

Laura Borràs Castanyer

Editorial

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Editorial

By Laura Borràs Castanyer

No. 33 – 2004

Dear Readers,

The texts to be found in this edition of Dichtung Digital derive from the papers presented at the International Conference Under construction: Literatures digitals i aproximacions teòriques (Under construction: Digital literatures and theoretical approaches), which was organised by the international research group Hermeneia and held at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) in Barcelona on 14-16 April 2004. The results of the marriage of the new digital technologies and literature are constantly more evident, more interesting and more eloquent, but at the same time, this new area throws up a whole range of questions, which have no easy answers. Therefore, the three days of the conference at the Open University of Catalonia were taken up with lectures, talks and debates. The papers presented were grouped into different thematic blocks, some of which dealt with the controversial management of the architecture of information; the critical analysis of digital works by authors in English, French, Italian, Catalan and Spanish; and the musical analysis of the most popular videogames or the presentation of a model to analyse videogames that seeks to combine ludology and narratology. At the same time there was room for a certain reflection concerning the role of code in digital literature, to introduce the subject of collective creation on the Internet and relate it to the precedents within traditional Western culture. This led to a consideration of readers' habits and the preparation for them to understand this type of texts. On the more applied side, we dealt with the topic of hypertext as a tool for the critical editing of texts, and there were proposals for the use of the new technologies in the classroom. We also had an analysis of the massive implementation and dissemination of videogames in society - always emphasising the pedagogical possibilities contained in these multimedia systems - which is in part encouraged by the need to involve the player in the discourse to be found in hypertext. There were also practical demonstrations of software dedicated to authoring, (such as MIDIPoet, created by Eugenio Tisselli and used for the manipulation of texts and images through algorithms).

The articles included here attempt to delineate a geography specific to the broad map of the different textualities in digital media, and to establish the frontiers between digital literature and net art. To this end, "Concrete poetry in Digital Media. Its Predecessors, its Presence and its Future", is a text in which, to use the Faustian metaphor of the two souls (the meaning-driven soul and the spectacle-driven soul)

Roberto Simanowski introduces the division between the reader who focuses on content and the reader who focuses on form; while *Joan Campàs* seeks to establish the weakness of these factual frontiers by analysing more than twenty online digital works and proposing various distinct categories.

However, we also tended to want on the assessment of quality in the hypermedia, as well as a creative analysis of the evolution from pen to computer or from book to screen. In "Is this hypertext any good? Or, how do we evaluate quality in hypermedia?" we find a series of questions that have to do with hypertext and quality and an accurate analysis of informational, educational, fictional and poetic hypertexts by *George Landow*, one of the pioneers of hypertext theory. The author also discusses the characteristics that we should take into account to evaluate not only quality in hypertexts, but also their success and effectiveness. In "Littérature numérique, contraintes et ouvertures de l'écran. (Du stylo à l'ordinateur ou du livre à l'écran)" *Jean Pierre Balpe* sets out the concept of "engrammation" which deals with the process of text mediatization. He presents some practical examples, such as different algorithmic programming, in order to illustrate the mediatization processes.

We also have room for a critical approach to a piece of electronic literature and, of course, for a reflection on cybertext theory and ludology, currently one of the most active areas in this field of electronic textuality. Thus in "These Waves of Memories" *Raine Koskimaa* explores different aspects of "These Waves of Girls," trying to combine both the most technical aspects and the narratological ones. Koskimaa pays critical attention to Caitlin Fisher's work (ELO 2001 award) and shows how critics can attempt a "true electronic work" in an exemplary case. Finally, in "Six Problems in Search of a Solution. The challenge of cybertext theory and ludology to literary theory" there are six emerging and related questions formulated by *Markku Eskelinen* that try to show how literary theory and the study of ergodic literature can be usefully expanded by cybertext theory and ludology.

In spite of so many - and such pertinent - contributions, the participants in Barcelona, more than *homo sapiens*, continue to be *homo quaerens*, in other words, instead of certainties, we keep on asking questions, to ourselves and to our colleagues, in order to widen our perspectives. Anyway, we are delighted to present this issue and we would like that you will find it interesting. Enjoy the reading!

Greeting from Barcelona, October 2004

Laura Borràs Castanyer