



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S27. Internet Fiction(s)

Tuesday 29 August: 4.30-6.30pm

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The Internet is a massive, amorphous, rhizomic collection of information, fantasy, madness, debate, business, stupidity, brilliance, a limitless multiplication of voices, all clamouring to be heard. As such, it is also a medium which produces stories and narratives in ways both new and familiar. It is as a generator of fictions that the Internet is waiting to be explored by the disciplines of literary, cultural and linguistic studies: fan-fiction, scam-baiting, fan-sites, “rogue” interpretive universes, gossip. We aim to explore this uncharted territory in creative, theory-savvy ways using the fictions the Internet generates both within its domain and as a field of projections from without.

Hot-Wired: From Printed to Digital Interaction in the Peri-Narrative Realms of Toys and Romance

Inger H. Dalsgaard (University of Aarhus)

This presentation argues that historical romance websites reproduce the best of previous stages of literary and narrative culture – oral, written and printed - to produce something philosophically or psychologically, rather than technologically, new. To explain and contextualize this “peri-narrative sphere” which forms around written and digital texts - combining life experiences with reading experiences - this presentation also explores the various sensory and emotional links exchanged between three toy brands and their official web sites.

Web Side Stories: Janeites, Fanfiction and Never Ending Romances

Roberta Grandi (Catholic University of Milan)

The world of Austenian fanfiction on the net is complex and multifarious. Sequels, modernizations, and alternate universes try to give eternal life to Austen’s characters and stories, while completions, point-of-view versions and missing scenes “fill in” the blanks left by the author. Without wishing to give an accurate account of all Austen’s works, recreations and websites, the analysis will focus on the different approaches of re-working and on the various influences and intersections among the literary domain, “external” culture, and the world wide web.

From Internet Fraud to Interactive Fiction: The Ethics and Poetics of ‘Scambaiting’

Anton Kirchhofer (University of Munich)

Scambaits are ‘epistolary internet fictions’ located at an intersection of the criminal and the aesthetic. Inspired by so-called “Nigerian letters” and produced in cross-purpose interaction with real-life fraudsters, they come with a combined claim of usefulness and entertainment. After a brief discussion of the emergence, characteristics and locations of this type of ‘confidence art,’ I will focus on how both the fictions and the critical reflections engage with a central dilemma of this genre precariously poised between the comic moral triumph of ‘deceiving the deceiver’ and the constitutive inability to elude the Orientalist projections inherent already in the original scam.

Television Characters Blogging

Johanna Roering (University of Tübingen)

The interdependency of the internet and television as contemporary mass media has increased with the realization of the commercial potential of this connection. Fictional narratives are not only transferred from one medium to another but are extended and reconfigured in the other. A company-directed venture to extend a televised fiction into the internet is a set of blogs whose narrators are the fictional characters of television series. How do the series’ narratives adapt to the informal structure and explicit dialogism of a blog? And how is the narrative’s coherence maintained in the interaction between the TV-series and the viewers who can participate through the blog’s comment function?

Wading Through Streams of Consciousness: How Hypertext Redefines Coherence

Jukka Tyrkkö (University of Helsinki)

This paper discusses online hypertext fiction, focusing in particular on the way hypertextual coherence negotiation reflects modern culture and media and affects textuality and narrativity. Following a brief introduction relating hyperfiction to the diachronic continuum of literary narratives, I will discuss some of the key points of divergence distinguishing hypertextual coherence from conventional print texts. I will present the argument that hyperfiction mandates a more flexible and fluid understanding of coherence and that this new type of fuzzy coherence relies more on textual cues and seemingly superficial cognitive markers than it does on causality or rhetorical organization.