Digital Stories

If you didn’t catch all of the digital stories at the festival this year be sure to check them out.

Molly Bridges

The Happy Creatress': Margaret Cavendish and the burden of womanhood

In 1673, Bathsua Makin wrote that ‘a learned woman is thought to be a comet, that forebodes mischief whenever it appears;’ before her, the work of Margaret Cavendish, whose published writing on science and philosophy threatened to subvert the hierarchy of liberal education. Her venture served to make ‘women so high and men so low’ that it could ‘set the whole world in a flame’ and, perhaps unsurprisingly, prompted a weighty backlash from her male peers. As a woman of noble birth, Cavendish occupied an awkward middle-space between the elite and ‘non-elite,’ women. Her exclusion from the literary marketplace catalysed a struggle for discursive authority that manifests itself in peculiar images of hermaphroditism, both in her work and life. Indeed, Margaret King has since suggested that the learned women functioned as a ‘third amorphous sex.’

My presentation will explore these images and the implications this approach had on Cavendish’s pursuit for recognition in an environment in which she was considered, at best, a stranger, and at worst, an enemy.

Elisabeth Magin

Important Message Incoming!

‘Smiðr f*** Vígdis of the Snelde-legs!’ ‘Evil has the man who has such a woman …’ ‘Ingibjorg loved me when I was in Stavanger!’ If the messages above remind you vaguely of tabloid headlines or Facebook status messages revealing just a tad too much, this may not be far from the truth. However, they were written down centuries before tabloids or Facebook existed—between 1100 and 1400 in Bergen, Norway. Gossip and the need to share it, it seems, were as common in the
Middle Ages as today. These three messages are examples of runic inscriptions on wooden sticks that were found during a 20-year-long excavation in the town centre of Bergen, and together with 600 other inscriptions they present a lively picture of everyday life in a medieval trading town.

Today I will be sharing the story of how scholars discovered and unravelled the stories behind Smiðr’s, Ingibjorg’s and other inhabitants’ stories.

Ewa Krusewski

Takeover Regulations in China

We are aware of the 2008 financial crisis, we all felt its consequences. We blame greedy managers of big corporations for running the firms in a way that put them in financial troubles. We are no experts, but we often wonder: is there any way to stop managers from behaving like this? Takeovers (one firm buying another) are often considered a miracle cure for such problems as they help to discipline managers when they e.g. buy a fancy car when what the firm badly needs is a new machine. That is why many encourage regulations that makes takeovers easier and oppose allowing managers to defend the firm against an unwanted buyer. But real life is not always as good as theory predicts. Thus, issues regarding the impact of takeovers on the economy, employees etc. should be addressed before making suggestions about how to regulate them. Moreover, the rules should fit the country’s unique legal, economic and social context. This is what I need to consider while proposing China’s takeover regulations reform.

Sarah Walden

Non/Synse

Imagine tasting a symphony, seeing Friday as a red square, or feeling sound on your face. These are examples of a neurological phenomenon called synaesthesia (syn = together; aisthsis = sensation). Nearly everyone experiences some form of crossed senses, and around 1 in 23 people have an automatic and consistent form of synaesthesia. The causes of synaesthesia are not fully understood, but both nature and nurture play a part. This video uses the idiosyncratic nature of synaesthesia as a platform for a glitched, embodied storytelling: as a ‘deviation’ from standard neurology, the crossing-over of the senses produces surprising sensations in the body, and bodily sensations felt by the synaesthete produce affect/effect on the ephemera of the mind.

Synaesthesia is the mechanism by which one sense response is felt and simultaneously translated into another, and we can recreate this translation by ‘hacking’ digital technology or by simply telling the stories of our perceptual quirks.

Hollie Johnson

Dystopia and the Ecocidal Imagination

Critical scholarship has marked dystopia as a conventionally anthropocentric genre, focusing on authoritarian governments, inter-human relationships, and social repression. However, growing environmental concerns, especially the emergence of global warming in the 1980s, has demanded that authors turn their attention outwards to consider humanity’s impact upon the environment, and equally the environment’s influence upon humanity.

My presentation will give a short introduction to my research, explaining the concept of ‘ecodystopia’ and exploring how growing environmental anxiety in the late 20th and 21st century has been expressed in recent examples of dystopian fiction. This presentation explores how authors use representations of environmental crisis to demonstrate the interdependence between humanity and the natural environment and introduces some of key arguments and questions put forward by these texts.

Stefania Zardini Lacedelli

A Sound Journey in the Museum

Sound in all its forms – spoken words, music, natural soundscapes – is such an important part of human condition: it influences how we perceive the world, how we remember and socially interact. Nevertheless, sound is still underrepresented in the cultural institution par excellence: the museum. Museums have always been a predominantly visual - and silent - medium: the objects collected mostly belong to material and visual culture, the ways in which collections and information are displayed tend to privilege the eye over the ear. What happens if we imagine the museum as a place where people can listen and hear, where music, sounds and spoken words are just as
important as physical and visual artifacts? An educational activity in the Civic Museum in Belluno (Italy) begins to answer, by guiding a group of children to develop an aural perception of a painting and to recreate personal soundscapes. How many other sounds are waiting to be heard and how many hidden dimensions can we release?

Rachel Small

A Humoral Diet

Humoral theory was the dominant health paradigm in early modern England (c.1500-1750). It was believed that the body contained four humors (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile) and these had to be kept in balance to maintain good physical and mental health. One of the best ways to achieve this balance was through diet and a plethora of advice on which foods were best to eat was given in contemporary literature. By collating archaeological and historical sources and focusing on a case study, the diet of the aristocratic Grey family who lived at Bradgate House, Leicestershire, I aim to find out to what extent a ‘humoral diet’ was practised in early modern England. This digital story presents preliminary results including the humoral interpretations for chicken, beef and eel, food items which were consumed in large quantities by the Grey’s. The role of elite identity, taste and other factors in the formulation of humoral advice is also considered.

Laura Fryer

nobody even thought to mention me’: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s position as a screenwriter

First a novelist and then a screenwriter, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala felt more reverence towards her literature than she did towards her screenplays. She wrote films for almost fifty years with Merchant Ivory Productions and was considered an integral member of the production company, winning two Academy Awards. Archival materials such as annotated draft screenplays and filmmaker correspondence reveal her significant contributions to Merchant Ivory films. However, tracing the trajectory of Jhabvala’s portrayal in publicity shows that her role was often under- and misrepresented. Furthermore, Jhabvala often appeared to be compliant with the underappreciation of her film work; its visual and collaborative nature leading her to view it as a lesser art form than her literature. With writers themselves pervading such views, it is perhaps no wonder that screenwriting has garnered little attention in both the industry and academia.