

## ABSTRACTS

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### HYPERFICTION: THE AMBIGUITIES OF NON-LINEAR TEXT

Computers have affected human society as few other inventions in the past century have. As literature generally tends to reflect the nature and self-image of the society that produces it, it is but natural that the advent and widespread use of computers have had a large impact on contemporary literature. The access of computer to the large corpora of literary texts together with techniques for examining them and the building of hypertext and hypermedia systems brought out the issue of hyperfiction.

More texts are becoming available to the scholarly community in machine readable form, whether from text archives or commercial distributors who have released a comprehensive database users of such texts, however, are still confined largely to a small and specialized research community, with the technical skills to make use of electronic text. The notable absence so far of computer-assisted research in the leading scholarly journals is one sign that the field is still marginal. As we will suggest, there are reasons for this that go beyond mere notion, although this too has played a part in slowing the emergence of the field into the mainstream.

This article aims to provide a general background to the discussion of how, in broad terms, ruling hypertext theory has influenced most hyperfictions either to presuppose a highbrow reader with a penchant for postmodern writing or to disregard the reader completely in a theory-dictated quest for poststructuralist-inspired ideals. Main traits of hyperfiction and the elements that are essential in shaping the hypertext reading experience are to be introduced. More precisely, this will involve a look at reader types, main distinguishing traits of hyperfiction and hypertext writing techniques. Lastly it will consider questions concerning conventions within hyperfiction.

Hyperfiction, which can allegedly liberate readers from the constraints of print, often becomes too constraining for many readers when their only option is to follow the linked paths the author has prepared. Some readers refuse to read for very long when the reading brings them no rewards, that is, when it does not allow them to construct a reasonable explanation for the events of the fiction.

To conclude, we should say that readers move back and forth between confronting the signs (reading with a critical distance) and allowing themselves to be absorbed into that imagined world. It should be clear by now, that hyperfiction has developed into a medium that offers rich possibilities for creating interesting reading experiences. There are more variables than in print literature, because the medium offers many ways of presentation and because so few conventions exist. Thus, there are many more questions that the writer must ask himself in addition to those connected with putting the right words in the right order. The reader, likewise, must broaden his interpretive range for new ways of literary signification and learn to notice subtle meanings implied in the use of linking and other formal elements.

*Key words: informational technologies, hypertext, hyperfiction, textuality, modeling technology.*