Hypertext fiction

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Hypertext writing has developed its own style of fiction, coinciding with the growth and proliferation of hypertext development software and the emergence of electronic networks. Two software programs specifically designed for literary hypertext, *Storyspace* and Intermedia became available in the 1990s.

Storyspace 2.0, a professional level hypertext development tool, is available from Eastgate Systems, which has also published many notable works of electronic literature, including Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story*, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, and Judy Malloy's *its name was Penelope*. Other works include Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* and Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

An advantage of writing a narrative using hypertext technology is that the meaning of the story can be conveyed through a sense of spatiality and perspective that is arguably unique to digitally-networked environments. 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.

Critics of hypertext claim that it inhibits the old, linear, reader experience by creating several different tracks to read on, and that this in turn contributes to a postmodernist fragmentation of worlds. However, they do see value in its ability to present several different views on the same subject in a simple way.[4]. This echoes the arguments of 'medium theorists' like Marshall McLuhan who look at the social and psychological impacts of the media. New media can become so dominant in public culture that they effectively create a "paradigm shift" (Lelia Green, 2001:15) as people have shifted their perceptions, understanding of the world and ways of interacting with the world and each other in relation to new technologies and medias. So hypertext signifies a change from linear, structured and hierarchical forms of representing and understanding the world into fractured, decentralized and changeable medias based on the technological concept of hypertext links.