

# LITERATURE BETWEEN MEDIA

2 October, 10.00-17.00

The Nobel Auditorium (1482-105)

Radical developments in the media ecology throughout the last decades (not least the digital revolution) have resulted in new possibilities and challenges for literature. Through centuries, literature's status as a written and book-borne art form has been taken for granted, but the emergence of new media has severed the natural bond between literature, writing and books. This seminar, arranged by the AU Ideas Pilotcentre Literature Between Media in collaboration with Aesthetic Seminar, aims to examine how some of the semantic, material, user-oriented and institutional aspects of literature are evolving in dialogue with new media.

## ABSTRACTS

Kiene Brillenburg Wurth (Profile Professor of Literature and Comparative Media, University of Utrecht)

**Literature, the Technical Image, and the Future of Writing: *Livres-livres*, *Fugitive Sparrows*, and *S*.**

In the digital and postdigital ages, the 'analog' has only gained significance. Indeed, I would postulate that the 'digital' has precisely instated the 'analog' in the time of its presupposed demise. The latter is an effect of the former. Thus, especially since the 2000s, with the digital revolution, we see a return back to the book, young writers choosing the so called 'analog' medium of the paper book—and its *constitutive* contrast to the electronic page—as the more challenging, innovative medium. To gauge the significance of the 'analog' in 'digital' times it is, however, not enough to consider the aesthetics of paper bookishness and all its cultural and cognitive connotations. In this paper I will therefore focus on the issue of writing, handwriting, and the idea of the archaic in the 'digital' age. Using the work of Friedrich Kittler, Vilém Flusser, Carlo Sini, Brian Street and others on alphabetic writing and literacy, Paul Bishop's notion of the archaic in the present, and primary works such as Louise Paillé's *Livres-livres*, Zachary Sifuentes' *Fugitive Sparrows*, and J.J. Abrams' and Doug Dorst's *S*, I tease out the significance of illegible writing today and trace the possible transition of writing into a technical image. How does the sheer *possibility* of this transition affect the idea of the literary and its fundamental relation to human memory?

Sara Tanderup (PhD student in Comparative Literature, Aarhus University)

**Material Memories. Remembering the Book in Contemporary Experimental Literature**

What happens to the printed novel in the age of digital media? Works such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010), Anne Carson's *Nox* (2010), Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007) Jess Stoner's *I have blinded myself writing this* (2012) and J.J. Abrams/Doug Dorst's *S.* (2013) experiment with other media and draw attention to the visual and material aspects of writing and the book. My talk investigates this tendency from the perspective of memory—pointing to the fact that many recent works combine formal experiments with a thematic concern with memory, trauma and the past. Most obviously, this is demonstrated as several texts apply the aesthetics of diaries, notebooks and scrapbooks, suggesting the revival of the book as an intimate space of memory and communication. Analyzing selected works, I argue that these works about memory (and forgetting) express a process of remembering at a media level as well: remembering the book and literary culture. However, they also explore the changing conditions for producing texts, writing, reading—and remembering—in the digital age. Hence, I point to a tension: In spite of an apparent nostalgia towards the old media, these works are fundamentally products of the contemporary media culture.

Maria Engberg (Associate Professor, Malmö University)

**Writing on the World: Inscription, Mediation and Augmentation**

This talk will explore the contemporary condition of locative narrative, or location-based storytelling. Inscription on and in the world has a long cultural and media history. In contemporary media culture, replete with digital screens, and places that are tagged, mapped and augmented with digital content, any media experience can be locative, as a consequence of the logic of networked media, in Greg Elmer's words. Illustrated by media events/works in urban settings (ranging from panorama Mixed Reality narratives to inscriptions on buildings with large-scale digital projections) I discuss three dimensions of writing—in an extended sense—on and in the world: inscription, mediation and augmentation. These dimensions of writing establish that location-based media move beyond establishing location to an exploration of the multiple mediated, cultural, and experiential layers of a (any) place.

N. Katherine Hayles (Professor of Literature, Duke University)

**Adaptation, Supplementation, Transformation: Three Modes of Literary Circulations through New Media**

The relationships of contemporary literature to new media are both complex and diverse. This talk will illustrate three modes through which literary texts are engaging, and being engaged by, computational media. Mark Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* was originally conceived as a print book, taking full advantage of such specificities as page spreads and linear page bindings to create a constraint-driven novel. After its publication, Danielewski then adapted it for publication in a Kindle edition, re-imagining how the narrative would work in digital media. Steven Hall's *Raw Shark Texts*, also published as a print novel, used digital media to supplement and enrich the narrative. David Clark's *88 Constellations for Wittgenstein* illustrates how narratives are transformed when imagined from the start as born-digital works. Together, these texts illustrate the manifold possibilities for literature in the new millennium.