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Where's the Meat? Cyberspace Imageries and the Meanings of Disembodiment

The Internet has been described as cyberspace in fiction, research and journalism since the early 1990s to the degree that the two have become synonymous. While the figure of cyberspace has lasting appeal, it comes with considerable problems, the most central of which concern identity and location. In the studies of the mid-1990s, nowadays labeled as "classic" or "pioneering," the Internet was seen as a site for developing alternative, fluid and multiple identities that were no longer grounded in the users' embodiment and physical location. Conflating identity with role and disembodiment with freedom, such formulations produced simplified readings of both poststructural theories of identity *and* the conditions of media usage. Reading cyberspace formulations produced in research and fiction alike, the article addresses fantasies and representations of disembodiment, and argues for a more situated approach to studies of the Internet.