Text, Hypertext, and Hyperfiction: A Convergence Between Poststructuralism and Narrative Theories

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Abstract
This article briefly surveys the changing theoretical perspectives on text from structuralism to poststructuralism and how they are subsequently accounted for by hypertext theorists to comprehend the emerging genre called hypertext fiction. Some theoretical issues concerning the reading of this genre also will be discussed. The purpose of this study is to illustrate that the radical promises and challenges of digital novels to readers would prove reading and interpretation of conventional texts are far more participatory. This will be accomplished by tracing the evolution of poststructuralists’ concepts of intertextuality, multivocality, decentering, multilinearity, disorientation, and interactivity to find a way out of constant notions of conventional principles of reading.

Keywords
hypertext, poststructuralism, hypertext theory, and hypertext fiction

Introduction
Print stays itself; electronic text replaces itself. If with the book we are always printing—always opening another text unreasonably composed of the same gestures— with electronic text we are always painting, each screen unreasonably washing away what was and replacing it with itself.

Joyce (1996, p. 232)

Print stays itself, electronic text replaces itself. Electronic text is as apt to evolve before it forms, as apt to dissolve before it finishes.

Joyce (2001, p. 14)

The first sentence in both statements above is perhaps one of Joyce’s favorite lines as he keeps repeating it in two of his books discussing the issues of hypertext technology. The author of the widely examined hyperfiction Afternoon: A Story, Joyce’s book not only provides us an understanding of the communication technologies that are constantly evolving in the network cultures but also offers us a view of how the medium of print and the computer work distinctively in its own affordances. The two statements as well inform us of several historical occasions of the movement from one theoretical position to another that has been taking place since the inception of new media technologies—the cultural and technological shift from modern to postmodern, analogue to digital, text to hypertext, and one of which this article intends to inquire, fiction to hyperfiction. Hypertext critics, scholars, or students who are interested in hyperfiction should be mindful that these changing theoretical perspectives be understood as the published body of criticisms of the media and hypertext could lend themselves as an important framework to account for the development of narrative into the digital environment. What follow are some discussions that are excitedly stirred by these movements.

Structuralism to Poststructuralism
Behind these changing cultural phenomena, we have witnessed a period where our society has moved away from modernism to postmodernism. Modernism refers to a period in the early 20th century where modern thoughts and practices took over traditional culture of the 19th century in various aspects such as economy, politics, social, arts as well as literature. Meanwhile, it has been described (Fuchs, 2009) that postmodernism can be seen as a continuation of the modernist movement. In terms of economic development, the former period is normally based more on economic production or industrialization but the postmodern society is shaped and driven, not by industrial manufacturing but

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information technologies, innovation, and services as part of globalization process and increased technological automation. Consequently, the economic transition brings with it enormous changes to our culture, art, and politics. These changes have influenced the way media theorists understand these commodities as by-product of a rapidly developing technology and also the way they function in society.

Earlier media analysts argue that the media technologies of the modernist periods have imposed an ideological meaning in which society is led to believe that media texts have only one possible interpretation, one way of seeing the world, or one absolute meaning. These texts help define human consciousness and the world the society is living in. However, the articulations of such ideological domination through media texts have conditioned the audience into becoming a naive and passive consumer. The society is not only powerless in the face of various oppressive media technologies; they are also offered a picture of a homogenized culture. Moreover, the focus of the ideological analyses of the cultural products at the time has primarily been the content of the messages. These products are the primary objects where structuralism mostly draws its arguments from. It has been discussed that originated from the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who was interested in the structure underlying all languages, structuralism argues that the social structures are themselves, object or events that contain meanings or signs (Tredinnick, 2007). These signs which form the basic element for language, and meanings have always been explained with reference to their signs. Saussure divided the sign into two parts; the “signifier” (image, sound, or object) and the “signified” (the concept it represents). These parts are closely related, and meanings are generated in relation of the two. For example, a signer “tree” should always refer to a signified “woody perennial plant” but not something else. It is discussed (Chandler, 2007) that this way of deriving meaning can also be understood through oppositions, or binary pairs such as tree versus shrub or tree versus animal. Saussure continued to argue that all signs or meaning is constructed culturally and ideologically mediated through the mass media texts. They are able to position society in a way that their representations are taken to be reflections of everyday reality.

However, it has been expressed that media analysis gradually began to shift away from the idea that a media text could only represent one ideological meaning (Allen, 2000). This shift gave rise to postmodernism as a reaction and rejection to the modernist assumption or a certain universal reality. Ideology, it is argued, is far more complex and is capable of becoming polysomic. This has become one of the central arguments in poststructuralism which also arose from the reaction against the traditional search for a true meaning. Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva were among those who rejected the structuralist idea of universal reality and stressed on the plurality of signification. Instead of focusing on the way a text is constructed; these contemporary theoreticians place heavy emphasis on the role of the audience or reader in the production of meaning. Kristeva, in particular, argued that texts are presented in such a way that positions readers as the interpreter of their meanings. Derrida (1998) with his deconstruction thinking argues that a text is itself an endless stream of signifiers, and a word does not have any final meaning. For him, texts exhibit “difference” or consist of multiple interpretations in which true meaning is impossible to pin down.

As these arguments suggest, postmodernism foregrounds a profound cultural movement in which modernist approaches of the world and the conception of the passive audience area greatly challenged. This shift in cultural perspective has influenced many fields, including literary criticism in which the French literary theorist Roland Barthes explores the notion of author and authority of a literary text. In one of his well-known essays, Barthes (1977) eloquently announces the death of the author by arguing that meanings in literary text do not come from the author, but they come into existence through its language. For him, the author is merely a “scriptor” who does not produce a single original meaning, but his or her text is a mixture of texts drawn from numerous writings or traditions. Moreover, whatever meaning a text contains resides in the way readers consume it because they are the ones a text is written to. However, a text in Barthes’s sense can be readerly and writerly. A writerly text positions readers as an active constructor of meanings, but a readerly text assumes passive readers whereby the text gears them toward one meaning. Graham Allen (2000) argues that Michel Foucault somewhat shares Barthes’s premise on the role of language. For Foucault, a text does not revolve around the author’s intended meaning. Its meaning is defined in terms of multiple authors and readers. However, Foucault (1997: p.124) disagrees in the total absence of an author. He acknowledged the existence of an author as the basis on the “author function.” The “author function” asserts that an author only constitutes a part of a written work and just sets out to regularize discourse and knowledge but not the entire interpretive process.

From this brief overview and as it has been proven clearly poststructuralism originated in the reaction against the structuralist interpretive tradition. Their criticism, mainly centers on themes like the text meanings, text constructions, and the role of author and reader. Whatever the argument is, it has been noted that the intellectual development during the years until 1970s has always revolved around the confinement of print text. It is not until the development in computer technologies in the 1980s that we began to witness a heavy examination of these new media forms by scholars like George Landow (2006), who were fascinated to see, among other things, “an almost embarrassingly literal embodiment” of theory and technology (p. 52). In fact, Landow (2006) was among the first hypertext theorists to lay claim that poststructuralist notions of text propounded by Kristeva, Derrida, Barthes, and Foucault could now be tested and realized in one of the computer writing techniques known as hypertext. In the years that
followed as hypertext began to reach wider audience, poststructuralism was appropriated as a framework to understand hypertext and formation of its theory, but the theory has in turn given new light and extended our understanding of poststructuralism. This brings us to the second movement in which hypertext and poststructuralism come into contact.

**Hypertext and Critical Theory**

The idea of a hypertext system was introduced by Vannevar Bush in 1945 with his vision of an efficient information retrieval device called Memex. As a vision that has revolutionized human thoughts, the idea was later developed and realized by Ted Nelson and Douglas Engelbart in 1965 from whom the term “hypertext” was coined (Landow, 2006). Ted’s notion of hypertext is understood by “non-sequential writing—text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen . . . this is a series of text chunks connected by links, which offer a reader different pathways” (Landow, 2006, pp. 2-3). Simply put, hypertext is a kind of writing that offers multiple text fragments, text chunks, text units, or reading pathways that are interconnected through hyperlinks. The hyperlinks can either connect a text fragment “external” to a work such as a parallel or contrasting text by another author or “internal” to another text chunk within the same work (Landow, 2006). A variety of other concepts such as multilinearity, links and network, and reading choices can be deduced from these definitions. These concepts not only reflect the structure of the system but also explain the “hyper” about hypertext in the new media environment. As a modern mode of writing in literature, these concepts have been later taken as basic criteria in defining hyperfiction. For example, the multiple reading pathways translate into multiple narrative threads. Definitions of hyperfiction were limited when the genre was still flourishing but a search in Google nowadays yields many results, including the one from http://www.thefreedictionary.com that goes “a work of fiction written and presented as an electronic hypertext document, especially one that allows variations in plot development.”

Landow’s claims are not at all too difficult to accept here. A closer look at these concepts actually shows some level of synonymy with the poststructural themes. For example, a reader playing a role in selecting what to read mirrors Barthe’s notion of writerly text. There is also the reduction of authorial power in imposing text meaning through the multiple narratives. Indeed, although, the Aristotelian concept of plot and story drastically shaped the definition of “narrative,” and it was boosted by the features of a print medium. However, this was till the emergence of postmodern era when literary genres experienced a transformation to the extent that the previously held concepts and theories were questioned. Novels in this era have begun to feel a degree of freedom from linear arrangement. Jean-Francois Lyotards’ view about postmodern narratives is explained as “competing little narratives” or “differends” (Inman, 2004, p. 109). Indeed, according to this notion, the narrative structure of the printed novel genre has undergone a major change. This purpose ties unrelated textual sections into a network. However, this structure is more than just the sum of its sections, and also the goal is more than simply mingle preceding texts. As Landow (2006) suggests, non- or multilinearity is a hallmark of hypertext. In fact, such interactive structure fashions the linking between segments. These associations set up essential concepts within the structure, influencing the reader’s interpretations and interactions with the narrative, and as Hayles (2002) claims, such “multiple reading path” is a defining characteristic of a hypertext (p. 26).

Hence, to have a firmer grasp of hypertext, which constitutes a large of part of hyperfictional works such as Lance Olsen’s 10:01, and Geoff Ryman’s 253, it is necessary to understand the way their narrative structures are understood. What follow are some of the key concepts of text in poststructuralist thinking that are subsequently taken to represent the way interactive narratives work in hypertexts.

**Intertextuality**

Allen (2000) states that Barthes’s argument that a text is a mixture of other writings not only highlights the role of author and reader but also the notion of intertextuality. Introduced by Kristeva, intertextuality implies that a literary work is constructed, not by a single author, but as a result of the interactions between other texts. Text becomes “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend, and clash” (Barthes, 1977, p. 151). From this perspective, a text does not convey a particular author meaning through a single narrative strand, but it is a combination of several voices from different authors, and a compilation of cultural textuality. Intertextuality has its root in print technology. The most obvious example of intertextual manifestation in print is the footnotes or quotations that are indicative of other source texts outside the main text. However, the concept of intertextuality is stronger in a hypertext fiction rather than its printed one. Landow (2006) postulates, “Hypertext, which is a fundamentally intertextual system, has the capability of accentuating intertextuality, in a way that page bound texts in a book cannot” (p. 55). In hypertext, intertextuality is manifested through hyperlinks whereby other texts from different authors can be brought together in a single node. As Allen (2000) points out, “Hypertext systems allow us to branch off from what appears to be a main text into intertextual pathways, to the extent that the main text may well be forgotten or come to seem just one more text in an intertextual, or in this case hypertextual, chain” (p. 202). Therefore, there is no sole source from which a text is written. In fact, what has happened to the hypertext novel is that reality itself has begun to merely indulge in the narrative through referring to various real events and episodes of other texts. For instance, Olsen’s aim for bringing
different texts within his characters’ stories in hypertext is to create intertextuality and unstable meaning. In fact, providing the unique and holistic meaning is not Olsen’s target, but he leaves the novel with traces of meaning to readers’ response in the process of reading and meaning making. Indeed, interdependent ways in which texts stand in relation to one another produce meaning. Therefore, instead of limiting one’s reading of a text based on its author and literary tradition alone, hypertext readers can open up their reading to an apparently boundless play of relationships through by intertextuality.

Multivocality

Many literary and media theorist like J. David Bolter, George Landow, Marshall McLuhan, and Walter Ong see that print works foster individuality, authority, and univocality. For Barthes (1977), however, a text is plural in meaning, not simply by virtue of having several meanings, but in terms of achieving the “very plural meaning” involving the play of signifiers. It is this “very plural meaning” that brings forth the idea of multivocality. A text is multivocal in the sense that it conjoins multiple voices drawn from several discourses with each having equal expression (multivocality is a term closely related in intertextuality). Landow (2006) asserts that hypertext can be seen as multivocal through its hyperlinks and multilinear means of structuring narrative. Textual representations can be easily composed and compared from different positions or voices. In this way, texts are no longer bound by the physical limitations of print which foster the tyranny of a univocal voice. Indeed, making relevant and incidental determinations in quite impressive, changeable, and unpredictably interactive structured medium is quite challenging. This matter points to an important quality of multivocality in hypertext. Hypertext novelists by using prominent frequent temporal shifts and spatial swings in their characters’ imaginations depict outstanding multivocal structures.

In fact, multivocality in digital narrative is realized as a functional criterion. Readers can enjoy more as it is believed that multivocality is depicted by mingling the text with the verbal, the visual, and the virtual environment in which the readers have a greater role to associate a set of events and gain aesthetic pleasure by such an interactivity. In fact, the way hypertext fiction is read resembles correlated stories, which should be organized and sequenced by readers. With the large number of characters constituting multivocality, the intention is to provide a pleasurable sense of disorientation. Therefore, by playing within diverse perspectives readers organize their own stories and receive a very plural meaning of the novel.

Decentering

The concept of “decentering” was introduced by Derrida in his theory of deconstruction. Derrida (1978) argues that all structure, including language, contains some sort of “centre” the function of which “was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure . . . but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the freeplay of the structure” (p. 278). Even though Derrida acknowledged that the center is important, the idea is subverted by himself on the ground that meaning is not fixed. What the center determines cannot represent a final signified because it can be a signifier itself. As a result, a chain of signifiers with the center continuously shifting between the signified and signifier; the center becomes decentered. The characteristic of hypertext is said to manifest this kind of decentering experience in the narrative. Without an organizing structure that guides reading direction, readers move from one text to another with each representing a center and a focus of their investigation. In Landow’s (2006) words,

One experiences hypertext as an infinitely decenterable and recenterable system, in part because hypertext transforms any document that has more than one link into a transient centre, a partial sitemap that one can employ to orient oneself and to decide where to go next. (p. 57)

Whether or not Landow’s claims can truly be tested in the new media form or hyperfiction will not be given much importance here as it entails a separate analysis which requires a new space altogether. What is being emphasized throughout this article is that his observations on the parallelisms between critical theories and technology have provided a preliminary picture of the way text behaves in the computer and how reading is possibly affected in the hypertext environment which many scholars have duly addressed.

Print Versus Hyperfiction—Some Concerns

Electronic literature has received remarkable attention during recent years due to the advanced communicative properties of the computer technologies which offer potential transformations to the literary tradition and textuality in general. Hyperfiction is perhaps the most popular genre of electronic literature, which was made popular by the pioneering work of Michael Joyce’s Afternoon: A story in 1987. Since then, hyperfiction has continued to fascinate scholars and students alike by its promise of dynamicity between author, text, and reader, if not the rupture that the hypertext technique imposes on literary conventions. In fact, postmodern novels deliver an effective and virtual sense of imagination to readers because a literary text must be “conceived in such a way that it will engage the reader’s imagination in the task of working things out for himself, for reading is only a pleasure when it is active and creative” (Iser, 1972, p. 275). In this sense, hypertext fiction by suggesting certain cybernetic situations for readers endows them a virtual reality in which
their interactivity will influence the written part of the text. In other words, the fictive world of the printed novel is, in some respects, different from the reality which readers experience in a digital novel. Therefore, as Landow (1997) states, “all writing becomes collaborative writing with hypertext” (p. 104). There is no doubt that authorship and reader’s role are undergoing a fundamental change due to the proliferation of digital publishing like hypertext fiction. Multimodality of digital literary works challenges conventional novelists to bring together different poststructural concepts, media capability, and interpretive traditions to produce entirely distinguished and artistic literary works.

To Bolter:

Hypertext is a vindication of postmodern literary theory . . . When Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish argue that the reader constitutes the text in the act of reading, they are describing hypertext. When the deconstructionists emphasize that a text is unlimited, that it expands to include its own interpretations—they are describing hypertext, which grows with the addition of new links and elements. When Roland Barthes draws his famous distinction between the work and the text, his is giving a perfect characterization of the difference between writing in a printed book and writing by computer. (Bolter, 1992, p. 24)

According to this passage, it can be said that hypertext and precisely hyperfictions are the consequences of poststructuralists’ notions and the emergence of electronic literature. Furthermore, when the deconstructionists emphasize that a text is unlimited, that it expands to include its own interpretations, they are describing about the reader’s role, which grows through the freedom in choosing their own paths.

**Author–Reader Relationship**

The growing corpus of the works within the genre itself has surpassed the times when we call hyperfiction and the evidence is clear if we incline on the language of poststructuralism and hypertext theory. However, hyperfiction continues to be subject to lively debates among its critics and practitioners such as J. David Bolter, Yellowlees Douglas, Sven Birkets, David Miall, George Miller, and Espen Aarseth, to name a few. One such ground for argument centers around the relationship between author and reader which still leaves us with many uncertainties about the genre. Convention tells that it is the author’s function in Foucault’s sense who defines the extent to which a literary work is demarcated between the producer and the receiver of the text. For Landow and Delany (1991), the author is the one who is constructing the narratives, and he or she is also the one who is directing our reading movement from the beginning to the end in a print document. The arguments are one-sided to some extent where readers are not allowed much privilege in the conversation. With this kind of authorial control, the print creates a tyrannical authorship and as Wells (1997) argues, this control enforces a passive position on readers as they are obligated to follow an author-directed linear narrative. It has been asserted (Landow, 1992) that the linear habits of thought associated with print technology often force us to think narrowly. Moreover, the print culture positions itself as the sole communication between the author and the reader. However, when authoring in hypertext or hyperfiction, the author has to surrender some degree of control to the readers. Unlike print, the hypertext allows readers to have more liberation in the textual selections through electronic links. With the necessity to choose links that do not always move linearly, reader takes on a more active role in deciding their reading directions. Landow (1992) explains that every text which is inserted in the cyberspace creates a web of relations and allows for a nonsequential reading and thinking. As a result, readers may encounter many other texts that are created by different authors. Instead of reading a text which creates the illusion that it is constructed by a single author, the text now includes many individuals who are associative of each other in the text creation. Apart from the liberty of choosing their reading direction from the links, authors and readers may also be given the freedom to make changes to an existing document or create annotations. They can besides incorporate other texts into a document through electronic links creating a corpus of interrelated materials. Such liberation given by electronic linking has several institutional and implications to both print and hypertext. First, the electronic linking “shifts the boundaries between individual works as well as those between author and reader . . . [and] engenders certain notions of authorial property, authorial uniqueness, and a physically isolated text of print” (Landow & Delany, 1991, p. 7). Indeed, Hypertext challenges all these ideas that a work is strictly the sole property of the author, mainly because of the freedom of reading selection and direction.

**Multilinearity**

The ways in which texts get organized and shape our comprehension in the reading process, be it expository text or literary text, are crucial. Text structure is a common characteristic in the organization of thoughts and arguments, and our reading comprehension depends on how well the structure is arranged. Conventions say that a text should follow a linear succession that requires an order which always starts from a beginning, middle, to an end. This structure has long been the standard in the print tradition. It entails that a print text should be written from the first page to the last and the ideas that there is only one possible reading order imposed by the print pages. To convey the writer’s knowledge about a topic, a sequential writing that organizes ideas chronologically is often used. The organization of ideas will reflect how well the arguments are structured and the clarity of the topic being discussed. Most writing in print will have a paragraph
structure that consists of the beginning, middle, and an end. Hence, it is unlikely that the conclusion of that topic be found in the first paragraph of the text. In literary writing, the events within a story are often told in a sequential manner so that the cause and effect or the relationship between those events can be established. This is because the outcome of an action preceding the action itself in an event is very unlikely. Print normally has only one possible sequence directed by the subsequent use of paragraphs. Each paragraph has a function in preparing for the next. Douglas (2001) argues that paragraphs in print narratives are important in directing reader’s experience, and each paragraph is dependent on the previous one. On the contrary, in a hypertext fiction like *Dim O Gauble* by Andy Campbell where a young boy experiences scary visions in a nonregular order, unlike the rigid order of print, the writer is not compelled to write in a linear direction because in the electronic environment, there are not print pages that force linearity. Indeed, hypertext fiction is not limited to one single order. As it exists in a vast electronic space within networks of textual data, writing can result in several different directions made possible by electronic links. Therefore, multilinearity emphasizes on reader’s freedom and by offering various paths persuades users for further exploration.

**Disorientation**

Reading that is now concerned with selecting which point a reader should follow has a good chance of stumbling on a path that has been visited before. Bernstein (2009) calls this reading experience a “cycle” which he perceives as important to a hypertext structure. This will not happen in print because there is only one organizing principle—the only center of investigation that a reader has. It has been mentioned (Landow, 1992; Landow & Delany, 1991) that the center is important for a text as it tells what the readers should concentrate on. Hypertext, on the contrary, has no center because it is composed of bodies of linked text that have no primary axis of organization. Hypertext can be challenging as readers continually shift their attention each time they come across a new text. This could be a benefit in the sense that readers determine their center of investigation without any restriction from the author. Some readers may find reading hypertext enjoyable. However, readers who prefer a single narrative structure may find it difficult to stay focused. With the lack of the center to guide reading, readers can also be confused about where to go next in the electronic space. The experience can be discouraging because readers feel trapped and lost within the vast hypermedia system. Kim and Stephen (1995) explain that this loss of one’s sense of direction, position, or relationship with one’s surrounding is disorientation. The organization of print text, however, gives readers a sense of location. It makes it easy for readers to bookmark the page where he or she has stopped at and carries on from there when reading continues. The sense of location in a book is significant in print. It produces desire to reach its ending. Although most conventional writers have opined that hypertext confuses and disorients the reader in a virtual space, but hypertext theorists believe that the connection between oral and visual languages is reasoned by thematic coherence. Paul Kahn quotes Morse Peckham’s notion of disorientation “art offers not order but the opportunity to experience more disorder than any other human artifact, and artistic experience, therefore, is characterized by disorientation” (Kahn & Landow, 1993, p. 66). There is little doubt that getting lost, and the subsequent sense of disorientation, is a key component of the hypertext reading experience. Michael Joyce (1988) also assumes that disorienting qualities of hypertext fiction praise the necessary activism required of readers. The reading choices may encourage readers to explore the content of each option. Each of them could provide an element of surprise or even disappointment to readers. For instance, at the homepage of the hypertext fiction *Inside: A Journal of Dreams* by Campbell and Judi Alston the haptic interactivity confuses the understanding of the story, but since the readers can find out that there’s more to it than they could receive. They are likely to play it. Gradually, they disorient through links, pictures, actions, and written texts together but can grab the story as well. Therefore, the reader’s own role and the hypermedia elements grow to form a new world, a semifictive view that hardly any printed novel can actualize. Wells (1997) argues that hypertext could also produce a desire through the choices that the program makes available for readers. Hence, to reduce disorientation authors play a major role in designing a pleasurable but constructive hypertext. In fact, an author’s creative use of nodes, the self-contained units of meaning in a hypertextual narrative, can play with the reader’s orientation and add meaning to the text as well.

**Interactivity**

Marie-Laure Ryan (2006) sees interactivity as the most important quality of the computer system. She argues that digital texts that are not interactive could usually be enacted by another medium. Two dimensions of interactivity can be understood according to Golovchinsky and Marshall (2000): how readers express navigational intent and how information is presented in response within the computer environment. Essentially, interaction occurs when readers use the computer interfaces such as the mouse to click, drag, and scroll a particular text. In the literary context, rather than being laid out entirely on the print pages where readers are normally guided by the rigidly prescribed narrative line, readers of hypertext will have to guide virtually themselves in the exploration of narrative. Bolter (2001) also proposes, “The qualities that distinguish electronic writing from print, flexibility and interactivity, become the bases of the enthusiastic claim that computer can improve on the printed book” (p. 26). Therefore, hypertext novels can be described as books whose
technical structure is, to some extent, different from the majority of printed ones. They position the reader in a way to interact with the story by choosing from some present paths. Indeed, the reading choices that hypertext provides are encouraging as they promote decision making. In contrast to the rather passive reader position enforced by print, readers in hypertext do not follow an authoritative voice, but they actively participate in the creation of narrative instead. For this reason, some argue that the freedom to choose links by readers has destroyed the autonomy of the author. However, there are others who feel that such a courageous claim is misleading. Aaron Smuts (2009) argues, “to be interactive, something must be responsive in a way that is neither completely controllable nor completely random” (p. 53). In this sense, authors should provide the interactive structure of the hyperfictions in a way to foster reader’s collaboration and interactivity. In fact, such complex networks play a significant role in reader’s navigation and stimulate reader’s response and interaction.

Conclusion

Once unfamiliarity of the hypertext fiction has subsided, this new output comes to be absorbed by a culture; it has been accepted and appropriated for usage beyond that prescribed or designed by the authors. So examining and interpreting this postmodern cultural phenomenon has to befallen to enable faster and more persistent dissemination of this fresh genre. The invention of digital fiction has provoked critics to refashion the traditional views of readership, authorship, and integrity of a text. The birth of hyperfiction moreover, has brought further issues into the fray that the potential for narrative creation expanded from conventional forms, and also it would pose a dilemma of how readers perceive the real world beyond the screen. For many postmodern writers, creating a realm in which readers are free to imagine and form their own plot is an exciting feature. Therefore, writers have been able to expand their perspectives and delve deeper into the issues at play.

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