MULTILINGUAL FAN FICTION AS COMPLEX INTERVENTIONS INTO POPULAR CULTURE

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Fan fiction involves the writing, reading and discussion of novels, stories, poems and songs by fans of cult TV series, films and fiction, on web sites founded and monitored by fans themselves. It is based on and intervenes in for example characters, plot and themes of a cult ‘text’ originally produced by someone else with a legal right to them. Interestingly, fan fiction is often multilingual: it is published on both international and national web sites primarily in English, but also in other languages, involving a variety of code choices, alternations and mixes.

In this paper I will approach fan fiction as complex literacy and discourse practice. More specifically, I will report on a study of a corpus of nearly 200 fan fictional texts written by Finns in wholly, primarily or partly in English. Within a cross-disciplinary framework combining insights from discourse analysis, new literacy studies, sociolinguistics and cultural studies, I will investigate some of the multilingual, stylistic and generic strategies of Finnish fan fiction, and show how they relate to and draw on a variety of textual conventions and discourses, part of which are literary in nature. Finally, on the basis of a comparison of fan fiction by Finns to texts by writers representing other national and linguistic backgrounds, I will argue that fan fiction is one example of truly global discourse: it is one means through which transnational fan cultures, identities, relationships and communities are created, maintained, negotiated and struggled over.