READING DIGITAL FICTION. NARRATIVE, COGNITION, MEDIALITY

by Rukminingsih Rukminingsih

Media Practice and Education

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BOOK REVIEW

READING DIGITAL FICTION. NARRATIVE, COGNITION, MEDIALITY by Alice Bell and Astrid Ensslin,
2024, 218 pp, Hardcover
ISBN: 978-0-367-62670-9

DECLARATION

Availability of data and material

The work is open access and can be accessed from Routledge, Taylor and Francis group. The material provides an extensive and structured exploration of digital fiction, adopting a cognitive and empirical approach. Contributing for researchers and pre-service teachers.

Competing Interests

Kala Sita Rukmi*
Department of English Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7215-4074

Rukminingsih
Department of English Education, Universitas PGRI Jombang, Indonesia
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7809-8381

Hartia Novianti
Department of English Education, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9117-4660

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Authors' Contributions

Book Review

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Abstract

Reading Digital Fiction provides an extensive and structured exploration of digital fiction, adopting a cognitive and empirical approach. Introducing the concept of "medial reading," it emphasizes the importance of audience engagement with the medium of production and reception. The text examines five generations of digital fiction, including hypertext fiction, hypermedia fiction, narrative video games, app fiction, and virtual reality. It showcases diverse qualitative reader response research methods specific to different mediums and platforms, ranging from screen-based interaction to gallery installations. Through empirical studies, the book investigates aspects such as hyper textuality, interactivity, immersion, and medium-specific narrative elements. By focusing on the reader's experience, it contributes to the development and critique of cognitive, trans medial, and empirical narratology and stylistics.

Keywords: Digital fiction, hyper textuality, medial reading, reading

Introduction

Digital media provides writers and programmers with interactive, multimodal tools for creating narratives. These tools have special affordances in terms of material and aesthetics that impact the processes of producing and reading. The experiences offered by hypertext and virtual reality stories differ and reading in digital media is platform and materially-dependent. This book examines reading as a cognitive, embedded, and embodied process in literary and digital fiction.

Main Text

This book begins in chapter 1 where it introduced Digital Fiction, Empirical Research, and Media Reading. The cognitive processing of digital fictions—interactive, computer- generated stories that blend many storytelling modalities—is examined in this chapter. The computing environment in which they are created and consumed shapes digital fictions, which are experimental fictions. They may be text-based or include spoken narrative with visual, aural, animated, or cinematic media. There are

several linear ways to read, play, or experience these stories, and readers frequently have a choice in how they proceed through the text or story world.

Chapter 2 is discussed about second-person narration in Ludic hypermedia fiction. A common narrative element in digital fiction is the second-person pronoun "you," which provides semantic and referential uncertainly for creative storytelling. It can be employed to allude to a protagonist or to speak directly to the reader or narrator. Nevertheless, depending on its medial and narrative embedding, its semiotic and pragmatic flexibility goes beyond these two applications, producing other meanings and aesthetic effects (Ensslin & Bell 2021). This chapter introduces a novel trans medial technique that uses a Likert scale to extract qualitative information about writer's processes in response to their unique uses of "you." Digital fictions are available in different linear formats for reading, gaming, and enjoyment.

chapter 3 explores hyperlinks in hypertext fiction. Hypertext fiction could be arranged by using electronic hyperlinks, hypertext fictions and link discrete textual pieces, or lexias, with additional content (Ensslin & Skains, 2017). These hyperlinks, which adhere to the third-generation electronic literature standards, serve as important textual connectors between the units of a hypertextual network. They give readers agency and narrative control so they may co-create the text and traverse it, enabling them to make wise decisions and creative writers. By critically analyzing current hyperlink typologies and synthesizing them into a new meta-typology that maps onto scalable degrees of schema disruption and writerly play and experimentation, this chapter offers a new philosophy of hypertextual reading. The new typology enables creative writers to create their own portfolios by synthesizing the aesthetic decisions they make between emotive and narrative connections.

Chapter 4 explores immersion in literary games in the 3D-game WALLPAPER by examining textual elements through the lens of cognitive poetics. It offers a fresh cognitive analysis framework for immersion that is derived from the **Immersion** program under Department of Science & Technology (**DST**),modified to take interaction and multimodality into account. Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in interest in digital narrative media immersion, partly due to Murray's (1997) suggestion that being immersed in a simulated environment might make one feel as though they are in a different reality. The chapter makes the case that the most common type of immersion is spatiotemporal immersion, which supports and enhances other types such as literary, ludic, narrative, artistic, and spatial immersion.

The next chapter explores -application fiction and the ethics of ontological ambiguity. 21st- century creative writing and digital-born fiction have been profoundly impacted by the proliferation of mobile apps (Salter 2015). This chapter investigates the relationship between the ethics of fictional narratives and interactive, participatory app fiction. The authors present a new, medium-conscious model of ethical positioning that takes into account the ways in which authors and readers utilize reader contributions to create a story world. In order to take reader reactions to interactive, participatory storytelling into consideration, this model has been modified.

The last chapter is he orientation and empathy in VR Fiction. The chapter depicts the phenomenological intricacies of Virtual Reality (VR), a storytelling medium that facilitates the creation and exploration of universes in a manner that is highly immersive, spatialized, and embodied. Users don head-mounted devices like Meta Quest, HTC Vive, and Valve Index to experience virtual reality worlds that offer the sense of full, embodied presence. Readers must medially, ontologically, and emotionally readjust themselves in order to engage with this new story medium. The author uses the word "ambimediality" to describe the persistent way readers use allusions to other media to make sense of their reading experience, and it emphasizes the significance of mediality and medium specificity in narrative phenomenology.

This book uses empirical methods to investigate how digital-born fictions are processed cognitively. It introduces new ideas and techniques while modifying narrative and stylistic theories to the procedural affordances of digital storytelling. The study advances stylistics, digital media scholarship, empirical literary studies, and cognitive and trans medial narratology. It presents a novel theory of modern reading called "medial reading," which reinterprets reading as a process that is both medially contingent and mindful of the medium. The significance of readers' posture in digital fictions and the orientational consequences of particular designs are emphasized in this study.

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GENERAL COMMENTS

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