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## **Ketai shosetsu: Remediation, hypermediacy and the hyperreal**

Cari Michele Tulleys

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KETAI SHOSETSU: REMEDIATION,  
HYPERMEDIACY AND  
THE HYPERREAL

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition:  
English Literature

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by  
Cari Michele Tulleys  
December 2012

KETAI SHOSETSU: REMEDIATION,  
HYPERMEDIACY AND  
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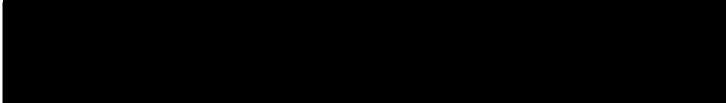
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by  
Cari Michele Tulleys  
December 2012

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Nov 19, 2012  
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## ABSTRACT

Technology has changed every aspect of modern life and continues to shape and re-shape the world we live in. I will explore the effect that technology has had on the delivery of literature. I will focus on the emergence of cell phone novels originally in Japan. As a theoretical footing, I will start with Jean Baudrillard's idea regarding human desire of the hyperreal as a touchstone for Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's idea of "hypermediacy" and "remediation." I will use Bolter and Grusin's "remediation" to explore how keitai shosetsu (cell phone novels) fit into the spectrum of text remediation, where text has been refashioned multiple times from oral to print and now to digital. The emergence of cell phone novels works to repair several aspects of the twentieth century novel, including but not limited to, issues with convenience, immediacy, and cost.

Five of 2007's best-selling novels in Japan originally started out as keitai shosetsu and since Japan is a forerunner of most global technology, it is inevitable that an attempt to popularize this genre in the United States will and may already be brewing.

## DEDICATION

To my sister, Casandra. Reach for your dreams and you  
will catch them all.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE EMERGENCE OF THE CELL PHONE NOVEL

#### Introduction

My eyes slowly opened as I heard a chime chime chime in the distance, "Who could it be at this hour?" My arm flailed off the side of the bed as my fingers stumbled around in the dark of my room to grab my brand new LG Voyager cell phone. As I grasped the device and turned it over, a new message light shone in the darkness of the room. As my eyes adjusted to the light, I could see the message was a new chapter addition to *Secondhand Memories*; the cell phone novel I had been following for weeks. A rush of excitement and curiosity flashed over me. I would finally know who the man that had called Seiji and threatened Aoi's life really was.

I had been reading *Secondhand Memories*, a new type of novel written on the author's cell phone and distributed to readers' cell phones to be read in small chapter installments. The novel is also uploaded to [textnovel.com](http://textnovel.com), the first U.S. site dedicated to the development of U.S. cell phone novels.



Cell phone novels are a new way to write and read fiction using modern technology. The use of modern technology in creation and distribution of texts has many advantages and lends itself to a new genre of collaborative literary development in real time.

Cell phone novels were incepted and first became popular in Japan. The Japanese refer to cell phone novels as "keitai shosetsu." The rapidly growing popularity of the cell phone novel genre in Japan is due partially to the wide use of personal digital devices in the area. The main hosting website for cell phone novels in Japan is Maho i-Rando, a site that publishes thousands of digital novels.

The United States also has a large consumer base for personal digital devices. Within the last few years an U.S. site for cell phone novel collaboration and publishing, textnovel.com, has emerged, which makes it possible for this new genre to be popularized in the United States.

### Purpose and Scope of Study

Throughout my examination of cell phone novels and digital literature, I will look at how technology has affected the way reading is done and has facilitated the emergence of keitai shosetsu. I will also explore new media

of literature and conjecture as to whether these new media will usher out print based literature in Japan, the United States and the rest of the world. I will examine how print literature is affected by technology and in turn transforms into a more appealing form for modern readers and in turn consider where this evolution of text will lead. Finally, I will consider the impact that replacing print literature with digital literature may have on society.

We shape technology and then technology shapes us by delivering commodities that promise us pleasure, comfort, leisure and convenience, but paradoxically leave us bored and distracted, alienated from what is real -- other humans and the earth. (Spencer 1)

In this thesis, I focus on the participatory nature of electronic literature and how remediation of texts have created new forms of literature that do not seem like texts at all, but more like virtual reality. By delving into a specific example of electronic literature, cell phone novel *Secondhand Memories*, I will demonstrate that the hyperreal quality of the cell phone novel is more appealing to modern readers. This discussion will organically include speculations about the future of literature and human

societies. I will take a look at one of these speculations regarding the future of literature and human societies.

Authors of traditional keitai shosetsu typically use one-word pseudonyms to write under instead of their real names. Authors of keitai shosetsu are generally high school girls who author dramatic love stories. The authors are not classically trained and experienced in writing, so the language is simple and direct in most cases.

The cell phone novel I will focus on for the purposes of this research is *Secondhand Memories*, written by Takatsu and published via textnovel.com. A short description of *Secondhand Memories* is given on textnovel.com:

[a] simple story about a high school love. One suddenly loses their memory. A story about the true meaning of love, sacrifice, friendship and pain. (The novel is the first true Japanese style cell phone novel ever written on textnovel.com, written and meant to be read on cell phone[s] in very short chapters (ranging 50-100 words) packed with beautiful language, drama and plot twists).  
(textnovel.com 1)

More specifically, *Secondhand Memories* is a love story in which the main character, Sejii Narimiya, gives his account of what happens when his high school love, Uchida Aoi, loses her memory. It is a simple yet dramatic story written in first person perspective.

One reason I chose to focus on *Secondhand Memories* is because it won a Reader's Choice Award (among other editor awards) on the textnovel site. The other reason I chose to focus on this particular cell phone novel is that of all the cell phone novels featured on textnovel.com, *Secondhand Memories* is thematically and stylistically closest to authentic Japanese keitai shosetsu. Like authentic Japanese keitai shosetsu, *Secondhand Memories* is a dramatic love story between teenage characters.

Featured on textnovel.com in the Preface of *Secondhand Memories*, Takatsu, the author, describes the motivation behind his style in this novel, "I intended to write this with simple but delicate language, preserving some sort of innocence, childishness, and adding a personal touch" (textnovel.com 3). Takatsu explains that *Secondhand Memories* was, "Inspired by Moshimo Kimi ga and various other Japanese cell phone novels. ~There is some sort of magic with simple language" (textnovel.com 3). Most authors

of cell phone novels, both in Japan and the United States, are new authors. Their works are generally written using simple language. The stories are dramatic in nature and are based on everyday life.

Like Japanese keitai shosetsu *Secondhand Memories* was written entirely on the author's cell phone and distributed to its readers' cell phones. The stories are also featured on hosting websites. *Secondhand Memories* is featured on textnovel.com and Japanese keitai shosetsu are featured on similar pre-existing sites. The most popular Japanese site that features keitai shosetsu is Maho i-Rando, which was the home of Yoshi's novel *Deep Love*. *Deep Love* was the very first keitai shosetsu to make the leap from digital to print and in doing so made it to the top of Japan's best sellers list and later was made into a movie, TV series and manga (Japanese comic). It is interesting that *Deep Love* was originally developed as a cell phone novel and gained much popularity in that form. However, when the cell phone novel *Deep Love* was transferred to print, it gained much more popularity, eventually being made into a movie and manga. When a new technology is introduced it seems natural to use the old familiar medium (print in this case) and then transfer the work to the new technology (digital or

more specifically, cell phone). Cell phone novels are developed in the reverse manner. First digitally and then if they gain popularity, they are transferred to print and other more familiar media.

Perhaps the authors of cell phone novels are more familiar with digital form of communication rather than printed forms. Most of the authors are young women and are tacit members of the oyayubi zoku (thumb tribe). Oyayubi zoku is a term used in Japan to describe the generation of people who use handheld electronic devices. The term translates to "thumb tribe" and was chosen because typing into small devices has increased the dexterity of this group's fingers and particularly their thumbs. Takatsu, the author of *Secondhand Memories* is a nineteen year-old university student in Tokyo, Japan. He is the first to write and pioneer authentic Japanese style cell phone novels on [textnovel.com](http://textnovel.com) and in North America. The [textnovel](http://textnovel.com) site offers Takatsu's personal e-mail address ([kyou.taka@auone.jp](mailto:kyou.taka@auone.jp)) so that readers may contact him directly as well as a link to his blog and website ([textnovel.com](http://textnovel.com)). This is a direct connection to the author that readers of printed texts do not normally experience.

Katherine Hayles, postmodern literary critic and professor at Duke University, explains the difference between electronic and print literature in her article "Electronic Literature: What is it?," "Electronic literature, generally considered to exclude print literature that has been digitized, is by contrast 'digital born,' a first-generation digital object created on a computer and (usually) meant to be read on a computer" (Hayles 10). Here electronic literature is described as being "digital born." Hayles' definition of electronic literature excludes all of the texts that were first published in print and recently re-formatted to fit the screens of popular devices, such as the Kindle, cell phones and other electronic devices. What is unique about electronic literature is the medium the author uses to create their work. To count as electronic literature, the author must use a digital medium, such as; PCs, laptops, and now cell phones.

Hayles goes on to describe the "evolution of texts" and how the mutation of texts has created expectations in readers,

Readers come to digital work with expectations formed by print, including extensive and deep

tacit knowledge of letter forms, print conventions, and print literary modes. Of necessity, electronic literature must build on these expectations even as it modifies and transforms them. (Hayles 11)

Hayles' term "evolution of texts" is very helpful in understanding how electronic literature came to be. The allusion to Darwin's theory of mutation helps illustrate how texts have adapted to and with the modernization of society. Due to this evolution, readers come to electronic literature with expectations that were formed by their experience with traditional printed texts. In turn, new and mutated texts offer similarities to print literature that make them accessible and comforting to their readers.

For cell phone novels, this mutation is easily illustrated. Cell phone novels are not strikingly new. The new medium is comprised of stylistic influences from print literature forms. Society was in the age of print literature when computers, the Internet, and portable phones started to be developed. With the growing capabilities of electronic devices came possibilities for innovation. First, typewriters and computers were used to compose texts instead of pen and paper, and then laptops



and now cell phones are used. These devices weren't created solely for composition of texts and maybe were not created with this function in mind at all, but with these inventions came opportunity for mutation of composition as a function or bi-product of technology.

The marriage of literary composition and technology was met with a traditional understanding of print literature. Compositions made with the typewriter and computer looked much like handwritten texts and perhaps at first texts were hand-written and then transferred onto the typewriter or computer for finalization. As the medium got smaller and more digitized (computer and now cell phones), so did the composition. Style and genre of texts are growing (or shrinking) with the devices used to compose them. Texts now written with cell phones look very different from traditional print-texts, mainly because of their medium (as opposed to differences in style).

The current examples of the evolutionary texts are simply a starting point to where text will go in the future. Each new attempt at new genres causes more knowledge and innovation which authors use to build onto or from old genres. Each step in the evolution of texts is not completely novel. Instead each step builds on past

uses/forms of texts. Electronic literature is not a completely new genre springing from nowhere. It is more like a step in the evolution of literature and in the broader sense, in the evolution of communication. It is a mutation of print literature into something new, but distinctively familiar.

For example, one common feature of electronic texts is the hyperlink. A hyperlink is inserted into a text most commonly as a line within the text or a multi-media object (picture etc). This link acts as part of the text, but also is interactive. If the reader/viewer clicks on a hyperlink, it takes them to a new text that usually is related to the original text, but also stands on its own. Hayles talks about the excitement new hypertext technology has caused in the literary field:

[e]arly hypertext theorists, notably George Landow and Jay David Bolter, [...] stressed the importance of the hyperlink as electronic literature's distinguishing feature, extrapolating from the reader's ability to choose which link to follow to make extravagant claims about hypertext as a liberatory mode that would dramatically transform reading and writing and,

by implication, settings where these activities are important such as the literature classroom. (Hayles 43)

This seemingly new feature was seen as a tool that would aid in the transformation of reading, writing and even the classroom.

Although the hyperlink seems novel and specific to electronic literature, Hayles points out that this feature is only a mutation of a feature commonly used in print literature. Hayles explains,

[o]ne problem with identifying the hyperlink as electronic literature's distinguishing characteristic was that print texts had long also employed analogous technology in such apparatus as footnotes, endnotes, cross-reference, and so on, undermining the claim that the technology was completely novel. (Hayles 44)

Here digital literature takes an existing feature of print literature and makes it seem completely novel. However, at second glance, the hyperlinking structure is simply a mutation of a structure commonly used in print literature.

One electronic literature genre that employs the hypertext feature is hypertext fiction. Hayles explains,

" . . . [r]eaders with only a slight familiarity with the field, however, will probably identify it first with hypertext fiction characterized by linking structures" (Hayles 45). Hypertext fiction is an interactive type of literature, which uses a nonlinear story-telling style where the reader can move through the story by clicking on their choice of links. This type of story also seems very different from fiction stories in print because of its nonlinear movement and interactive spirit. At first glance hypertext fiction seems completely novel. However, the *Choose Your Own Adventure* stories of the 1980s and 1990s are conceptually similar to hypertext fiction. *Choose Your Own Adventure* is a series of printed children's books that allows readers to choose the main character's path through the story, which made the stories nonlinear and interactive like hypertext fiction. The main differences between these two types of text are the media used.

Hayles further examines the difference between print and electronic literature:

[t]he immediacy of code to the text's performance is fundamental to understanding electronic literature, especially to appreciating its specificity as a literary and technical

production. Major genres in the canon of electronic literature emerge not only from different ways in which the user experiences them but also from the structure and specificity of the underlying code. Not surprisingly, then, some genres have come to be known by the software used to create and perform them. (Hayles 12)

Like "e"-literature (electronic literature) or cell phone novels, the formation and style of new genres have similarities to print, but the media used are what set them so far apart. For example, texts written on a cell phone in the form of text messages are limited to a certain amount of characters. Even though each text has a character limit, composition may be further limited by the amount of text that will actually appear on the screen at one time, which may be taken into consideration by the author for aesthetic reasons. Digital devices like cell phones or computers are not only set apart from print literature because of limitations; electronic media also offer many advantages over print literature. Unlike print-literature, which can employ illustrations, electronic media can also employ illustrations, but can also offer new multi-media opportunities such as graphics, videos, sound clips etc.

The mixed media aspect makes it a hybrid form of literature.

Although there are some similarities between print and electronic literature because electronic literature is fundamentally a mutation from print literature, the media used separate them greatly from each other. Unlike the mutation of stone tablet to print texts on paper, electronic texts look and feel drastically different from print texts on paper. Not only do they look and feel different, the ways the reader accesses them are also very different. Hayles makes the point that, ". . . electronic texts cannot simply be shoved into the same tent with print without taking into account their different modes of operation" (Hayles 47). The "modes of operation" Hayles mentions, seem to be what make digital literature feel drastically different from printed texts.

Hayles is not the only one talking about the evolution of texts. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin are also talking, but instead of calling it "evolution of texts," they refer to these mutations as "remediation of texts." These scholars study the genealogy of remediation and how that genealogy has brought about modern texts.

Bolter, professor at Georgia Institute of Technology, explains the implications of remediation quite simply:

. . . that human thought. . . would change its mode of expression, that the principal idea of each generation would no longer write itself with the same material and in the same way, that the book of stone, so solid and durable, would give place to the book made of paper, yet more solid and durable. (1)

If each generation writes itself with a new material, then electronic texts are certainly becoming the medium of the present generation.

As Hayles, Bolter, and Grusin explain, the emergence of cell phone novels works to repair several aspects of the twentieth-century novel; including but not limited to, issues with convenience, immediacy, and cost.

Although generational disputes may arise, Bolter clarifies:

[o]f course, the printed book did not eradicate the encyclopedia in stone; it did not even eradicate the medieval art of writing by hand. People continued to contemplate their religious tradition in cathedrals, and they continued to

communicate with pen and paper for many purposes.

(1)

Electronic literature does not mean an immediate death sentence for print literature. Instead it is an opportunity and maybe even a transition to the widespread use of a more appropriate medium for modern society.

Although new media may not eradicate pre-existing media, they have an opportunity to compete. Bolter explains, ". . . printing did displace handwriting: the printed book became the most highly valued form of writing. And printing certainly helped to displace the medieval organization and expression of knowledge" (2). Just as the printed book slowly phased out the age of the book of stone, new media today is pushing printed works into the background.

Like print superseded the method of chisel and stone, "[t]oday we are living in the late age of print. The evidence of senescence, if not senility, is all around us. And as we look up from our computer keyboard to the books on our shelves, we must ask ourselves whether 'this will destroy that'" (Bolter 2). The opportunity for competition has arisen with the invention of the digital medium. The new medium's staying power can only be had through a



struggle of "survival of the fittest". The medium that fits best into society's progression will survive.

The new medium itself is not the only opportunity for literature, but instead it is a seed from which many new opportunities will sprout. In fact with the creation of a new medium comes an opportunity for new genres and styles. Bolter writes:

[w]e shall see that the computer has even fostered a new genre of literature, one that can only be read at the computer screen. Major book publishers in the United States already translate their texts into computer-readable form for photocomposition; books pass through the computer on the way to the press. Many, perhaps most, of these texts will someday cease to be printed and will instead be distributed in electronic form (2).

With the cell phone novel, electronic literature reaches the point that Bolter describes above. The electronic form ceases to be a transitional writing tool or storage device for distribution of print literature. Also, the electronic form is no longer a back up, it is the sole medium used in

the composition, distribution and reception of cell phone novels.

In his work Bolter corrects an assumption most likely shared by champions of print literature,

[t]his shift from print to the computer does not mean the end of literacy. What will be lost is not literacy itself, but the literacy of print, for electronic technology offers us a new kind of book and new ways to write and read. The shift to the computer will make writing more flexible, but it will also threaten the definitions of good writing and careful reading that have been fostered by the technique of printing (2).

With the way new generations seem to flock toward digital entertainment, even in neglect of more traditional leisure activities, such as reading and writing, it is no wonder there is an assumption that this shift from print to the computer could mean an end to literacy. As Bolter explains, electronic media do not portend the end of literacy; instead they usher in a new kind of literacy. With this new literacy comes advantages and challenges. One advantage is that electronic literature has an immediacy that print did not. However, in one example Bolter hints that this

immediacy may undermine the deliberation and thoughtfulness of printed texts.

Hayles seconds Bolter's ideas about electronic literature:

[j]ust as the twentieth century saw an explosion of interest in the book as a medium, with an impressive canon of artists' books and other experimental practices exploring the potential of the book as an artistic and literary venue, so electronic literature has seen a growing body of work that interrogates networked and programmable media as the material basis for artistic innovation and creation. (Hayles 30)

Again the transition from print to electronic literature is compared to the transition from the book of stone to print literature. Since each medium is quite different from the preceding mainstream medium, there is opportunity for innovation and creativity. With innovation and creativity come enthusiasm as well as skepticism and criticism.

Both Bolter and Hayles also speak about the ambiguous implications of electronic literature:

[p]aying attention to the ways in which electronic literature both continues and disrupts

print conventions is a neat trick, and the criticism is littered with those who have fallen prey to Scylla or Charybdis, ballyhooing its novelty or failing to see the genuine differences that make it distinctive from print. (Hayles 44)

Like previously discussed, electronic literature is not a completely novel invention. Electronic literature borrows from traditional print conventions while separating itself from print with new capabilities. Most bystanders of the evolution of literature do not consciously recognize the similarities and differences between print and digital media.

The above description of electronic literature sums up the essence of evolution/remediation of texts. Electronic literature borrows from print, but also remediates to create a new and more relevant genre for the modern day community. Evolution and remediation of literature is influenced by the modern way of life, making electronic texts more functional and useful for changing communities.

An easily understandable demonstration of the remediation of texts present in the transition between print and electronic texts that Hayles examines are language differences between the two. The use of personal

digital communication devices (pagers, internet chat rooms, cell phone texting) has fostered a new type of language. Hayles explains text speak as, ". . . a linguistic practice in which English (or some other natural language) is hybridized with programming expressions to create a creole evocative for human readers, especially those familiar with the denotations of programming languages" (Hayles 30). This language as Hayles describes, uses English (or whichever primary language is naturally read by a community) and marries it with the digital language of the devices used for communication. When the use of pagers was popular, this language consisted of the employment of digital numbers that looked like letters. This was done as a practical solution because only numbers could be displayed on the small screen of the pager. For example, the word "yes" could be expressed by paging the numbers "435" and the word "no" could be expressed by paging the numbers "170". In "435" the digital version of the number "4" (with an open top) looks like the letter "Y". The digital version of the number "3" looks like a backwards "E". And finally, the digital version of the number "5" looks like the letter "S." The numbers "170" is a little more complicated, but just as easily decipherable. In "170" the "1" and "7"

combine to look like an "N" and the "0" is easily seen as the "O" in the word "No." The reason that this encryption was accessible to users of pagers is because it is based on the alphabet pager users already know. This process is the embodiment of mutation; the change of an existing entity catalyzed by environmental pressures (or medium based pressures in this case) into something seemingly novel.

In fact electronic texts are growing with the needs and interests of communities at a rapid pace. Hayles explains:

[w]hereas in the 1990's email novels were popular, the last decade has seen the rise of forms dependent on mobile technologies, from short fiction delivered serially over cell phones to location-specific narratives keyed to GPS technologies, often called locative narratives.

(Hayles 20)

Each technological advance offers an opportunity for authors to express their literature through a new genre.

Take the locative narrative genre for example; GPS or global positioning systems were used to aid people in navigation. GPS use satellites that communicate oftentimes to a small handheld device to guide people to a chosen

destination. GPS technology was practically developed to aid travelers in finding their way to a physical destination. Unassumingly, the invention of the GPS interestingly created a literary opportunity, which was capitalized on and resulted in locative narrative.

A locative narrative employs the use of a GPS that guides its participants literally through a city or locale, while telling a story. Jeremy Hight elaborates:

[t]he narrative may have detail but only enough to create a half sense of place thus enhancing the awareness of two places at once in the physical city. The narrative may be written in style as well as detail and content to enhance the discontinuity of place being experienced by the viewer/reader, of the disjunction between what is imagined and referenced and what physically, at present, is. (Hight 8)

This locative narrative genre turns the reader into a participant and blurs the lines between reality and fiction. In the genre, there is a play between what is actually present or historical and what is part of the story or what is fiction.

Authors of locative narratives use the genre as allegory. Hight explains:

[t]he selected texts as weighted are constructed by the author to specifically reference metaphorically the larger issues and concepts to be addressed. These short narrative vignettes are to be constructed with the sort of image play that informs allegory to a degree. (Hight 13)

In this genre, the medium intermingles GPS technology, the city itself, and the recorded narrative. Hight describes how the three work together to enhance the overall effect;

The fact that the written narratives are read by voice actors and appear only as sound in headphones upon activation not only enhances characterization and tone through speech pattern, cadence and inflection, but creates a sense that every space is agitated [...] The city is to be read and publication becomes one of the streets, zeroes and ones in code, and in the air.

Movement and reading now brings a narrative of what was unseen and what has been lost in time, only for it to quiet again once passed. (Hight 13)



The participatory and multi-media nature of the locative narrative bombards its participants with the author's message. The message is loud and comes from each direction and is in turn hard to ignore.

The last few examples of electronic texts and digital literature genres that have recently been developed show that technology has unquestionably had an impact on literature. New digital media continue to catch the attention of consumers, with the invention of products like the Amazon Kindle and now the capability of authors to use cell phones to produce novels, digital literature is also grabbing the attention of consumers.

Since the subject matter of cell phone literature as a research focus is a novel one, there were no scholarly studies to rely on for information regarding the cell phone novel in particular. Due to this limitation, many of the relevant sources noted in the thesis focus on other types of digital literature, such as digital magazines, virtual reality etc. This did not present itself as a serious limitation because studies on other types of digital literature were relevant to the focus of this project.

Another limitation was the lack of an English translation of a keitai shosetsu or Japanese cell phone

novel. Due to this limitation, the text I chose to focus on is an U.S. cell phone novel, *Secondhand Memories*, which was written by a Japanese-American author. Although U.S. cell phone novels are similar to Japanese cell phone novels, there are some stylistic and thematic differences that this study was unable to fully explore.

In chapter two, I will examine the text of a cell phone novel and show how cell phone novels, through their participatory nature, embody Jean Baudrillard's theory of the hyperreal. I will also explain why this hyperreal quality of cell phone novels appeals to modern readers.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE APPEAL OF THE CELL PHONE NOVEL

Now that the definition of keitai shosetsu (cell phone novels) and some background has been established, the discussion will delve into Baudrillard's hyperreal and cell phone novel texts to see how the genre is related to Baudrillard's theory and why this hyperreal quality appeals to readers of cell phone novels.

For the purposes of this project, I will focus on the cell phone novel *Secondhand Memories*, written by Takatsu. This cell phone novel can be found on [textnovel.com](http://textnovel.com), the first U.S. cell phone novel site that allows authors to post their stories via their computers or text message them to the site via their cell phones. Readers can either view stories on their computers or subscribe to stories and have each chapter text messaged to their cell phones as they are written and uploaded to the website. This site is similar to Japanese *Maho no i-rando*, a popular site in which 5 of the Japanese 2007 10 bestselling print books were originally distributed to cell phones as keitai shosetsu. Cell phone novels are a type of electronic literature. Other types of electronic literature include blogs,

electronic magazines, traditional print literature formatted to be read with electronic devices etc.

Although electronic literature is a remediation of print literature, there are many differences between the two. In *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin explore aspects of electronic literature that they claim improve on those of print literature. Some of the improvements of electronic literature Bolter and Grusin discuss are changeability of text, reduced distance between author and reader, the space does not feel mediated, texts are more interactive, more accessible, there is a quicker response between correspondents causing the space between author and receiver to disappear.

In their discussion Bolter and Grusin talk about how electronic applications allow texts to be more changeable and how changeability of texts results in less distance between author and reader. They explain:

[p]rinting also tended to magnify the distance between the author and the reader, as the author became a monumental figure, the reader only a visitor in the author's cathedral. Electronic writing emphasizes the impermanence and

changeability of text, and it tends to reduce the distance between author and reader by turning the reader into an author (3).

With print literature, the author is virtually unreachable. The author becomes a celebrity of sorts, readers cannot connect with the author and that makes the author a separate intangible entity from the reader. Firstly, with cell phone novels in particular, the space between author and reader is significantly minimized. The author sends each chapter directly to the reader's personal cell phone. When this happens, the distance between author and reader virtually disappears. It seems the author speaks directly to the reader. Secondly, the author uploads the story to a website where readers can review each chapter and make comments while the story unfolds. Because readers comment in the midst of the authoring process, comments can undoubtedly help to shape the story when the author reads them. In this example the distance between the author and reader minimizes to the point that the reader turns into author, in a collaborative influential sense.

This idea of space being minimized between author and reader becomes more complicated with the idea of hypermediacy. Hypermediacy is defined as, ". . . the

tension between regarding a visual space as mediated and as a "real" space that lies beyond mediation. Lanham (1993) calls this the tension between looking at and looking through" (Bolter and Grusin 22). The result of hypermediacy is that the space between author and reader is erased; in fact the author and medium seem to be erased completely until the text appears as if it is reality itself. Print literature can attempt this task, but cannot fully succeed because the medium itself will always be noticeable. Remember that the author sends each chapter directly to the reader's personal cell phone. This action is where the distance between author and reader is erased and the text appears to be reality. A text between author and reader is received like a text between friend and reader.

Bolter and Grusin advise that "[r]eplacement is at its most radical when the new space is of a different medium" (25). Cell phone novels offer a very new medium for literature and that in itself makes their use so noticeable. Since their inception in 2007, there has been an excitement about cell phone novels. At this time, our community focuses the bells and whistles cell phones have; this focus makes cell phone novels an opportunity to spread excitement and support literacy among cell phone users.

Long before cell phone novels emerged, electronic literature was world-wide. There were online novels, websites, advertisements, blogs, and devices such as Amazon's Kindle. The difference between these types of electronic literature and cell phone novels is that:

[c]reators of other electronic remediations seem to want to emphasize the difference rather than erase it. In these cases, the electronic version is offered as an improvement, although the new is still justified in terms of the old and seeks to remain faithful to the older medium's character.

(Bolter and Grusin 27)

Cell phone novels do not attempt to be faithful to the older medium of print literature, except that cell phone novels use written language. The style, feel, and look of the cell phone novel are completely different from the print novel.

#### Examination of the Text *Secondhand Memories*

The style and language of the cell phone novel is very familiar to the relaxed spoken language of U.S. readers. In this example pulled from *Secondhand Memories*, the main character describes his love interest, ". . . loved her the

way she was. She is the sweetest person ever" (Takatsu 3). Authors of cell phone novels are usually not experienced traditional print authors. The tense in these texts will flip-flop; just as if the speaking character is in conversation. The sentences are short. The author does not place an emphasis on proper grammar.

Another example from the text, [e]veryone was bubbling with genuine smiles as we sipped our drinks. I laughed along with them and spent my Christmas thus, in such a way. I tried hard not to think, not to feel, not to know that the more I drown in the Christmas air, the more my heart aches. Every Christmas for years there was someone who was always there for me. This year I tried not to think that it was any different.

(Takatsu 213)

This example is very confessional in nature. The somber tone of the text compares to the tone of a text the reader might receive from a friend who was feeling down and alone during the holiday season.

Bolter and Grusin further explain:

[t]he digital medium can be more aggressive in its remediation. It can try to refashion the



older medium or media entirely, while still marking the presence of the older media and therefore maintaining a sense of multiplicity or hypermediacy. This is particularly clear in the rock CD-ROMs, such as the Emergency Broadcast Network's Telecommunications Breakdown, in which the principal refashioned media are music recorded on CD and its live performance on stage. This form of aggressive remediation throws into relief both the source and the target media. (27)

The cell phone novel is still mediated, but it is mediated in a way that the reader does not notice the medium as much as he/she would in print novels. In contrast the Kindle and other electronic book readers work to point out the medium. The awareness of the medium exists because the texts are duplicates of print literature texts re-formatted for electronic media. Because the only difference between the traditional electronic texts is their media, readers notice the difference in media.

In her work "Publishing and Hypermedia," Anne-Marie Dauphin-Tinturier speaks to this focus:

[n]ow, with the possibility of transforming all sources of different sensory perception into

digital records, all data can be combined into a unique application, handled by a single machine. The production thus obtained associates knowledge content, and digitized records and synthesizes data to organize the whole. (2)

Authors push to get more out of a chosen medium. With devices like the iphone, "there is an app. for everything". "There is an app for that" is becoming an annoyingly common phrase in our communities. In addition to the cell phone as medium there is the cell phone novel hosting site. The hosting site is a website that acts as a library to house all of the cell phone novel texts. The site also holds any comments made about the text. Please see the screenshot below. The screenshot displays Chapter 58 of *Secondhand Memories* hosted on textnovel.com.

As opposed to seeing an isolated chapter at a time, the hosting site allows readers to (1) jump from chapter to chapter; (2) see comments other readers have left about each chapter; (3) see the names of recent visitors to this particular novel; and (4) see awards the novel has won. In addition to novel related features, the reader can see related and unrelated advertisements on the left.

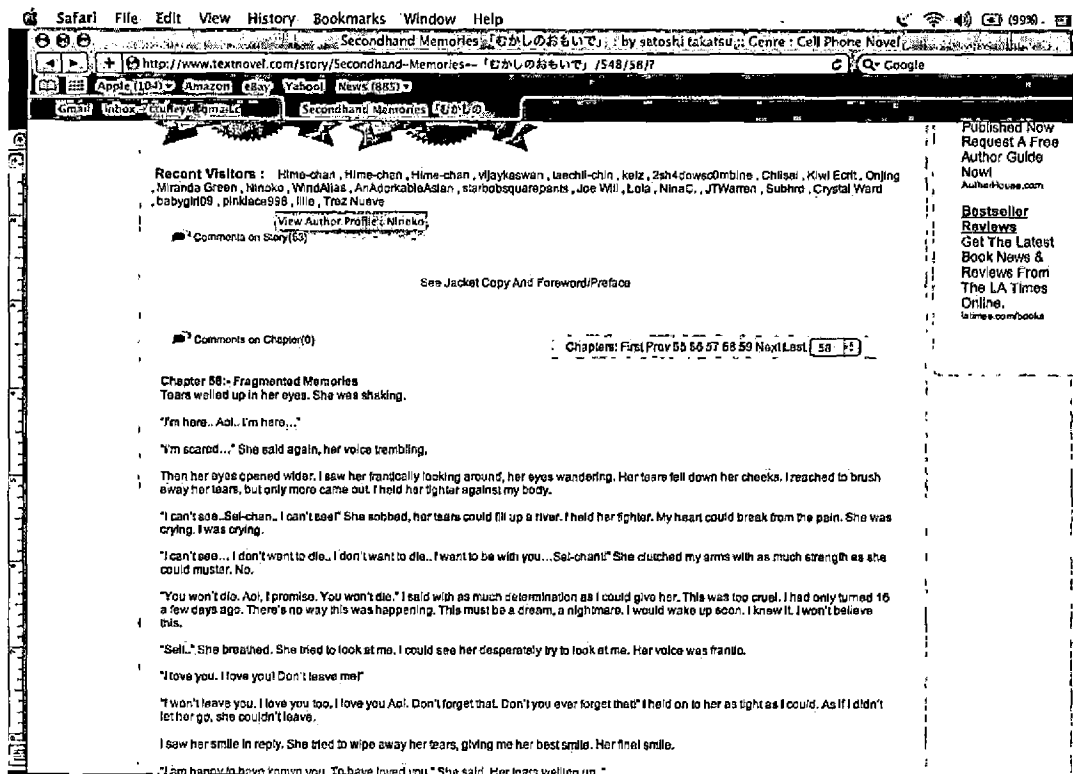


Figure 1. *Secondhand Memories* Chapter 58 Screen Display.

Takatsu. *Secondhand Memories*. Textnovel.com. website

Looking at the novel in the hosting site may be distracting. Dauphin-Tinturrier explains;

. . . in the new "product" obtained,  
characterized by the homogeneity of data, their  
organization no longer needs be strictly linear.

A piece of information can appear at any time, in a configuration of elements, itself part of a broader system. There is no chaos there, rather something that can be compared to the process by which a person creates a stock of his/her own information and knowledge, organizing it into what umberto eco calls a "personal encyclopedia" (see eco). (2)

Although the nonlinear interface can at first seem chaotic, it allows the reader to build on and organize their knowledge. The reader can choose to move through the text in the direction that interests them and expand their knowledge in the direction chosen and then again change course if that interests them.

Instead of following an author's linear course, the reader decides how to navigate the text. Dauphin-Tinturrier explains:

A user of such a configuration can create his/her own itinerary towards new findings, since the system allows for multiple choices to move from one piece of information to another, and may even allow the insertion of new information. This feature is interactivity, which can be compared

to the action of a virtual audience. (2)

The reader becomes one part of an interactive audience and is allowed to navigate and participate in the text.

Due to the interactive nature of these hypermedia texts:

A new form of writing is thus made possible, allowing for multiple scenarios, which are more than a superimposition of traditional texts and correspond to a new mode of expression, the hypertext/hypermedia. (Dauphin-Tinturrier 2)

Readers of the cell phone novels will be familiar with this hypertext because they will be familiar with hypermedia.

However hypertext did not originate with hypermedia; "The principle of the hypertext (Memex) was first introduced in 1945 by Vannevar Bush, in a famous paper: "as we may think" (see Lavigne; see also "Laufer and Scavetta)" (Dauphin-Tinturrier 3). Twenty years later:

The term "hypertext" was coined in 1965 by Ted Nelson who tried to define this emerging form of writing and reading, based on nonlinearity. He imagined a utopian model, Xanadu, which was to be a gigantic network through which anyone provided with a computer could access and add to the whole of world literature. (Dauphin-Tinturrier 3)

Dauphin-Tinturrier expresses that hypermedia is not a new idea. He goes on to talk about the hyperlinking of texts:

The links introduced between various texts are compared to the semantic links that connect in our mind one idea to another one, and which work to associate thought processes and the utilization of memory. (3)

An example of hypertext in print literature in its simplest form is the footnote. Like hypermedia, the footnote creates a link in a text that leads to another text. Readers of print literature should be familiar with the linking of footnotes; therefore hyperlinking should be comforting to readers.

Unlike hypermedia, the footnote makes for a more manual and time-consuming process for the reader. Another way that the cell phone novel reduces the distance between author and reader is in its confessionality. Much like epistolary fiction, the cell phone novel acts as a confessional text in which the main character speaks in first person point of view directly to the reader. Scholar Mikko Keskinen speaks to this point in "Epistolarity and Eloquence: Sylvia Brownigg's *The Metaphysical Touch* as a Novel of Letters and Voices in the Age of E-mail

Communication”:

[e]pistolary fiction inevitably implies a wider hiatus between event and expression than is the case in speech. One convention of the genre aims at bridging that gap by writing to the moment, that is, seemingly simultaneously with what is happening. (9)

With the traditional epistolary fiction writing to the moment seems to reduce the distance between author and reader eventually the reader does not receive the text until months or years after it has been written. With cell phone novels the author writes to the moment and the distance between author and reader reduces even further because the reader receives the text immediately

In traditional epistolary discourse,

. . . the exchange of notes may be so rapid that even the spatiotemporal distance between correspondents seems to disappear [...] Such communication happens online and almost in real time, thus making the illusion of space-time presence stronger than is ever possible in graphic epistolarity. (Keskinen 10)

The speed of exchange from author to reader works to

further erase the distance between the two. The exchange between author and reader is so quick, it seems like a real conversational exchange.

Although readers notice the difference in speed of exchange with cell phone novels from traditional epistolary fiction, expert in modern composition, Marshall McLuhan points out:

[f]or the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs. The railway did not introduce movement or transportation or wheel or road into human society, but it accelerated and enlarged the scale of previous human functions, creating totally new kinds of cities and new kinds of work and leisure. This happened whether the railway functioned in a tropical or a northern environment, and is quite independent of the freight or content of the railway medium. The airplane, on the other hand, by accelerating the rate of transportation, tends to dissolve the railway from the city, politics, and association, quite independently of what the airplane is used for. (8)



By reviewing a history of transportation media, similarities can be found in the evolution of texts. Just as the railway dissolved from the city, the speed of exchange of cell phone novels dissolves interest in print literature.

The speed of exchange and confessionality of the cell phone novel both work together to reduce the distance between author and reader by creating a transparent immediacy. Like friends texting each other, there is a confidentiality between the author and reader of the cell phone novel. Traditionally the confidante is the character being written to. In the case of epistolary fiction the confidante is the reader. In *Secondhand Memories* the confidante is the text receiver. The cell phone novel can be perceived as diary fiction, which paints the reader as voyeur. In their collaborative work *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Bolter and Grusin discuss the transparent immediacy of contemporary texts, "[w]hat we wish to highlight from the past is what resonates with the twin preoccupations of contemporary media: the transparent presentation of the real and the enjoyment of the opacity of media themselves" (2). Bolter and Grusin claim that, transparency is achieved through the new media.

Bolter and Grusin qualify; the idea of transparent immediacy is not a new one:

[a]s a historical counterpart to the desire for transparent immediacy, the fascination with media or mediation can be found in such diverse forms as medieval illuminated manuscripts, Renaissance altar- pieces, Dutch painting, baroque cabinets, and modernist collage and photomontage. (15)

The cell- phone novel comes closer to transparency from media before it due to speed of exchange and because the medium is used for everyday familiar communication.

In his work, "E-pistolarity and E-loquence", Keskinen says that although,

[t]he accelerated exchange of electronic epistles can potentially heighten the illusion of presence, voice, and immediacy. However, such basic conventions of the letter novel as confidentiality and confessionality may remain relatively stable in spite of the medium. (2)

Keskinen explains that the speed of exchange and accessibility of electronic literature does not undermine the confidential and confessional qualities of electronic epistolary fiction.

Keskinen elaborates:

[t]he motifs of confidence, confidant(e)s, and confession permeate a number of epistolary novels. Confidence is needed before a correspondent can confide to his or her epistolary confidant(e), or especially to confess to him or her as a confessant. (5)

In addition to an increase speed of exchange, cell phone novels embody traditional qualities of epistolary fiction.

Keskinen also says of epistolary fiction, "[t]he feeling of speaking to one's correspondent when writing to him or her and, analogously, of hearing his or her voice when reading the reply letter are recurring tropes in epistolary fiction" (9). These qualities can be found in cell phone novels and are magnified due to the ability of the reader to comment to the author, creating a true exchange between author and reader.

An example of confessionality in *Secondhand Memories* occurs when Sejii describes his happiness with Aoi, his love interest, "[s]he looked at me with a smile on her face. I smiled back. It was summer. School was off. I was in complete bliss" (Takatsu 1). Here the main character shares his feelings about the girl he likes. The character

becomes vulnerable with the reader of the text when he shares his inner feelings.

The electronic form of the diary related to electronic literature in many ways:

[b]esides this formal affinity with electronic exchange as letter writing, the Diary harks back to the early phases of the diary [...]The first diarylike novels in the eighteenth century were invariably letter journals. In contrast to later diary fiction, which was supposedly meant for the diarist's eyes only, the letter-journal novels implied another addressee, usually a confidant.

(Keskinen 16)

The diary is meant for the diarist's eyes only so when a confessional diary-like text is shared with removed readers, The reader has a voyeuristic experience.

The following passage from *Secondhand Memories* reads like a diary entry:

I have never seen her like this, so radiantly beautiful, and...elegant. She was wearing a simple short sleeved white summer dress, that flowed and moved like waves. It floated at a perfect height just below her knees. Her short neck length hair

neatly brushed, different from the usual playful  
and slightly scruffy hair. Her delicate facial  
features shone in the moonlight. (Takatsu 39)

The author describes his subject very sensually. The use of ellipses in the first line of the passage works on a couple of different levels. It makes the passage seem immediate, as if the author is still in the thought process. The ellipses can also be seen as suggestive, like the author was thinking something personal he did not want to put to words.

Although electronic epistolary reduces distance between author and reader, "[t]he interplay between the private and the public crystallizes in the profound anonymity of both the writer and the possible readers of the Diary" (Keskinen 17). The following passage from *Secondhand Memories* shows how anonymity of author and reader creates a diary feel:

Just a few hours ago, she was smiling, smiling at me. A few hours ago, she had her arms around me, and I felt her warmth all over my body. A few hours ago, she had been shining, as radiant as an angel. How could this have happened to her? Why hadn't it happened to me instead? I'd give

anything to change places with her. She didn't deserve this. How could I let her go through this pain? Now, I could only silently wait by her side. I found a stool next to her bed and collapsed onto it. (Takatsu 84)

The passage reads like a monologue of a grief stricken character. The character speaks with complete vulnerability as if the words will not be published. The reader comes in unnoticed and the story maintains its vulnerable voice.

In another passage from *Secondhand Memories*, main character Sejii shares his guilt:

'I got busier with my job, and I saw her less. She came over in the mornings to give me a bento lunchbox she made, at night she would come to fix me a dinner before returning. And that was it. I didn't get to spend quality time with her. After a while, she disappeared from my life.' (Takatsu 246)

The vulnerable open tone of the character is maintained throughout the text:

I made the mistake of not carrying both of our burdens. Instead, I just turned away. Yes, she told me to leave. But there was no reason I

should've done so. I was weak. She needed me to stand by her. Sometimes I wonder, maybe that I caused her death. If I had remained by her side, no matter what she said, she might've eventually given in. I could've helped her recover, helping her with my strength. She would have had the will to live.' (Takatsu 254)

The character is stricken with grief and feels responsible for the death of his love interest. The character does not hold back; instead he shares everything with the reader, his confidante.

Cell phone novels fit into the virtual reality genre. Virtual reality, like the cell phone novel, is not completely separate from past media. However, Bolter and Grusin argue that one of the main differences is, "[v]irtual reality is immersive, which means that it is a medium whose purpose is to disappear. This disappearing act, however, is made difficult by the apparatus that virtual reality requires" (2). The apparatus related to virtual reality that Bolter and Grusin mention is a large obtrusive headpiece that the participant wears. The virtual reality medium does not go unnoticed. In advantage of cell phone novels is that the cell phone is so heavily used by

its people for actual communication, that it becomes commonplace and less noticeable by the reader as a medium for fiction. The medium is already associated with real communication by readers.

For example, here the main character of *Secondhand Memories* describes the city lights as "blaring, flashing" and says that the characters were "swimming through a sea of people" (Takatsu 4). The descriptive language creates a picture for the reader. Imagine that this text comes to the reader's cell phone among other non-fiction texts. The juxtaposition of fictional texts with non-fiction texts make the cell phone novel seem like reality.

Not only does fiction seem like reality due to the language used and the juxtaposition of texts, the short length of the text creates an urgency and desire within the reader to see more. Take the following passage for example:

'Eh? Moshi moshi? You finally call... I missed you..' I said. 'What's up? Aoi-chan...' There was a crackle. Then I heard a man's voice. I stared at the phone. 'Narimiya Sejii.' He sounded like he was older than me. 'Yes...?' Why was he calling with Aoi's cell phone? What's going on? 'Come to the rooftop of the school. If you want to see Aoi



again.' He paused. 'Come alone.' His voice was  
frightening. (Takatsu 17)

The main character receives a call from a stranger on his girlfriend's cell phone. The reader only receives information that the main character is aware of in the passage. The main character is in a panic, as he does not know who the caller is and describes the caller's voice as, "frightening". The reader receives this chapter and wonders just as the character is wondering, who is the caller?, where is Aoi?

A few chapters later the main character says:

[I] was panting by the time I reached the front and gave the heavy gates a push. It was locked. I swore and shook the gates. It wouldn't budge. Cursing, I jumped and struggled to haul myself over the top. I dropped over on the other side, landing on my feet hard. My heels would be a bit sore. But I didn't care. I didn't skip a beat, moving forward, as I looked towards the shrine, I saw someone there, sitting off to the side. I couldn't tell who it was, as there were a few bushes in the way. Was it the kidnapper? Or Aoi? Was it a trap? I rushed there, poised and ready

for anything, uncertain what was to unfold. My muscles tensed up. I felt adrenaline rushing through my body. My heart was pounding hard. I had no idea what I was up against. All I knew was that I needed her to be fine. (Takatsu 24)

The author creates suspense and that suspense is doubled by the short length of each chapter and because the reader has no choice but to stop reading until they receive more of the text. The reader cannot read ahead like in completely published print texts. The reader has no choice but to wait in suspense.

*Secondhand Memories* has innumerable examples of author created suspense, such as, "[t]he door was slightly ajar. I pulled it open with a little effort and it slid soundlessly. I looked into the room. Someone was there" (Takatsu 101). The author uses the medium to build and maintain suspense throughout the text.

Like discussed with virtual reality, most electronic literature media do not disappear that easily, "[w]hile the apparent autonomy of the machine can contribute to the transparency of the technology, the buttons and menus that provide user interaction can be seen as getting in the way of the transparency" 12). The buttons and menus used for

interaction in cell phone novels only enhance the transparency of the medium since use of those menus and buttons is second nature in our technological communities.

It may seem that society has come a long way from traditional print literature; however, Bolter and Grusin claim that,

. . . digital media cannot be significant until they make a radical break with the past. However, like their precursors, digital media can never reach this state of transcendence, but will instead function in a constant dialectic with earlier media, precisely as each earlier medium functioned when it was introduced. (31)

In virtual reality, the viewer must forget she/he is wearing a computer interface. With cell phone novels this step is unnecessary because viewers already use cell phones to convey and receive real information. Users of cell phones are comfortable and confident in the device. The user's comfort level helps make the device less noticeable.

This claim by Bolter and Grusin seems absurd. Digital media contrasts starkly to print media because digital media and print media differ greatly, it does not seem like a simple next step in evolution of texts. Instead it seems

like a revolution. Digital media require experts, they are so different from print media. However, the printing press represents an advancement that also once needed specialists and had to be learned as a skill. Perhaps Bolter and Grusin have a valid point.

Although digital media seem like a revolution, an ending point, maybe it represents a beginning point.

The process of designing and building a hypermedia product requires professionals to handle the various media, hence the need for a full team of specialists to produce a CD ROM. Clearly, this will be a highly iterative process which continually revisits the grids and the models that are used to structure the work.

(Dauphin-Tinturier 8)

Since digital media requires experts, it will continue to be examined for opportunities, for improvement, with no end in sight, proving that today's digital media is simply a middle point in the evolution of texts.

Marshall McLuhan argues that the medium is the message. That artists use the medium to convey the message, but the medium is a message in itself. There is a strong bond between the producer and receiver of the text.

Bolter and Grusin talk about virtual reality, a genre that also creates a bond between author and reader:

[a]s computer scientists themselves put it, the goal of virtual reality is to foster in the viewer a sense of presence: the viewer should forget that she is in fact wearing a computer interface and accept the graphic image that it offers as her own visual world (Hodges et al. 1994). (3)

The same goal is true with the cell phone novel. If the reader accepts the cell phone novel's fictional texts interchangeably as a non-fiction text, the reader is invested in the story as if it were reality.

With cell phone novels there are two interfaces: The cell phone screen itself and the computer screen. Cell phone novels are all uploaded to a hosting website, which acts like a library. Readers come to this website to peruse, read, and subscribe to different cell phone novels. This interface is much different from reading a cell phone novel on a cell phone.

In digital media today, the practice of hypermediacy is most evident in the heterogeneous "windowed style" of World Wide Web pages, the

desktop interface, multimedia programs, and video games. It is a visual style that, in the words of William J. Mitchell (1994), "privileges fragmentation, indeterminacy, and heterogeneity and . . . emphasizes process or performance rather than the finished art object" (8). (Bolter and Grusin 12)

Unlike traditional printed texts, electronic texts present themselves as unfinished. They are published in a changeable state. They are changeable by the author and by readers.

Bolter and Grusin continue on to explain that:

Interactive applications are often grouped under the rubric of "hypermedia," and hypermedia's "combination of random access with multiple media" has been described with typical hyperbole by Bob Cotten and Richard Oliver (1993) as "an entirely new kind of media experience born from the marriage of TV and computer technologies. Its raw ingredients are images, sound, text, animation and video, which can be brought together in any combination. It is a medium that offers 'random access'; it has no physical

beginning, middle, or end" (8). (12)

Bolter and Grusin describe electronic texts as compositions of multi-media and as having "random access." They say that these multi-media and accessibility features result in electronic texts having no "beginning, middle, or end."

Although it sounds like the definition of hypermedia matches only electronic texts, Bolter and Grusin qualify:

This definition suggests that the logic of hypermediacy had to wait for the invention of the cathode ray tube and the transistor. However, the same logic is at work in the frenetic graphic design of cyberculture magazines like *Wired* and *Mondo 2000*, in the patchwork layout of such mainstream print publications as *USA Today*, and even in the earlier "multimediated" spaces of Dutch painting, medieval cathedrals, and illuminated manuscripts. (12)

Textnovel.com uses the hypermedia described above on the webpages. The hyperlinking used creates a nonlinear interface where readers can browse and read different texts, comments about the texts, awards given to texts etc.

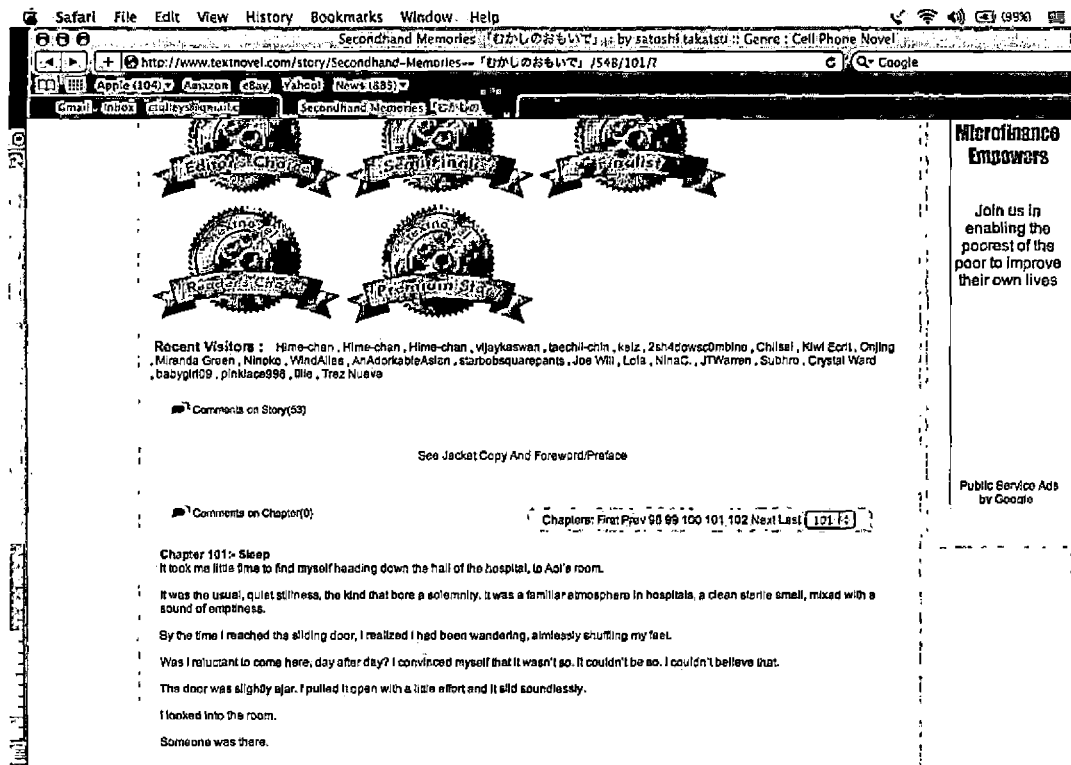


Figure 2. *Secondhand Memories* Chapter 101 Screen Display.

Takatsu. *Secondhand Memories*. Textnovel.com. website

Above is a screenshot of a textnovel.com webpage. This particular page displays Chapter 101 of the cell phone novel, *Secondhand Memories*. Again notice that (1) the text of the chapter displays near the bottom of the page. Above



the text (2) sit links to each individual chapter as well as (3) a link to readers' comments on the specific chapter and above that shows (4) a link to readers' comments on the overall story. The page also displays (5) its most recent visitors. The top of the page (6) lists all of the awards the story has won from the textnovel site. In addition to story and textnovel.com related information, to the right of the page (7) third party advertisements are displayed. In the screenshot viewers see (8) two tabs, one the open tab displaying the textnovel.com webpage and the other a gmail tab, my personal e-mail. This hyperlinking nonlinear style is what Bolter and Grusin describe as, ". . . frenetic [...] design" and "patchwork layout".

Bolter and Grusin further discuss the design of new media; Rokeby (1995) is clearly adopting a modernist aesthetic when he writes that

. . . while engineers strive to maintain the illusion of transparency in the design and refinement of media technologies, artists explore the meaning of the interface itself, using various transformations of the media as their palette. (23)

Bolter and Grusin point out that digital media can be explored for meaning. Meaning is no longer limited to the text itself.

As Bolter and Grusin explain, the artist to convey a message uses both the medium itself and language. The following is an example of complete chapter of *Secondhand Memories*;

The first snowflakes touched down softly, one at a time. Lonely snowflakes became friends. A few became many. Many became more. More and more they came down from heaven. They fell against me, a tickling sensation, a million white stars against the dark sky. Were they mocking us? Or were they trying to cheer us up? (Takatsu 332)

This chapter is lyrical. It reads like a poem and includes detailed imagery. The lyrical qualities and rhetorical questions at the end of the passage make it seem like an oral text. The questions seem to be begging an answer, perhaps from the reader. The questions posed by the author to the reader, add to the participatory nature of the text. The author requests a response from the reader.

In his work "Publishing Hypermedia," Dauphin-Tinturier explores similarities between hypermedia and oral text;

hypermedia, as a way to organize thought, can bring to publishing in the context of an oral culture. In that oral context, communication is immediate and the text is produced during a performance, within a specific framework of time and space, by an enunciator, for a unique audience, who are there to watch the production of the text. In this situation, a strong bond is established between the producer and the receiver of the text, one which involves complicity and involvement. The receivers may be bound together by a common sense of belonging to the same culture, but also and more importantly by the fact they together share the immediate context of the articulation of the text, and receive simultaneously the performance, such that their reciprocal reactions cannot fail to influence their perception of the text. (1)

The immediacy of each chapter of the *Secondhand Memories* helps to create immediate context for both the author and reader to share. This immediacy helps to solidify the bond between author and reader.

The following passage offers another example of a complete chapter from *Secondhand Memories* that creates shared context between author and reader:

I crouched down slowly beside her. She looked so delicate, like a flower. I didn't want to touch her. I was afraid I would break her. I couldn't shout anymore. I got down on my knees next to her, gently reaching around her. We were alone now. I felt like we were alone. Just the two of us. There was not a sound. I lifted her head, and then her body, and reached so I could cradle her fragile body in my arms. She felt so limp, so weak and small. I wanted to protect her. I swore to protect her. But it was too late. (Takatsu 51)

The above example also includes detailed imagery. The imagery creates a picture for the reader. It allows the reader to visualize what the main character sees. Toward the end of the passage the main character expresses a loss of hope. Since the reader has become involved in the context, an invested reader may also feel a loss of hope at this point in the story.

Dauphin-Tinturier speaks about the difference between oral and written texts and how in written texts the

author's meaning can be exploited by readers:

[t]here is a gap between the intention of the author and the meaning given by the reader, who exploits this freedom of interpretation. In the case of an oral text, the aim would be to reduce this gap, and to evoke the strong complicity that prevails between the performer and audience, a complicity that is affected because they are together in the same place and at the same time.

(3)

Although digital media is written text and the author and reader are not together in the same physical space, the reader can interact directly with the author and vice versa. With digital texts author and reader share the same mediated space simultaneously; there is no disconnect.

Erasure of the medium works best between participants of shared cultures (even more so among generations).

Electronic literature requires a knowledge and comfort level with the electronic devices used. Devices used in electronic literature are staples of society like cotton, grain, lumber etc. and their use results in social patterns of organization. Dauphin-Tinturier supports this idea:

[t]his feature is most salient when a culture is

shared, though this does not mean the text cannot be exported. One challenge is to cater for sharing of the text with different audiences thereby promoting better cross-cultural understanding. (2)

Due to the interactive nature of digital media, [a]ssigning authors to hypermedia published on the internet is even more challenging, since modifications may be made by new contributors, sometimes including the users. In this case, there is no distinction left between authors and readers. The product is the temporary result of a collective work, with no identifiable author. (Dauphin-Tinturier 4)

The interactive nature of this new media has initiated changes even in the basic aspects of texts,

[t]his is a new form of writing, which operates on bits of information of various origins. Hence the emergence of a new grammar, the need to inventory sources, to isolate information units and to mount them; this without losing sight of either the general organization or the need for cooperative endeavor [...] in these various modes

of expression. (Dauphin-Tinturier 5)

The designers of digital text interfaces must keep in mind that the text will be collaborative from a number of sources and they must structure the media so the designers can maintain order and organization.

The media must be designed so that it is accessible by author and reader but in different ways,

[t]he user [reader] will want to feel involvement and a degree of intuitiveness. He/she should be able not only to get into the project without difficulty, but also to find pleasure in discovery, which essentially depends on the material interfaces—input devices (mouse, keyboard, and other devices to receive any physical input) and output devices (screen, speakers, printer), or on the software interfaces present on the machine—approach of the software programs and seamless communication between these programs (the main constraint now is the OS, i.e., the operating system). (Dauphin-Tinturier 7)

With digital media, the reader becomes the "user". The text becomes complicated and has many aspects, including

hardware. The media must be "operated" by the reader/user instead of simply being read.

Another point Dauphin-Tinturier makes is,

[t]he program designer needs to be aware of the socio-cultural environment of the potential user, and his/her capacity to use the new codes proposed, while also taking into account the user's contradictory aspirations (to feel free and creative and guided and assisted). (8)

The user must be capable of navigating the medium. If the user is not capable of operating the mediated space, the message will be lost.

In *Understanding Media; The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan speaks about technology:

[r]apidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man- the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media. (3)

McLuhan takes an interesting stance on the new hypermedia:

"[i]n a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and



dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message" (7). McLuhan claims that it is not the meaning of the text that holds importance. Instead it is the medium itself that holds importance. He elaborates:

[m]any people would be disposed to say that it was not the machine, but what one did with the machine, that was its meaning or message. In terms of the ways in which the machine altered our relations to one another and to ourselves, it mattered not in the least whether it turned out cornflakes or Cadillacs. (7)

It is evident that our modern culture affects how new media is designed, McLuhan points out that the opposite is true. The new media also shapes our culture. McLuhan believes that this phenomenon has more impact than any message.

McLuhan talks about the difference between automation and the machine itself: "[t]he essence of automation technology is the opposite. It is integral and decentralist in depth, just as the machine was fragmentary, centralist, and superficial in its patterning of human relationships" (8). Automation makes the machine unnoticeable in a society

that has been focused on the development of machinery. When the machine, which historically was operated by humans can now operate itself, it becomes less noticeable.

McLuhan says that technological media are becoming staples of our society:

[i]f the formative power in the media are the media themselves, that raises a host of large matters that can only be mentioned here, although they deserve volumes. Namely, that technological media are staples or natural resources, exactly as are coal and cotton and oil. Anybody will concede that society whose economy is dependent upon one or two major staples like cotton, or grain, or lumber, or fish, or cattle is going to have some obvious social patterns of organization as a result. (22)

McLuhan agrees that modern society urged the creation of digital media and in turn digital media are further shaping society.

Although society is pleased with its technological advancements, there is a dilemma that McLuhan points out:

Margaret Mead described in *Time* magazine (September 4, 1954): 'There are too many

complaints about society having to move too fast to keep up with the machine. There is great advantage in moving fast if you move completely, if social, educational, and recreational changes keep pace. You must change the whole pattern at once and the whole group together- and the people themselves must decide to move. (30)

By creating a fast acting machine, society has created a need for itself to keep up. Margaret Mead and McLuhan discuss the growing pains and discomfort that society is feeling. None the less, society struggles to keep up with the machine.

McLuhan speaks of these changes in the terms of Manifest Destiny:

[a] related form of challenge that has always faced cultures is the simple fact of a frontier or a wall, on the other side of which exists another kind of society. Mere existence side by side of any two forms of organization generates a great deal of tension. Such, indeed, has been the principle of symbolist artistic structures in the past century. (76)

Society has a need to progress, to keep up with the

machine. Because society is currently in a transitioning stage, there is tension between the traditional print supporters and digital media supporters.

Dan Spencer in his piece "What Consumes Us" reiterates the point that McLuhan makes, "[w]e shape technology and then technology shapes us by delivering commodities that promise us pleasure, comfort, leisure, and convenience" (3). Unlike McLuhan's point that society struggles to keep up with the machine, Spencer goes on to say that technologies, "Paradoxically leave us bored and distracted, alienated from what is real—other humans and the earth" (Spencer 3).

The debate between traditional print supporters and digital media supporters brings to the surface a lot of good questions about the future. In fact, some of these questions may have an impact on much more than literature. Will new technology used to convey literature stick around? Is the new technology positively affecting society? What happens when the machine stops?

Cell phone novels and other digital media are undoubtedly appealing to modern day readers. Since the evolution of texts has been driven by societal demand, this fact begs the question, what does this appeal to digital

texts mean for the future of literature and human society?

If the medium is the message, what is the medium telling  
us?

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CELL PHONE NOVEL

Five of 2007's best-selling print novels in Japan originally started out as keitai shosetsu and since Japan is a forerunner of most global technology, it is inevitable that an attempt to popularize this genre in the United States will and may already be brewing. With U.S. websites like textnovel.com, this attempt is evident.

Like in the U.S., the cultural circumstances of Japan have certainly lent to the emergence of keitai shosetsu. I will examine the popular oyayubi zoku (thumb tribe) culture of Japan and the Japanese literary tradition to look for explanations of why keitai shosetsu have become so popular in that country. I will make comparisons of Japan's popular culture and literary tradition to that of the United States and based on those comparisons, will make assumptions as to whether or not the cell phone novel will become popularized in the States. The differences between Japanese and U.S. cultures may also help explain why cell phone novels have gained popularity in Japan more quickly than in the U.S.

In *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method*, scholar Kenneth Burke explains how society develops language as instruments, which ultimately aid society's way of living:

. . . through its use in the social processes of cooperation and competition [...] [t]he ultimate origins of language seem to me as mysterious as the origins of the universe itself. [...] the various tribal idioms are unquestionably developed by their use as instruments in the tribe's way of living (the practical role of symbolism in what the anthropologist, Malinowski, has called 'context of situation'). (44)

Burke says that cultural circumstances can shape language because language is a tool to use in the context of situation. Burke discusses how language develops from the context of situation, "[s]uch considerations are involved in what I mean by the 'dramatistic,' stressing language as an aspect 'action,' that is, as 'symbolic action' (44). In Japan keitai shosetsu fit into the society's "context of situation". Cell phone novels have already become very popular in Japanese societies. If we are able to compare

the United States' "context of situation" to Japan's, we may be able to make an educated guess as to whether cell phone novels may become popular in the United States. The symbolic action Japan has taken in literature is to develop keitai shosetsu. Perhaps similar technological and cultural circumstances will cause the United States to take the same action. Ways of expressing language are continually developed according to what fits best into the community's way of life. This idea manifests itself in the emergence of keitai shosetsu in Japan. The highly technological people of Japan have been met with an equally technological way of reading and writing.

An examination of Japanese literary tradition may tell how literary styles similar to keitai shosetsu developed. In his work, professor Richard Hooker describes early Japanese poetry, "[e]arly Japanese poetry had only thirty-one syllables per poem in five lines (5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables, 7 syllables, 7 syllables)" (Hooker 6). Hooker points out that Japanese poetry was traditionally short with thirty-one syllables per poem. His description here reminds me of the keitai shosetsu texts--each chapter must be small enough to be delivered by a text message. This was an early verse form of poetry called



Tanka from the Nara period of the Japanese literary tradition. Hooker describes the aesthetic qualities of traditional Japanese poetry,

[a]s pointed out by the kokugakushu, the primary aesthetic principle is the evocation of a mood, emotion, feeling, or realization in a description of an event or an object—often an object unrelated to the cause of the mood or emotion. In the Manyoshu poetry and all its derivatives, the whole world can be writ small in a single, inconsequential event, such as the falling of a leaf or the blossoming of a cherry tree. The principle mood is one of a sense of the passing of things, a kind of sedate understanding of loss and sorrow. This interpretation, however, is very narrow—the Manyoshu poetry and its derivatives betray the entire range of human experience and emotion. The style is simple and direct, evoking meaning not from florid language or elaborate metaphors, but from the object or event being described. (Hooker 12)

keitai shosetsu follows this primary aesthetic principle. In *Secondhand Memories* Sejii describes a dress, “. . . a

simple short sleeved white summer dress that flowed and moved like waves" (Takatsu 39). Like any literary tradition, Japanese literature struggled between different schooled of thought,

[I]n T'ang China at this time, a debate was raging among poets about style: one camp believed that florid language and elaborate metaphor made good poetry while another camp believed that poetry should describe concrete events in simple and direct language. In Japanese poetry, the emphasis on concreteness and simplicity was always the norm. (Hooker 12)

Early Japanese literary tradition helped shape the direction of modern Japanese literature. If not in mode of publication, the literary tradition unquestionably affected the aesthetic principles of modern Japanese literature, including keitai shosetsu.

Later during the Heian period of Japanese literary tradition,

[t]he great classic work of Japanese and world literature, the *Genji Monogatari*, was written in the first two or three decades of the eleventh

century with additions and accretions added over the next two centuries. It was written by Murasaki Shikibu (not her real name), a court lady who was the daughter of a regional governor (Shikibu was the title of her father—the *Genji* shows nothing but contempt for regional governors). (Hooker 25)

The Heian period of the Japanese literary tradition was influenced and led mainly by aristocratic culture. The author of *Genji Monogatari* (*Tales of the Genji*) was an aristocratic woman. Murasaki Shikibu holds some similarities to authors of *keitai shosetsu*. First, many authors of *Keitai Shosetsu* are young women. Second, both Murasaki Shikibu and authors of *keitai shosetsu* author under pseudonyms instead of their real names. Continuing his explanation of the authors of Murasaki Shikibu, Hooker also notes,

[i]n the mid-level courts, women developed strong and educated communities that were in part integrated with courtly life. Two of the most important works of the Heian period, the *Murasaki Shikibu Diary* and the *Pillow Book* of another middle court lady, Sei Shonagon,

chronicle the lives of women in the court.

(Hooker 24)

Unlike the Heian period, authors of keitai shosetsu are written by common people, not aristocrats, and the subject matter focuses on common life.

Hooker summarizes the plot of Murasaki Shikibu's story,

. . . the Genji Monogatari is a series of loosely connected stories detailing the life and maturation of Genji. The son of an emperor, Genji goes through a series of setbacks in his quest for favor and love. About 3/4 of the way through the novel, Genji dies and the rest of the novel concerns his son. (Hooker 36)

The plot of the Genji Monogatari, as Hooker explains, could easily be used as a plot for a modern day cell phone novel. The story involves a young character that experiences challenges and dramatic events.

In his essay "Renga: The Literary Embodiment of Impermanence and Nonself," David Landris Barnhill describes another interesting poetic form which originated during the Edo period of the Japanese literary tradition. The renga is a form of poetry similar to tanka; however, the renga was

formed by linking successive verses of poetry written by different authors, mainly people of the court. Landris Barnhill describes this form as a "parlour game." The renga has many similarities to keitai shosetsu. First, both the renga and Keitai Shosetsu are collaborative in nature. Both are public and changeable works during their production. Second, the linking nature of the renga seems to be a precursor in thought to the hypermedia of modern Internet.

One similar genre to the cell phone novel in the English literary tradition is the letter novel. In "E-pistolarity and E-loquence: Sylvia Brownrigg's *The Metaphysical Touch* as a Novel of Letters and Voices in the Age of E-mail Communication" Mikko Keskinen describes the emergence of the letter novel,

[t]he letter novel came into existence in England and France toward the end of the seventeenth century, reached its peak in the eighteenth, and declined in the beginning of the nineteenth (Rousset 65). The rise of the letter narrative coincided with the advent of the novel as a major genre and initially represented itself as nonfiction that provided allegedly real accounts of life, often in the form of letters (Altman 5;

Rousset 75). (8)

Like cell phone novels, the letter novel focused on real accounts of everyday life. Keskinen goes on to explain, "[l]etter writing was a widely used means of communication during the peak period of the epistolary novel's popularity" (Keskinen 1). Since letter writing was a staple of communicating during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, readers easily identified with novels in letter form. The same is true of cell phone communications and the reception of cell phone novels by modern readers.

Keskinen goes on to compare letter writing to e-mail correspondence and points out some inconsistencies in e-mail communications:

[e]-mail is not purely graphic inscription like a letter, nor is it speech used in face-to-face conversation or in mouth-to-ear telephone discourse. E-mail contains features of both writing and speech, but with definite differences. Although inscribed in visual signs, e-mail is insubstantial; although speechlike, it lacks the immediacy of oral discourse. The hiatuses between visibility and intangibility and between production and reception are the keys to

the curious communicative locus of e-mail. (8)

The lack of immediacy of e-mail communications is repaired in cell phone communications. The author types in their message onto their cell phone and then pushes a button, which causes the message to appear on the reader's cell phone almost simultaneously.

It seems that different literary traditions have been pushing toward a common modern day literature. In fact, works of fiction like E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" have foretold what modern day literature looks and feels like. Although the early twentieth-century story "The Machine Stops" can be argued as a PSA against human dependence on advanced technology, the technology in the story is prophetically similar to present day media. In addition, Burke's warning against the "naïve verbal realism" of words to meaning can be used to understand how the immediacy of electronic texts blurs the lines of reality. The spirit of the community in "The Machine Stops" is similar to online writing communities including readers and writers of cell phone novels. Both communities are very collaborative when it comes to the creation and interpretation of ideas and rely on each other to create conclusions and interpretations. With genres like the cell

phone novel and the hypermediacy of the Internet, remediations of texts are pushing the boundaries of the literary tradition.

### Hypothesis

Due to remediation prompted by literary movements, Keitai Shosetsu could, through the genre's participatory nature, become popularized in the United States despite literary warnings against this type of technology. With devices like the Amazon Kindle already becoming mainstream in the United States, cell phone novels may have a chance to thrive. However, just like traditional U.S. poetry and the Haiku, U.S. cell phone novels will look much different than Japanese Keitai Shosetsu.

Marshall McLuhan discusses digital libraries and mobility, "[i]f we draw on studies of digital libraries in use [...] potential advantages of mobile access to digital resources come to light. Digital library patrons can:

- Engage in opportunistic reading and annotation, reading when and where other resources are available" (Marshall 1), because electronic devices and Internet are readily available, there are many



opportunities to read electronic literature.

Electronic literature also allows readers to comment on the work they are reading.

- "Use digital content in concert with access to human mediators, such as librarians, analysts, publishers, and colleagues" (Marshall 1), with cell phone novels readers are able to interface directly with authors. Readers can comment and inquire about the direction of the cell phone novel they are reading; and
- "Interweave mobile information access with other activities such as writing or organizing materials." (Marshall 1). McLuhan's depiction of the digital library is strikingly similar to E.M. Forster's depiction of modern communication in his story "The Machine Stops."

In "The Machine Stops" characters live in small rooms that could provide anything they needed. They would stay in their rooms and speak with each other through the machine. In the story characters did not meet in person or gather in public- most all communication was had through the machine. The following excerpt describes one character's experience:

[f]or a moment Vashti felt lonely. Then she

generated the light, and the sight of her room, flooded with radiance and studded with electrical buttons, received her. There were buttons and switches everywhere [...] There was the button that provided literature. (Forster 59)

This excerpt from Forster's "The Machine Stops" sounds just like the digital libraries Marshall McLuhan examines that are in use today. Perhaps when Forster's story states, ". . . there was the button that produced literature" this simplifies the process. However, the statement is not too different than the process of pulling up digital literature today.

Forster also describes a lecture that Vashti gives:

[t]he clumsy system of public gatherings had been long since abandoned; neither Vashti nor her audience stirred from their rooms. Seated in her armchair she spoke, while they in their armchairs heard her, fairly well, and saw her, fairly well. [...] Her lecture, which lasted ten minutes, was well received, and at its conclusion she and many of her audience listened to a lecture on the sea; there were ideas to be got from the sea; the speaker had donned a respirator and visited it

lately. (Forster 63)

Unlike cell phone novels and digital literature, Vashti's lecture is given at a certain time and participants can "tune in" at that time. With cell phone novels, the text, even in its production stages, is available for readers to view at any given time- the author need not be present. The readers can comment, ask questions etc. Just like in "The Machine Stops," but with digital literature and cell phone novels, readers can comment and ask questions at any time. In the world of "The Machine Stops" distance is not an issue for communication. In our modern world of digital communication, neither distance nor time is an issue.

McLuhan agrees, "[p]eople may use mobile digital library technologies to cross physical and digital boundaries" (Marshall 1). In "Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing" Bolter agrees, "[a]n electronic text permits the reader to share in the dynamic process of writing" (5). Cell phone novels present an opportunity for readers and author to cross boundaries and participate together in the development of texts.

McLuhan goes on to describe reading as an activity, "[r]eading is opportunistic; people read when they have time, where they have a comfortable place to sit, and where

there are other necessary resources at hand" (1).

Remediation of literature texts to their digital handheld versions makes reading very easy- the necessary resources are always at hand. Cell phone novels especially mesh with what McLuhan describes when he says, ". . . reading is rarely a one-time linear traversal of a document" (1). In fact, with cell phone novels reading is never a one-time traversal of a document.

Dan Spencer explains why readers are uncomfortable with large linear documents:

[i]t is only honest to admit that even the most motivated readers, whether they are twenty-five or sixty-five, can become physically exhausted when reading pure text in books and staring at those little black marks on white paper for long periods with no visual relief. A long, unillustrated text takes a long time to read, and many people don't quite have the stamina or, more importantly, the taste for that anymore. They just don't want to put in the time, no matter how fascinating the book. They wonder why the writer could not have been more concise. They want a quick read rather than a thick text, not because

they are unintelligent or lazy, but simply because they are used to quick electronic perception. (2)

With the widespread use of cell phones for communication, people are comfortable with short electronic texts. This makes literature like cell phone novels more appealing to modern readers, as Spencer describes them.

However, as was previously explored,

[a]t the same time, books as a medium are not going away, just as theater survived films. I-- and apparently a lot of other people--like to go to bookstores, to hold books, to flip through them, and even to read them while drinking some coffee. There is something special--call it privacy and intimacy--between ourselves and a book that we are not ready to give up. And then there's the fact that books don't black out on us sometimes, as electronic devices do. (Spencer 2)

Spencer comments on the fact that media can persevere remediation just because consumers enjoy them or enjoy their novelty. He also states that print literature can be more reliable than digital literature, which at times can be conveyed through temperamental media.

Although there are many positives to electronic literature, in "What Consumes Us: The Deformation of American Values," Spencer claims, "The culture of both the household and the community have become attenuated and fragmented in a social context marked by technology and commodification" (Spencer 1). Spencer's comments echo the message of Forster's "The Machine Stops."

Spencer goes on to say, "[w]e shape technology and then technology shapes us by delivering commodities that promise us pleasure, comfort, leisure and convenience, but paradoxically leave us bored and distracted, alienated from what is real--other humans and the earth" (Spencer 1). Perhaps Spencer and Forster's worries are valid. However, they are not heeded. Humans have the insatiable urge to forge ahead, out of which results in greatness and sometimes destruction.

Like in Forster's story, remediation of texts in modern day society has brought literature to a state of hypermedia; one example is the cell phone novel. The popularity of the cell phone novel has exploded in Japan and is growing in the United States. Not only has remediation of texts led to the emergence of the cell phone novels, but literature texts such as E.M. Forster's "The

Machine Stops," have portended similar types of literature. Whether or not the cell phone novel is a sign or omen of what is to come for the human race, these types of digital literature are inevitably growing in popularity.

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