1 Introduction

This study aims at exploring the digital three-dimensional virtual world, Second Life (SL), and its potential for learning in a specific discipline, in this case literature studies. The goal is to understand how virtual worlds contribute to understanding literary competences and how they transform conceptions of literature, and of skills needed for accessing literary content. In addition, since the density in technology varieties and definitional terms in today’s media landscape has allowed for a relative confusion concerning what a virtual world is, the field of exploration calls for an extended contextualization. Therefore, this study also serves the purpose to situate virtual worlds in current learning technology landscapes. In this expanding area in educational research, terms and notions are constantly emerging, tending to concur with each other to name either the technology itself, or the representations produced through technological devices, such as virtual worlds.

Y. Lindberg (✉)
School of Education and Communication, Jönköping University, Jönköping, Sweden
e-mail: ylva.lindberg@ju.se

© The Author(s) 2019
S. Bagga-Gupta et al. (eds.), Virtual Sites as Learning Spaces,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26929-6_5
More specifically, this study attempts to answer the question how virtual worlds can support literary competences for the twenty-first century, where the media density transforms ways-of-being-with-words (Bagga-Gupta, 2014), as well as ways of reading and making meaning across languaging modalities. Reading, understanding, and interpreting literary fiction in multimodal genres, such as film and comics, are common areas in connection to literary studies. However, how are established literary competences (Culler, 1980; Todorov, 1971), such as understanding the function of a récit, characters, milieus, as well as a narrative voice and an author, conceived of and learnt in digital virtual worlds, where events often are produced and consumed—“written” and “read”—simultaneously? Furthermore, how do participants in these worlds perceive the dichotomy fictional—real, in comparison to the literary work where the demarcation line between the terms tend to be less fluid?

The initial parts of this chapter define and contextualize virtual worlds in education and in relation to literature, which is followed by the third section addressing aspects that prevent virtual worlds from being widely used as teaching and learning tools. The fourth section critically reviews research on learning and the specific virtual world, SL. The fifth section presents an explorative and empirical study inside SL that addresses issues of literary learning. This part of the chapter is followed by a discussion of central questions regarding hinders and affordances of the tool in literature learning.

2 The Context of Literature and Learning with Virtual Worlds

Experiences with language and literature teaching and learning in virtual worlds, such as SL, are quite well documented in research (Mikropoulos & Natsis, 2011; Wang & Burton, 2013). For example, the Virtual Round Table Web Conference is held annually in a virtual environment, and at several occasions in SL, with the aim to present frontline language learning in and with digital technology. This study is oriented towards literature learning, a subject closely connected to language, but far less explored
Literature learning with digital tools calls for an understanding not only of (1) the digital tools *per se*, but also of (2) what is produced in terms of literary material in digital environments and with digital tools, and of (3) how the digital literary material is connected to past and present analogue–digital literary material. Even though literary studies have their own intrinsic premises, these three aspects are equally relevant for language studies and can potentially be applied to other subjects explored through the lenses of transformations of learning in and with digital resources.

The first aspect addresses the need for an understanding of the materiality and features of the digital tool intended for learning purposes. Concerning virtual worlds, this aspect represents a consistent challenge because of the linguistic confusion surrounding the subject. Acronyms, such as MUVE (multi-user virtual environment), VLR (virtual learning reality), VLE (virtual learning environment), and MMO(RP)G (massively multiplayer online (role-playing) game), have accumulated with the digital shift and are often used as synonyms, risking a reduction of conceptual clarity in scholarly work on virtual worlds. On a fundamental level, virtual worlds are computer-based environments that have existed and been inhabited by users since the beginning of the 1980s. A major feature differentiating a virtual world from other virtual environments consists of the prominent representation of geographical space. This is confirmed by Girvan’s (2018) attempt to define virtual worlds through an analysis of recurrent overlapping appellations in the field. She concludes that virtual worlds are:

> Shared, simulated spaces which are inhabited and shaped by their inhabitants who are represented as avatars. These avatars mediate our experience of this space as we move, interact with objects and interact with others, with whom we construct a shared understanding of the world at that time.

Space is also an important feature of fiction in different genres, from the novel to the film. Regarding virtual worlds, spatial representations have
progressively been improved and transformed through innovations in digital technology made available on the market. Today, they are distributed in three dimensions and can, through sophisticated virtual reality (VR) systems, display graphics similar to spaces in the real world. In addition, virtual worlds can be distributed both offline and online, just as they can be more, or less, open to users. For example, the graphic quality of the virtual interface is most often best rendered in pre-designed virtual worlds for MMOGs (massively multiplayer online games), where there is a paying wall for participation, such as the ARPG (action roll-playing game) Destiny (2014), Sea of Thieves (2018) and Monster Hunter (2018). Free online virtual worlds, such as SL, do not need to strive for graphic perfection to the same extent, since the goal of these worlds more often is the collaborative and/or individual construction of the world, not game-based itineraries with preconceived environments proper to videogames. Players have a more limited agency to modify and take part in the growth of the in-world contents in videogames in comparison to online participative virtual worlds. It is not surprising that digital virtual worlds have become an extremely lucrative and growing market (see, for example, statistics from Newzoo.com), since imaginary worlds have fascinated people throughout history, especially literary history. As educational technology, though, virtual worlds have not gained consistent ground in comparison to the widespread use among everyday digital users.

However, in recent research on digital environments and learning (Database ERIC: 2016–2018),¹ digital tools and resources are often put afore in different learning contexts and disciplines as important support for designing efficient teaching. On an overall level, the research field informs about how digital resources can be of help to (1) reach learning goals, for example through new pedagogical designs, (2) support collaboration, for example through problem solving in and with digital environments, (3) adapt the teaching to different “learning styles”, for example by blending digital and analogue contexts, (4) bring in situations and material from outside the classroom, (5) support “authentic learning”, for example by facilitating practical assignments in digital environments, (6)
enhance learners’ autonomy, and (7) change attitudes and beliefs concerning digital tools.

Despite the fact that the themes identify critical issues for learning with digital tools, technology implementation tends to become the dominating goal in research on learning and digital resources (Lim, Zhao, Tondeur, Chai, & Tsai, 2013). The holistic perspective, where transformations of communicative practices, as well as of subject-specific content, are studied in relation to each other and to the learning, is often pushed to the background. Despite the tendency to promote new technology, research on technology affordances also bears witness to difficulties in improving the above-mentioned themes by available technology. The obstacles encountered can partly be found in the process of technology adoption. As shown in Chap. 2 (this volume), implementation of technology is processed in decisional structures and chains, at the end of which teachers are the practical implementors and users in cooperation with their students. In order to understand the teacher perspective, and to anchor the study in a teaching context, the following two parts will address thresholds for integrating virtual worlds in learning.

3 The (Non-)Adoption of Virtual-World Technology in Education

The adoption model of innovators-early adopters-early majority-late majority-laggards developed by Rogers (2003), with the aim to understand the predicaments among distinct groups for approaching and integrating technology, has been recycled and further elaborated by several researchers (Kopaničová & Klepochová, 2016; Penjor & Zander, 2016; Terry & Cheney, 2016). The criteria for this model are of interest for the present study, since some of them store information about hinders regarding the (non-)use of virtual worlds in educational settings:

A. Relative advantage: The individual considers the current practice and to what degree the innovation would provide advantage. […]
B. Compatibility: Degree of accordance with the existing values, past experiences, and requirements of potential users. […]
C. Complexity: Degree of difficulty in understanding or using the innovation. The more effort and considerable time it requires, the more unlikely it is that users may adopt it.

D. Trialability: The perceived possibility to experiment and test the innovation on a limited basis to allow users to understand the benefits of it. […]

E. Observability: Degree of visibility to others of results of an innovation. This allows users to observe results and disseminate them to others. […]

(Criteria developed in Penjor & Zander, 2016)

Even though advantages (A) of virtual worlds in education are identifiable in theory, such as new possibilities for collaboration and scaling up and scaling down categories of learning content, for example a molecule in chemistry, the identification of the practical benefits of this type of educational technology may be less obvious. Virtual worlds are time-consuming, since advanced skills to manage the functions, just as insights into the social structures, are required. Hence, benefits like quality enhancement and viability are seldom immediate. Moreover, virtual worlds are digital products challenging established norms, values, and teaching traditions, since virtual spaces create their own rules and codes. Therefore, virtual worlds demand a certain amount of knowledge, engagement, and creativity in order to find out how these tools are compatible with a specific teaching module (B). The reluctance to integrate virtual worlds in education can possibly have its roots in the very product of hybrid digital technology connecting several digital media in one. This feature can be perceived as ambiguous, provocative, and threatening, since it is not only challenging our world view and values, but also concurring with real-worldly activities. In addition, virtual worlds contain a range of advanced functions and possibilities for multimodal creation, communication, and interaction. Thus, the complexity can be perceived as an insurmountable threshold for potential educational users (C).

However, the study on technology adoption conducted by Penjor and Zander (2016) makes clear that it is problematic to dress a general model for adoption for teachers in VLEs. The curve between innovators and laggards is not necessarily the same in different educational settings.
According to these authors, the local organizational and social structures in educational institutions are divergent and offer different conditions for implementation. Nevertheless, the developed critical criteria in the adoption model can be valuable tools when considering how to use virtual worlds in education.

Since the professional environment and schedule of teachers seldom offer enough time to reflect on and test a technology’s entire potential for specific learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; McCune, 2018), this study will draw on the last criteria in the adoption model (see above Penjor & Zander, 2016), that is, trialability (D) and observability (E). These criteria seem to be the most challenging ones regarding virtual-world technology, because of the time required to test possibilities, as well as to reflect on and observe in-world useful didactic potentials, for example what is produced in terms of literary material in the digital environment, and how the digital literary material is connected to past and present analogue literary material, as well as to conceptualizations of literary competences.

4 Second Life and Virtual Worlds as “Promising” Learning Tools

Since the digital shift in the 1990s, online virtual worlds have been addressed in research as “promising tools” for learning because of their unique technological features, such as “ways they record, manage, represent and communicate data and information” (Mikropoulos & Natsis, 2011). Other complementary characteristics associated with virtual worlds are the transformation of “knowledge’s nature” and access to knowledge (Pellas & Kazanidis, 2014), as well as favourable conditions for collaborative learning, innovation, and creativity (Gregory & Wood, 2018). Spatial and three-dimensional features that Girvan (2018) puts afore as fundamental for virtual world technology are noticeably absent in these discussions, despite several attempts to explore affordances with virtual three-dimensional spaces for teaching and learning (see f. ex. Angel Rueda, Valdés Godínes, & Rudman, 2018; Tokel & Isler, 2015).
However, the various examples of pedagogical designs carried out in the virtual world SL are relatively well documented, which forms one of the reasons why Gregory and Wood (2018) consider that this technology for learning has attained a stage of maturity. The authors state that virtual worlds, SL in particular, have at present gone through all phases of Gartner’s hype cycle: (1) Technology trigger, (2) Peak of inflated expectations, (3) Slope of enlightenment, and have finally reached the (4) Plateau of productivity. Concerning SL, which is Gregory and Wood’s (2018) main object of study, it is difficult to deny that the launch of this world in 2003 was a “technology trigger” that made people and scholars dream about literal emigration waves to digitized spaces, just as the founder of SL, Philip Rosedale, did (see Castronova, 2007; Cline, 2005; Meadows, 2008). The discovery of lucrative aspects of SL, especially the attention paid to the fortune gathered by Anshe Chung, the first virtual millionaire, contributed massively to the “peak of inflated expectations”.

The hype that surrounded SL in 2007 has since then evaporated quite dramatically. Nevertheless, among the virtual worlds that have been launched during the last decades, SL is one of the most persistent (Dickey, 2011), which is not necessarily a proof of attainment of the “plateau of productivity”, as suggested by Gregory and Wood (2018). In fact, the hype cycle as a theoretical framing is not entirely convincing, since it is supported by (1) recent research, which adopts an uncritical view of the hype cycle, and (2) research from the 1990s, which addresses technology changes in a broad sense without connecting them to specific technological inventions, contrary to the intention with the Gartner hype cycle. In addition, the information scientist Jorge Aranda pulled the hype cycle model to pieces in two simple observations already in 2006 (Aranda, 2006): first, because it implies a guarantee for success over time for every technological invention without considering the risk of failure; second, because technological inventions can very well be successful right away, without passing through stages of hype, inflated expectations, and disappointment. Spotify is one obvious example of technology with immediate success (for further insight into hype cycle research, see f. ex. Debehayir & Steinert, 2016; van Lente, Spitters, & Peine, 2013). Nevertheless, the hype cycle contributes with a model of representation of a technology’s
development and anchorage in society over time, which appears as one important aspect to consider in digitalization and implementation processes in education.

As the literature reviews on virtual worlds and learning carried out by Wang and Burton (2013), and Mikropoulos and Natsis (2011) have shown, the engagement with existing virtual worlds in education is challenging, principally because the instructional design and the virtual worlds do not match each other. These challenges have in several studies in the reviews been described as obstacles to surmount, which could possibly be an indication that virtual worlds are not so mature and productive for learning as some scholars suggest. Nevertheless, in these nascent learning practices, few online virtual worlds have been so solicited for educational purposes as SL (Creelman, Petrakou, & Richardson, 2008; Dickey, 2011; Gregory & Wood, 2018; Lindberg, 2013; Wankel & Kingsley, 2009). Still, an observation of the charts of the number of visitors in SL in April 2018 confirms the limited usage and attraction of SL (http://dwellonit.taterunino.net/sl-statistical-charts/). The statistics show that the number of visitors never peaks beyond 55,000 avatars present in SL at the same time. These are modest numbers, in comparison to other online virtual worlds with strict gaming purposes, where the presence can easily reach triple that number. Thus, the scholarly interest in SL as a learning space does not seem to correspond to a usage in practice.

Despite the higher number of visitors in commercial game worlds, in comparison to SL, we can assume that gamers discover, explore, and abandon commercial gaming worlds in a more consumerist way than SL users, since game worlds often have an expiry date, when it is time to move on to the newest or to the most recently launched game world. Altogether, if people with access to digital devices and internet comprise an infinitely small part of the global population, of which even less people are present in virtual worlds, this category of technology remains at the stage of a “promising tool”. In this context, it is difficult to maintain that a virtual world like SL as an educational resource is consolidated and manifested among teachers and students, as Gregory and Wood (2018) tend to do. Nevertheless, valuable experiences by teachers and scholars concerning language learning through virtual worlds are accumulating...
Few of these studies address fundamental changes that progressively, but inevitably, occur through the presence in and of virtual worlds. How do virtual worlds change our conception of literature and literary competences, as well as creativity and communication between people? For example, the comprehension of fictional worlds in relation to the real world is an important part of contemporary literature didactics and literary theory (Bell & Ryan, 2019). The relationships between virtual, fictional, and real worlds call for scrutinization and problematization, in order to gain insight into how literature potentially could be learnt in and with virtual worlds. These interrogations are approached in the following analysis of the literary theme “Amor and Eros” in SL, where one extracted sequence of interaction and communication will be the object of study.

5 The Literary Theme of Amor and Eros in a Real-Fictional-Virtual Continuum

The sequence that has been collected in SL builds on observations and reports over the years, on (1) literature on SL, (2) literature in SL, as well as on (3) literary museums, cafés and book clubs, book releases in SL (see f. ex. William Gibson presenting his book Spook Country in SL in 2007), (4) theatres and performances in SL, such as A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and (5) reproduced literary worlds and events inside SL (see f. ex. Battlestar Galactica and Gulliver’s travels). I, Researcher (in analogy with I, Robot, Asimov ([1950] 2001), and I, Avatar, Meadows, 2008), have positioned myself as the slow Innovator and Early adopter in this context, eager to investigate and discover potential materials for literature didactics designated for educational settings, but at an idle speed that has allowed for a seizing of moments and thereby for discovering “triable” elements (see the criteria in the adoption model, section three). Through the analysis of one found “triable” element, this chapter will share potentials for literature learning in the digital age, that the reader can “observe” and evaluate (see the criteria in the adoption model, section
The chosen sequence in SL is connected to a common literary theme, that is, Amor and Eros, as a means of delimiting the study and connect the data to a specific subject content often used in literature didactics in school (Lindberg, 2016). As Belsey (1994) shows in her work, literary history is dominated by the theme of love in its different shapes, from Sappho to Stephanie Meyer’s vampire series, via mythical lovers such as Orfeus and Eurydice, Paris and Helena, Tristan and Isolde, Lancelot and Guinevere, Abélard and Héloïse, Jane Eyre and Rochester, Anna Karenina and Vronskij, just to mention a few. Refsum (2016) contributes with further elucidation of the love theme in contemporary literature, specifically in Scandinavia, from the twenty-first century. The rich representation of love in literature indicates that the conception of love is both constructed and learnt from storytelling, just as literature offers different codes for languages of love and opportunities to observe how the theme of love unfolds in different fictional settings and relationships. This study focuses on heterosexual love since this is a dominant norm in society, though communication and interaction in virtual spaces are liable to criticism of this norm.

Just as the love theme has been explored in literary studies, real-life amorous behaviours have been focussed in research, which reflects a cross-disciplinary scholarly interest in conceptions of love and how it is constructed. Sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1998) develops how intimate and amorous feelings have been codified in many ways in society throughout history, an evolution which is presented as principally due to societal shifts. The digitalized era has brought about the latest shift concerning intimate relationships and flirtation (Turkle, 2015, 2017 [2011]). In this regard, Ben-Ze’ev (2004) picks up the thread where Luhmann stops his report on society’s love codes, just before the digital shift, and presents changed behaviours regarding intimate relations in the nascent net-based everyday-life communication. He writes that: “Falling in love and out of love, flirting, cheating, even having sex on-line have all become part of modern way of living and loving” (Ben-Ze’ev, 2004: foreword). Apparently, digital media and communication generate new ways of experiencing and perceiving love, since the mediation of languages of
love are transformed (see also Freeman, Bardzell, Bardzell, & Herring, 2015; Johansson & Lindberg, forthcoming). These different theoretical outlooks on love suggest that mediation is a central feature for the concept and understanding of love. History also teaches us that mediated love is nothing new and can be traced back to traditional practices of love letters (Ahearn, 2001).

Regarding the changes in mediated love, some informants in Boellstorff’s (2008) ethnographic study on avatars in SL perceive the virtual love as more real, since one gets to know the real person before reacting on the physical appearance. On the contrary, the informants in Turkle’s study (2015) express pessimism concerning love online and put afore that a deep and sustainable relation is more difficult to achieve in a media-dense context. Konstam (2015) confirms that technology enables young adults to “be less committed and planful in relationships” (55). She points to “blurred lines between dating, friendship, sexual, and romantic behaviors” (55). These studies show that humans are learning how to be social with digital tools, and in digital contexts, as well as to marry digital dimensions to analogue ones. Identity, language, and culture are exposed aspects in this process, as well as these are the capital that the individual must invest and risk, in order to fully embrace the analogue–digital continua. Literature is an eloquent product of these aspects in transformation, and, consequently, literature itself is extending and changing its frontiers. The virtual world of SL hosts the literary theme of “Amor and Eros”, and positions relational events in the continuum between online love relationships and fiction. The constructed fictional world and the ongoing interaction between avatars, behind which humans are hiding, represent the main features for creating, simultaneously, links to the real world and links to the literary world.

As a result of digital communicative practices impacting the thematic literature and storytelling associated with Amor and Eros, several written stories inspired by love in SL have materialized in real books, such as Alain Monniers’ novel *Notre seconde vie* (2007), in which avatars are flirting and falling in love with each other, or the avatar author Dalian Hansen’s novel *ANIMA. A novel about Second Life* (2007), where amorous attraction is represented as existing in and out of the virtual world. In addition, through authentic dialogues, the documentary love story about
the avatars Per and Qin (Olsen & Qin, 2011) retells how an intimate relationship is formed in SL between the two protagonists. Drawn from real experiences and events in the virtual world SL, these stories have been fictionalized through technics of retelling in specific genres, and formatted in the artefact of a book, which points to the remaining symbolic status of “bookish” literature (Brillenburg Wurth, Driscoll, & Pressman, 2018; Pressman, 2009). In the following, an excerpt from ongoing communication and interaction in SL will be retold through the documentation of text and images, in order to capture the literary dimensions activated in moments when avatars are involved with the world, seemingly without an explicit learning purpose.

**Entering the Theme Amor and Eros in Second Life**

Everything that “goes on” in SL can be observed as ephemeral stories that start and stop in a constant flow embedded in the virtual space, where fiction and reality sometimes blur into one. This modality-rich virtual world can be perceived through image, sound, and text, but also through the different themes, or genres, that the space is divided into on the destination guide website (https://secondlife.com/destinations). The exploration of literary competence and the literary theme Amor and Eros in SL is inspired by current ethnographic methodology for digital environments (see Jong, 2016, for a brief overview of the area), more specifically the steps between planning, entry, and data collection, as formulated by Kozinets (2010), as well as the role of the researcher as an individual experiencing and embodying, in a unique way, the surrounding virtual world (Hine, 2015).

For this study, the theme “romance” has been selected out of 15 categories from which it was possible to choose destinations in year 2015, when the study was carried out (on 8 June 2018, there were 47 categories to choose destinations from). During the moment when the study was in progress, the “romance” category was hiding two sub-themes: “wedding” and “romantic spots”. The latter sub-theme collected 35 locations (to be compared with the current 93), of which the most popular places were taken into consideration for further observation. In order to ensure an
observation ground with regular communication and interaction between avatars, the selection of the most visited and appreciated places under the category “romance” was carried out in two steps. In the first step, the nine places that had been liked by more than 50 users on the destination guide website were visited a Monday afternoon and a Friday afternoon in the same week, in order to explore which ones were the most visited (Table 5.1). The location Intimate Romance Garden scored highest in the test, with 15 avatars present at both times of the week, and with the most obvious presence Friday late afternoon, with 20 avatars at the location. It is interesting to observe that three years after the study, this location is no longer available in SL, along with three other locations collected in 2015. However, five of the most popular romantic places at the time of the study are still listed on the destination guide website (Table 1, titles in boldface). These changes point to the rapid transformations of the virtual space in comparison to the analogue-real, which appears more stable since elements do not usually vanish instantly, and transformations are often carrying traces from the past.

The exploration of Intimate Romance Garden required that “I, Researcher”, was visible and interacted with other avatars (Boellstorff, 2008; Hine, 2015). In order to verify a constant presence at the chosen location, and to get acquainted with the activities there, I visited Intimate Romance Garden every day during a week for longer sessions of one to two hours. This procedure permitted me to confirm that the location was visited on a regular basis, and to get in contact with three informants and speak to them about their motives to be in SL, and particularly to visit

| Table 5.1 The nine romantic locations liked by more than 50 users on SL’s destination guide website |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Intimate Romance Garden 60 likes                         |
| • Foxxies Piano and Jazz Ballroom 60 likes                 |
| • Isle of View 55 likes                                    |
| • Dubai Jazz My Way 485 likes                              |
| • Two moon Paradise 664 likes                             |
| • Ajax and Katie’s Romance Garden 71 likes                 |
| • Leroy 189 likes                                         |
| • Dream Scene 55 likes                                    |
| • Garden of Greenburg 52 likes                            |
Intimate Romance Garden. When observing my own behaviour and reactions in the virtual world, I realized that I was drawn to some avatars and avoided others. Like in real life, it is difficult to explain why the feeling of appeal or repel arises between individuals, but the method to follow my intuition when contacting avatars resulted in three encounters and conversations about love in SL. The informants were aware of my role as a researcher and accepted that I used their stories and snapshots of their appearances in SL for the current study.

Informant 1, with the assumed name Dave in this study, was five years and four months in SL when I met him. Dave had had several love affairs in SL, and once he had been in love for real. The story had been hurtful for Dave, since his avatar partner left him for someone else. His work with surveillance at a company made him spend a considerable amount of time at a computer desk, where he could easily access SL.

Informant 2, with the assumed name Belinda in this study, was one year and nine months in SL when I first met her. She had not had any amorous relationships in SL. She went to Intimate Romance Garden for friendship, exchanging of ideas, and for learning about human nature. Belinda was married in real life (RL), and in her profile documentation one could read several quotations about love from eclectic origins, for example, Bertrand Russell, Bob Marley, and Irish proverbs. She observed that men talked more easily about their inner self in the virtual context than in real life.

Informant 3, Addi, chose to reveal his real virtual name and his virtual profile picture. He spoke very frankly about his innermost dream, that was to live a real love story in SL. Addi was searching for his perfect match in this digital context and dreamt about travelling around everywhere in the virtual world with his beloved one. He was in search of someone to trust and someone that could be faithful to him.

These contributions point to some reasons among avatars to engage with the theme Amor and Eros in the virtual space SL. With different approaches, the informants are looking for an experience of the abstract concept of love that the immediate reality cannot easily provide. The virtual space can offer other types of encounters, since it contributes with broader interfaces towards other individuals. In addition, the screen with its functions and tools offers alternative ways of languaging and commu-
nunication, which can cater for new forms of intimacy. The informants had identified the benefits of the virtual space for their goals, and therefore immigrated part-time to this environment. The interviewed avatars’ stories also bear witness to the experience of reality in virtual space through their emotional engagement with the world. This is valuable information in the run-up to the following passage where a collected sequence will be analysed through the literary features activated.

“**The Beauty and the Beast**: A Story Event in Second Life

The data that reconstitute a communicative and interactive event in SL have been gathered through the in-world “snapshot” function in the place Intimate Romance Garden. The avatars’ names are changed in the representation of the event, and no research has been carried out to find out who they are, neither in virtual nor in real life. The place Intimate Romance Garden was codified for romance, considering the hearts floating around in the air, the scenic landscapes (see Belsey (1994) for the signification of nature for romance), and the written messages, such as “Love is blind, but can see through the heart”, “love is giving someone the possibility to hurt, but trusting them not to”. The environment was constructed around a main place for social gatherings, where it was possible to mingle with other avatars. In the surroundings, several spots were constructed for more intimate face-to-face encounters (Fig. 5.1). The “milieu” is a part of the stories generated in the virtual world, and the importance conveyed to it depends on the narrative structure of the specific story.

In the sequence extracted from one visit to Intimate Romance Garden, “I, Researcher” is present at the central spot, observing avatars’ activities. Suddenly, a wolf-like avatar appears in front of me. Let us call it “the Beast” (Fig. 5.2). The Beast speaks its own language and enounces the following in the public chat window: “[07:14] V\^vv^V HoWILLzZz V^vv^V”. I have the feeling that the Beast is addressing me, but I do not

---

2 The square brackets show the exact time for the avatars’ pronounced lines in the public text chat.
know how to react (Fig. 5.2). While watching and waiting, a blond female avatar with a black mask covering her eyes (Miss M) enters the scene (Fig. 5.3). She says in the public chat: “[07:17] u again!”. The event is followed by the appearance of a dark male avatar (Mr V), equally wearing a mask. Mr V positions himself close to the Beast and warns: “[07:17] be careful monster she is dangerous :)” (Fig. 5.3). The situation is generating a dialogue between several avatars. The Beast is the object of communication but does not utter anything:

Excerpt from the dialogue “The Beauty and the Beast”

[07:19] Miss M: nned to take my whip too
[07:19] Mr V: you are strong monster
[07:20] Mr V: but she is stronger
[07:21] Mr V: your teeth are scary :))
Analysis of Three Literary Features

The lived, documented, and told story of “The Beauty and the Beast” offers new perspectives on common literary features, such as the central
theme, the genre, the characters, and the author. In the following, these aspects are discussed from a point of view of how literary competences call for re-conceptualizations when in contact with events in digitally mediated virtual worlds.

**Literary Intertexts**

The communicating and interacting avatars in the scene mix several myths of love (Fig. 5.1). The couple Miss M–Mr V calls the wolf-like avatar the “monster”. The moment when Miss M realizes that “he is in love…with me…the monster” is a decisive turn, which transforms the event and unfolds associations to the story *The Beauty and the Beast*. Suddenly, the wolf-like avatar is not only a monster, it is also the cursed protagonist in the famous story, who will remain a Beast if he does not...
find a woman who loves him truly. At [7:23] another avatar, Lady X, steps in and joins the conversation. She suggests that Miss M should give the Beast a kiss so that he can be transformed into a prince. The fairy tale about the princess and the frog is in this moment intervening with the event. This literary dimension is however expediently aborted by Miss M, who declares that she already has her prince. From the context, it is possible to draw the conclusion the Miss M and Miss V are a couple. Both avatars wear the same kind of mask, and they are acting in accord. In addition, at one point during the event, Miss M needs her whip, which she is not only declaring in the chat window, but also shows concretely on the screen. These details connote to the BDSM culture, which has been interpreted and popularized through the literary trilogy *Fifty shades* (2011–2015) by E. L. James, as well as through its recent film adaptation. In turn, these novels recall De Sade and eighteenth-century erotic and sadomasochistic literature. In this way, the event is playfully improvised towards a hybrid romantic intrigue. The interacting avatars are more, or less, consciously making use of their cultural and literary baggage related to the theme of Amor and Eros, in order to shape their own story.

**Genre Conventions**

The ongoing event is watched by several avatars standing around the scene, which contributes to the impression that the improvised communication and interaction is transformed into a piece of performance, a drama, and a play. This aspect is reinforced by the modality-rich event, where bodily movements, gestures, and positionings function as complementary meaning-making layers to the presented texted dialogue. The dialogue generated in the public text chat becomes the written improvised play, and the situated utterances receive their full sense through the visual course of events in the digital space. In addition, the chain of events could very well be a Machinima-film if an avatar present at the perfor-

---

3 Machinima is a notion merging the two words: *machine* and *cinema*. It is the term used for animated films realized in different three-dimensional virtual worlds. For further reading on the subject, see Lowood (2008).
mance records the ongoing activities. It is not possible, though, to verify in real time if a recording of the event is carried out.

The event of “The Beauty and the Beast” can be interpreted as a story, in the sense that the participants are creating an improvisation and a play through their communication and interaction. Therefore, the sequence is an in-world fiction, in contrast with other courses of events that are lived and experienced in more literal ways. Mr V’s systematically repeated smileys after his utterances further reinforce the fictional aspect, since they seem to indicate that the communication and interaction between the involved avatars should be experienced on a second degree. In addition, the participants watch the course of events and the dialogue from their screen, which offers a similar experience to cinema. In parallel, some of the participants are living the event as a real-life experience, the intensity of which the avatars can regulate through the in-world functions. For example, the screen view can be adapted either to an experience from a point situated at the avatar’s eye level, or to an overview, where the avatar sees him/herself moving around in the virtual space. The former caters for an enhanced reality experience and the latter offers a more distanced experience, which underscores the fictional and virtual aspects. These contradictory features motivate a categorization of the sequence as a “story event”, that is a story invented, lived, and told in real time, where the participating avatars are the authors as well as the characters. In this ambiguous context between story and event, genre and medium get interwoven. The medium is not only mediating; on the contrary, it entirely becomes a part of languaging practices forming the transferred information (Meyrowitz, 1985). In this case, the virtual world as a medium allows for a bridging to more traditional media, such as theatre and film, as well as for a formatting in a specific genre, in this case, a drama or a play. “I, Researcher” has received the story event from different mediating sources; through the virtual world itself, that is, the milieu, the public chat forum, that is, the dialogue, and the avatars with their moves and postures, that is, the characters. Instant messaging and the voice function are complementary mediation instances that did not come into play from my screen view, although storing the inherent potential to contribute to the chaining and juxtaposition of ongoing discourses in the construction of the story event.
Character Construction

In a modality-rich, media-dense, and performative virtual world, where the participants create events that can be perceived as stories, it becomes less obvious what defines a story, and which fundamental pieces that are necessary for a course of events to be considered a story. Ryan (2001, 2006, [2012] 2014) has studied narratology in digital media extensively, and states that:

[A story] is defined as a mental image formed by four types of constituents: (1) a spatial constituent consisting of a world (the setting) populated by individuated existents (characters and objects); (2) a temporal constituent, by which this world undergoes significant changes caused by non-habitual events; (3) a mental constituent, specifying that events must involve intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world (or the mental states of other agents); (4) a formal and pragmatic constituent, advocating closure and a meaningful message. (Ryan [2012] 2014, p. 17)

The first constituent (1) is the spatial environment, which requires words, in order to get materialized in a literary text. In this case, it is built up as a visual place, Intimate Romance Garden, in the virtual world SL, and signals the theme of the activities at this specific spot. The second constituent (2) comprises the very event in time. Even though the interruption in Intimate Romance Garden of “the Beast” did not change the virtual world considerably, it represents an unusual event that affected other avatars present in the place at that time. Both constituents, obviously, can be expressed through other modes than words, which partly contradicts Ryan’s ([2012] 2014) claim that these are closely connected to linguistic expressions.

However, the third constituent (3) seems, on the contrary, in need of linguistic support to be comprehensively expressed. This constituent translates that characters/avatars involved in the story event need to react intellectually and/or emotionally in relation to what is happening, and/or to other characters. This can partly be achieved through gestures and facial expressions, but the exactitude is reached through the verbal lan-
guage. In the sequence from the story event “The Beauty and the Beast”, Miss M reacts aggressively on the appearance of the Beast (“u again!”) and announces that she needs her whip. Mr V reacts by taking the role of the defender of Miss M (“get your hands off her”). Lady X, in her turn, reacts to the romanticism in the situation when she encourages Miss M to give the Beast a kiss (“kiss him…”).

The fourth constituent (4) comprises a closure, during which the participants (and the audience) understand that the story event is coming to its end. In the story event “The Beauty and the Beast”, the end arrives abruptly at the moment when Miss M gives the following exhortation: “ok lets go…” It is not clear, though, if this invitation to leave only addresses her partner Mr V or all avatars present. In either case, this verbal utterance is decisive for the creation of an end, but, in line with Ryan’s ([2012] 2014) analysis, the end can as well have been realized through alternative means and modes, in this case, the visual withdrawal of Mr V and Miss M.

According to Ryan’s model, the fourth constituent (4) also should offer the possibility for an interpretation of a message. The reported sequence from the story event “The Beauty and the Beast” allows for an observation of the message of “fidelity in love”, since Miss M chooses not to kiss the Beast, and declares that she already has a prince, that is, assumingly, Mr V. It is also possible to interpret the message as “threatened love”, since the Beast apparently becomes a threat to the couple Miss M–Mr V. The “impossible love” and “the transformational power of love” are other thematic possibilities that the story event “The Beauty and the Beast” activates. The moment Miss M announces “he is in love…with me…the monster”, the story event balances between two possibilities: either Miss M chooses the monster or she remains with her partner Mr V. This peripeteia is annihilated and no transformation is taking place. Miss M decides to continue as before, with her partner Mr V. This is probably one reason for the abrupt end. The alternative would have been a love imbroglio requiring a more consistent temporal engagement with the story event, and, probably, a more immersive and sustainable experience.

The story event and the characters, their roles and functions are constructed through collaboration between avatars. Interesting enough, all
avatars do not make the same impact and do not enjoy the same power on the story. There is a plot leader, represented by Miss M, who takes the role of the protagonist as well as that of the author, as she is the one who decides over the *peripeteia* and how the story should end. Miss M declines Lady X’s suggestion to kiss the Beast, which would have turned the story into an interesting triangle drama, and it is Miss M who decides when the story has come to an end through the exhortation: “ok lets go”. If the Beast takes the role of the trigger of the story event, it remains passive and silent throughout the plot. This avatar is the motive for the story event and has a considerable power to change the course of events but chooses not to.

The aspect of event, rather than a story, is underscored by the back-grounding of narrative perspectives and narrative voices (see Lindberg, 2018), which are at the core of text-based literature. These aspects are only activated through the retelling of the story event by the “I, Researcher”. Still, the story event does not have an outside author, but is driven by the avatar-characters themselves, with their identities and communicative actions. Within the narratology field there is a rich nomenclature to identify intrigue and narrative perspectives. Even perception and mental activity within characters are included in the terminology. Nevertheless, tools are lacking for describing how the narrative subject is constructed through interaction and communication. This dimension can very well be elucidated through the study of ongoing story events in virtual worlds.

The analysis of the sequence “The Beauty and the Beast” displays several literary features that argue for a story, and more specifically a type of love story that could be categorized as flirtation and *marivaudage* (Legrain, 2012). The basic constituents of a story are in place and characters have their own roles to play, as trigger, defender, and plot leader. Nevertheless, the story has no author and no personal narrative voice or perspective. The plot is constructed as an improvisation in real time through an instant collaboration between avatars who are living the story as an event in their virtual lives. In this story event, both classic and popular literary content come into play and shape underlying messages in the ongoing communication and interaction. Real, virtual, and fictional dimensions are merging, which is uncovered and illustrated by the “I, Researcher’s”
documentation or retelling of the story event. Through this procedure, literary material created in and with virtual worlds is unfolded, showing the function and role of fundamental features in literary récits.

6 Literary Learning as Embedded and Embodied Knowledge

This study is an attempt to take stock of hinders and affordances for virtual worlds to become a learning tool for literature didactics, and, as well, to focus on “trialability” and “observability” (see the adaptation model in section three) in the virtual world, SL. An explorative approach to the tool itself and to its content has allowed for identifying “triable” elements for literature didactics, such as the usage of ongoing story events in virtual worlds. One story event has been analysed and herein offered for “observability” by interested educators. In this case, an excerpt from ongoing communication and interaction in a place associated with the theme of romance and love in SL has been the object of a literary analysis. The sequence called “The Beauty and the Beast” in the study offers insights into how communication and interaction between avatars recycle elements drawn from classic and popular literary fiction, as well as of transformed conceptions of literary features, such as genre, plot, and characters.

The results unfold how several fundamental elements in stories are constructed in a virtual world and how these relate to traditional text-based or cinematographic storytelling. For example, in literature as well as in virtual worlds, real and familiar places, as well as famous places, such as Paris or London, are often used to create the setting of a story (Ryan, 2001). In SL, the place and space are more explicitly thematic, addressing the activities going on there, such as “romance”. The characters are not invented by an author, as in traditional literature. On the contrary, their function and identity are continuously constructed through utterances, reactions to, and interactions with other characters involved in the story event. Nevertheless, in this example of co-production of characters, one character takes the lead, the plot-leader, as an equivalent to the author.
Finally, the study of “The Beauty and the Beast” reveals how genres come into play through several media instances and shape the story event. In this case, theatre as a traditional medium, and the play and the performance as genres and art forms are activated and altered through the usage of technology.

The story event shows the importance of engagement with the virtual space, which the avatars make use of for deploying literature in action. However, in the virtual world, the dichotomy fictional—real is challenged, since the avatars are living through the event. The plot of “The Beauty and the Beast” is real for those involved, even though one avatar signals through emojis that the dramatic emotions involved must not be taken at face value—it is invented in the moment, an improvised story, or a “prank”, as some participants might say. The facilities offered in-world to document such an event in parallel with its occurrence permit a retelling of the story, leaving room for the identification of fiction, literary elements, and the discovery of how literary features function. The collaborative and communicative context in virtual spaces underscores that something real goes on between participants, which can be seen as a hinder for observing literary elements embedded in the world and in the interaction. Nevertheless, the joint activities of doing and documenting story events form a way to embody literary understanding, knowledge, and skills, which potentially can be transferred to the learning of other genres and modes, such as screenplay writing, filmmaking, and literary analysis. A virtual story event also forms a means to critically discuss literary terminology in order to go beyond instrumental applications of terms on text-based fiction.

In addition, the use of virtual worlds in literature studies has the potential to address and problematize the continuum real-virtual-fictional. The interviews with avatars in Intimate Romance Garden offer insights into how real love stories and intimate relations are made and unmade in the virtual space, just as there are events experienced on a second degree, more closely linked to fiction. In this way, virtual worlds are recipients of reality, as well as of fiction, and seem to constitute a complementary dimension to ways of perceiving, using, and doing literature. Avatars involved in virtual worlds are carrying cultural and linguistic experiences from one world to another; between the virtual, the real, and the fictional, contributing to the blurring of borders between these dimensions.
It is undeniable, though, that from an educational point of view, the sequence “The Beauty and the Beast” unfolds in an unframed setting, detached from instructional design, learning outcomes, and assessment. The avatars are doing a story through which they seem to be learning literature in an unaware way. Unaware learning is, in this case, to be in contact with a subject content without knowing it, and without anticipating what could be assessed and/or drawn from that experience. The purposelessness of the activity and the aspect of playfulness allow for the creative production of the story event.

Furthermore, the social context demands participation and immersion to a degree that the avatar is free to control. The course of events depends solely on the engagement and creative interaction among avatars. Therefore, this is an uncomfortable zone where anything can happen, which can be interpreted as a denial of tested and proved methods for teaching and learning that educational contexts most often proclaim. Still, the learning in these processes has a potential to become aware, if the event is documented and recalled through story(re)telling and analysis. However, guidance and conscious associations to a specific field and subject are needed to establish what categories of knowledge and skills that have been experienced and/or acquired during the event. In this regard, the results from “The Beauty and the Beast” suggest renewed approaches to literary knowledge and ways of acquiring literary and linguistic skills.

In the era of pre-digitalization, literacy, that is, reading and writing, was a basic practical skill for knowledge acquisition. Today, as I argue in Lindberg (2013), literacy is an instable notion, not to be seized in absolute terms, rather in the intersection between savoir and a savoir-faire in constant motion. The notion of literacy depends on the technology at hand and the knowledge base the user chooses to link to the used technology. With this perspective, the concept of literacy requires to be constantly explored in situated practices and in connection to a specific field and specific technology practices. Ever-changing and accumulating technology and media landscapes call for new skills to be managed in the production of knowledge. As a consequence, the notion of knowledge is progressively distancing itself from solely theoretical insights, embracing the doing in situ. The increased use of digital devices in humans’ every-day life and
communications tends towards a merging of the savoir and the savoir-faire. Knowledge in a specific field is just as much the management of tools that give access to and produce the knowledge intended for learning. Literature studies experience a turn concerning these matters, since digital tools, as well as communication and interaction in virtual spaces, seemingly alter what literature can be, and how it can be produced and learnt.

The current hinders for adopting virtual worlds as a learning tool for literature studies can, thus, be summarized as follows:

- The embodied interaction becomes a hinder for seeing literature.
- The unframed settings and the unaware learning challenge traditionally defined educational designs.
- The notion of reality and the dichotomy real—fiction are challenged through the layers of virtual reality and story events created and lived in these spaces.
- The space is unlimited and goes far beyond the classroom walls, challenging ideas of control of movement and interaction in educational settings.

Considering these hinders, the “plateau of productivity” for virtual worlds, such as SL, in literature learning does not yet seem attainable. The presence of young people in virtual worlds is nevertheless increasing, and the technology continuously refined. An integration of virtual worlds in literature didactics implies a revised notion of literary knowledge and skills, which would offer a more prominent place to the doing of literature, but also to critical thinking, and to skills and knowledges transferable to other areas.

**References**

Ahearn, L. M. (2001). *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Angel Rueda, C. J., Valdés Godínes, J. C., & Rudman, P. D. (2018). Categorizing the Educational Affordances of 3-Dimensional Immersive Digital
Environments. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in Practice, 17*(2018).

Aranda, J. (2006, October 22). Retrieved May 10, 2019, from https://catenary.wordpress.com/2006/10/22/cheap-shots-at-the-gartner-hype-curve/

Asimov, I. ([1950] 2001). *I, Robot.* London: Voyager.

Bagga-Gupta, S. (2014). Language: Ways-of-Being-with-Words Across Disciplinary Boundaries and Empirical Sites. In H. Paulasto, H. Rionheimo, L. Meriläinen, & M. Kok (Eds.), *Language Contacts at the Crossroads of Disciplines* (pp. 89–130). Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Bell, A., & Ryan, M.-L. (2019). *Possible Worlds Theory and Contemporary Narratology.* University of Nebraska Press.

Belsey, C. (1994). *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Ben-Ze’ev, A. (2004). *Love Online: Emotions on the Internet.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Boellstorff, T. (2008). *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Brillenburg Wurth, K., Driscoll, K. & Pressman, J. (red.) (2018). *Book Presence in a Digital Age.* New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

Castronova, E. (2007). *Exodus to the Virtual World: How Online Fun Is Changing Reality.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cline, M. S. (2005). *Power, Madness and Immortality: The Future of Virtual Reality.* University Village Press.

Creelman, A., Petrakou, A., & Richardson, D. (2008). *Teaching and Learning in Second Life – Experience from the Kamimo Project.* London, UK: Incisive Media.

Culler, J. (1980). Literary Competence. In J. P. Tompkins (Ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (pp. 101–117). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R. C., Andree, A., & Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE). (2010). *How High-Achieving Countries Develop Great Teachers. Research Brief:* Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

Debehayir, O., & Steinert, M. (2016). The Hype Cycle Model: A Review and Future Directions. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 108*(July), 28–41.

Dickey, M. D. (2011). The Pragmatics of Virtual Worlds for K-12 Educators: Investigating the Affordances and Constraints of “Active Worlds” and “Second Life” with K-12 In-Service Teachers. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 59*(1), 1–20.
Freeman, G., Bardzell, J., Bardzell, S., & Herring, S. G. (2015). Simulating Marriage: Gender Roles and Emerging Intimacy in an Online Game. Proc. In CSCW’2015. New York: ACM.

Girvan, C. (2018). What Is a Virtual World? Definition and Classification. Educational Technology Research and Development, 66(5), 1087–1100.

Gregory, S., & Wood, D. (Eds.). (2018). Authentic Virtual World Education: Facilitating Cultural Engagement and Creativity. Singapore City: Springer.

Hine, C. (2015). Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Johansson, S., & Lindberg, Y. (forthcoming). Cyberculture. In A. Lock, C. Sinha, & N. Gontier (Eds.), Oxford Handbook on Human Symbolic Evolution. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jong, S. T. (2016). Netnographic Research on Online Communities and Culture. In M. Chou (Ed.), Proceedings of The Australian Sociological Association Conference (pp. 151–160). The Australian Catholic University, Fitzroy, Melbourne, 28 November–1 December 2016.

Konstam, V. (2015). Emerging and Young Adulthood: Multiple Perspectives, Diverse Narratives (2nd ed.). Cham: Springer.

Kopaničová, J., & Klepochová, D. (2016). Consumers in New Millennium: Attitudes Towards Adoption of New Technologies in Purchasing Process. Studia Commercialia Bratislavensia, 9(33).

Kozinets, R. (2010). Netnography. Doing Ethnographic Research Online. London EC1Y: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Legrain, S. (2012). Marivaudage et redondances: Un style dramatique entre langage-action et métalangage. Poétique, 170(2), 177–193. https://doi.org/10.3917/poeti.170.0177

Lim, C.-P., Zhao, Y., Tondeur, J., Chai, C.-S., & Tsai, C.-C. (2013). Bridging the Gap: Technology Trends and Use of Technology in Schools. Educational Technology & Society, 16(2), 59–68.

Lindberg, Y. (2013). De la Belle époque à Second Life. EPU (Cyper).

Lindberg, Y. (2016). Framtida berättelser på gymnasiet. Kärleksintrigen som interaktiv berättelse i Second Life. In H. Höglund & R. Heilä-Ylikallio (Eds.), Framtida berättelser. Perspektiv på nordisk modersmålsdidaktisk forskning och praktik (pp. 85–101). Åbo Akademi, Pedagogik och välfärdssstudier, Rapport 39/2016.

Lindberg, Y. (2018). L’(im)mobilité de l’œuvre de Melchior Mbonimpa et l’esquive de la world literature. Nordic Journal of Francophone Studies/Revue nordique des études francophones, 1(1), 62–76. https://doi.org/10.16993/rnef.6
Lowood, H. (2008). High-Performance Play: The Making of Machinima. *Journal of Media Practice, 7*(1), 25–42. https://doi.org/10.1386/jmpr.7.1.25/1.
Luhmann, N. (1998). *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
McCune, V. (2018). Experienced Academics’ Pedagogical Development in Higher Education: Time, Technologies, and Conversations. *Oxford Review of Education, 44*(3), 307–321.
Meadows, M. S. (2008). *I, Avatar: The Culture and Consequences of Having a Second Life*. Indianapolis, IN: New Rider.
Meyrowitz, J. (1985). *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Mikropoulos, T. A., & Natsis, A. (2011). Educational Virtual Environments: A Ten-Year Review of Empirical Research (1999–2009). *Computers & Education, 56*(3), 769–780.
Olsen, P. R. T., & Qin, L. G. (2011). *Second Life Love. Dialogues of a Singaporean Woman and a Swedish Man*. Olsen & Qin.
Pellas, N., & Kazanidis, I. (2014). Online and Hybrid University-Level Courses with the Utilization of Second Life: Investigating the Factors that Predict Student Choice in Second Life Supported Online and Hybrid University-Level Courses. *Computers in Human Behavior, 40*(Nov), 31–43.
Penjor, S., & Zander, P.-O. (2016). Predicting Virtual Learning Environment Adoption: A Case Study. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology – TOJET, 15*(1), 69–81.
Pressman, J. (2009). The Aesthetic of Bookishness in Twenty-First-Century Literature. *Bookishness: The New Fate of Reading in the Digital Age, XLVIII*(4), Fall.
Refsum, C. (2016). *Kjærlighet som religion: lidenskap og lengsel i film og litteratur på 2000-tallet*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
Rettberg, S. (2019). *Electronic Literature*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations* (5th ed.). New York: Free Press.
Ryan, M.-L. (2001). *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Ryan, M.-L. (2006). *Avatars of Story*. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press.
Ryan, M.-L. (2012, Revised Version 2014). Narration in Various Media. *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. Retrieved June 14, 2019, from https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/53.html
Terry, K., & Cheney, A. (Eds.). (2016). *Utilizing Virtual and Personal Learning Environments for Optimal Learning*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
Todorov, T. (1971). *Poétique de la prose*. Paris: Seuil.

Tokel, S. T., & Isler, V. (2015). Acceptance of Virtual Worlds as Learning Space. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 52*(3), 254–264.

Turkle, S. (2015). *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. New York: Penguin Press.

Turkle, S. (2017). *Alone Together – Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. Ingram Publisher Services Us.

van Lente, H., Spitters, C., & Peine, A. (2013). Comparing Technological Hype Cycles: Towards a Theory. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 80*(8), 1615–1628.

Wang, F., & Burton, J. K. (2013). “Second Life” in Education: A Review of Publications from Its Launch to 2011. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 44*(3), 357–371.

Wankel, C., & Kingsley, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Higher Education in Virtual Worlds. Teaching and Learning in Second Life*. Bradford: Emerald Group Publishing.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.