HYPERTEXT AND INTERTEXTUALITY: AFFINITIES AND DIVERGENCES[1]

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Abstract: Mariusz Pisarski, HYPERTEXT AND INTERTEXTUALITY. AFFINITIES AND DISCORDANCES. "PORÓWNANIA" 8, 2011, Vol. VIII, p. 183-194, ISSN 1733-165X. Intertextuality, the ability of text to be linked with other texts, as its inherent quality and the inseparable part of its "texture" is often, within the context of the new media, compared to hypertextuality: the ability of text to be linked with other texts by means of electronic links. My comparative approach to these two broad literary categories, intertextuality and hypertextuality, is an attempt to differentiate their respective models from each other. The latter is neither a "dramatised" form of intertextuality nor an additional level of architextuality. The relation between both categories is much more complex that intertextualists and hypertextualists have initially thought. In contrast with Michel Riffaterre's George Landow's findings I suggest that hypertext can be seen as in fact anti-intertextual. Showing few examples from fictional and non-fictional hypertexts, especially from the classical computer novel afternoon, a story by Michael Joyce, I try to demonstrate that digital text written and read within the interconnected network of narrative segments can even be a parody of intertext. Though these new findings do not undermine the general notion of close affinities between the two concepts in question, it is my hope that they deepen the complexity of this relationship.

Abstrakt: Mariusz Pisarski, HIPERTEKST A INTERTEKSTUALNOŚĆ: POWINOWACTWA I ROZBIEŻNOŚCI. „PORÓWNANIA" 8, 2011, Vol. VIII, s. 183-194, ISSN 1733-165X. Intertekstualność, czyli zdolność tekstu do łączenia się z innymi tekstami, jako właściwość wpisana w tekst od zawsze i nie dająca się od niego oddzielić, w kontekście nowych mediów dość często porównywana jest z hipertekstualnością, czyli wspieraną przez kod komputerowy zdolnością tekstu do łączenia się z innymi tekstami za pomocą elektronicznych hiperłączy. Artykuł ten stanowi próbę porównania obu tych kategorii i dość stanowczego rozróżnienia prezentowanych przezeń modeli. Hipertekst nie jest „udramatyzowanym" intertekstem, ani rodzajem architekstu, jak pierwotnie sądzono. W odróżnieniu od spostrzeżeń Michela Riffaterre'a, który przyglądał się hipertekstowi z perspektywy intertekstu, i George'a Landowa, który badał hipertekst pod kątem intertekstu, sugeruję tutaj, na przykładach zaczerpniętych z fikcjonalnych i niefikcjonalnych utworów hipertekstowych, zwłaszcza z powieści *Popołudnie, pewna historia* Michalea

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Joyce'a, że hipertekst może być anty-intertekstem i parodią powiązań intertekstualnych. Choć sugestie te nie mają na celu podważenia oczywistych pokrewieństw między obiema kategoriami, mam nadzieje, że mogą się przyczynić do pogłębienia refleksji na ten temat.

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Initial similarities

Digital and non-sequential writing, text that branches and works on demand, the deep structure of the Internet... Whatever we call hypertext[3], the theoretical potential of this phenomenon, almost 25 years after the publication of the first hypertext novel[4], still manages to undermine some popular notions on which there seems to be a common agreement. One of those notions is the seemingly close relation between intertextuality and hypertextuality. The act of reading on the web, for example, seams intertextual in a most natural way. Hyperlinks that are embedded in text take reader to a source, a context, commentary or continuation of a fragment being read. Not surprisingly, the process has been seen as intertextual by both hypertext theorists and intertextuality experts.

George Landow, in his pioneering work on the relationship between literature and new technologies[5] regards hypertext as a realization, implementation or embodiment of intertextuality. This perspective might be justified not only if one understands intertextuality as a general potential of any text to branch, expand and weave a network – which roughly corresponds to the broad concept of intertextuality represented by Roland Barthes – but even in a narrower perspective[6], defined by Julia Kristeva. According to Michał Głowiński:

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[3]   The short explanation of hypertext is based on several definitions proposed by T. H. Nelson in *Literary Machines*. Sausalito, Mindful Press 1993 [no pagination]; N. Wardrip-Fruin in *What hypertext is? Proceedings of the fifteenth ACM conference on Hypertext and Hypermedia*. ACM, New York 2004, p. 126-127, E. Branny's PhD dissertation *Cybertekst. Metodologia i interpretacja*, sup. by M. P. Markowski, UJ 2099 and my own online hypertext article *Hipertekst–redefinicje*, „Techsty" 2006, nr 1 (3), http://techsty.art.pl/magazyn3/hipertekst/hipertekst_redefinicje_2007.html [access: 30.09.2012].

[4]   *Afternoon, a Story* by M. Joyce, written in 1987 and published by Eastgate Systems in 1991. Polish edition: *popołudnie, pewna historia*. Transl. Radosław Nowakowski and Mariusz Pisarski. Kraków, Korporacja Ha!art 2011.

[5]   G. Landow's important book *Hypertext* was first published in 1992 as *Hypertext: the Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology,* Baltimore: J. Hopkins University Press. 5 years later, an expanded edition appeared under a changed title: *Hypertext 2.0: the Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* . The latest, third edition appeared in 2006 as *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization.*

[6]   Narrowing the semantic scope of intertextuality does not mean limiting it to literary phenomena. Intertextuality reaches far beyond literature. See for example R. Nycz's *Intertekstualność i jej zakresy: teksty, gatunki, światy*, in: *Tekstowy świat*. Warszawa, IBL 1995 p. 59–82. Within the semiotic context hypertext gets even closer to intertextuality than in the literary field, materializing and dramatizing intertextual processes. Instantly and within the frame of a single screen, hypertext can evoke literary,

> *Not every relation between one text and other text (or texts) qualifies as intertextual [...] One can observe a tendency to regard intertextuality as a set of specific relations linking a text with other texts*[7].

Intertextual relationship, says Głowiński, must be clearly indicated in the text. An electronic text, with most of its hyperlinks visibly labeled to stand out within their context, easily fulfills such a condition. Moreover, it introduces a new element of immediacy: the reader can now activate indicated connections and the hypertext transfers her to the links' destinations. But the traditional intertextual connection sets itself apart from the digital form of indicated intertextuality. The former involves the reader's interpretative effort and a certain level of erudition in order to make a meaningful connection. This connection is not easily verified and encourages following paths of memory or the corridors of a library. The latter engages its own computational mechanism to enhance this intertextual, hermeneutic and peripatetic effort. For better or worse, the reader is encouraged to make choices, to activate inherent and visible connections. As a result there might be no need to go anywhere, because by activating a link some intertextual relations instantly appear before readers' eyes.

It is not surprising that Graham Allen, author of the monograph on intertextuality published in the late 90s, is embracing hypertext as intertextuality's ally[8]. If one considers new media as inherently democratic with its primary role lying in facilitating the information access, hypertext can be seen as a manifestation of complex intertextual relations and a global promoter of the very idea of text as a reference network.

Initial differences

The clear affinity between hypertext and intertextuality should not obscured by the obvious differences, which so far have not gained much attention[9]. Comparing the two phenomena, Michael Riffaterre wrote:

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musical, cinematic and visual semiotic codes. As we are concerned mainly with literary hypertext, the problem of interdisciplinary relations is relegated to the background.

[7]   M. Głowiński, *Intertekstualnośćć, groteska, parabola: szkice ogólne i interpretacje*. Kraków, Universitas 2000, p. 6

[8]   G. Allen, *Intertextuality*, London-New York, Routledge 2000.

[9]   Affinities between intertextuality and hypertextuality were discussed in Poland by J. Frużyńska and M. Bogaczyk. Frużyńska dismisses the easy identification of the two phenomena by early hypertext

> *intertextuality, a structured network of text-generated constraints on the reader's perceptions, is the exact contrary of the reader-generated loose web of free association that is hypertextuality*[10].

Although Riffaterre presents a series of interesting examples of intertextuality found through romantic literature (Goethe's poem *Mignion* from *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, translated into French by Gerard de Nerval), his findings are not supported by examples from hypertext literature. As a result, comparisons between the two phenomena are not complete. After reading the classical examples of hypertext fiction, represented by A*fternoon, a Story* by Michael Joyce (1990), *Patchwork Girl* by Shelley Jackson (1995) or *Victory Garden* by Stuart Moulthrop (1992) one can come to a conclusion that reverses Riffaterre's assumption. It is rather hypertext, which represents a structured network of constraints, imposed on text by implicit links. Compared with the reading experience of hypertext, the intertext – in spite of its intentionality – appears more open and less constraining. For the most part, Riffaterre is right. If we take into account Ryszard Nycz's distinction between intertextuality proper and facultative[11], hypertext – more as a model than its realization – is a free-form construction. The author imposes the connections between segments of text according to his own choice. The reader does not have to follow the connections, nor is he obliged to do it in a specific order. On the other hand, if one takes into account the operational layer of digital text[12] and examines the process of the hypertext link (as a mechanical device) in comparison to intertext link (mental mark), clearly visible differences arise.

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theory. Bogaczyk, on the other hand, sees hypertextuality in a postmodern context, as a type of intertextuality . Both authors do not compare the mechanisms of intertext and hypertext. M. Bogaczyk, *Wszystko jest tekstem? Hipertekstualność jako doświadczenie lektury*. „Techsty" 2007, nr 3, http://www.techsty.art.pl/magazyn3/artykuly/bogaczyk01.html [access 30.09.2012], J. Frużyńska, *Hipertekstowe opowieści w prozie XX wieku*. UW, Warszawa 2007, s. 24 [PhD dissertation, sup. Bogdan Owczarek].

[10]   M. Riffaterre, *Intertextuality vs. Hypertextuality.* "New Literary History" 1994, vol. 24, nr 4. p. 781.

[11]   R. Nycz, *Intertekstualność i jej zakresy,* op.cit, p. 64

[12]   Digital literary work comprises several new layers not present in print form: the code, interface and operation layers. They can contribute to the overall meaning of text in a scale equal to the linguistic level. See E. Aarseth, *Cybertext. Perspectives of Ergodic Literature*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1997.

The practice of hypertext fiction, whether in their stand-alone form or their www versions calls for correcting also George Landow's assumption on the inherently intertextual nature of non-sequential, networked text. Hypertext is, in the first place, **intra**textual. Hundreds of discrete units of text (lexias) in a hypertext novel refer mostly to themselves within the closed intratextual network of the work. Michael Joyce's A*fternoon, a Story* has more than 900 links and none of them refers outside of the work. Even the Internet sites, statistically speaking, link mostly to websites within the same service, portal or domain. Linking the texts of different authors and to different web services, although frequent, is made in a more careful manner. Thus one can feel encouraged to further examine and perhaps reevaluate the relationship between hyper- and intertextuality.

In an environment where literary works that are centuries or continents apart can be evoked by a single mouse click, the material manifestation of the intertextual relation can be viewed not as embodied by hyperlink, but perhaps simplified by it. While in an educational hypertext such simplification can be justified by the economy of referential or bibliographical traversals, in hypertext fiction it can turn against authorial intentions, against the text and against intertextuality in general. An example would be a reading session where the reader, who has ready learned the too obvious convention of linking in a given work, purposefully bypasses most of the indicated referrals. In this case the reader doesn't want to follow any links, because the author made them too obvious. It is not necessarily the authors' fault. The reason might be on the human side and might relate to the very character of hypertext as a medium and writing tool. In other words, the range of intertextual field in a typical node-link hypertext has to be narrowed. While making connection between the source text and the referential text, hypertext authors make a necessary selection. A single word, phrase or sentence can lead – most of the time – to a single destination. Thus the semantic interplay of texts is narrowed. Does this mean reduction? Not necessarily. Hyperlink as an intentional and visible referral to another text can exhaust its potential already on the first stage of the process by merely indicating the destination. The main part of the process, when it assigns the connection with a function and motivation, and places it within the context of the already invoked referrals and overall meaning of the work, can be easily lost within the confines of single-link

activation. But on the other hand, a concretized or "simplified" intertextual connection can have its wide range of uses in non-fictional, education hypertexts.

Hypertext as a dramatized intertext

An example of a successful balance between the intertextual and hypertextual potential of text, not hampered by unidirectionality of links, can be found in *In Memoriam Web* by George P. Landow, Jon Lanestedt and their students at Brown University: a hypertext adaptation of the poetry book In Memoriam A.H.H by Victorian poet Alfred Tennyson. By segregating the poems in several categories, the intratextual mechanisms of hypertext try to accurately reflect the internal relations between poems. Alternative lists of hyperlinks pave the way for variable traversals of the work and find hidden, or not so much visible in the original, correspondences and shared motifs. Even the intertextual relations, as noted by Graham Allen, appear to be in place and are able to enrich the reading of the nineteenth-century work in a manner not available in print. The full meaning of a whole is revealed to the reader only after its relationship with the social, political and historical issues of the times of Tennyson and his contemporaries are taken into account.

> In Memoriam Web" allows readers to call up a vast array of contextual material, including other literary texts concerning the poems' scientific, religious, and philosophical concerns [...]. The reader can also call up student essays and other comments on the "Web View". The same reader is able to contribute to the discussion by adding his or her own comments, essays...

A seamless symbiosis of intertextuality and hypertextuality ends with educational hypertext. The practice of literary hypertext reveals that the two systems do not coincide with each other and are quite often in conflict. This is especially visible in works where the main goal is a narrative game rather than reaching the story's climax, and where certain events and "facts" are purposefully hidden from the reader. These strategies set the literary hypertext apart from the historical, educational In Memoriam Web.

Afternoon, a Story by Michael Joyce, first and widely discussed hypertext novel brings many examples of complex correlations between hypertextuality, intratextualisty and intertextuality. One can expose them by a closer look at linking strategies within the closest neighborhood of a single narrative fragment. One of the key lexias of *Afternoon, a*

Story, situated in what Jane Yellowlees Douglas calls the deeper layers of the "stratosphere" of Joyce's hypertext[13], contains four one-sentence paragraphs:

> *I felt certain it was them, I recognized her car from that distance, not more than a hundred yards off along the road to the left where she would turn if she were taking him to the Country Day School.*

> *Two men stood near the rear of the grey Buick and a woman in a white dress sprawled on the wide lawn before them, two other men crouching near her. Another, smaller body beyond.*

> *In the distance, coming toward them and the road along which I passed, there were the insistent blue lights of a sheriff's cruiser and a glimpse of what I thought to be the synchronized red lights of the emergency wagon.*

> *It was like something from a film: Blowup or the Red Desert*[14].

If readers want to know what events from *Afternoon, a Story* are similar to the two Michalangelo Antonioni's films, the "dramatization" of intertextual relations, as seen in *In Memoriam Web*, will not be sufficient, if useful at all. The quoted segment "Die" can be accessed from six preceding segments and branches in seven different directions. In other words, there are six fragments in A*fternoon, a Story* with links to lexia "die" and seven links from "die" to other destinations. None of them leads to fragments relating to *Blow Up* and *Red Desert*, or suggests what "just like" events from A*fternoon* we should connect to Antonioni's works. Within the confines of educational hypertext, like *In Memoriam Web*, clicking on *Blow Up* should reveal general or contextual information on the film. In a literary hypertext much more allusive and less pronounced connections are at play:

> *Against a sterile horizon, sometimes broken by pastel-to-greybrown smokestacks, an occasional oblong of bright red.*
> *The pure ennui of the industrial landscape not unlike the absentedness of these characters' lives, also broken by occasional passion.*
> *Albers, say, or Werther.*

> *Our lives shot through with color, dazzling orange and electric blue veins, within which poison gases, and the incessant thumping, beating, chugging*[15].

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[13]   J. Y. Douglas, *'How do I stop this thing?': Closure and Indeterminacy in Interactive Narratives*, in: *Hyper/text/theory*. Red. George Landow. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press 1994, p. 159-188.

[14]   M. Joyce, *afternoon, a story*. Estagate Systems 1991, fragment "Die".
[15]   M.Joyce, *afternoon, a story*. Estagate Systems 1991, fragment "Blow-up".

"Blow-up" is one of the seven destination segments accessed from "Die" by clicking the words "Blow Up" in the last sentence of the fragment. It clearly has not much in common with Antonioni's film, set in the swinging London world of art and fashion. If anything it resembles industrial landscapes of a factory town from *Red Desert*[16]. It also points to a contrast, not similarity as a reason behind the juxtaposition of motifs from *Afternoon* and Italian director's works (*ennui of the industrial landscape* versus *our lives shot with color*). As a result, in the destination lexia, readers are faced with more questions than answers. The way the intertextual connections in *Afternoon, a Story* are put into movement, or dramatized, sets the linking strategies far from the clear functionality of *In Memoriam Web*, and closer to what can be called a parody of intertextuality. Hypertext fiction authors seem to be well aware that employing intertextual connection by hypertext mechanisms would make their works more predictable, even boring. If the subtle range of possible associations evoked in the sentence "Just like Blow Up or Red Desert" is reduced to a single, one-directional, encyclopedic departure from the main text to the context, the reader could be easily discouraged from following any links at all. If hypertext is made only of such explicit and obvious links, of what Jeff Parker calls "blatant links"[17] and Mark Bernstein defines as links, which the "reader does not want to follow"[18], the poetic potential of an unexpected juxtaposition of text segments – the core of hypertext rhetoric – would lose its *raison d'être*. Non-sequential, non-linear writing would turn into a handicapped, mechanical copy of an intertextual network of the "culture texts" devoid of complexity.

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[16] A similar strategy of covering up seemingly apparent connections takes place in "Red desert" – another of the seven destination points of "die". The narrator recounts one of his favorite scenes from an unnamed film: *We used to get high and watch the same scene again and again, you know, when they blow-up that Frank Lloyd Wright house and everything tumbles across the screen in slow motion fragments... washing machines, stereos, bread, furniture, televisions and blenders, hundreds of objects... all exploding into pretty fragments, a shrapnel of possessions showering in slo-mo over our dreams of money and sex.* Interestingly, a scene that meets such a description is nowhere to be found either in Antonioni's *Red Desert* or in *Blow Up*. The film links from "die" are there rather to add up to the motif of memory and its flows that permeate A*fternoon, a Story*.

[17] J. Parker, *A Poetics of the link*. "Electronic Book Review" 2004, nr 12, http://www.altx.com/ebr/ebr12/park/park.htm [access: 30.09.2012]

[18] M. Bernstein, *More than legible: on links that readers don't want to follow.* ACM, New York 2000, p. 217.

Quality literary hypertext knowingly escapes the dangers of treating the intertextual relations as a mirror mechanism of its own linking systems. It is done by introducing a postmodern play with elements that appear to be intertextual, but – after the link activation – turn out to be transgressions of themselves, inviting readers to revaluate intertextuality in general and technologically supported reference networks in particular. Breaking the referential promises of the link, referring to texts that do not match what has been suggested in the departure point goes against the classical economy of reading for the plot or for the knowledge. The relation between the active text and the linked text becomes deeper, more complex and with elements of contingency. Similar to the other components of the poetics of hypertext, like cycles and recurrences, this contingency calls for reinterpretations and revaluations.

Horizontal and vertical model of intertextuality in the context of hypertext

Several intertextuality models based on the dialogism in literature (Julia Kristeva) are accompanied by competitive models based on the category of the palimpsest (Gérard Genette)[19]. The former are called horizontal, the latter vertical. The horizontal model emphasizes spatial relationships between the individual text and its affinities with the surrounding works. The vertical model foregrounds temporal relations between text and intertext to explore layers and traces of older text in a younger one[20]. Instead of rediscovering the network of relations, the researcher, like an archaeologist, reveals consecutive layers and individual or generic structures that contribute to the final

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[19]   A wide range of theories of intertextuality is presented in an overview by Manfred Pfister. In: M. Pfister, *Koncepcje interteksualności*. Transl. M. Łukasiewicz. „Pamiętnik Literacki" 1991, z. 4, p. 187.

[20]   Such a bipolar division is an oversimplification, but might be a useful one. It should not be mistaken for Kristeva's own distinction between horizontal and vertical axes of relations between a work and its environment. The former applies to the relation between author and reader, the latter to that between text and intertext. On the other hand, the distinction between a horizontal and vertical model is driven by the structure of hypertext. A system of links, as has been discussed, can be easily affiliated with intertextual connections, as in *In Memoriam Web*. A bit less obvious would be applying a link mechanism to a vertical, palimpsest model of intertextuality. It becomes visible when one puts aside links, and examines hypertext from the perspective of a text that, on the screen, constantly "replaces itself" (Michael Joyce's term). If association, or even allusion, can serve as a device for the horizontal model, the vertical could be represented by a quotation. In the first case, a bond is established between two disparate wholes. In the second, the invoked text permeates the invoking one, and the two can be separated again only during the analysis of layers. See J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York, Columbia University Press 1980. On palimpsests in relation to hypertext on Polish ground see J. Roszak, *Na dnie opowieści. O palimpseście i hipertekście*. „Techsty" 2003, nr 1, http://techsty.art.pl/magazyn/r1.htm [access: 20.09.2010].

structure of the text in question. From among five types of "transtextuality" proposed by Gérard Genette (intertext, paratext, metatext, architext, hypotext), the vertical model is fully represented by metatext and hypertext[21]. The former is a quotation, a relation between one text and the other, not necessarily expressed directly by a quotation, or even by a remark[22]. The hypertext, in Genette's context, stands for any relation between text B (hypertext) and text A (hypotext) that exists prior to B, where text A is visible in a form other than commentary[23].

Although not all distinctions proposed by the French literary theorist have passed the test of time, they accurately define the properties of the "literature in the second degree", especially in its derivative type. Genette's metatext and hypertext are derived from pre-existing texts and this derivation takes two forms: a visible and an invisible reference. The first one is obvious and can be illustrated by Aristotle speaking in his *Poetics* about Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. But Genette's attention goes to the second type of relation:

> *It may yet be of another kind such as text B not speaking of text A at all but being unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process I shals provisionally call transformation, and which it consequently evokes more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it*[24].

The type of referencing described here seems to correspond to the category of citation structures introduced by Danuta Danek and understood as quotations of particular poetics, styles and artistic systems[25]. Danek also emphasises the temporal aspect of intertextual relations (hypotext–hypertext is replaced by text commented–commentary

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[21]   Genette's term hypertext, defined in *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* from 1982, has a principally different meaning from T. Nelson's hypertext as electronic, non-sequential writing (Nelson coined the term in 1965).

[22]   G. Genette, *Palimpsesty. Literatura drugiego stopnia*. Przeł. A. Milecki, in: *Współczesna teoria badań literackich za granicą. Antologia*. Red. H. Markiewicz. Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie 1992, p. 317-366.

[23]   Ibidem, p. 323.

[24]   G. Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*. Transl. Ch. Newmann, C. Doubinsky. University of Nebraska Press 1982, p. 5.

[25]   D. Danek, *O cytatach struktur (quasi-cytatach) i ich funkcji w wewnętrznej polemice literackiej*. in: *Prace z poetyki*, Red. M. R. Mayenowa i J. Sławiński.

and palimpsest–like layering of one text on top of another). As such, Danek's findings place themselves among the same vertical model of intertextuality.

How can the vertical model be applied to hypertext? If we put aside traversals between text segments by means of links, which can – sometimes confusingly – overlap with horizontal intertextuality types of relations, and if we look at link structures as something of a static, immobile nature, some more abstract and indirect correlations arise. Going beyond the link and looking at more universal processes which involve not only hypertext and intertext, but hypertext and text in general, one can see text – as an artefact existing among other texts it relates to – as a hypotext for hypertext and as its quoted structure. In hypertext, the intertextual potential of text (whether evoked or not) materializes in a form of hyperlinks. From this perspective hypertext forms an additional layer of text, made possible by computer technology and the complex semiotics of a digital sign. As a result some qualities of text are amplified, some are pushed to the background. These processes have considerable consequences for the poetics of literary fiction placed in a digital environment.

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