

READING CULTURE AND LIBRARIES IN CHANGE

May 22–23, 2019, University of Turku

Session proposal: **Digital poetry / Digitaalinen runous**

Language used in the session: **Finnish**

Chair: Karoliina Lummaa, University of Turku, sakalu@utu.fi

Presenters:

Siru Kainulainen, University of Turku

Miikka Laihinen, University of Turku

Karoliina Lummaa, University of Turku

The Digital poetry -session discusses digital poetry and the practical, interpretational and philosophical challenges this emerging art form poses on reading and literature scholarship. Digital means of creating and publishing poetry diversify the makeup of poetic texts and alter the ways poetry is read, experienced and understood. The purpose of the session is to address the diverse issues involved in screen-mediated creating, reading and experiencing of poetic texts. By introducing a variety of approaches and concepts, the papers will also examine how contemporary methodologies developed within various branches of humanities will help to understand, contextualize and conceptualize digital poetry.

Kainulainen focuses on the differences and tensions between reading digital poetry and printed poetry, with a special emphasis on senses. As examples she discusses Tuija Välipakka's electronically published work *On hundred red things in summer 2018* (2018, nokturno.org) and poetry collection *Uutisia! (News!)* (2018, Siltala). Research has emphasized digital environments as a new resource and a possibility for readers of literature (Herkman & Vainikka 2012). However, a study of the attitudes of readers utilizing the web reveals that the readers still consider themselves as traditional users (Matikainen & Villi 2015). Accordingly, an active usership of web-based platforms is still understood in terms of content-production. Reading as such does not count as active usership. Is it possible, Kainulainen asks, that poetry in its "traditional" printed forms is still able to activate the senses more thoroughly and "demand" more from its readers. As the reception and reading experiences of E-books has not yet been adequately studied (cf. Kajander 2015), the paper will formulate a series of preliminary questions and suggest approaches to address questions concerning active readership and sensorial experientiality.

Laihinen discusses the philosophical aspects of digital poetry with a special emphasis on ontology. In a stark contrast to static textual objects of printed poetry, the moving images of digital, program-based poems offer a new challenge for readers. The digital format dissolves all spatio-temporal limitations of printed literature – a change that requires philosophical reflection as well.. Laihinen addresses digital poetry as texts that surpass bodily capabilities. Philosopher Baruch Spinoza highlighted the human body as a new philosophical model: according to Spinoza, the body always exceeds all information we have on it. Based on Spinoza's ontological monism Laihinen argues that words in poetry can be examined as bodily entities. Drawing also from the conceptual frameworks of speculative philosophy Laihinen examines the potentialities of digital word bodies. He asks, what are these digital word bodies capable of, as their stability as representative signs is questioned and challenged by new modes of poetic expression.

Lummaa's topic is agency. Within posthumanist literary studies, the question of authorship has been challenged by the notion of nonhuman agencies. Focusing on one visual poem, "damage" (2008, nokturno.org) by Jukka-Pekka Kervinen, Lummaa addresses the multiple agencies of digital

poetry. “damage” opens up a seemingly three-dimensional space of partly effaced words “written” in different colors. The poem is created with a computer program written by Kervinen, based on stochastic/cybernetic algorithms. By changing the angle of the screen the reader is able to manipulate the color contrasts and thus the material makeup of the poem. Drawing from N. Katherine Hayles’s (1999) remarks on the changing experience of reading text from the screen (or the *flickering signifiers* as she calls the signs of digital texts), digital poetry can be studied by observing the multiple nonhuman agencies and powers of human poetic and programmatic authorship, computer hardware and software, electricity, and other objects, systems, and processes uncommon to any classical humanist notion of poetry.