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# Born-Digital Dialectics: Twitter Literature as a Cyberspace Genre

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## ABSTRACT

This paper establishes Twitter literature as a born-digital literary genre shaped by the dialectical nature of cyberspace and its constraints and affordances, including enforced brevity, threading modularity, and algorithmic virality. It addresses the gap in studies on electronic literature and digital humanities, traditionally pivoted on studies of hypertext fiction, while pushing the literary potentials of microblogging to the margin. Synthesizing Hayles's media-specific analysis, Levine's genre theory, and other ideas on the dynamics of cyberspace, it argues that the constraints of Twitter do not overshadow creative forms of cultural critique, but, on the contrary, they create a space of tension between democratization and hierarchy. This paper contends that the constraints potentially democratize the production of literature through a highly social space of engagement and participation, yet the algorithmic systems usually preserve the hierarchies and attenuate the democratic potential. Through a genealogical analysis, the literary possibilities behind Twitter literature and its evolution are traced to pre-digital fragments, digital precursors, and key movements on Twitter. Analyses of two examples, including Jennifer Egan's Black Box and Teju Cole's Small Fates, demonstrate how constraints foster aphoristic density, nonlinear narratives, and participatory meaning-making within the contested space. The paper promotes digital humanities by redefining twenty-first-century literariness and placing cyberspace as a potential zone for genre formation.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper establishes Twitter literature as a born-digital literary genre that has been shaped by the dialectical nature of cyberspace in general and the distinct features of Twitter in particular. This study locates Twitter literature within digital humanities, illustrating how cyberspace performs as an active player in genre formation in twenty-first-century literature. William Gibson's notion of cyberspace, in his science fiction novel *Neuromancer* (1984), recast information as something spatial so that it possessed the quality of a landscape that can be easily navigated. He provided a dystopian image of the space, practically viable for the fusion of human and Artificial Intelligence, as an AI obtains Swiss citizenship (48). The dystopian image is portrayed by a space of untraceable crimes, like the case of a theft (44). N. Katherine Hayles has developed this in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), arguing that cyberspace has created a paradigm shift, the transformation of humanist subjectivity into posthuman embodiment. She demonstrates that bodies of information resulted in human disembodiment, adding digital entities as an indispensable part of the definition of human, apart from humans' mentality and physicality, as she states, "there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (3). Thus, she critiques the idea of bodilessness as an illusion since she argues that it is still grounded in digital infrastructures (12-13). Cyberspace, like literature, functions as a dialectic space oscillating between a utopian space of escape and a dystopian space of trap, so it triggers the idea of Twitter as a literary cyberspace (36-38). The transformation of Twitter (2006-2023) from a microblogging apparatus to a literary lab helped the democratization of cyberspace come true.

The platform offered limited space to its users to ossify its poetics, including brevity, algorithmic virality, and thread-based modularity. However, these three principles have later seen several alterations. The alterations catalyzed linguistic creativity. Naturally, creative writing in the Twitter space became aphoristic, i.e., dense and intense. Teju Cole's micro-fictions are good examples. The space and later alterations fueled virality as well through retweets and hashtags. As Hayles says, "an 'I' transformed into the 'we' of autonomous agents operating together to make a self. The infectious power of this way of thinking gives 'we' a performative dimension" (*How We Became Posthuman* 6), this increased the vitality of the productions and supported eclectic participation of readers and their agencies. Interestingly, it subverts Barthes' idea of 'the death of the author' through live tweets and simultaneously supports the idea of the formation of archived threads. Traditional gatekeepers, thus, have been bypassed and literary production was democratized. In a sense, the platform created a cyberspace which, at least in some moments, challenged the Bourdieusian hierarchies and permitted the emergence of counter-hegemonic critiques. Twitter literature has become the epitome of a genre born in digital space, affecting literary traditions with its robust digital possibilities and practices. Accordingly, the paper addresses the following questions along with the discussions: 1) How do cyberspace dialectics and the constraints of Twitter coalesce to form Twitter as a born-digital genre? 2) How does Twitter literature liquidize authorship and foster participatory meaning-making while simultaneously replicating pre-established hierarchies? Moreover, 3) How does the genealogy of Twitter literature depict the trajectory of its evolution?

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. Gaps in Electronic Literature

Hayles framed the concept of 'born-digital' forms in her *Electronic Literature* (2008), as "a first-generation digital object created on a computer and (usually) meant to be read on a computer" (3) and limned two generations of pre-Web, e.g., Michael Joyce's *Afternoon, a Story*, and post-1995, like Flash poetry (6-7). Jessica Pressman's *Digital Modernism* (2014) continued the scholarship and attributed digital literature to the aesthetics of modernism (2). She contended that digital platforms, like Flash, provided authors with tools to experiment in fragmentation and rhythm (ix). Interestingly, her discussion challenged Hayles's idea that there has been a rupture between modernist experimental works and digital innovations (Pressman 19-20). However, there are some gaps in the existing critical literature.

The most significant one is the prevalence of studies on 'hypertext literature' in the literature. Hayles and Pressman, for instance, have pivoted their scholarship on topics such as hypertext fiction, codework, etc. Consequently, topics concerning microblogging have been marginalized. Scholars like Leonardo Flores highlighted this gap and stated that the third generation of electronic literature, emerging on social media and networking platforms, has been neglected (para. 16). Twitter literature is a vivid example. The second gap is the discrimination against some platforms in the relevant studies. The standards of ELO (Electronic Literature Organization), with its standard, led to the exclusion of some platforms and the literature produced on them; for example, Twitter literature has been sidelined and its legitimacy within literature has been thrown into doubt (Rettberg 20-21). The third gap is the intransigence prevalent in the theory, which fussily delimitates analytical frameworks. Hayles's framework, media-specific analysis, is a good example (Rettberg 24). Similarly, Pressman's above-mentioned analogy fails to address the

socio-algorithmic aspects of microblogging (Rettberg 21). This paper intends to help address these gaps.

Few scholars have already worked on Twitter literature, so many more studies must be done in this field to map its critical ground adequately. Shuchi Agrawal (2023), in her paper "Twitterature: A New Digital Literary Genre," provides an introductory survey of the literature on Twitter. It frames the platform as a tool for summarizing or promoting the pre-existing print or electronic literature, not a distinct genre. Her scope throughout the paper is descriptive without using a theoretical framework to make a critical analysis of features and possibilities that were born to Twitter. In a similar manner, Laila Al Sharagi and Irum Abbasi (2016), in their "Twitter Fiction: A New Creative Literary Landscape," have defended the existence of 'Twitter Fiction' against the mainstream critical orientations that privilege print or less progressive electronic literature. They identified the resonance of Twitter fiction with contemporary digital attention economies. However, their analysis relies mostly on journalistic sources and is so non-theoretical that it fails to examine the power dynamics in Twitter literature. Christian Howard-Sukhil (2023), in her "Twitter & World Literature: The Development of Hashtag Communities as a Global Writing Practice," advanced the studies on Twitter literature much more broadly by moving beyond individual texts to the analysis of hashtags as a community-forming practice. While Howard-Sukhil maps trans-linguistic circulation and politicized discourse on Twitter, she has focused more on the sociological function of hashtags and did not theorize the output of features on Twitter as a literary genre. These critical works describe the existence of literary production on Twitter, the related communities, and their distributive functions, but they do not explain the how and so what of the Twitter literature. Accordingly, this paper aims to

fill this gap by giving a theoretical account of Twitter and the born-digital genre being formed and circulated on it.

**2.2. Theoretical Gaps**

There is a gap regarding the theoretical framework to analyze Twitter literature as a genre. The gap has its roots in persistent gaps in the studies on electronic literature and digital humanities. As mentioned earlier, Flores's idea of 'the third generation electronic literature', which emerged after 2005, acknowledges the credibility of platforms like Twitter and Instagram in literary studies. In the same way, Rebecca Walkowitz argues that electronic literature is born-translated so that it will encompass Twitter literature, including texts that embed global readership for being multilingual and translation from its inception (3-4, 47). While the expansion in Hayles's definition of electronic literature has included the literature born on social media and paved the way for fresh, progressive studies in this field, little research has been done on examples of Twitter literature. The scholarship must be developed urgently as the previous literary productions through microblogging have been underexamined, and the production is being accelerated.

The second and more profound reason for an urgent focus is that the production suggests the incipient transformation of literary production by and large. The transformation is expected to be detected and justified by genre theory. So far, genre theory has not adequately addressed it in order to examine how social media, with its unique qualities, has been fermenting literary evolution. Jenkins underscores the participatory culture of cyberspace in his *Convergence Culture* (2006), being subversive of media hegemony (29) through retweeting and hashtags, but his model regards the formal aspects of literary production in the space as less important. He adopts the same attitude towards the reasons behind the

innovation, e.g., participatory praxis, in the emergence of novel genres (164). This attitude, taken by Jenkins and some other scholars, has created a theoretical vacuum about the above-mentioned transformation. For instance, genre theory has not systematically located and theorized the literary production specific to a particular platform as a distinct genre, for instance, Twitter literature as a genre native to the Twitter platform and generated with its specific differential characteristics. Cyberspace theory is expected to work actively here, but the gap is yet to be significant. Sherry Turkle, as an example, in her *Life on the Screen* (1995), subordinates technical qualities as factors in the formation of new literary forms, although she meticulously demonstrates that users construct multiple or fluid identities through various tools on the Net (11-15). The lesson to learn here is that such an anti-Cartesian view is critical in understanding Twitter literature. The tradition of Cartesian dualism in Western philosophy has privileged the mind of a (wise) individual (res cogitans) over the body (res extensa), so the mind plays the role of a sovereign, authoritative figure, namely the author, and the body is a passive entity to be ruled, the reader. Twitter literature, with its constraints and affordances, has destabilized the binary.

The interesting point in Turkle's study is her focus on the anti-Cartesian idea of identity, which makes authorship a very critical issue in studies on cyberspace. The tradition of indifference towards genre studies in cyberspace has later created a reductionist view in cyberspace theory (Agrawal 73-74), which considers cyberspace as a setting rather than a catalyst of generic literary transformation. Lisa Nakamura's *Cybertypes* (2002), in a realistic manner, shatters the dream of an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory utopia in cyberspace by revealing that algorithms preserve stereotypes in the space or by creating cybertypes. The example is telling:

anonymity, in the absence of racial markers, in cyberspace is usually understood as whiteness, as the default participants (Nakamura 31–32). She, however, overlooks the intersection of cybertyping and genre formation in experimental spaces like Twitter. Hopefully, Luzón and Pérez-Llantada focused on the modalities of the space, in particular, how it can persuade and foster participation, discussion, and debates (23-25). However, they fail to bring the ability and creativity of the space into focus to build up new, hybrid genres.

**2.3. Theoretical Position & Contribution**

This paper aims to address the discussed gap in the critical literature on electronic literature and contribute to the establishment of Twitter literature as born-digital literature, that is, a distinctive cyberspace-native genre that developed from the constraints of Twitter, including limited character brevity, thread-based modularity, and algorithm-based interactions, together with human creativity. It examines how these constraints have reconfigured literary forms, democratized social, cultural, political, or individual expressions, and affected the aesthetics of print literature. This way, it addresses the critical gaps that have already been discussed. While the theoretical frameworks in most previous studies have ostracized the literary significance of microblogging or relegated cyberspace to a passive setting, this study places Twitter as a major player in the evolution of literary genres. In practice, it synthesizes N. Katherine Hayles's idea of 'media-specific analysis' with platform studies in order to investigate how algorithmic infrastructures, like Twitter, have reshaped the production of literary works. The main thesis holds that Twitter literature is part of a literary genre born of dialectics in cyberspace, contributing to the field of digital humanities in the redefinition of literariness in the twenty-first century. The paper discusses how the

affordances of Twitter literature have made it practically possible to democratize authorship, enable marginalized voices to dismantle cultural hierarchies, and make readers engage actively in the construction of meaning. Accordingly, it analyzes two examples: Jennifer Egan's *Black Box*, a compressed speculative narrative, and Teju Cole's *Small Fates*, a post-colonial micronarrative. The paper, finally, argues that Twitter literature exemplifies a genre born on and with a dialectical space: the interplay between control and collectivity, ephemerality and preservation, and algorithms and agencies.

**3. Analysis of Genre and Power**

This section undertakes the theoretical analysis of cyberspace dialectics, power dynamics, and genre formation in cyberspace as one of its major focuses. It actually examines how the dialectical space on Twitter, which is a site of both possibilities and limitations, molds literary production in the digital world. It establishes the forces and effects of Twitter as a contested cyberspace on literary genre formation.

**3.1. Cyberspace: A Contested Literary Territory**

William Gibson conceptualizes cyberspace as a shared illusion, understanding it as a utopian potential. His *Neuromancer* describes: "cyberspace. *A consensual hallucination* (emphasis added) experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts… A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system" (34). The 'consensual hallucination' suggests that Gibson does not consider it a mere technology. The hallucination is utopian mainly because it is consensual, lying outside of the existing material limits. Cyberspace users have agreed that they breathe in a world of hallucination, a virtual landscape of free interactions or collective escape from the confines of

their bodies. This concept has revolutionized the perceptions of the Internet to an active apparatus, as significant as physical spaces, a shared site of subjectivities. Gibson's transcendental world of cyberspace removes corporeal confines and lets users build up networked, communal realities. In this novel, Gibson, through the hacker protagonists of the story, depicted today's world of the Virtual Reality metaverse, fluid online identities, decentralized communities, and digital embodiment. This is the epitome of Gibson's utopianism, the dream of a mind freed and fleeing from its body. Of course, the picture is oxymoronic: simultaneously utopian and dystopian, a world of possibilities while haunted by hegemonic hierarchies of control (Gibson 34-35). As a whole, the picture is optimistic; virtual existence is prioritized over material reality because fusion leads to liberation from physical limitations through technology. N. Katherine Hayles challenges Gibson's utopianism.

Hayles, against Gibson's transcendental utopianism, loads a materialist critical pistol. Her counter-argument is that cyberspace is not a haven cyberspace users can escape to, but is rooted in physical space; it is not purely virtual but tethered to power plants, servers, cables, hardware, labor, and corporations. Cyberspace, therefore, is not an escape, but, in Hayles's words, it constructs a combination of the semiotic and material, which had started in the middle of the twentieth century, as she marks, "seeing the world as an interplay between informational patterns and material objects is a historically specific construction" (*How We Became Posthuman* 14). The material part of the knot has already been discussed. Hayles argues that the space comprises codes, avatars, symbols, and digital realities; she explains, "in cyberspace, point of view does not emanate from the character; rather, the pov literally is the character" (*How We Became Posthuman* 38). Thus, the liberation from physical limits is a pure

illusion when Silicon Valley giants duplicate capitalist inequality online, from a physical/offline master copy, as she remarks, "virtuality… instantiated in an array of powerful technologies" (*How We Became Posthuman* 14). Even the military establishment takes the duty, as she notes, "it is no accident that the condition of virtuality is most pervasive and advanced where the centers of power are most concentrated. Theorists at the Pentagon, for example, see it as the theater in which future wars will be fought" (*How We Became Posthuman* 20). While minds are sensing liberation in the virtual world, bodies are sweating in the physical world. So, contrary to Gibson's romanticized space, Hayles's cyberspace is a site of 'to be or not to be,' *a battleground of realities*, in which the mind and flesh are both being exploited: "the parts of the self are indeed owned, but they are owned precisely because they were purchased" (*How We Became Posthuman* 3). The tension between the utopianism of Gibson and materialism of Hayles mirrors the experience of the literary author on Twitter; it is a platform that promises liberation but is made on material infrastructure as well as algorithmic control. Tarleton Gillespie's analysis of algorithmic governance is relevant to this tension.

Gillespie critically rejects platforms' claims of neutrality. He exposes that they covertly collect and create content through technical mechanisms (Gillespie, "Politics of 'Platforms'" 357-8). He explains that viral materials are prioritized over nuanced discourses, which are complex, in-depth, and context-based. These discourses include ambiguity, multiplicity, and non-reductivism. According to Gillespie, 'engagement-optimized content' is favored by platforms for its simplicity, speed, and vividness. So, if any content challenges standards and moderation, it is going to be detected as violations and sidelined. This way, the unnormalized are marginalized through algorithmic suppression

(Gillespie, "Politics of 'Platforms'" 358-9), which shows how intersectional justice or liberation can be merely absurd phrases in cyberspace. The platforms act as what Michel Foucault termed a *dispositif*, an apparatus of power or disciplinary measures by power for surveillance and naturalization, as Gillespie explains the same issue about Google ("Algorithmically Recognizable" 74). On the other hand, Henry Jenkins highlights 'participatory culture', the mechanisms in cyberspace through which users can practice resistance (3). Based on his ideas about the function of fan fiction in participatory culture and its comparison with Wikipedia (255-6), it can be argued that tools like hashtags can transform readers into collective interpreters or even co-authors of works.

While algorithms are designed to homogenize the space, they can also be used against the purposes for which they were invented. So, they creatively repurpose the dispositifs, making non-linear, for instance, narratives by threading tweets. Thus, it can be claimed that Jenkins thinks that the subversion of power and the decentralization of norms are 'tactics of grassroots', which the marginalized can use to resist the system and show their agency. For instance, Johanna Burai's campaign, *World White Web*, functioned as 'repair politics' (the ways to circumvent prioritizing algorithms) to promote racial justice in Google's image search results. Burai's project disrupted algorithmic favoritism and modified it, for example, in Pinterest. Twitter's literary space can be defined based on the current discussions about cyberspace. Gibson's utopianism, Hayles's material-semiotic knot, Gillespie's algorithmic regimes, and Jenkinsian participatory culture and tactical agency account for Twitter's unique cyberspace, with its constraints, for the emergence of transformative literary production. Twitter literature epitomizes the dialectical nature of cyberspace as it is a genre native to a platform with contradictory qualities,

including possessing algorithms that check distributed networks and possibilities for expressions of agency by means of repurposed constraints.

### 3.2. Genre Theory and Affordances in Cyberspace

Caroline Levine, in her *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015), reimagines genre theory through developing the concept of 'form,' including, but not limited to, spatial, temporal, and social forms. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, she connects literary studies, political theory, and cultural studies. She thinks that forms encompass infrastructures or structuring principles that shape both aesthetics and social life (3). If so, there are collisions of forms; as a result, genres cannot remain fixed (7). Moreover, in her model, a genre waxes and wanes as any organization of elements, that is, "all shapes and configurations, all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference" (Levine 3) are in a state of flux. She explains that different forms possess different 'affordances', including their potentials as well as limitations. Genres possess distinctive affordances, with which they shape expectations; they circulate through contexts (they are 'portable'), and they collide with other genres (4-6), leading to the emergence of a new genre, as she asserts, "form, for our purposes, will mean all shapes and configurations, all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference" (3); she argues that forms emerge from politics, as she continues, "politics is not only about imposing order on space. It also involves organizing time… politics involves activities of ordering, patterning, and shaping… the political is a matter of imposing and enforcing boundaries, temporal patterns, and hierarchies on experience, then there is no politics without form" (3). Levine's model demonstrates how the architectures of platforms function as affordances (potentials and limitations), e.g., Twitter's

character limit, to shape genres, though Levine's model can justify the formation of traditional literary genres as well.

The evolution of the sonnet in English poetry is a good example. Yet, Twitter literature epitomizes a new media form, in which it is the computational/algorithmic logic that dictates forms, not cultural tradition, like the features of a new media Manovich explains (63-65). Manovich's idea adds significance to Levine's emphasis on affordances, making the platform an active player in the formation of genre. For instance, the imposed brevity on Twitter compels users to come up with innovative wordings, maybe through fragmentation or compression. At this point, the innovation can maneuver differently in cultural contexts and yield social and cultural possibilities where power can be contested and reconfigured. Levine's model, interestingly, challenges Foucault's deterministic notion of power. However, it must be noted that Levine's idea advocates, in a sense, the Foucauldian idea that power is productive and welcomes resistance. This, if known by users, generates activism and practical resistance.

Levine's genre theory aligns with Derrida's idea of genre, too. In his literature, "The Law of Genre," Derrida introduces the principle of genre theory, "genres are not to be mixed" (202), and then pulls the rug. He argues against accentuating the purity, prescribed by genre theory, and definite boundaries of genres, holding that "participation [in genre] never amounts to belonging" (206), so significant is the inevitability of hybridity. Suppose that a text participates in a genre using its forms, themes, conventions, etc., but, he argues, it does not mean that the text (fully) belongs to that particular genre. The reason is that a set of discrepancies or distinctions usually exists that hinder the text from falling under the generic category. The notion of purity meets a big paradox here: a genre

requires norms and boundaries (distinct categories); it is impossible to meet the demand (as there is no text without contamination). Now, the formation of Twitter literature, in light of the inevitability of hybridity, as a genre is justified on the grounds of the paradox in genre theory.

Twitter literature, in particular, and electronic literature, in general, have been born from computational/algorithmic processes and structures and are basically characterized by the possibilities for combining and recombining elements in a nonstop manner. Thus, it is one of the principal features of Twitter literature to blur boundaries between literary genres and boundaries between literature and other forms of media, as explained, due to its active participation as well as recombinant nature. The literature fuses elements from various genres; examples are the logical organization of literature, the brevity and figurative language of poetry, the factuality and timeliness of journalism, and the contagiousness and variety of memes. The amalgam, as a new genre, is complex and contingent, based on Luzón and Pérez-Llantada's discussions on genre theory (22), can be called 'digital genre ecology', in which there are no definite boundaries between genres. This makes Twitter literature a distinct 'cybergenre' born from technical infrastructure, including hardware and software, and social practices of the Net. The constraints and affordances, including character limit, threaded modularity of the platform, and algorithmic interactivity, as explained, foster creativity and function as catalysts of aphoristic density, nonlinear argumentations, which Pressman calls "stream of text thoughts to readers" (105), and embedded participation, respectively.

Crystal, interestingly, acknowledges that brevity, on digital platforms, changes into linguistic microforms (44) characterized by precision and innovation in syntax (46-47) as well as "unexpected poetic resonance" (46). As Rettberg describes it that "creativity is… as the result of

a distributed process" (45), the phenomenon, which can be called a networked literary praxis, indicates the character counter forces the mind to make the expression pithy; the threads let the readers see the breaks and join them; and the algorithmically organized replies, retweets, etc., push the authority to the margin. Hence, the genre is, in a sense, arbitrary since it is not pre-defined by theoreticians, authors, or critics, and the ever-changing algorithms put the texts and contexts on the platform in constant flux.

### 3.3. Mode of Production, authorship, and capital

Walter Benjamin's "Author as a Producer" (1934) can be used to analyze Twitter literature and creative praxis, in particular, and the mode of production in cyberspace, in general. From a Marxist viewpoint, Benjamin urges that artists must transcend their practice of representing socialist content. He expects them to transform the apparatus itself (774), that is, the mode of representation, including the means and media through which art is formed and issued. This way, they can succeed in overcoming the barrier between writing and image, between author and public (Benjamin 775). Benjamin's instruction requires the fusion of media as well as the dissolution of hierarchies. For instance, images need to integrate with textual forms to create multimodal content, and authors become the beginners of unfinished works, welcoming additions, omissions, or revisions through the active, perpetual participation of readers.

Twitter literature has made Benjamin's dream come true as it epitomizes his theory. The reason is that the publishing hierarchy and authorship have been disrupted on Twitter. Not only are writers, to a large extent, free to publish their content and circumvent the gatekeepers, but anyone with any chosen identity can sign in on Twitter and participate in

the formation of contents. This form of democratization aligns with Benjamin's demand for removing the barriers between the author and the public. The constraints and affordances on Twitter are not merely passive rules; they force the users to experiment and find their own mode of expression. Writers have to master precision, leverage threading, and use multimedia. The previously discussed features of Twitter made the platform not merely a passive cyberspace for distribution, for example, as a bookstore is, but features designed to receive feedback, such as replies, retweets, and real-time interaction, reshape the nature and signification of the content constantly. However, it must be noted that the phenomenon is much more complicated owing to the fact that the platform follows the values of capitalism, especially data commercialism.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, in *Distinction* (1979), challenges this image of Twitter literature as a platform of democratization. He believes that artistic works are apparatuses of social class division (91) since aesthetic taste is a signifier of the social class (6). Thus, the preferences of the high-brow or artists are regarded superior, leading to the internalization of the dominance of the elites. Twitter literature, in light of Bourdieu's argument, replicates such stratification since it changes offline hierarchies into online ones. For instance, established authors with verified accounts, who have already accumulated cultural capital, receive wider algorithmic visibility. Marginalized voices are suppressed through algorithmic shadowbanning (Risius and Blasiak 824-6), the same as they are suppressed in the real world (Nakamura, *Cybertypes* 139). Cultural capital on Twitter is raised as it is gained in the real world: the metric system, including follower counts, virality metrics, and codified prestige by algorithms (e.g., class, gender, race, etc.), determines the quantity of the cultural capital. When reading Benjamin's emancipatory vision and

Bourdieu's critique of dynamic stratification together, one easily finds a foundational tension over the nature and emergence of Twitter literature, and cyberspace in general, which seems to remain unresolved. It must also be noted that the dynamic of the algorithmic hierarchy just discussed has been intensified meaningfully by recent policies of the platform. The platform, now called X, shifted to a subscription-based verification system, X Premium. It drastically changed the meaning of 'verified account'. Once, verification was a signifier of authenticity. The signified is still authenticity, but authenticity is primarily a purchasable commodity. In other words, the platform practically has a monetized algorithmic favor so that those who can afford the authenticity are amplified, and non-paying users are underprivileged in terms of visibility. This pictures the Bourdieusian image of the platform even more darkly.

**4. Genealogical Analysis of Twitter Literature**

Twitter literature, though a minor or small part of world literature, with its distinctive feature, does not include works that are completely novel in literature; there have been notable similar works written in print or published in earlier stages of cyberspace or the digital world. There is even evidence to claim that Twitter literature is the reactivation of literary traditions on a dialectical platform in cyberspace. Aesthetic works driven by similar constraints and affordances can be traced back to the world of antiquity, continuing to the present; examples are many, but some are Shōnagon's zuihitsu, Bashō's haiku, and Nietzsche's aphorisms. Similar works appeared after early virtual worlds, blogs, and Web 2.0 emerged. The evolution, if it can be called so, includes three stages: predigital experiments, digital evolution, and key movements.

**4.1. The Pre-Digital Stage**

Long before the appearance of tweets on cyberspace, writers like Nietzsche and Shōnagon mastered the art of fragmented, threaded expression. Nietzsche's aphorism and Shōnagon's zuihitsu practiced the form of writing that users now experiment with on X (previously called Twitter). In *The Twilight of Idols* (1889), Nietzsche perfected the art of wording short and sharp sentences. Consider this example: "'All truth is simple.'—Is not this a double lie?" (Nietzsche, *Twilight of Idols* 1); he creates here a sort of intellectual explosion in the reader's mind. The aphorism, in this example, is a compression of wisdom, while being deliberately tinted with ambiguity. The statement is open to interpretation and shows how Nietzsche converts constraints to potency in his arguments. Imagine Nietzsche were alive and could tweet. He would have loved that.

Long before him, in the seventeenth century, Bashō composed haiku. Haiku's rule of three lines consisting of five, seven, and five syllables made perennial images in the reader's mind. To make an example, "the old-lady cherry/in bloom: a remembrance/of her old age" (Bashō 19). These few syllables thrived on brevity to create a double vision of past and present in a circle: the image of cherry blooms becomes durable through minimalism with an everlasting resonance, like viral tweets. Even earlier, Shōnagon, in his *The Pillow Book* (c. 1000), experimented with zuihitsu (literally meaning 'following the brush'). Zuihitsu is a Japanese genre of miscellany in which anecdote, poetry, and observation are combined without any pre-defined order. It seems that there is no narrative coherence in the sequence of fragments. Some fragments are short, composed of a few words, and some occupy a few pages. Like tweet threads, zuihitsu works with modular autonomy, where each fragment contributes to the whole while communicating its independent meaning.

Modernist authors like Virginia Woolf also experimented with fragmentation to represent the experience of modern man. In her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), she used the technique of 'tunnelling' through the psyches of characters, letting thoughts leak or rush across characters or time, forming a fragmented narrative. As it is argued by Marandi and Yahyapoor, using a Deleuzian lens, the fragmentation in the novel is more than a mere technique; it is a split subjectivity and a pure form of time which engulfs a coherent self and transforms it into a self in a state of flux (10). The same capacity exists in Twitter literature, and it is far stronger. Like Clarissa Dalloway's thoughts, tweets move subjectivities rapidly across a vast, boundless network, as the narrator of the novel describes, "she felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here'; but everywhere" (Woolf 172). It is interesting that stream-of-consciousness, masterfully used by Woolf, is practically evident in users' spontaneous, reflective tweets, embodying Woolf's fragmented yet fluid consciousness. Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (1927–1940) also foreshadows threads in Twitter literature. The work is an unfinished masterpiece, consisting of pieces from observations, quotes, insights, etc., put together. Rejecting totalitarian historiography, he praises the formation of the 'dialectical image'. He believes that "image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation" (462), meaning truth is bound to a specific time and place only in the moment of its emergence.

The constellation creates unending dialectics: such a process is mirrored in the architecture of Twitter through retweets (with comments). A user's retweeting with a comment is interpreted as sharing a post, but this is not the whole story. The user adds a new layer of interpretation, critique, and context to the original tweet, so it is transformed into a new

conversation. This dynamic creates a dialogic, polyphonic layering of meaning, similar to Bakhtin's notion of polyphony, through which a multitude of consciousnesses or voices interact with each other without fusing. They actually transform a monolithic statement into a collaborative, contested, and ever-changing constellation of truth. This is how retweets (with comments) work, making truth custom and contextual. These are a few examples of the precursors of literary cyberspace or Twitter literature, revealing that constraints and affordances on Twitter are similar to the strategies used in literary works of the pre-digital world.

**4.2. The Digital Evolution**

Fragmented writing practices continued after early text-based cyberspace emerged. In fact, a digital evolution took place, from MUDs (Multi-User Domains), including text-based virtual worlds in the 1980s, to the Blogosphere (personal publishing platforms) in the late 1990s, and to Web 2.0 Polymedia (interactive, multi-platform ecologies, like Twitter) in the 2000s. Thus, it can be claimed that decades of digital experimentation with fragmented writing practices culminated in Twitter literature. MUDs, as "a new form of collaboratively written literature" (Turkle, *Life on the Screen* 11), such as LambdaMOO, were storytelling environments that encouraged users to collaborate in the practice of writing. It is interesting to say that a user described a room in LambdaMOO where each textual fragment or contribution was used to build a collective immersive world space or story; thus, MUDs, in general, can be considered as proto-cyberspaces (182). The implication of the technology was the decentralization of authorship, as a multitude of users might co-create the narratives. Significant is the point that the co-creation was real-time, so there was live writing.

Moreover, users adopted fictional roles, playing with identities. These innovations made the technology and practice of writing phenomenal. MUDs did not have Twitter's constraint of character limit (brevity), but the act of world-building was done through a limited number of commands (e.g., describe, look, etc.), which forced the users to act with precision. The narratives emerged and evolved from users' interactions. MUDs pioneered modularity as well. They treated room descriptions as standalones, self-contained textual units. Landow terms them 'lexia': fragments that users could recombine and reuse to make evolving narrative worlds (*Hypertext 3.0* 3). It does not need to be explained that MUDs have embodied Benjamin's call for montages or dialectical images, using fragments, to critique culture; they also materialized Jenkins's idea of participatory culture. In the 1990s, blogosphere and hypertext fiction normalized fragmented, modular publishing, which converged in Twitter literature.

Rebecca Blood identified blogs' revolutionary essence, as she explains, contrary to traditional media; blogs prioritized raw, immediate microcontent, which includes brief, timestamped fragments that valued immediacy and concision over polish (*Weblog Handbook* 5). Unlike static websites, each post in a blog is a self-contained fragment that circulates in cyberspace independently while anchored in the evolving archive of the blog, like the threading system of Twitter. However, the authorial control in blogs is much stronger than the chained fragments on Twitter. Hypertext fiction, like MUDs and the blogosphere, ruptured linearity in traditional narratives through lexias. Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story* (1087/1990), one of the pioneers in hypertext fiction, used Storyspace software to build lexias that let readers click and navigate through them in variable sequences (Hayles, *Electronic Literature* 6, 60-62). Interestingly, in Joyce's work, phrases like "I want to say I have seen, my son dies this

morning" are navigated via hyperlinks, producing multiple interpretations. Based on Landow's explanation, grounded on Deleuze and Guattari's idea of rhizome-"one of the principles of reading and writing hypermedia… lies in the fact that one can begin anywhere and make connections" (59)-this phenomenon can be named a rhizomatic reading, which is non-linear, non-hierarchical, multidirectional, and recombinant. This also prefigured Twitter literature, but hypertext fiction does not possess Twitter's real-time social dynamics. Yet, based on Hayles explains in her analyses of electronic literary works, digital literature remediates the past to invent the future (*Electronic Literature* 140, 142, 184), Twitter literature, in a sense, partially hybridized the microcontent of the blogosphere (temporal fragmentation) and the lexias of hypertext fiction (spatial fragmentation) and then added social fragmentation, e.g., retweets and algorithms, to produce a new literary genre.

The technology of Web 2.0 expedited the emergence and use of microblogging and made a profound shift towards polymedia. Madianou and Miller's concept of 'polymedia' (126) signifies the cyberspace ecologies where multiple platforms, like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, enable their users to exploit any technical affordances as well as "a series of cultural genres or emotional registers… for various tasks within relationships" (148). Twitter, by 2010, emerged as the premier literary polymedium, synthesizing text, image, video, and hyperlink to produce compressed composition. In other words, the platform's 140-character (and later 280) limit smoothed the way for blogs' microcontent; its retweet function expanded MUDs' collaborative writing; hashtags, like #Flashfiction, brought together micro-communities under specific thematic clusters. Such a polymedia ecosystem confirms Manovich's idea that the new media would privilege variability over uniformity (127),

producing various forms from modular elements, that is, modular variability (133). As mentioned before, converging these capacities on Twitter produced a dynamic which, according to Jenkins's definition of 'convergence' (282) in the glossary at the end of his book *Convergence Culture*, can be described as the feedback loop of participatory culture; to wit, the platform transformed into a recursive literary system (Hayles, Electronic Literature 131), a cyberspace in which constraints and affordances foster innovation through democratic distribution of creativity (17). This digital evolution has demonstrated that fragmentation did not make a technological rupture. On the contrary, it reactivated some latent literary potentials and possibilities in cyberspace ecologies.

**4.3. The Culmination**

Twitter, with its discussed features, has become a dynamic agora through hashtags like #BookTwitter, fostering participatory movements in engaging with texts. In a similar manner, Jeet Heer's threaded historiography made modularity a kind of weapon to revitalize marginalized narratives, although the ephemerality of productions and algorithmic bias make it difficult for the narrative to survive. #BookTwitter represents a paradigm shift in literary criticism. #BookTwitter transformed it from an academic, elite practice into a democratic, participatory practice. #BookTwitter enhanced Twitter's affordances. The brevity purified critical insights; threading created nonlinear argumentation; and algorithmic virality increased reach but prioritized participatory content. This is markedly different from the dynamics of academic journals. The movement, like Habermas's idea of the public sphere, operated as a 'digital agora' in which writers, readers, critics, scholars, and even ordinary people participate actively in the real-time construction of interpretation across the global cyberspace, evocative

of Jenkins's notion of participatory culture in cyberspace, where audiences are dynamic co-creators of meaning.

The example is the public involvement in discussing Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. #Beloved or #SlaveryLegacy curated global responses, mobilizing anyone to contribute to the discussions on slavery. It can be interpreted as a collective cognitive assemblage, the knowledge systems coming out of distributed networks, based on Hayles's discussion of how "distributed cognition implies distributed agency" in electronic literature (*Electronic Literature* 136). Nevertheless, this cannot overshadow persistent hierarchies or the biases ossified by algorithms and metrics, i.e., 'algorithmic shadowbanning' (Risius and Blasiak 824-6), which results in privileging, for instance, established critics and reinforcing cultural capital, the real-world version of which Bourdieu, as discussed earlier, warned about. Overall, #BookTwitter, with its rhizomatic structure, fosters multilingual, democratic, non-linear debates, for example, the spark of debates by a tweet about Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*; the phenomenon can be described as variable sequences, which defer and defy established interpretation. To repeat, grand literature-related movements on Twitter like #BookTwitter embody the central contradiction (communal creation versus algorithmic stratification) in cyberspace, which requires a dialectical vision to be understood.

Jeet Heer's threaded tweets are another example of key movements made on Twitter. Jeet Heer invigorated the Twitter essay with his (threaded) tweets, considering tweets as performative writing (Heer, "In Defense"). He created controversial arguments in his essays on Twitter, e.g., his 2012–2015 threads on "Rob Ford's Racism" or "John Donne's Sci-Fi Imagery", like exploratory writings in print, by using numbered,

modular fragments. He once described Twitter essays as 'real-time thinking':

"22. But again: Why do this on Twitter rather than any other medium or outlet? 23. One characteristic of the Twitter essay… is commitment to real-time thinking. 23. When I start a Twitter essay, I have a few basic points, but no definitive plan. I'm thinking out loud in public. 24. Because Twitter is a social medium, tweets generate responses: so as I'm writing I get replies. 25. These replies sometimes shape the course of the essay as I write it. Sometimes even change my mind on a topic." (Heer, "I didn't create").

His 50-tweet thread on *Star Wars* revealed neoliberal subtexts by adding hashtags like #ComicHistory, connecting the community of anti-establishment narratives, and by juxtaposing film scenes with historical facts or parallels, which dismantles the essential feature of mainstream media, passive media consumption. His counter-hegemonic historiography in his Twitter essays demonstrates that Twitter can function as a cyber-heterotopia; heterotopia as a counter-space which challenges dominant power structures, creates alternative orderings, and suspends or reverses institutionalized norms so that suppressed histories resurface (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 24). His use of fragmentation to reveal suppressed truths also evokes Benjamin's method of "brushing history against the grain" (*Illuminations* 257), which helps the historian to dissociate oneself from the 'barbarism' in the transmission of narratives of civilization and in civilization itself (256). However, Heer's work reveals the vulnerability of the digital sphere, that is to say, the threat of disappearance, for example, when his 2018 thread on immigration disappeared during a Twitter API update. These two movements, #BookTwitter and Heer's threads, as prime examples of Twitter literature,

demonstrate the dialectic of cyberspace as #BookTwitter democratizes literary criticism but reproduces offline hierarchies, and Heer's threading tweets, as essays, counter the established historiography yet remain vulnerable to power controls.

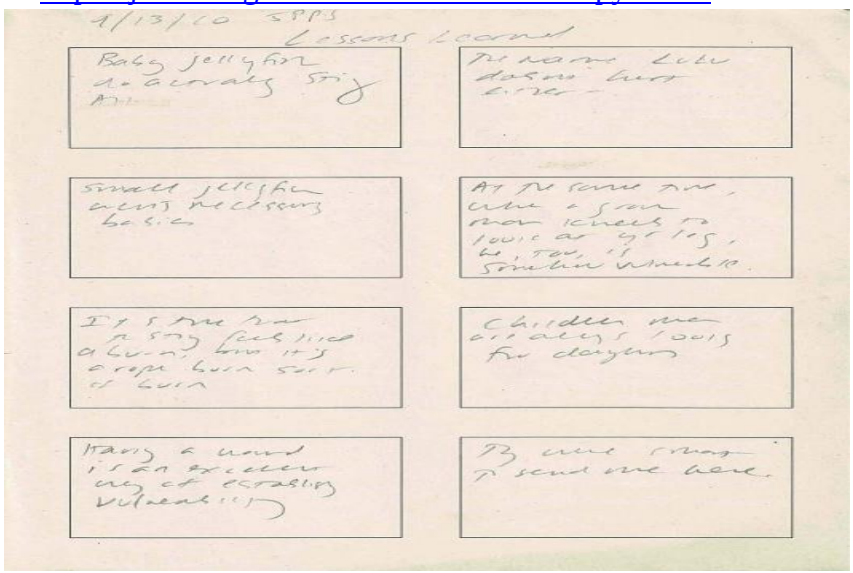
## 5. Exemplars of Twitter Literature

### 5.1. Jennifer Egan's *Black Box*

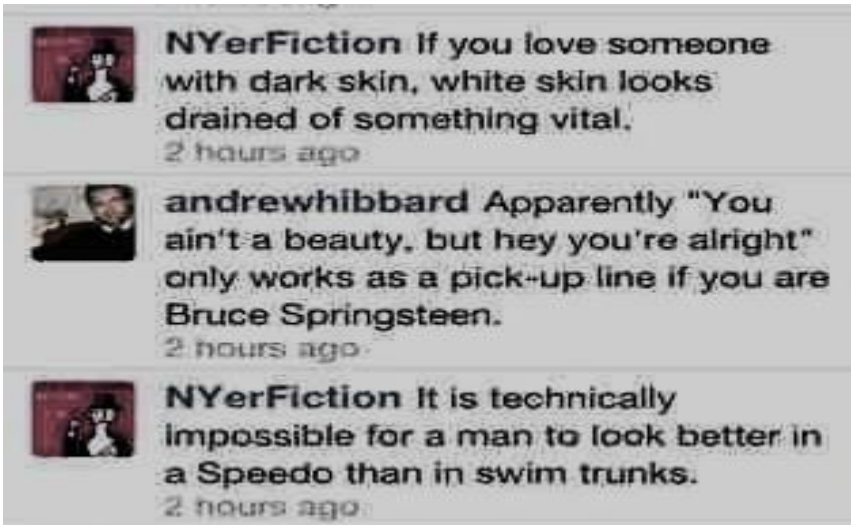
Jennifer Egan's *Black Box* was a series of tweets that was released on the Twitter account of The New Yorker from May 24 to June 2, 2012, one tweet per minute from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. It is a short story narrating the life of a spy in the Mediterranean in the future. She won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2011 for her novel *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010). The work is composed of thirteen interconnected stories. There are many characters in the stories linked to Bennie Salazar, the protagonist. The narrative navigates fluidly through time from the 1970s to the contemporary to the future. This novel is a prequel to her novel *The Candy House* (2022), which is a collection of brief interrelated stories with overlapping characters, many of whom were in *A Visit from the Goon Squad.* Both of these works incorporate science fiction themes. One of these stories is "Lulu the Spy, 2032," which was *Black Box*, already published on Twitter. The serialized tweets were about Lulu Kisarian, who was hired for the Citizen Agent program as a spy. It is obvious that there is a strong intertextuality between these three works, one published on Twitter coming between two works in print.

Egan's *Black Box* was around six hundred tweets, each of which was limited to 140 characters. Egan utilized Twitter's architecture as a transformative medium as she employed the platform's constraints and affordances to produce narrative meaning. The 140-character limit made Egan create brevity, a telegraphic aesthetic, as she explains, "I found

myself imagining a series of terse mental dispatches from a female spy of the future… The story was originally nearly twice its present length; it took me a year, on and off, to control and calibrate the material into what is now "Black Box" ("Coming Soon: Jennifer Egan's 'Black Box'"). The compression in the narrative heightened the thematic tension. In fact, fragmentation in *Black Box* was used as a form since each tweet was a standalone unit, for instance, "People rarely look the way you expect them to, even when you've seen pictures" (Egan, "Black Box"). The independence of each tweet reminds the readers of the platform on which it is issued. It is interesting that Egan, to adapt herself to the constraints, drafted every bit of the story in gridded notebook squares, copying tweet limitations on paper before publication, as she says, "I wrote these bulletins by hand in a Japanese notebook that had eight rectangles on each page" ("Coming Soon: Jennifer Egan's 'Black Box'"). Look at this picture from https://jenniferegan.com/artifacts/lulu-the-spy-2032/:



This demonstrates that the work is an example of born-digital literature as the paper draft abides by the constraints of the digital screen, as Power implies that the work is a reverse media translation (Power 2) based on Hayles's description of electronic literature that media translation is practiced when a print work is transformed into an electronic one (*Electronic Literature* 10, 183). Thus, it can be concluded that the unique narrative structure of *Black Box* is the outcome of the platform's constraints, making the work an example of Twitter literature as a genre. That each fragment is a standalone bit opened the space between the tweets, a gap or suspense, to be filled by the readers as a creative, interpretive performance. Consider the following shot as an example:




Add the retweets, likes, and hashtags in comments to the comments, which readers could have used the moment a tweet was posted, right before the one-minute interval. The affordances fostered a global collaborative audience. Readers actually were experiencing a real-time development of the narrative. The collaborative engagement in the narrative was facilitated

by Twitter, which resulted in synchronizing the interactions, never happening to the readership of works in print. This enactment of Jenkins's 'participatory culture', "fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content" (290), could paradoxically resolve and lead to ambiguities, making the bits more poetic in a sense. In other words, cyberspace becomes an arena for an unending real-time hermeneutic reading ritual of the writer's encoding and the readers' decoding and re-encoding.

The point of view, second-person narration, which Egan selected, blurs the boundaries between the writer, readers, and the protagonist, and even the platform as a networked cyberspace composed of all of them together, contributing to the formation of a democratized space. Egan's choice of second-person POV and the platform's features dissolve the Cartesian subject in Western humanism. The reader is not a passive recipient but an active attendee inside and outside the narrative space, thus blurring boundaries and obliterating the binaries of the writer, the reader, and the protagonist's minds. Furthermore, the ephemerality of tweets, with technical updates, for example, shows a serious concern about digital preservation. While Egan's tweets are archived by *The New Yorker*, many of the original threads do not exist on X. The most significant inference drawn here is that Twitter literature, hence, acts within a posthuman framework; it junks the Cartesian binaries of mind from body and author from reader and creates, instead, hybridity, a heterotopic space of collective and embodied minds.

### 5.2. Teju Cole's *Small Fates*

Teju Cole's *Small Fates* is a set of serialized tweets (very short stories) issued from 2011 to 2014, by which Cole, the Nigerian American writer, decolonized cyberspace and ruptured the established historiography,

making a fragmented one. It is believed that Cole's work is an effective intervention in Twitter's literary cyberspace, Twitter literature, since his project transformed forgotten fragments of violence in the colonial era, taken from Nigerian press and the archive of the early twentieth century. Cole, in composing *Small Fates*, was influenced by the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century French writer and critic Félix Fénéon's miscellaneous fact (fait-divers), which includes events that cannot be categorized in any section of news media. Notably, Fénéon contributed to the "News in three lines" column in a French newspaper in the 1900s, a style which is close to a tweet. Cole, from such a background, made colonial atrocities into micro-narratives on Twitter to puncture the colonizer's deliberate amnesia.

It would be of great moment to examine how *Small Fates* has succeeded in redefining Twitter as a platform of decolonizing memory: a site in cyberspace in which poetic compression, i.e., a constraint transformed into creativity, negotiates algorithmic precariousness and control. In other words, in Cole's work, as a born-digital counter-archive, Twitter's constraints, in practice, have been weaponized to dismantle colonial historiography. This way, Twitter literature, contrary to Gibson or Hayles's frameworks, is not a neutral 'hallucination' but an ideological or discursive battlefield to reclaim history. The prescribed brevity by Twitter, the virality through retweets, and the modularity by threads are the apparatuses torpedoing 'colonial aphasia'. Aphasia is, as Ann Stoler explains, "a condition in which the occlusion of knowledge is at once a dismembering of words from the objects to which they refer, a difficulty retrieving both the semantic and lexical components of vocabularies, a loss of access that may verge on active dissociation, a difficulty comprehending what is seen and spoken (Stoler, *Duress*, 12).

Consequently, colonial aphasia is "a political condition whose genealogy is embedded in the space that has allowed Marine Le Pen and her broad constituency to move from the margin and extreme— where her father was banished—to a normalized presence in contemporary France" (Stoler, *Duress*, 12). As Stoler admits, colonial aphasia is not limited to French colonialism, but it is found in all colonial projects. Thus, Cole's work countered the systematic forgetting of imperial violence.

One of the interesting points is that Cole's project can be understood as an anti-Cartesian regarding methodology. Colonial historiography, inclined to operate as a Cartesian authority, the dominant narrative, the sonorous voice in the hall, is always characterized by rationality, objectivity, and solemnity, which suppresses the subaltern's embodied experiences. Cole's tweets, with their fragmented and highly distributed form, cast the Cartesian figure of the colonizer off. History is presented as a non-monolithic entity, the truth overflowed by the colonial, authorial mind. In contrast, it is collective and multifaceted, and it also comes from the recoveries of minds overwhelmed by the traumatic experiences of colonialism. It is significant to add that Cole's work counters the neocolonial policy that Bornaki and Salami, drawing on Mouffe, call the otherizing scheme, which has led to a managed agonistic identity for the marginalized (55-56). *Small Fates*, using the affordances of Twitter to hit this managed relationship and violence of colonial history. As it is said, Cole took twentieth-century marginalized records from Nigerian newspapers and U.S. archives as his sources. These sources have been excluded from dominant or standard historical narratives. He adopted Fénéon's minimalism and infused critique into it. Consider this tweet, which Cole posted on June 27, 2011: "Emmanuel who stole 188 pieces of dry fish, and Eze, who stole 50 bags of beans, at Iddo market, unfortunately

never met." (Cole). There is a fait divers irony in the tweet as it juxtaposes petty crimes with a kind of existential absurdity. Putting 188 pieces of dry fish against 50 bags of beans, in this tweet, highlights the system's obsession with trivial things while the existing systematic poverty is neglected. The numbers in the tweet also signify the importance of figures in the system's bureaucracy, reducing everything to a list or statistics. The verb phrase "unfortunately never met" demonstrates Cole's bleak humor as it connotes a connection missed by two desperate actors, making theft tragicomic. The tweet also adds a geographical truth to the fictional event by mentioning "Iddo market." Cole, by removing the reason why Emmanuel and Eze stole the items, makes the readers face the issue of deprivation, exposing the colonial economic system that commits crime via inequality. It can be argued that Cole, in this tweet and in *Small Fates,* in general, has used Benjamin's idea of montage to save subaltern histories from imperial homogenizing narratives. Cole's tweets present disjointed fragments against totalizing narratives, anonymous victims against heroic subjects, and non-linear chronology against linear progress.

The discussed tweet, like the majority of Cole's tweets, embodies Benjamin's concept of 'dialectical image', which exposes the enduring logic of colonialism and a fresh understanding of historical truths by a past act of colonial violence colliding with a contemporary platform in cyberspace, as Benjamin describes, brushing history against the grain. It also uses Twitter's algorithm, non-linear feed, to replicate historical fragmentation and make readers accustomed to discontinuous truths. *Small Fates* demonstrates that Twitter literature can be transformed from an apparatus of surveillance, as Nakamura, Risius, and Blasiak discuss, into a tool of subversive memory, leveraging Twitter to unearth buried traumas. Significant is the point that Twitter literature, regarding Cole's *Small*

*Fates*, both enables and undermines the subversiveness of the work. The hashtags, e.g., #SmallFates, facilitated the participatory interactions of the readers, materializing Jenkins' democratic ideals, but the algorithmic biases prioritized Cole's verified status over other marginalized voices. In all, Cole's *Small Fates* suggests that literary cyberspace, especially Twitter literature, can be employed to fracture historical amnesia against established historiography.

**6. Conclusion**

This study has established Twitter literature as a distinct, born-digital genre that was shaped by the cyberspace's dialectical nature and the specific constraints of Twitter: enforced brevity, thread-based modularity, and algorithmic virality. These constraints, as non-passive limitations, function as generative affordances that foster a unique literary form: the character limit makes aphoristic density and linguistic creativity; threading enables alternative, non-linear narratives, and algorithmic features (retweets, hashtags, replies) foster participatory engagement, converting readers into active creators of meaning and decentralizing authorship. It has also been discussed that Twitter literature as a genre has emerged from a complicated, deep-seated genealogy, revitalizing latent literary possibilities. These possibilities can be traced in pre-digital bits, evolved through digital precursors, and finally culminated in Twitter's unique synthesis in the polymedia ecology of Web 2.0. The paper demonstrated this in its analyses of two examples. Jennifer Egan's *Black Box* leveraged Twitter's 140-character limit and real-time serialization to create a 'telegraphic aesthetic,' through using modular poetics and second-person narration to obscure the boundaries between the writer, readers, the character, and the platform. The paper has also suggested that Teju Cole's *Small Fates* weaponized Twitter's brevity and modularity to form

a decolonial counter-memory and save marginalized histories of colonial violence from 'colonial aphasia.'

The analysis has revealed that Twitter literature is an embodiment of a significant contradiction in cyberspace. The literature oscillates between the utopian promise of Gibson and the dystopian reality of Hayles. It has been discussed that the algorithmic governance replicates and bolsters the offline inequalities through shadowbanning, visibility biases for established cultural capital, and the privileging of engagement-optimized content. Also, the ephemerality within the platform threatens the preservation of the literature. It has been shown that this tension between control and collectivity, ephemerality and endurance, and algorithmic determinism and creative agency defines the genre. The paper promoted a critical reconciliation between Twitter's affordances (for democratization) and its algorithmic enforcement of hierarchies. It was deduced, especially through reading Egan and Cole's works, that the tension has created a dialectic space on the platform, contrary to a binary, either democratic or hierarchical space. Theoretically, this study has addressed the critical gaps in the studies on electronic literature by recognizing Twitter literature as a genre, synthesizing Hayles's media-specific analysis with platform studies and genre theory in order to argue that cyberspace is not merely a setting but an active catalyst for generic literary transformation. It, overall, concludes that Twitter literature exemplifies a born-digital cyberspace genre made of dialectics, reshaping literary production, circulation, and reception in the twenty-first century, which needs more scholarly attention within digital humanities.

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