Chapter 5

Auto(bio)graphies of the Digital Being
Mark Amerika’s *Grammatron, Phon:e:me, and Filmtext*
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Apparatuses were invented to simulate specific thought processes.

Only now (following the invention of the computer), and as it were with hindsight, is it becoming clear what kind of thought processes we are dealing with in the case of all apparatuses…. All apparatuses (not just computers) are calculating machines and in this sense are “artificial intelligence,” the camera included, even if their inventors were not able to account for this. - Vilém Flusser

This is not literature.

I do not write literature.

I am a network practitioner.

...

This is what it means to MAKE HISTORY.

TO MAKE HISTORY UP. - Mark Amerika

The evolution of writing in the new media has passed through various trajectories of development and has explored unforeseen possibilities in the course of technological innovations. Starting with hypertext fiction, which was purely based on the creative potentiality of the authoring programs like the Storyspace, the more recent forms of writing practices have increasingly incorporated further developments in communication and computing technologies to take the radical experiment, which started with hypertext fiction, a step further and to a higher level.
The dramatic spread of media technologies, new communication channels and the coming of networking unleashed hitherto unimaginable possibilities for experimentation during the 1990s. It seemed as if culture was undergoing a fundamental transmutation that had been in the pipeline since the second half of the twentieth century. The last decade of the 20th century became a watershed in the history of computers as the internet marched on to the world stage. The internet has been described as one of the most groundbreaking inventions in recent human history, which has the potential of radically reshaping and reconfiguring the entire spectrum of social life.

In the history of new media writing, the rise of the internet has been one of the most significant developments. With this came new possibilities of creative experimentation and faster dissemination of innovative art practices, together with the opportunity to re-think and, thereby, open oneself to prospects of constructing new aesthetic practices and novel artistic artifacts suited to the age of network computing. The field of literary writing at the turn of the millennium had been already experiencing significant shifts in theory and practice. The rise of the internet had initiated a revolution which facilitated the emergence of new spaces for creative expression and writing. Significant in this regard is Jerome McGann’s work Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web (2001) in which he discusses how the coming of digital culture has released new possibilities for not only organizing and archiving literary texts but for interpreting them as well. He observes, “[T]he next generation of literary and aesthetic theorists who will most matter are people who will be at least as involved with making things as with writing text[s]” (McGann 19).
In the evolving trajectory of writing in the new media, Mark Amerika’s work is a narrative of the shift from hypertext fiction to network fiction and, finally to the latest form of new media writing which incorporates text, sound, video, animation and programming. He is an American new media art theorist, critically acclaimed artist and web publisher whose creative work has been exhibited at national and international art festivals like the Whitney Biennial, the Walker Art Center, the Denver Art Museum and the American Museum of the Moving Image. The work of Amerika has generally been classified as belonging to Net art or Internet Art, the field of digital art practices in which artists make use of the internet for the creation of innovative art works. Amerika launched himself on the literary scene with the publication of two cult novels, *The Kafka Chronicles* and *Sexual Blood*. He is also the founder of *Alt-X Online Network*, one of the oldest and premier online portals for experimental art and writing on the internet. The tag line of the website reads: *Where The Digerati meets The Literati*, which best captures the spirit of the Amerika’s overall project.

Amerika’s aim throughout his innovative oeuvre has been to expand the concept of writing to incorporate into it the creative potential unleashed by the advent of computers and the internet. In his “Avant-Pop Manifesto: Thread Baring Itself into Ten Quick Posts,” he says:

> The future of writing is moving away from the lone writer sitting behind a keyboard cranking out verse so that one day he or she may find an editor or agent or publisher who will hype their work to those interested in commercial literary culture. Instead, the future of writing
will feature more multi-media collaborative authoring that will make itself available to hundreds if not thousands of potential associates around the world who will be actively internetworking in their own niche communities…. (Amerika 291)

With Larry McCaffery, Amerika is one of the main proponents of the *Avant-Pop Movement* in the American artistic landscape. The movement got impetus from postmodernism during the 1990s and is characterized by its non-resistant attitude towards mainstream culture. It advocates an eagerness to engage with the stuff of mainstream culture and uses all kinds of material from the mass media to build something creative that may lead to the implosion of the mainstream. The aim of the Avant-Pop artist, to quote Amerika again, is “to enter the mainstream culture as a parasite would[,] sucking out all the bad blood that lies between the mainstream and the margin” (290).

5.1 **GRAMMATRON**

*Grammatron* is a work that makes use of the possibilities of both programming and networking to explore the potential of the networking technology. The title “Grammatron” is itself quite interesting since it can be broken up into “Gramma” from grammatology which means the science of writing and “tron” could be read as taken from “electron”, “neutron”, “protron”, all of which refer to the constituent elements of the subatomic world. So “Grammatron” could mean the science of writing in digital/electronic and computer-mediated environments. The work, as Amerika himself describes it, is an
exploration into the science of writing as it gets teleported into the electrosphere. It is an elaborate extratext that attempts to challenge the critical strategies employed by most academic theorists confined to the print-publishing model and, as such, is intimately connected to the network-distributed milieu.

It was one of the first works in the field of Net art which was selected for the prestigious Whitney Biennial.

What led Amerika to the creation of Grammatron was “his commitment to use the World Wide Web to investigate the “consensual hallucination” of cyberspace for experimental composition, publication, exhibition, performance, marketing, and distribution” (Preface xvi). Grammatron comes in two versions: a High bandwidth version titled “Interfacing” and a Low bandwidth version titled “Aba Golam”. The only difference between the two is the beginning: “Interfacing” starts with a dynamic mediation which plays itself out before the reader. It starts with the injunction:

You are about to enter GRAMMATRON

Please wait while the machine reads you.

After a few seconds, the text starts appearing with each page containing an image or a dynamic (gif) image. Amerika makes use of shamanism which refers to certain practices in which an individual tries to enter into altered states of consciousness to interact with the world of spirits. The work is about Abe Golam, an “info-shaman” and a sorcerer, who is the creator of Grammatron and Nanoscript. Golam is struggling to transcribe his “personal loss of meaning” as he confronts the vast
electronic desert. He is scared about his chances of survival in the electrosphere which was his home at some point of time. Parts of the text are hyperlinked to carry the narrative forward. The first page of the work opens with the following lines:

Abe Golam, legendary info-shaman, cracker of the sorcerer-code and creator of Grammatron and Nanoscript, sat behind his computer, every speck of creative ore long since excavated from his burnt-out brain, wondering **how he was going to survive in the electrosphere** he had once called **home**. His glazed donut eyes were spacing out into the vast electric desert looking for more words to transcribe his **personal loss** of meaning. **“I’m Abe Golam, an old man. I drove a sign to the end of the road and then I got lost. Find me.”**

In the above quote, the bold words highlight the links in the text; the reader can follow any of the links to enter the work. Each link opens up a new, independent screen. The narrative unfolds through Abe Golam. But gradually the very identity of Golam as “I” disperses into the network into which Abe Golam first got hooked. As a result, it increasingly becomes difficult to know, as one moves through the infinite extending relationships in the network, whether it is the Grammatron that brought Abe Galom’s identity as an I into existence or Abe Golam who brought the network called Grammatron into being as the following lexia title “monsterI” highlights: “Was he an artist, an engineer, a rabbi, a doctor? Who was creating who?” On the other hand, the lexis entitled “socket cables” tells the following: “Golam adjusted the VR socket cables and shifted his body inside the coffin-like teleportation unit
ready to discharge himself into the vast realm of the electrosphere and its immersive chaos”. The word “Golam” is an intentional play on Golem, a magical anthropoid in the Jewish folklore and mysticism, formed from inanimate matter. The literal meaning of the word Golem is amorphous, artificial and unshaped human being invested with life force.

Figure: 1, Grammatron (For coloured image see Appendix III)

The work becomes a narrative of its networked relationships. Throughout the work we come across many tangential definitions of what Grammatron is. The work juxtaposes the blurring of boundaries between Reality and Virtual Reality, and forces one to consider how this blurring erodes our cherished notions of possessing a unitary homogenous self able to comprehend not only itself but its environment.

Once the human begins gets teleported into the electrosphere, the I becomes only a particular node in the network and keeps on forming new relationships incessantly. I becomes
[t]he free-floating “I” that automatically unwrites itself here in the electrosphere takes on multiple digressionary tracks and easily morphs into any number of so-called voices permeating the virtual environment. “I” am the-content-within, the Other whose form presents itself to the Reader as more than meets the “I” -- this more, this faster and better, is my new religion. “I” call it Digital Being.

We may state that “Digital Being” is the state of being-in-the-cyberspace, a perpetually fluid consciousness which simultaneously overflows and remains at the verge of completion. It enacts Derrida’s theory of continuous deferral of meaning, by trying forever to comprehend the electrosphere in its entirety. Amerka’s Grammatron thus dwells upon the implications of living in a fluid world where it is becoming increasingly difficult to trace the boundaries between fantasy and reality; in other words, in the condition of digitality. Fundamental to this state of being are code and data. In one of the lexias titled data, the following text appears:

    it is worthless…
    -0-1-0-1-0-1-0-1-0-1-0-1-0-1-0-1-0-1-0-1-0-
    it is data that worries me….

In another lexia entitled “Nanoscript” the following text appears:

    Nanoscript was the forbidden data that had been permeating the electrosphere ever since the dawn of Man. It was the underlying code that transcribed the evolution of consciousness in a natural world.

Here, one can see that both data and code are frustrating barriers since both challenge the comforting ontological belief in human being, and yet these are
inescapable as they together generate and drive all forms of life in the real world and in the electrosphere.

*Grammatron* comes with a companion theory guide titled “Hypertextual Consciousness”. The reader/user, as is the case with new media writing generally, can click on any of the given links to begin his exploration/reading of the work. As soon as the reader clicks on the link, *Hypertextual Consciousness* (HTC), the screen with the following text appears:

**HYPERTEXTUAL CONSCIOUSNESS 1.0**

an exploration into cyborg-narrators, virtual reality and the teleportation of narrative consciousness into the electrosphere....

In the aforementioned theory guide, Amerika contemplates the relationship between Virtual Reality, networking, hypertext and consciousness. He meditates how these emerging fields have opened novel opportunities for creative artists to exhibit their work for free and be in the company of like-minded people who enjoy their digital artistic productions. He says:

The cyborg-narrator, whose language investigations will create fluid narrative worlds for other cyborg-narrators to immerse themselves in, no longer has to feel bound by the self-contained artifact of book media. Instead of being held hostage by the page metaphor and its self-limiting texture as a landscape with distinct borders, Hypertextual Consciousness can now instantaneously link itself with a multitude of discourse networks where various lines of flight circulate and mediate the continued development of the collective-
Singh 236

self as it rids us of this need to surrender our thinking to outmoded conceptions of rhetoric and authorship. (Grammatron)

Amerika’s objective in producing Grammatron has been to explore and extend the concept of writing through the new digital media platforms in order to see how in an immersive networked space narratives might be created in future. He further says that Grammatron is basically a “public domain narrative environment” which plays with the possibilities of narrating the life in digitally networked world.

5.2 PHON:E:ME

Mark Amerika’s Phon:e:me is also a significant work of net art. The work was sponsored by Walker Art Center’s Gallery 9 initiative under which the work of many new artists were presented in online exhibition, in collaboration with the Australian Council for the Arts New Media Fund, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art and the Jerome Foundation. The homepage of the Gallery 9 project reads as follows:

…a site for project-driven exploration, through digitally-based media, of all things “cyber.” This includes artist commissions, interface experiments, exhibitions, community discussion, a study collection, hyperessays, filtered links, lectures and other guerilla raids into real space, and collaborations with other entities (both internal and external). <http://gallery9.walkerart.org/>

Gallery 9 gradually became one of the most creative and known online venues for internet-based art exhibitions, exploration and discussion about such artistic experimentation and practices in the field of new media art, in particular the web-
based art. *Phone:me* was launched in the year 1999. And the work was also nominated for the esteemed International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences Award in the year 2000.

As in his earlier work *Grammatron*, in *Phone:me* also Amerika dwells on the of authorship, creativity, network phenomenology, etc. In *Phone:me*, Amerika also makes use of audios, interface design and programming capabilities of computers to play with the fluid and fluctuating relationship the user forms with the network. That relationship is mediated through ever-new design interfaces that remain in a process of continuous regeneration and replacement. In the introduction to the work, available on his on own website, he writes that *Phone:me*

investigates the way auditory media pervades our daily lives and how this in turn affects the way we experience what have become routine cultural practices such as reading, writing, listening to music, and surfing the Internet. With a multitude of viable media formats and cultural objects fighting for our attention, questions of how we choose to design our own interactive experiences come to the fore.

In other words, Amerika’s attempt in *Phone:me* is to unravel the implications of living in network culture brought into existence by the functionalities of computers and other digital communication technologies. And this amounts to enquiring how our everyday cultural practices are undergoing transformations under the impact of communication technologies and those technologies of representation which are underpinned by an inherent capability for *programmability*. 
Phon:eme is a kind of electronic concept album. The notion of concept album goes back to 1950 and 60s. A concept album is “unified by a theme, which can be instrumental, compositional, narrative, or lyrical” (Shuker 5). And Phon:eme exploits every aspect of the idea of concept album by employing concept characters making use of composition, narrative and lyricism with background use of instrumental sounds.

As the reader clicks on the launch button, the work opens up in an independent window. The first window appears as the follow:

![Image of three green dots against a bluish background](http://phongme.walkerart.org - phon:eme - Microsoft Internet Explorer)

**Figure: 2, Phon:eme**

In the above figure, there are three green dots in vertical form against a light bluish background. The bluish background may allude to the sky, signifying its limitless character to allude to network as a sky with ever extending possibilities. The movement of the cursor over the dots breaks them into animated movement leading
to the appearance of the title “PHON:E:me”. The participation of the reader in the unfolding of the work takes place via the movements of the cursor.

The movement of the cursor over the title breaks it into three lines appearing at different levels in the window-frame and finally disappearing, as shown in the following figure:

Figure: 3, Phon:e:me

The animation stops with all the three lines disappearing into the bluish background, leading to a clear window-frame with nothing on it. Now, as the reader moves the cursor over the bluish blank space, there appears something like the following as the cursor reaches particular areas on the screen, which shows that these small areas have been programmed to respond to the movement of the cursor. The screen shows as in the following figure:
The above frame shows three horizontal lines at equal distance from each other in a vertical setting. The text in the first line reads: network congestion: “still-life with artificially constricted psychobabble”. This text keeps moving from the side of the screen to the left. And the text on the right hand side of the screen, overlapping the third horizontal line, keeps shifting with ever new headings like “network conductor”, “buoyant orality”, “spunk narrative”, “fabricated desire”, “recombinant écriture”, “specialized mythopoiesis” and “cut n paste mutantextuality” etc. The two square dots with titles “realaudio” and “mp3” are links to audio files that accompany the work.

The movement of the cursor over the first circle in the first line brings to light what we may term as the title “re-mixes”; the movement of the cursor over second circle in the second line brings forth the title “hyper-liner-notes”; and the title of third line is “film-texts”. The text in the first and the third line now remains
unchanged; it is only the second line where the work can be said to play itself out before the reader. The work basically, as Amerika himself says, is an “orchestration of writerly effects” contributed by network artists, writers, designers, DJs, programmers and curators. Their combined efforts created a transformational online narrative environment that tells the story of how net culture is altering our received notions of authorship and originality, and how emerging digital artists are helping to break down the boundaries between the virtual and the real, between art and non-art, and the various disciplines that have too often led to rigid compartmentalization and weak critical speculation.

The work is thus conceived as a collaborative project in which each participant - the programmer, the sound designer, the writer, DJ, the conceptual artist, the sound designer all come together to creatively contribute to the construction of a work that challenges conventional notions of authorship, originality and creativity in the form of individual genius. It consequently forces us to rethink “some of the issues surrounding experimental narrative practice as a one-man (one-woman) show” (Amerika 392).

The title “re-mixes” seems to refer to this fusion of different creative interventions by respective specialists into a single fragmented-whole. The “transformational online narrative environment” does not mean an overarching narrative structure with implicit cause-and-effect chain of events unfolding through the classical logic of probability or necessity. It rather refers to a space of fragmented-compositions, though noisily serious in nature, jotted together, coded to appear with the movements of the cursor controlled by the reader.
The compositions are invitations for a cardinal re-thinking of dominant prevalent conceptions with reference to our understandings of writing, author, creativity, originality and their mutual relationship in the emerging computer mediated network culture. The language has been infused with the language of programming and computer systems, interrupting the smooth functioning of the semiotic-linguistic order which facilities the emergence of a sense of self.

In the above figure, we see a list entitled “featuring” under the heading “hyper:liner:notes” subtitled “an orchestration of writerly effects”. The list contains a number of titles like the Network conductor, the New Media Economist, the Applied Grammatologist, No Mo PoMo and the Conceptual Artists etc., all of which are known as “concept characters”. Concept characters are those which take shape on the noisy pathways of the network when, as Amerika writes, “differance meets intertextuality and then has an affair with metafiction or Avant-Pop or HTC,” as a result of which all kinds of hybrid creatures come to life. All concept characters are
not fused into some kind of traditional narrative logic. The notion of concept character also comes from the field of animation where a character is designed in a manner that symbolises a particular idea or concept, as in the traditional style of personifying certain moral attributes such as virtue, perseverance, vice, etc. But in the network, the character embodies all kinds of opposing tendencies of the network, not a single idea. The last line in the above figure says: “And various other sonoluminescent”. The word ‘sonoluminescence’ refers to a phenomenon caused by the sound waves. It is defined as the “luminescence excited in a substance by the passage of sound waves through it” (Oxford Dictionaries Online), which in an inverted manner may refer to the emergence of characters or sounds or luminous writerly effects which the work is all about.

5.3 **FILMTEXT**

*Filmtext* is a work that makes use of recoded audios and videos and language, all geared towards the construction of a new kind of art-object which expands the boundary of art, culture, the profane and the aesthetic and the sublime in a radically avant-garde sense. The work raises fundamental questions about the location of contemporary humans in a highly computerized, technologized and networked world where they are bombarded with a never-ending flow of information in the forms of sounds, images and videos etc. The questions are: Who controls and drives these complex networks? Who writes the scripts of such networks? Who determines the flow of information? The work challenges the received conventional notions prevalent in discourse about network culture. The work has been exhibited in many international art festivals. *Filmtext 2.0* has been
recently on exhibition as part of the Media Forum Exhibition titled “The Immersion: Towards Haptic Cinema” at the Moscow International Film Festival

*Filmtext* is composed of seven independent scenes. The geographical landscape which forms the background of the frame is different in each of the eight screens, as a result of which the relationship of the reader with each screen varies with changes in ambience and backdrop in each frame. As soon as the user enters the address of the work in the browser, the work starts playing itself out in the form of an introduction. The first line of the introduction reads: “The figure is absent and in its absence it somehow resembles me”. The first screen looks like the flowing figure:

![Figure: 6, Filmtext](image)

On the top right side of the screen, we read the options. The word “intro” is underlined which means that it is hyperlinked. The introduction can be replayed. There are eight Chinese characters referring to eight independent screens of which the work is constituted. Following these are the credits. The background of the
screen is black with light grey long and short rectangular bars, including the text itself which appears moving across the screen from left to right. The introduction raises certain questions: “who are the ghosts in the Literary Machine,” and “who are the Network Conductors,” and “who are the Actions Scripts”? The introduction begins with the following declaration: “The Figure is absent and in its absence it somehow resembles me,” which may refer to the “I” as an effect of the network and nothing else. The introduction ends with two words: “Database” and “Digital Being”. The reader is also free to go to any of the screens of her/his choice by clicking on any one of the Chinese characters. Otherwise, by the time introduction has run its course, there appears a rectangular bar on the right side of the active area on the screen, which reads: “Authorized For Next Level”. There is an upward arrow besides this text that is linked to the next screen.

As soon as the reader clicks, s/he moves to the next level. It is a kind of desert landscape with small hills, as shown in the following figure:

Figure: 7, *Filmtext*
Again, there appear certain lines, prior to this screen, which describe what will be coming. It is called Transition 1. The movement of the cursor to top of three hills, which are a kind of hollowed out tops of hills, makes an elliptical circle over the hill which then light up from outside. Clicking on it, a small screen appears on this deserted landscape. In this screen again, there are three buttons on the right side which are hyperlinked to the text that finally appears on this short monitor-screen, since it looks like one, and can be switched off straight away by clicking on the button at the very bottom on the right hand side as shown in the following figure:

![Figure: 8, Filmtext](image)

A click on the first rectangular box on the right side of the short screen, as seen in the above figure, makes the text appear. The text gets gradually typed in the monitor-screen. The text talks about the reality of the real and to what extent we could ever know what we perceive is actually real. It says that the field of perception is “traumatized with thought”, and therefore all reality “must be imagined”. The text
ends with a strong declaration that “[p]erception itself has now become terrorized” which has all kinds of implications. Amerika here seems to be referring to what Bernard Steigler, in his recent book *For a New Critique of Political Economy*, has diagnosed. He says the process of grammatization moved to a higher level with the industrial revolution, leaving the sphere of language behind. He further writes:

[T]he process of grammatization invests bodies. And in the first place, it discretizes the gestures of producers with the aim of making possible their automatic reproduction - while at the very same moment there also appear those machines and apparatuses for reproducing the visible and the audible that so caught the attention of Walter Benjamin, machines and apparatuses which grammatized perception and, through that, the affective activity of the nervous system. (33)

The terrorization of perception, as Paul Virilio has noted in *The Vision Machine*, is a direct result of the rise of optical and other digital devices and technologies since the nineteenth century. The cumulative effect of all this has been a fundamental “engineering of vision,” to use Lev Manovich’s words. Steigler warns that all this will produce the “grammatization of affects” which in turn will lead “toward the cognitive and cultural capitalism of the hyperindustrial service economies” (33).

The title of the program in the screen is “bodytext” and “silence”. The basic layout of the work remains the same throughout. The text appears in the following scheme:
Telltarget("title"){

gotoANDplay("title");
}

With each click of the user on the small rectangular box in the small screen, a new meditation appears with a different title at the two places in the above framework.

There are three hilltops as seen in the Screenshot 7. Clicking on the second one lets a smaller screen appears in the frame. In this short screen, there are three options on the right side. Clicking on the first and third leads to the playing of different fast-paced short videos with a lot of heavy background sounds. The following figure shows one of the movies being played out in a smaller monitor-screen:

![Figure: 9, Filmtext](image_url)

In this, a dark black shadow, probably of a male figure with a hat keeps fluctuating. The click on the third hilltop just leads to the appearance of a white zigzag pattern, shown in the following image.
The second screen talks about the “Digital Thoughtographer” who is basically a “tele-robotic presence in the field of action”. The “Digital Thoughtographer” is a “colour-me-Beautiful make-up artist on a metaphysically violent rampage”. The language is certainly intimidating and it almost short-circuits meaning in the reader. The DT is supposed to be an “alien lightform” who transports “other-worldly consciousness” into the “ether”. Amerika writes that this DT becomes a kind of ghost writer because the humans are always prone, since their mind and thought are flexible, to take in what is seen, at face value, and then “[digest it] into something extra-real” in the sense, this ‘extra’ seems to have been loaded with a providential meaning which grows like a “fungus”. As it happens with all meaning, it

Begins to grow IN you, to take you over.

And the more it grows inside you, the more you become it.

And the more you become it, the more it seems natural.
And the more it seems natural, the more others get used to it and accept it for what it is.

This almost sounds like the formalist idea, related to the fundamental the function of art, of defamiliarization or *estrangement*. In the network culture, this is possible only if we are somehow conscious of how the network is organized and if we understand its control and drive mechanisms, channels, and the filters through which information passes and comes to interpellate us as subjects of the network.

The third screen opens with a rocky desert landscape. There are two similar circular links in the frame. The monitor-screen appears as the reader clicks on the left link. The following text appears as the reader clicks the first of the three square boxes in the monitor-screen. Not only can there be no original, the simulacrum has now lost its punch too.

Aura is interface.

What you see is what you get?

Or is it?

There is only perception.

…

The experience of seeing what is there in front of our eyes and capturing that thereness in the experiential act of perception.

This certainly suggests how the question of perception has once again become crucial in the contemporary digital and network world. As Manovich says, it is more a question of interfaces in the form of information designs that determines we relate
to the world. Amerika corroborates Manovich when he emphatically says that “Aura is interface”. The aura has been destroyed with the coming of mass production techniques, and the Baudrillardian concern with the simulacrum that displaces, or rather replaces, reality is also dead. There is no original; there is no simulacrum, there is only the *interface*.

The moment the text appears in the monitor screen, a strange kind of technological gadget falls on to the screen and utters the words: “eye:camera”. The most important part comes when the reader clicks on the next button in this monitor-screen of this third frame-screen, titled “narralogue”. It talks again about the question of “seeing” and about the lingering possibility of seeing what is not there, which, as Amerika writes, instills a kind of “unsettled angst” which puts into question the very phenomenon of seeing:

> Charging the language with meaning to the utmost possible degree, the digital thoughtographers use whatever data is possible at their disposal.

The fourth frame-screen, like the second one, has a black background with three elliptical circles landing in the above space. Clicking on the extreme right elliptical figure brings forth the monitor-screen whose first links is the title “institution” and it is subtitled “chameleon”. The technological gadget again accompanies the text, but it is literally incomprehensible because the voice is so heavy and blurred. It talks about the obsolescence of the institution of the museum
as it is being increasingly replaced by “live archive,” which is “an Anti Document”.

It further argues that what we are witnessing is an “event”; the we is “the Network author”. The event is nomadic; it processes the language, and it has replaced the old revered entity called ‘object’. Every network is an event, loaded with an infinite array of processes. There are no objects as such; there are only patterns which are charged “with meaning to the utmost possible degree” by the digital thougthographer” by using all kinds of “data at their disposal”. All this makes meaning itself into an event, a process, a nomadic event processing itself into newer patterns in the network, controlled by the authors. The last of the links really foregrounds one of the most evocative, and provocative, short pieces of text in Filmtext. It is sub-titled “codification”, with “warrior” as the title. The fourth frame-screen talks about the question of “event” in detail, and ends with it. It says:

   Event Processing.

   New-religion in the making.

   Where will we go next?

   Are we free to go where we want?

   I live my life.

   My life is not a military institution.

   You cannot keep me in suburban zoo.

   Surrounded by my possessions.

   One by one dimming in the black hole of pseudo-subjectivity.
Each pixel is a dark spot on the canvas that informs my digital being.

A relentless html cancer spreading through the Central Nervous System.

The titles of the piece are important since the word “warrior” highlights the eagerness to fight and resist the homogenizing nature of codification underway in the network culture. All lines are independent and yet form a pattern leading to a narrative sense.

The piece indirectly alludes to military-industrial-complex, the callous consumerism of contemporary capitalism, the ideological interpellation, the contemporary space of the unfolding of being, the digital apparatus, and how all this corrodes the very CNS of human being, again an allusion to CPU (Central Processing Unit). This almost seems to suggest what Slavoj Zizek calls contemporary capitalism’s injunction to “Enjoy!”. In other word, the capitalist system, aided by the digital communication technologies and the computers, wants the human subject to keep enjoying irrespective of what s/he actually wants. To go a step further, the wants, desires, and drives are themselves codified by the dangerous homogenization whereby the central nervous system is getting cancerous, what Bernard Steigler has called the “cognitive and affective proletarianization” (30).

The reader moves to level five (5). It resembles the first frame-screen; the only difference is the hazy reddishness of the landscape with only three elliptical figures on similar hilltops, out of which the extreme right yields the larger monitor-
screen and the middle one yields a smaller monitor-screen in which different flickering videos are played at the click of the mouse. The next frame-screen again comes with a dark background with a strange mechanical kind of robotic figure located at the centre of the frame-screen in white, as shown in the following figure. The accompanying background musical score is almost menacing:

![Figure: 11, Filmtext](image)

With a click on the second elliptical figure, nothing happens except that the background to the white figure starts changing colour. The text emerges from the skull of this robotic figure and moves up and out of the screen.

The next level is called Transition 2. In this transition, the landscape that forms the background of the frame-screen changes fundamentally. The landscape is redolent of a foggy atmosphere in a sea (water is coloured white), bordering a low-lying mountain range, with two mountains right in the middle of the sea. There are
small elliptical figures though. This level is very significant since it marks a transition, and it talks about the “screenwriter”.

![Image of a monitor-screen with a link titled 'screenwriter' and subtitled 'memoryrecorder'.]

Figure: 12, *Filmtext* (For coloured image see Appendix IV)

The click on the extreme right elliptical figure over the mountain top makes the monitor-screen appear, with the first link titled screenwriter and subtitled “memoryrecorder”. In this piece, the self-reflexive nature of *Filmtext* is highlighted:

*This is not literature.*

*I do not write literature.*

*I am a network practitioner.*

*I remix viral ostranenie.*

*This is what it means to expand the concept of writing.*

*This is what it means to MAKE HISTORY.*

*TO MAKE HISTORY UP.*
A pseudo-autobiographical work-in-progress with an anticipated completion date of _______.

An ongoing ungoing Life Style Practice without aim.

Amerika here self-reflexively comments on his own creative practice in the sense that it questions its own status as a literary art-object by declaring that “this is not literature,” yet simultaneously it argues that the challenge of “expanding the concept of writing” demands such creative and inescapable re-mixing which leads to “viral ostranenie” which is the same as the technique of defamiliarization, as has been stated above. “Ostranenie” is a Russian term. The piece in the next link meditates on the futility of the nomadic wandering to “the end of the night” because it does not lead to the “much-vaunted conclusion at the light of the day”. It is always a circular self-reference “networked social discourses” which interpellate us. Amerika asks the question: “Is this war over yet?” And the answer is “the war is over the subject” which clearly points to the question of human subjectivity in a heavily computerized and networked world, with all kinds of gadgets, machines and technologies at our disposal, and us at their disposal.

Finally, we reach the last level again a desert landscape with small hard rocks scattered all over it. The same technological gadget appears over the frame-screen and a voice comes: “I will text it; I will the image; I will text the environment”, it keeps reappearing time and again saying, “communicating environment; audio environment” which may seem to be an allusion to Derrida’s famous statement that “[t]here is nothing outside the text”.
A click on the above elliptical figure brings the smaller monitors-screen onto the frame-screen in which one can see, like in the previous cases, videos of land deserted mountain ranges. The frame-screen appears as shown in the screenshot 12. Clicking the second elliptical figure makes the text appear in a white tube-shape ray, and it disappears within seconds. The text also appears at the top of the screen in the form of a series of loose fragments on *digitality and the network culture*.

All of Amerika’s works employ heavy programming, coding, and graphical interfaces to explore the question of technological mediation in the creation and construction of new kinds of narrative strategies that allow us to expand the concept of writing in a truly Derridean sense, for which every kind of inscription (aural, visual, kinematic) is writing. For instance, Amerika employs sounds, videos, and motion to build the dynamicity of the work and narrative movement. The movement here should not be thought of as a kind of causal chain of linear events; it is rather to be thought of as a motion in space, thought of the art-work itself.
The complete creative repertoire of Mark Amerika’s is a long, intense and complex meditation on the implications of being situated in a network culture. He goes deep into the very circuits of contemporary life, with great emphasis on the life-world of an artist, to engage himself with its very foundations, i.e. the condition of digitality and, thereby, brings to the fore what is taken for granted in general discourse. The attempt throughout has been, it seems, to rethink the blurring of traditional boundaries between the real and the virtual, the original and the copy, and the artist and the engineer/designer/programmer. The aim of Amerika in the trilogy has been, as he himself writes, to contemplate and seriously rethink

[…the] computer-mediated network environment of the World Wide Web as an experimental writing zone, one where the evolving language of new media would reflect the convergence of image writing, sound writing, language writing, and code writing as complementary processes that would feed off each other and, in so doing, contribute to the construction of interactive digital narratives programmed to challenge the way we compose, exhibit, and distribute art in network culture.

New media writers like Shelly Jackson, Alan Sondheim and Stuart Moulthrop stress that we must take into account the material specificity of writing in the new media. They point out that whereas it is important not to underestimate the programming and coding that go into the construction of new literary writing, the materiality of digital media should also include “the embodied cultural, social, and ideological contexts in which computation takes place” (Hayles, “EL: What is it” par. 45). Mark
Amerika’s three works *Grammatron, Phon:e:me* and *Filmtext* examines precisely this kind of materiality which foregrounds the socio-cultural elements of life in a computer-based and network-centered world. Amerika dwells on the nature of artist’s subjectivity in the network, the question of digital ontology, and how the condition of digitality and the specific materiality of the network shape her/his artistic production and aesthetic sensibility.