

No Hands: (Dis)Embodied Avatars and Reflexivity in Dutch VR-poetry

Ruben Vanden Berghe, Ghent University

Abstract

As has been expressed by various scholars on digital literature (Fülöp 2021, Baetens e.a. 2019, Bell 2010), reflexivity in digital literature differs from reflexivity in non-digital media, as digital literary output capitalizes on the medium's simulated and virtual processes. This paper explores how VR-poetry uses specific poetic and intermedial strategies to reflect creatively and critically on its technological conditions and the ideological conceptions of the body that are entwined with it. In particular, the paper will analyze how (dis)embodied aspects of the avatar are evoked and challenged self-reflexively in the VR-poetry of Dutch poet and composer Micha Hamel and his artistic collaborator Demian Albers.

Bibliography

- Baetens, Jan, Ortwin de Graef, and Silvana Mandolessi. *Digital Reason. A Guide to Meaning, Medium and Community in a Modern World*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019.
- Bell, Alice. *The Possible Worlds of Hypertext Fiction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Fülöp, Erika. 'Virtual Mirrors: Reflexivity in Digital Literature' in: E. Fülöp (ed). *Fictionality, Factuality, and Reflexivity across Discourses and Media*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2021,

Bio

Ruben Vanden Berghe is a researcher at the Department of Literary Studies at Ghent University (Belgium). His FWO-funded PhD research project *Widening the Net: Sublime Re/Presentations of the Internet in the Flemish and Dutch Novel* focuses on contemporary Flemish and Dutch fiction and the postdigital sublime. In the past, he worked as an assisting researcher on a project concerning the literary radio play in the Low Countries. His most recent publications include the articles 'The Imagination of the Internet in Dutch Literature of the 1990s' (co-author Siebe Bluijs, *Nederlandse Letterkunde*, 28, 2, 2023) and 'The Poison Sting of the Surfer: Digital Overload in Tonnus Oosterhoff's *Op de rok van het universum*' (*Spiegel der letteren*, 63, 3, 2021). His research interests include narrative theory, contemporary and experimental fiction, poetry, and new media.

ORCID-ID/Websites

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9994-7728>

Web site: <https://research.flw.ugent.be/en/ruben.vandenbergh>