Digital Humanities Meets Literary Studies:
## Challenges Facing Estonian Scholarship

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Aim of the presentation:

- Check out the limits and possibilities of Digital Humanities as a concept

- Determine its challenges for contemporary literary studies

- Introduce some research results and projects in literary studies done in Estonia using digital technology

Main question:
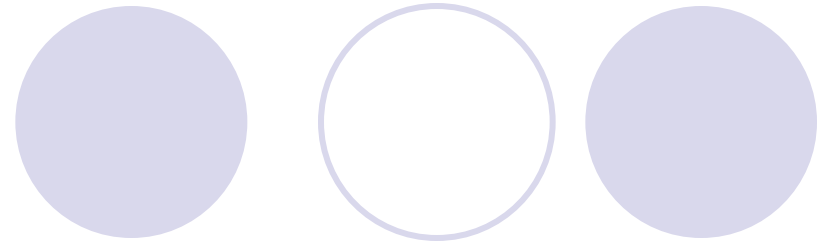
- Can Digital Humanities essentially be considered as **a tool** or **method** for **literary** research?

    OR

- Is it an entirely **new approach** in literary studies, which has a potential to change literary theory significantly?

Estonian experiences:

- Since the second half of the 1990s

- Mapping and analysing new forms of literary genres in the digital environment
  (*digital / electronic literature*)

- Creating and developing innovative experimental models of Estonian literary history and representing them as content-based interactive information environments

First focus of our research

- Digitally born literature
- Has been studied in Estonia since 1996
- Hypertextual poems
- Complex works of digital literature combining different media
- Literature born on social media, (e.g. twitterature, social media poetry, Alt Lit)

Hypertextual poem „Trepp" (Stairs,1996) by Hasso Krull

ta tormab mööda
marmorist treppe üles
üleval ootab teda
kahe peaga lohe
ta raiub maha lohe
kaks pead
nende asemele kasvab
kaks jalga
ta raiub maha jalad
kasvab kaks kätt
ta raiub maha käed
ja sinna kasvavad silmad

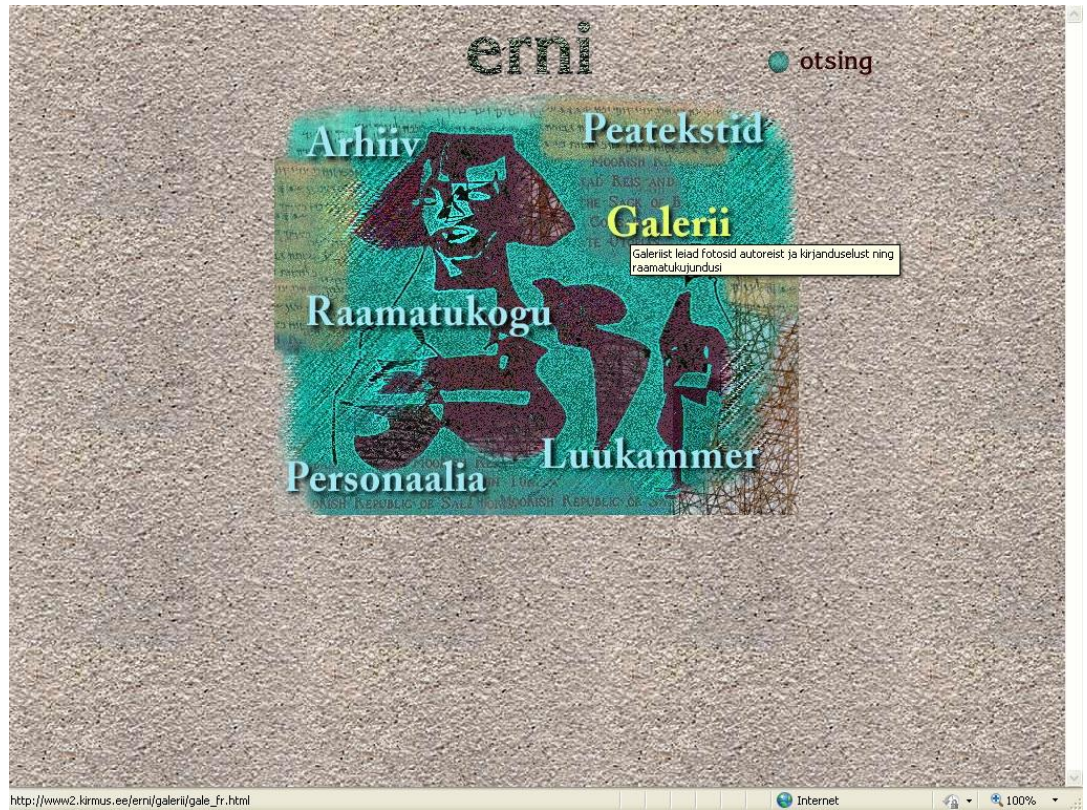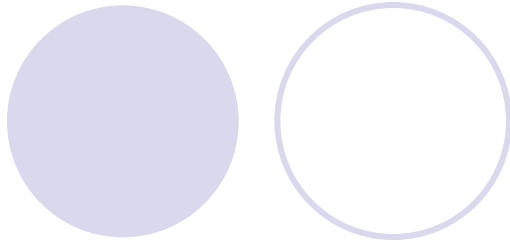- http://www.eki.ee/kodud/krull/

Twitterature by Keiti Vilms

Question:

- Is Digital Humanities able to offer a new framework for analyzing digital literature?

- So far, highly varied approaches have been used:

  1) the studies of hypertextuality

  2) cybertext theory

  3) narratology

  4) trans- and intermediality

  5) participatory culture

  6) postmodernism

Second focus of our research

- Three large-scale experimental projects for digital representation of Estonian literary history in 1997–2018.

- The objective of these projects was to develop principally new models of Estonian literary history in the digital environment.

- These activities were based on the research of (intertextual) relations between authors, literary works and critical metatexts
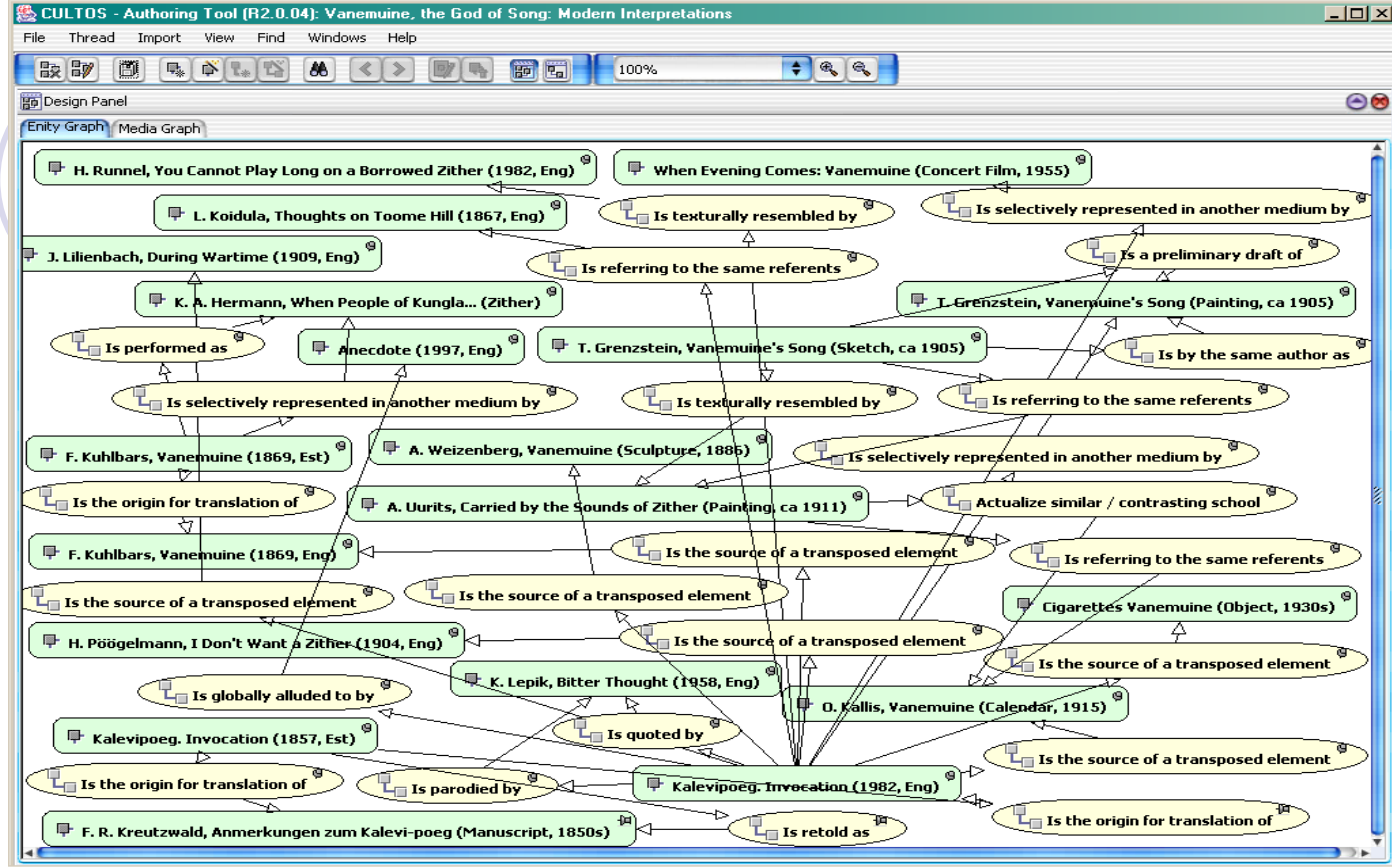
Hypertextual model
http://www2.kirmus.ee/erni

ERNI – Eesti kirjanduslugu tekstides 1924-25 (The Estonian Literary History in Texts)

The first literary project of the Estonian Tiger Leap program

Estonian Literary Museum, Marin Laak, Piret Viires & Virve Sarapik, 1997-2001

Intertextutal model of the epic

CULTOS - Authoring Tool (R2.0.04): Vanemuine, the God of Song: Modern Interpretations

File   Thread   Import   View   Find   Windows   Help

Design Panel

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- H. Runnel, You Cannot Play Long on a Borrowed Zither (1982, Eng)
- When Evening Comes: Vanemuine (Concert Film, 1955)
- L. Koidula, Thoughts on Toome Hill (1867, Eng)
- Is texturally resembled by
- Is selectively represented in another medium by
- J. Lilienbach, During Wartime (1909, Eng)
- Is referring to the same referents
- Is a preliminary draft of
- K. A. Hermann, When People of Kungla... (Zither)
- T. Grenzstein, Vanemuine's Song (Painting, ca 1905)
- Is performed as
- Anecdote (1997, Eng)
- T. Grenzstein, Vanemuine's Song (Sketch, ca 1905)
- Is by the same author as
- Is selectively represented in another medium by
- Is texturally resembled by
- Is referring to the same referents
- F. Kuhlbars, Vanemuine (1869, Est)
- A. Weizenberg, Vanemuine (Sculpture, 1886)
- Is selectively represented in another medium by
- Is the origin for translation of
- A. Uurits, Carried by the Sounds of Zither (Painting, ca 1911)
- Actualize similar / contrasting school
- F. Kuhlbars, Vanemuine (1869, Eng)
- Is the source of a transposed element
- Is referring to the same referents
- Is the source of a transposed element
- Is the source of a transposed element
- Cigarettes Vanemuine (Object, 1930s)
- H. Pöögelmann, I Don't Want a Zither (1904, Eng)
- Is the source of a transposed element
- Is the source of a transposed element
- K. Lepik, Bitter Thought (1958, Eng)
- Is globally alluded to by
- O. Kallis, Vanemuine (Calendar, 1915)
- Kalevipoeg. Invocation (1857, Est)
- Is quoted by
- Is the source of a transposed element
- Is the origin for translation of
- Is parodied by
- Kalevipoeg. Invocation (1982, Eng)
- Is the origin for translation of
- F. R. Kreutzwald, Anmerkungen zum Kalevi-poeg (Manuscript, 1850s)
- Is retold as

100%

The thread „Modern interpretations of *The Kalevipoeg*"

Project „The Estonian National Epic *The Kalevipoeg* by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald"

- project CULTOS – Cultural Units of Learning: Tools and Services (*IST-2000-28134*) - www.cultos.org

University of Tartu, Marin Laak & Piret Viires, 2001-2003

Relations based model

http://kreutzwald.kirmus.ee

„Kreutzwaldi sajand: eesti kultuurilooline veeb"
(Kreutzwald's Century: the Estonian Cultural History Web)

Estonian Literary Museum, Marin Laak et all, since 2004 - …

The base of the Estonian web-projects:

1) Each project had its own unique literary theoretical concept.

2) The visualisation of textual networks was preceded by long-term research using traditional methods of literary studies:

- Textual analysis
- Reception aesthetics
- Semiotics
- Intertextuality
- .....

The base of the Estonian web-projects:

- 3) The studies of new media and communication were also taken into account in cooperation with researchers of sociology of new media.

- *P. Runnel, P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. Viires, M. Laak (eds., 2013)*

- *The Digital Turn: User's Practices and Cultural Transformations.*

Pille Runnel / Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt / Piret Viires / Marin Laak (eds.)

**The Digital Turn:
User's Practices and
Cultural Transformations**

PL ACADEMIC RESEARCH
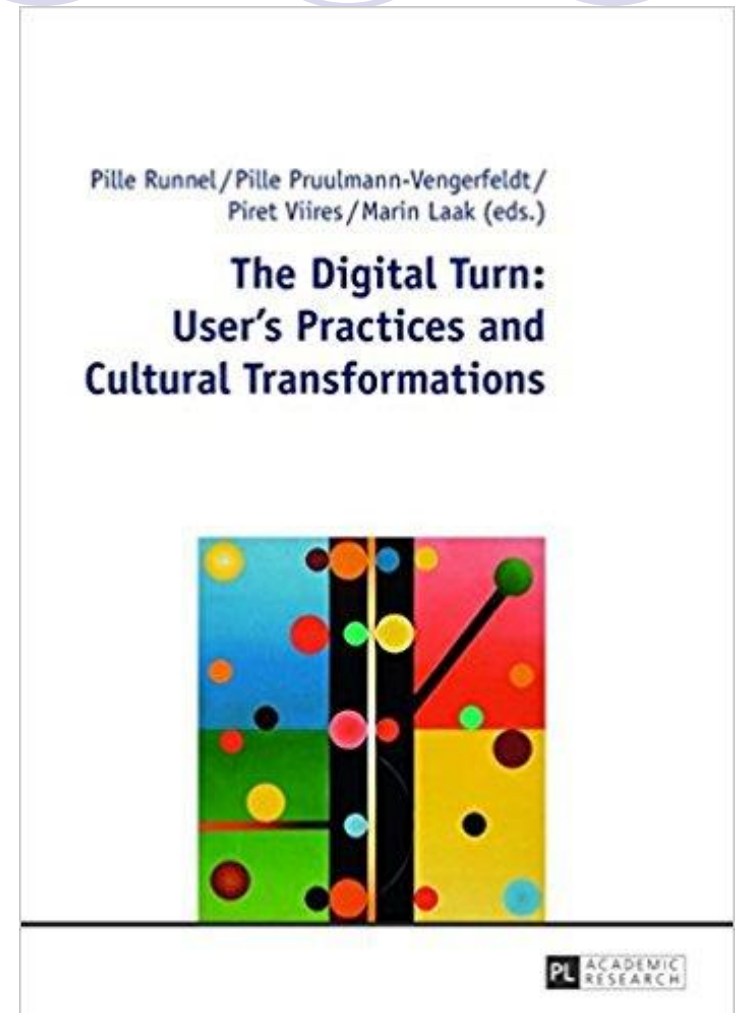
Final and so far open-ended question

Can Digital Humanities essentially be considered as **a tool or method** for literary research?

- OR

Is it an entirely **new approach** in literary studies, which has a potential to change literary theory significantly?

Questions for discussion:

- Can we talk about **digital literary studies** that can be considered a new discipline in the realm of Digital Humanities?

- OR

- Can we talk about **literary studies in the digital age** that uses digital tools and methods?

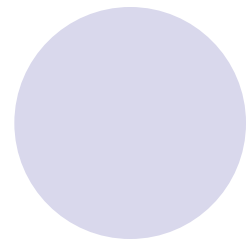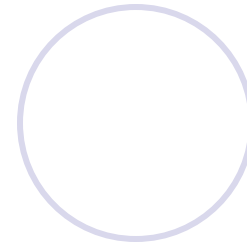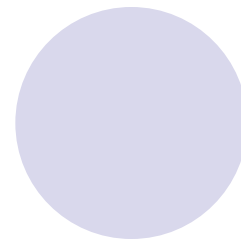A further discussion is needed for finding answers to these challenging questions.

Thank you!

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