SESSION 4 – CYBERTEXTS

Readings
> *Aarseth, Cybertext (Introduction)*
> *Ryan, Beyond Myth & Metaphor*

Concepts/Keywords
- Text
- Cybertexts
- Narrative
- Ergodic

Goals
- Understanding relationship of games with literary texts
- Introduction to the problem of "narrative" applied to games

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Both texts deal with metaphors of understanding games and literature -
- literature as a labyrinth
- games as story (in metaphorical sense)
- narrative myths

Literature & narrative can be playful – but can they be games? What is the relationship?

Both Aarseth & Ryan have problems with theoretical approaches. Aarseth criticizes both extremes of the literary criticism applied to digital texts (they're just like other literature or they can be completely different from other literature)

Cybertext -
> Machine that produces text
> takes info feedback loop from reader
> > → NON-TRIVIAL EFFORT

Aarseth focuses on verbal communication (text) where as Ryan talks about texts more generally
> -Purpose vs function (e.g. theological) rather than content

Q: Are these texts cybertexts? How? (Do they share characteristics with play or games?)
- Tarot Cards
- Detective Stories
- Pulp fiction
- Memento (film)
- Queneau's *A Hundred Billion Poems*
- Hypertext – Joyce's Afternoon
- CYOA (Choose Your Own Adventure)

Narrative: 3 definitions by Genette
- Series of events
- Discourse, the form

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- The act of telling

Other Aspects:
- A sign with a signifier (discourse) and signified (story)
- can be told (diegetic) or represented (mimetic)

Narrativity
- level of the signified, medium-free matter of degree

Narrative representation: constructed by the reader, based on text
- World (setting)
- Individuals (characters)
- Happenings (actions and events)

Myths: (both inspired by fiction!)

Aleph:
- Reordering creates new texts → refer to examples above (*Afternoon*, *Memento*)
- RECONFIGURING NARRATIVE
- Do lexia in different order provide new narratives?
- Ex: *Memento* needs that order, if watched in chronological order there is no surprise

VR Narrative/Holodeck:
- Technologically unviable (advance a bit simulation and abstraction)
- Holodeck involves a lot of suspension of disbelief, is almost like real life – so what's the point?
- Show Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* – Linda and the TV ("The Family")

Ryan's four types of Interactivity:
Internal – user is member of fictional world (1st/3rd person)
External – user is outside of fictional world
Exploratory – user can move in database but cannot make history or alter the world
Ontological – user can make decisions and determine what happens in the world

Aarseth's: Interpretive vs. Textonic (adding to the text)

	External	Internal
Exploratory	Hypertext	VR environments Types of plot: mystery story, parallel plot (soap operas), multiple POVs, spatial narrative (traversal), narrative of a place (story of a location)
Ontological	Interactive movies CYOA Simulation games (Sim City, Caesar)	Holodeck Computer games Hypes of plot – quest / fairy tale structure

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