woman. I have grown to see how much I am able to accomplish, and I have mastered working with my partner and allowing him to lead at times as well. I want every woman to feel empowered as she reads this great work of e-literature, adn I want me to see how we may think, or feel in this world dominated by them. Although we have come a long way since when the two books used as the text were made they can still be seen as relevant today. As women we are still underpaid in some jobs that men have as well, and we are trying our best to keep our independence.

Works Cited

<https://projects.cah.ucf.edu/mediaartsexhibits/uncontinuity/Schaag/schaag.html>

https://thedigitalreview.com/issue01/schaag_infinite/begin.html