

Hyperliterature and Intermediality in the Expansion of Literary Production

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ABSTRACT

The so-called ‘Information Revolution,’ which begun in the 1990s and generated a global system of expansion of the virtual space, imposed reconfigurations on artistic expressions. In regard to literature, one sees not only the transposition of consecrated genres and textual forms into digital media, but also the creation of a specifically digital literature, one that is often marked by intermediality. The present article aims at approaching concepts such as ‘hypertext’ and ‘hyper-writing’, and the phenomena linked to digital textualities as ‘hyperfiction’, ‘hyperpoetry’, ‘holopoetry’ and ‘hyperdrama’, among others; besides, it also raises the question: to what extent does hyperliterature interfere with the status of “conventional literature” written and read in paper?

KEYWORDS

Holopoetry, Hyperdrama, Hyperfiction, Hyperpoetry, Hypertext, Intermediality

Artificial intelligence is a metaphor for the psyche, a contraption of cognitive psychology and philosophy; multimedia (even as virtual reality) is a metaphor for *the sensorium*... Michael Joyce, 1991

INTRODUCTION

In 1987, in his book *La Machine Univers*, Pierre Lévy already referred to a creature that creates itself out of the novelties and possibilities of the technocosmos, in confrontation with the “transcendental dimension of computing”: the *Homo informaticus* (1998, p. 16). In the early 1990s, there is a growing interest in describing the process of cultural mutation that was outlined with the emerging cyberspace - a space where, differently from the classic media, messages are interactive, have unprecedented plasticity and speed, and enable the user to be a sender agent, connected to endless receivers who, in turn, are also agents and senders themselves. It is the advent of the “universal without totality”, the “collective intelligence” which is no longer univocal, of the One and All type but, rather, the All and All type.

Today, “browsing is necessary” and we interact in a “synergy between social life and electronic devices” (LEMOS, p. 11). After new technological devices brought about by the computing culture in a virtual society of non-linear webs, the Computing Era inaugurates new forms of socialization, knowledge and subjectivity, and establishes a meaning that is both composed and recomposed within shifting borders; fundamental cognitive activities are reconfigured by digital mediation and thus our relationship with language and creativity is restructured.

In the late 20th Century, for the development of new technologies from a humanistic perspective, artists and users were asked to be receptive to new developments and tried to “acknowledge the qualitative changes in the ecology of signs, the unprecedented environment that results from the

DOI: 10.4018/IJSVR.2019070105

extension of new communication networks to social and cultural life.” (Lévy, 2014, p. 12). New technologies have renewed (and continue to renew) their revolutionary potential to explore artistic languages that are mediated by hypercontextualization. In literature, as the text is transformed, many questions arise: Is paper literature - or, as Canclini (2013) renames it, “pre-digital literature” - anachronistic today, is this a front of resistance to cultural industry? If literature is aesthetic emotion and not information, how is it going to survive in the Information Age? How can the writer talk about durable experiences in a society of hyperexposure and ephemeral values? Without any claim to answer these questions, my intention is a different and specific one: to investigate how literature has expanded with the new perspectives introduced by the dynamic mutation of cyberculture.

The Value of Virtual Permanence

In the post-modern world, where the real individual is replaced with the ideal one, where sociability is molded by media and technology, and our identity is built amid a culture of images, sound and novelty, evanescence, speed and polymorphism. In this “clip culture”, as Gilles Lipovetsky calls it, literature – a type of narrative, and also an expression of free thought, which depends on reading as subjective and linear concentration - has been seeking alternatives to stay alive and meaningful. Even though it has been crushed by the ephemeral cultural industry, literature has a value of permanence, not of disposal; therefore, the word (whether written, looked at, or read), on reconfiguring itself and admitting new possible expressions, maintains and ensures its power.

The virtual world has brought us hybridizations that explore the potential of endless generation of texts with multiple readings, paths and destinations. Hypertext, which allows us to hierarchize and select areas of meaning, establishes connections between these areas, and between texts and other documents, is a ‘textual problem’ in a continuum. Hypertext, interactive multimedia and hyperliterature evolved from the relationship between literature, cyberspace and its tools.

All the virtual forms of literary expression are collective and combine technique and aesthetic pleasure, allowing and disseminating new emotional experiences. Hyperliterature, with all it has and brings in terms of despatialization, is just a natural extension of paper literature which, in turn, is a natural extension of oral literature - it is not the imposition of a technological phenomenon but the organic result of the written tradition of writing and reading. With the hypertext’s hybrid and rhizomatic language, which determines the deterritorialization of writing (according to Deleuze, 1950), hyperliterature is marked by interactivity, by the reader’s autonomy in deciding about openings, themes, characters or sceneries that he or she wants to explore, but to promote freedom in the construction of meanings.

Now, the reader is subject to a moving and reconfigurable text, which unfolds itself before each reader; the reader is no longer passive, as he or she participates in the composition of works that do not convey static messages but have message potential. Canclini makes it clear that:

Reading takes other forms, for example, writing and changing. In the past, printed books allowed notes to be taken in the page’s margins or empty spaces, “a writing that was implied but which could neither change the text wording nor delete it”. Now, the reader can intervene in the electronic text, “cutting, displacing, changing the order, introducing his or her own writing” (Canclini, 2013, p. 59, cited in Chartier)

Hypermedia/hypertextual browsing allows the author to be “de-enthroned” as the reader also takes over, to a certain extent, the function of writer. McLuhan said: “Gutenberg made us all readers. Xerox has made us morph into editors” to which Benjamin Wooley added: “... and computers are now turning us all into authors... In cyberspace, everyone is an author, which means nobody is an author: the distinction about which this is said - the author different from the reader - disappears” (Wooley, 1992, p. 165). Hypertexts are “subject- matters” that can be accessed in interactive flows, of which the “author” is collective; cyberspace ultimately introduces the prospect of looking at reading as a potential writing. As clarified by Michael Joyce:

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