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<h1 style="text-align: center;">Interactive Criticism of Digital Literature : A Taxonomic Approach to Interactive Texts</h1>		
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<b>Keyword</b>	Interactive Criticism, Digital Literature, Interactive Texts, Literary Genres, Multimedia, Interactive Reader.	
<b>Abstract</b> <p>The literary and critical landscape has undergone a profound transformation driven by the technological revolution, which has propelled creative texts toward digital and interactive forms, Interactive criticism emerges as a direct response to this shift, aiming to analyze digital texts that rely on technology and multimedia platforms. This study examines the theoretical framework of interactive criticism by defining it as a composite concept that integrates digital interactivity with textual analysis, while highlighting its conceptual ambiguities and the terminological uncertainties surrounding it</p> <p>The present study seeks to provide an in-depth examination of interactive criticism through a comprehensive approach that begins with defining the concept and tracing its epistemological roots, followed by classifying prominent forms of digital literature, such as interactive fiction and digital poetry, ultimately proposing a new taxonomy for interactive literary genres based on traditional literary categories, This approach reflects the necessity of rethinking conventional critical classifications in light of the distinctive nature of digital texts</p> <p>The central challenge lies in developing critical tools capable of accommodating the dynamics of interactive texts, which surpass the linear framework of print-based literature, and in ensuring that literary criticism keeps pace with this transformation while maintaining analytical depth without descending into purely technical readings. Furthermore, this study addresses the question of the extent to which interactive criticism can offer new methodological insights aligned with the characteristics of digital literature, thereby expanding the horizons for analyzing digital texts within the Arab context.</p>		
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## Introduction:

Technological advancements have given rise to new forms of literary creativity, necessitating a reassessment of traditional critical tools to keep pace with digital transformations. In this context the concept of interactive criticism has emerged as a contemporary methodology focused on studying digital texts that rely on the interaction between the text and its audience. The reader is no longer a passive recipient but an active participant in the construction of meaning.

The digital environment has fostered diverse forms of digital literature such as digital poetry and interactive narratives, which utilize multimedia platforms and enable the reader to engage dynamically with the text. Classifying the forms of interactive literature according to traditional literary genres, alongside technological capabilities, requires a reevaluation of the boundaries and categorization of literary genres within the digital milieu.

This study aims to shed light on these aspects to achieve a deeper understanding of how digital literature reshapes the relationship between text and reader and to highlight the role of interactive criticism in analyzing this emerging phenomenon.

### 1. The Concept of Digital Criticism :

Digital criticism is a contemporary methodology dedicated to the study and analysis of literary texts created and structured through multiple technological media. It arises from an awareness of the deep interrelation between literature and digital technologies, extending beyond the mere analysis of textual content to encompass the interactive relationships between textual elements and multimedia components such as images, sound, motion, and hypertextual links.

As an integrative approach, digital criticism is grounded in a methodological awareness that bridges literary knowledge and critical theory on the one hand, and technical and digital expertise on the other. It treats the digital text as an entity inseparable from the technological tools that produce it. Moreover, it is concerned with examining the ways in which readers interact with the text—through navigation, hyperlink transitions, and the exploration of its multidimensional layers.

This form of criticism emphasizes the creative dimensions introduced by digitality, including interactivity, polyvocality, and semantic interconnectivity, which render the reading experience flexible and continuously evolving. Additionally, digital criticism demands a set of multifaceted skills: the ability to interpret literary meaning alongside the competence to analyze the technological architecture of the text. Such a dual capacity requires the critic to possess comprehensive familiarity with both contemporary literary theories and the software used in producing digital texts.

In this respect, digital criticism represents a revolution in traditional critical paradigms, as it redefines the relationship between reader and text while affirming the decisive role of technology in reshaping the literary experience in unprecedented ways.<sup>1</sup>

The multiplicity of terms associated with digital texts reflects the technological developments that have fundamentally transformed the nature of texts, as well as their modes of production and consumption. The term digital text represents the broadest concept, referring to any text produced, stored, or processed by a computer, regardless of its form or content. Such texts are based on the binary system (1/0), which constitutes the foundation of digital data processing.

By contrast, the term electronic text emphasizes the medium through which the text is accessed, specifically referring to texts displayed via digital devices. This term is more specific than digital text, as it highlights the relationship between content and the electronic medium, distinguishing it from traditional print-based texts.

The interactive text represents the most advanced stage of digital textuality. Unlike static digital or electronic texts, it does not merely present information but allows readers to interact with the content through hyperlinks, images,

sounds, and videos. This form relies on the reader's active engagement in constructing meaning through direct interaction, thereby tailoring the reading experience to user preferences and making it dynamic and evolving.

Such terminological diversity reflects the richness of textual forms made possible by digital technologies. It also underscores the increasingly central role of the reader within the communicative process who is no longer a passive consumer of information but an active participant in the production of meaning.<sup>2</sup>

**Table Types of Digital Texts and their Characteristics :**

Term	Definition	Medium	Reader's Role
<b>Digital Text</b>	Text produced via computer, binary system (0/1).	computer	Passive reader's
<b>Electronic Text</b>	Text displayed through electronic devices; gains its quality from the medium.	Computer, smart, devices	Mostly Passive
<b>Interactive Text</b>	Text allowing interaction via multimedia (sound, image, video, hyperlinks).	Computer, internet, smart devices	Active, interactive reader

It can be observed from the table that there is a gradual development in the nature of digital texts, particularly in terms of interaction and the type of medium used. The digital text represents the most basic and simple form, as its primary role is to convey information through electronic devices without offering opportunities for interaction. In contrast, the electronic text relies on an electronic medium, making it more flexible in distribution and accessibility compared to printed texts.

Meanwhile, the interactive text is considered more advanced because it allows the reader to play an active role in the reading process through engagement with the content via multimedia channels. This transition reflects the shift of the reader from being a mere consumer of information to a participant in meaning-making, thereby enhancing the reading experience and making it more engaging and interactive.

The table also highlights the importance of the digital medium in reshaping the relationship between the text and the reader. The content has become richer and more integrated through the inclusion of audio images and video, which contributes to creating an enjoyable and immersive reading environment.

## **2. Digital culture represents a state of awareness :**

that has emerged in the modern era. The world has witnessed tremendous technological advancements, leading to the rise of what is known as "digital culture," which has become an integral part of our daily lives. This culture is not limited to the use of modern devices and technologies; it also encompasses a set of behaviors, habits, and knowledge that shape the awareness of individuals and societies in interacting with the digital world.

Digital culture is defined as a set of behavioral patterns, habits, norms, and knowledge applied when using advanced devices in the virtual environment, along with the skills and capacities required to participate effectively in this digital world. This definition highlights the importance of conscious engagement with modern technologies, requiring a deep understanding of how these tools function and their impact on our lives. With the widespread

diffusion of technology, it has become essential to develop digital awareness among individuals, particularly in developing societies. In the context of a digital divide among different social groups, challenges arise regarding social sustainability and the ability to keep pace with technological advancements. Therefore, fostering digital culture is considered a means to ensure social sustainability and bridge the digital gap.

Educational and cultural institutions play a pivotal role in promoting digital culture. Public libraries, for example, serve as ideal environments for teaching and training individuals in digital skills by providing robust informational and cultural resources that support learning and interaction with modern technologies.

Thus, digital culture represents a form of awareness that requires collaborative efforts across various sectors to enhance and disseminate it. Through education and awareness initiatives, individuals can acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to engage effectively with the digital world, contributing to the development of more informed and sustainable communities in the digital era.<sup>3</sup>

### **3. Interactive Literature: A Digital Revolution in the World of Narratives :**

In the digital era, literature is no longer confined to the pages of a book or restricted to a linear narrative style. It has transformed into an interactive experience that grants the reader an active role in constructing and shaping the text. This transformation has led to the emergence of what is known as interactive literature, a form of digital writing that transcends the boundaries of traditional texts. It allows readers to participate actively, whether by modifying the text, choosing different narrative paths, or even contributing new content. This form of literature represents an extension of the digital revolution, redefining the relationship between the text and the reader and creating a new form of creativity that merges literature with technology. Notable scholars, such as Fatima Al-Breiki, have studied this literary form, identifying seven core characteristics that distinguish interactive literature from traditional literary forms. The following presents these characteristics and their significance for the reading experience and literary creativity.

#### **1. Open-ended Texts:**

Interactive literature enjoys unprecedented openness, with no fixed beginning or ending. Readers can navigate the text freely, which may conclude at a certain point on the network or extend indefinitely. This reflects the nature of the digital era, which breaks temporal and spatial boundaries. As a result, interactive texts resemble a live experience, where the reader feels not merely as a recipient but as a creator of events and narrative paths.

#### **2. Reader Empowerment and Control:**

In traditional literature, the reader remains a passive consumer of content without direct influence over it. In interactive literature, the reader assumes an active role, feeling ownership of the text and control over its direction. This feature enhances the sense of engagement and immersion, making the literary experience more vibrant and personalized, as each reader may encounter a unique journey based on their choices.

#### **3. Absence of a Single Author and Collective Participation:**

A defining characteristic of interactive literature is that it does not recognize a sole author. The text becomes a collaborative space where users can modify, contribute, and participate in its creation. This phenomenon reflects the collaborative spirit of the digital era but raises questions regarding "literary ownership" and the limits of individual creativity, as the text is no longer the product of a single author but an evolving experience shaped by multiple readers and writers.

#### **4. Multiple Temporal and Spatial Dimensions:**

Unlike traditional literature, which adheres to a specific chronological and spatial sequence, interactive literature allows movement across different times and spaces within the text. The reader is not confined to a single path but can jump between events and explore the textual world according to personal choices. This creates a reading experience akin to navigating a digital game, where the text becomes an open space offering infinite possibilities for exploration and interaction.

#### **5. Absence of Fixed Data and Multiple Paths:**

Interactive literature contains no fixed data or single reading path; the text changes according to the reader's decisions, evolving like a living entity. However, this also presents challenges for critical analysis, as there is no "final" text to study, only an infinite set of possibilities that varies from reader to reader.

#### 6. Direct Interaction through Dialogue:

Digital tools allow readers to interact directly with the text, whether by selecting narrative paths or engaging with textual characters. This transforms reading into an active experience rather than a passive one, making readers feel as though they communicate with the text. This characteristic brings interactive literature closer to digital games and virtual reality, blurring the boundaries between reader, writer, and textual characters.

#### 7. Multiple Levels of Interaction:

Interaction in interactive literature is not limited to simple choices, such as selecting an ending; it can also involve complex engagement, such as modifying and reshaping the entire text. These varying levels of interaction reflect the advanced nature of this literary form, ranging from minimal intervention to complete text reconstruction, making creative boundaries unprecedentedly open.<sup>4</sup>

From the foregoing, it is evident that interactive literature is not merely a minor development in narrative techniques, but a genuine revolution that redefines the relationship between the text and the reader. It liberates the reader from being a passive recipient and grants them a creative role, allowing active participation in shaping the text. This renders the reading experience dynamic and constantly evolving.

However, interactive literature also raises several critical questions: Does the openness of texts lead to a loss of aesthetic value? Can interactive texts be considered complete literary works, or do they remain open-ended experiences? What is the role of the critic in analyzing texts that continually change according to the reader's choices?

Regardless of these questions, there is no doubt that interactive literature reflects the spirit of the digital era and offers new possibilities for creativity and literary experimentation, making it one of the most innovative and exciting forms of literature in the 21st century.

#### 4.Types of Digital Literature According to Mr. Najm:

**1. Theoretical Digital Criticism:** This type of digital criticism focuses on the theoretical aspects of digital culture, such as the developments of new technological innovations and their implications. It examines how these technological advancements influence literary creation, as reflected in areas like the relationship between images and digital literature.

**2. Applied Digital Criticism:** This form of criticism specializes in specific digital fields, such as digital creativity or other areas, providing practical analysis and evaluation within those domains.

**3. Interactive and Future-Oriented Digital Criticism:** This type involves the critic's engagement with data produced by digital technologies and explores strategies for future developments across all sources of digital culture.<sup>5</sup>

The three types of digital criticism mentioned above represent a methodological complement in the study of digital literature and the analysis of its elements. Theoretical digital criticism constitutes the foundational aspect, establishing the conceptual framework for studying digital literature by focusing on technological data and its impact on the creative process. Applied digital criticism is manifested through the practical analysis of digital works, allowing for the examination of how modern technologies are utilized within digital texts and highlighting their creative aspects.

Interactive and future-oriented digital criticism is the most advanced, as it reflects the critic's engagement with emerging digital developments and anticipates the future of digital literature. This makes it a tool capable of keeping pace with rapid transformations in the digital realm. This classification illustrates the responsiveness of literary criticism to technological advancements and provides a comprehensive methodology for studying digital literature from all perspectives.

## 5. Classification of Interactive Literature According to Literary Genres :

### Introduction:

Literature has undergone fundamental transformations with the advancement of digital technology. These developments have produced new forms of texts that rely on multimedia and direct interaction with the reader. Interactive literature is one of the most prominent manifestations of this evolution, as it breaks the traditional boundaries between the author and the reader and reshapes their relationship within a framework based on interaction and participation.

From this perspective, interactive literature can be classified according to the literary genre to which the texts belong, encompassing digital poetry, interactive novels, and digital stories. Each genre is characterized by artistic features that reflect the integration of written texts with audio-visual elements, offering readers a multi-dimensional reading experience.

This classification not only reflects differences in form and content but also highlights a transformation in the role of the reader, from a passive recipient to an active participant in meaning-making. Consequently, interactive literature emerges as a new creative space where literary arts and digital technology converge to produce a unique aesthetic experience.

### 5.1 Digital Poetry:

**Concept of Digitalization:** Saeed Yaqtin defines digitalization as “the process of transferring any type of document from an analog format to a digital format, whereby the text, still or moving images, and sound are encoded into numbers. This transformation enables the document, regardless of its type to be stored and utilized through information devices.”<sup>6</sup>

From Saeed Yaqtin’s definition, it is evident that digitalization represents a transformation from the traditional format to the digital format, facilitating the storage and processing of documents through information devices. This concept reflects the role of technology in reshaping texts, enabling new forms of literary creativity and enhancing the reader’s interaction with the content.

Critic Fatima Al-Breiki defines digital poetry as a form of poetic writing that manifests exclusively through electronic media, relying on technologies provided by modern innovations, and varying in its style of presentation and method of delivery to the reader-user.”<sup>7</sup>

From Fatima Al-Breiki’s definition, it is clear that digital poetry is closely linked to the electronic medium, relying on modern technology to present its content. The definition highlights the role of multimedia in enriching interactivity and diversity, as this type of poetry cannot be separated from the digital environment that gives it its artistic identity.

Moving to another perspective on digital poetry, it can be defined as: poetry that is delivered through electronic media made available by technological advancements”<sup>8</sup>.

From this perspective, it is evident that this definition emphasizes the interactive relationship between digital text and technology, highlighting that digital poetry results from the fusion of literature and technology. This opens new horizons for poetic creativity and reflects a transformation in the way literary texts are presented. Literary texts are no longer limited to words alone; they now rely on multimedia elements such as sound, images, and motion, enhancing the reading experience and making the reader an active participant in meaning-making.

The features of interactive poetry are identified as follows: “It presents an open-ended text (Texte Open Ende) or a limitless text, giving the reader the opportunity to feel ownership over all that is presented on the network. It does not recognize a single creator of the text, which makes the readers and users of the interactive text active participants in it. The endings are not uniform due to the multiple paths and choices available to the reader.”<sup>9</sup>

### 5.2 Interactive Theatre:



Literature and art have undergone radical transformations throughout the ages, reflecting the cultural changes experienced by societies. Among the most prominent of these transformations is the emergence of new forms of creative writing, including interactive theatre, which represents a modern model that redefines the relationship between the author and the audience. This type of theatre embodies a new philosophy based on involving the audience in the creative work, opening new horizons for the artistic experience.

Interactive theatre is one of the manifestations of interactive literature. Fatima Al-Breiki defines it as a new form that goes beyond the traditional understanding of literary creativity, which historically focused solely on the author's role. In interactive theatre, the artistic work is not limited to the text and performance; the audience becomes an active participant in shaping the theatrical presentation. This form of theatre removes the barriers between performers and the audience, allowing the latter to engage in the theatrical event and influence the course of the performance.

The significance of interactive theatre lies in its ability to break the "fourth wall" that traditionally separated the stage from the audience. Instead of being passive spectators, viewers become essential components of the theatrical experience. This interaction creates a unique experience that reflects the impact of modern technology and the evolution of communication tools in transforming artistic modes of engagement (10).

It can be said that interactive theatre represents a revolution in the concept of theatrical art, reflecting contemporary trends toward involving the audience in the creative process. By transcending the traditional relationship between the author and the audience, it enhances the value of participation and grants the audience a genuine role in shaping the artistic message. This theatrical form opens new horizons for creativity, yet it also raises questions regarding the limits of authorship and the role of the artist in the creative work. Interactive theatre remains a true embodiment of the digital era, where interaction becomes a fundamental element of the artistic experience.

### 5.3 Interactive Novels: Literary Renewal in the Technological Space

Literature has undergone numerous transformations throughout history, keeping pace with the social and cultural changes experienced by humanity. With the dawn of digital technology, a new literary form emerged that reflects the spirit of the digital age: the interactive novel. This innovative genre aligns with technological media to redefine the traditional relationship between the author, the text, and the reader, relying on a non-linear structure based on direct interaction.

#### Concept of the Interactive Novel:

The interactive novel is defined as a literary text that relies on digital media, allowing the reader to participate in the progression of events and determine its narrative paths. This genre adapts to contemporary technology and is enriched by its ideas and visions, supporting the notion that interactive literature embodies the inevitable advances of technological development. In this sense, the interactive novel becomes an open text that breaks the conventional linear reading pattern and grants the reader authority in shaping the text and its narrative trajectories.

Interactive novels rely on multiple narrative paths, where readers encounter different choices that lead to varied outcomes. These options are presented through digital interfaces, such as branching texts, hyperlinks, or multimedia elements like sound, images, and video. This interactive structure provides readers with an individualized reading experience that changes according to their choices, making each reading encounter unique.<sup>11</sup>

#### Conclusion:

In conclusion, it becomes evident that literature in the digital age represents a qualitative shift in the contemporary cultural and literary landscape, reflecting the convergence of artistic creativity with the technological and social transformations imposed by the digital revolution across various spheres of life. This literary evolution has given rise to what may be termed "interactive criticism" – a novel analytical tool that aligns with the nature of digital texts, which are founded upon participation and direct engagement with the reader. Interactive criticism focuses on examining the relationship between the text and its audience, taking into account

the multimedia elements employed in literary works, such as hyperlinks sound and images, while analyzing how meaning is reshaped through the choices available to the recipient.

The most prominent forms of interactive literature manifest in several creative models, including interactive poetry, which opens new aesthetic horizons by blending words with sensory effects; interactive theater, which breaks traditional boundaries between performance and audience by transforming spectators into active participants in the unfolding of events; and interactive fiction, which grants readers a central role in determining narrative paths and potential endings. These diverse literary forms demonstrate that interactive literature is not merely a technological development, but rather a reflection of a deeper transformation in the relationship among author text and audience, redefining the concept of creativity and critical engagement within a multidimensional digital context.

Consequently interactive literature does not merely provide a novel experience for the audience; it also opens the door to a reconsideration of traditional critical methodologies, offering fertile ground for studying the interactions between text and audience in innovative ways. This contributes to the expansion of both creative and critical horizons in digital-era literature and underscores the necessity of developing new analytical tools suited to this rapidly evolving reality, ensuring that literary studies remain responsive to contemporary technological and cultural challenges.

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. All observations, interpretations, and recommendations presented in this article are based on professional experience and research conducted independently.

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