

Abstract Samples

Amy K. Anderson, 2014

“Image/Text and Text/Image: Reimagining Multimodal Relationships through Dissociation”

Abstract:

“W.J.T. Mitchell has famously noted that we are in the midst of a “pictorial turn,” and images are playing an increasingly important role in digital and multimodal communication. My dissertation addresses the question of how meaning is made when texts and images are united in multimodal arguments. Visual rhetoricians have often attempted to understand text-image arguments by privileging one medium over the other, either using text-based rhetorical principles or developing new image-based theories. I argue that the relationship between the two media is more dynamic, and can be better understood by applying *The New Rhetoric’s* concept of dissociation, which Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca developed to demonstrate how the interaction of differently valued concepts can construct new meaning. My dissertation expands the range of dissociation by applying it specifically to visual contexts and using it to critique visual arguments in a series of historical moments when political, religious, and economic factors cause one form of media to be valued over the other: Byzantine Iconoclasm, the late medieval period, the 1950’s advertising boom, and the modern digital age. In each of these periods, I argue that dissociation reveals how the privileged medium can shape an entire multimodal argument. I conclude with a discussion of dissociative multimodal pedagogy, applying dissociation to the multimodal composition classroom.”

Holly F. Osborn, 2014

“Apparitional Economies: Spectral Imagery in the Antebellum Imagination”

Abstract:

“*Apparitional Economies* is invested in both a historical consideration of economic conditions through the antebellum era and an examination of how spectral representations depict the effects of such conditions on local publics and individual persons. From this perspective, the project demonstrates how extensively the period’s literature is entangled in the economic: in financial devastation, in the boundaries of seemingly limitless progress, and in the standards of value that order the worth of commodities and the persons who can trade for them. I argue that the space of the specter is a

force of representation, an invisible site in which the uncertainties of antebellum economic and social change become visible. I read this spectral space in canonical works by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman and in emerging texts by Robert Montgomery Bird, Theophilus Fisk, Fitz James O'Brien, and Edward Williams Clay. Methodologically, *Apparitional Economies* moves through historical events and textual representation in two ways: chronologically with an attention to archival materials through the antebellum era (beginning with the specters that emerge with the Panic of 1837) and interpretively across the readings of a literary specter (as a space of lack and potential, as exchange, as transformation, and as the presence of absence). As a failed body and, therefore, a flawed embodiment of economic existence, the literary specter proves a powerful representation of antebellum social and financial uncertainties."

Michael Todd Hendricks, 2014

"Knowing and Being Known: Sexual Delinquency, Stardom, and Adolescent Girlhood in Midcentury American Film"

Abstract:

"Sexual delinquency marked midcentury cinematic representations of adolescent girls in 1940s, 50, and early 60s. Drawing from the history of adolescence and the context of midcentury female juvenile delinquency, I argue that studios and teen girl stars struggled for decades with publicity, censorship, and social expectations regarding the sexual license of teenage girls. Until the late 1950s, exploitation films and B movies exploited teen sex and pregnancy while mainstream Hollywood ignored those issues, struggling to promote teen girl stars by tightly controlling their private lives but depriving fan magazines of the gossip and scandals that normally fueled the machinery of stardom. The emergence and image of the postwar, sexually autonomous teen girl finally began to see expression in mainstream melodramas of the late 50s, and teen girl stars such as Sandra Dee and Natalie Wood created new, "post-delinquent" star images wherein "good girls" could still be sexually experienced. This new image was a significant departure from the widespread belief that the sexually active teen girl was a fundamentally delinquent threat to the nuclear family, and offered a liberal counterpoint to more conservative teen girl prototypes like Hayley Mills, which continued to have cultural currency."