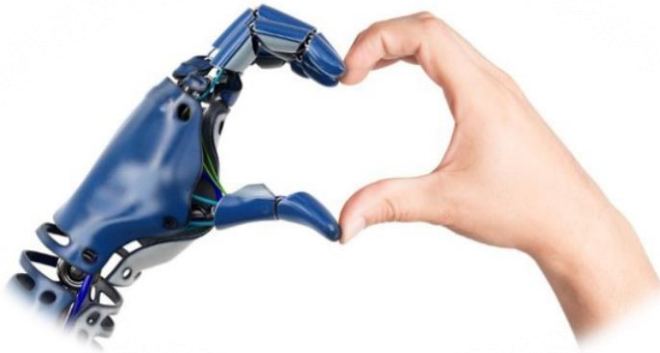


CALL FOR PARTICIPATION AT THE CONFERENCE



LOVE AND SEX IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE

(XXIII EFSS' 2018, 5-9 SEPTEMBER, SOZOPOL, BULGARIA)

& A CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE SECOND ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL DIGITAL AGE IN SEMIOTICS AND COMMUNICATION

DEADLINE FOR THE ABSTRACTS: 15 JULY

The advent of the internet and digital technologies in general wrought deep changes to the socio-cultural tissue in almost every part of the world. There is an entire global generation of young people called “digital natives”, which recognizes that the impact of new communication technologies is comparable to the function of ones mother tongue. Semiotic research has slowly begun to move in that direction.

With such considerations in mind we would like to invite our fellow semioticians, as well as scholars from related disciplines, to contribute research on one of the most dynamic spheres of the digital age — the (semio)sphere of love and sex. And if you think this only encompasses the movie “Youve Got Mail” and online pornography, these are only a minimal part of a huge sociocultural phenomenon:

- **Cyber dating and hookup culture:** researchers discuss this moment as the second greatest shift in human sexual habits, second only to the establishment of marriage. This new culture has also generated online communities for every orientation with important consequences for defining the huge variety of “new” genders and everyday practices, unthinkable without the support of social networking.
- **Social media, sexuality and sexting:** a more subtle expression and use of sexuality in the digital age are on conventional social media, where whole new “imagined communities” are formed as followers of sexually appealing individuals, who know how to use images and videos for their public identity making, sometimes at the very limit of the Facebook, YouTube and Instagram nudity restrictions. Then comes interaction through *sexting* — texting with sexually explicit images and videos...
- **Webcamming, hidden cams and Mr. Skin:** a new culture of voyeurism is empowered by these new technologies and markets. These are not exclusively the leaked private collections of the celebrities, nor the video clips with extracts from movies where their intimate parts appear. It is an entire industry where every person can monetize their sex appeal, selling digital content of their private parts or acts which are censored by conventional cultural standards. A huge phenomenon here is "webcamming", the peer-to-peer exchange of videos and images, as well as the selling of sexual content taken illegally with hidden cameras.

- **Erotica and pornography websites:** they say half of the internet is composed of porn. Even if this is exaggerated porn is everywhere, in terms of both quantity and traffic, and serves as a strong driver for web design innovations. Among the many possible approaches try to think of the art of giving short titles of the hundreds of millions of videos on the major pornography platforms. These kinds of micro narratives of the content of the videos are often created to hook on the encyclopedic knowledge of the user and wake up unrealized latent fantasies from everyday life.
- **Sex workers' platforms, websites and forums:** according to many researchers the digital age has changed not only dating but prostitution. There is a significant global divide between sex workers with sufficient cultural capital to use the internet and those without. The use of platforms, private webpages and forums has increased safety and independence for users and pulled significant business from the criminal sector. After the advent of those innovations more people deliberately chose to work in the sector, often combining it with other professions.
- **Digitally engineered sex:** here it is impossible to encompass all the experimentation that is taking place globally. For instance, VR technologies' claim is that it changes the users role from just voyeur to participant. Teledildonics is an area of technological innovation, allowing people to make love across distances, challenging all extant semiotic models of communication. Sex robots have long since invaded sci-fi movies, but in recent years we have witnessed incredible prototypes for the "ideal lovers" of the future.
- **The dark side:** revenge porn, Internet-related child sexual abuse, videos with documented sexual violence, etc.; we should be very careful with such topics but can still rely on the theoretical ground that is semiotic studies of memory and trauma, elaborated upon by some of our most prominent colleagues.

All these sociocultural phenomena can be approached from various semiotic perspectives: as culturally codified forms of social life, where the generative method can reveal meaning making mechanisms; as new cognitive realities, where habit changing and embodiment matter to understand the pragmatics and realism of digital love and sex; as new generation modeling systems, where human desires and artificial intelligence join forces to create new cultural forms or as a biosemiotic challenge to some of humanity's most important vital functions.

In order to enrich the interdisciplinary perspective, we are seeking **keynote speakers** who are leading researchers from the social sciences, together with some of the worlds' most prominent semioticians.

Workshop on Virtual Reality (open to all participants)

Intimacy, closeness and Virtual Reality? The current technological frame radically reshapes the way we communicate. This context sets forward a qualitatively new discussion on the conditions of "being with someone" today. Join us for a workshop which combines the theory and practice of virtual reality to give you greater insight on its growing social role in the digital age. This workshop is led by **Momchil Alexiev**, founder of VR Lab BG.

Registration fee: **80 Euro (for IASS members, 100 Euro for non members)** The fee includes: access to all lectures, workshops, seminars and round tables; badge and materials; 10 coffee breaks, small welcoming reception on 5 September.

REGISTRATION FORM Follow us on **Facebook** www.facebook.com/DigitASCjournal

WEBSITE (for the payment): <http://www.sociosemiotics.net/events/2018/love-and-sex-digital-age-semiotic-perspective>

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