

Loss Pequeño Glazier

Hypertext/Hyperpoesis/Hyperpoetics

2002-05-31

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/17533>

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Glazier, Loss Pequeño: Hypertext/Hyperpoesis/Hyperpoetics. In: *Dichtung Digital. Journal für Kunst und Kultur digitaler Medien*. Nr. 23, Jg. 4 (2002-05-31), Nr. 3, S. 1–15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/17533>.

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Creative Commons - Namensnennung - Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 4.0/ Lizenz zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu dieser Lizenz finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a creative commons - Attribution - Share Alike 4.0/ License. For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Hypertext/Hyperpoesis/Hyperpoetics***

By Loss Pequeño Glazier

No. 23 – 31.05.2002

E-text as Medium

If writing, as Plato suggested, is the head-on collision that results in a memory-numbing concussion, electronic texts release an underground text blast rendering all inhabitants of the planet amnesiac wanderers and nomads. Does "the nomadic" typify the new era of book-like textual emissions? Is this a good reading of Guattari or is it merely delusional? Does the breakdown of the book signal the loss of authority? Wasn't the great concern about Gutenberg's press in the mid-fifteenth century that exclusive rights to interpretation of the Bible would be lost? Did this contribute to Luther's insistence that one get one's own copy and then talk to Him directly? – Loss Pequeño Glazier (Tango, n.p.)

Electronic writing is not simply the e-equivalent of paper writing because writing that is electronic has different properties than writing that is on paper. Does a message carved into granite differ from one scratched into sand? One might be inclined to be slightly more taciturn in the former medium. The difference is in physical and material properties. The most interesting of these are not static properties (i.e., how many lines there are in the text or how many bytes it occupies) but properties that relate to the malleability of the electronic text. These are properties that inject the unpredictable into the work, always spinning away from its viewers and creators the way a listserv by nature spirals off-topic uncontrollably or the way that, since a page doesn't seem to display the way you intended, you just live with it. In order to achieve a better understanding of the dynamics of web-based hypertext, it is instructive to "read" such documents as electronic texts displayed and navigated through the medium of hypertext.

The Electronic Text

What does not change / is the will to change.

– Charles Olson (Selected 167)

As a physical object, the electronic text has certain specific qualities that distinguish it from a paper text.

1. It is searchable. Unlike a book, if you want to find the exact location where the word "utensil" is used in a thousand-page document, you can get there instantly.
2. It is transmissible. Writing a letter on paper requires other steps to get it delivered to the person for whom it is intended; with e-mail, your message can arrive seconds after you type its closing exclamation point. (Or, seconds after you realize to your chagrin that you posted your intimate thoughts to an audience of 2,000 strangers.) With equal speed, you can send your Poems on Various Subjects to locations all over the globe. (The implication here is that the old system of publishing – the approbation phase¹, the editing phase, the stamping of metal into paper as if a seal of validity phase – are now gone.)
3. The electronic text is nearly without physical size. You can carry the OED on CD-ROM in your dinner jacket pocket or a copy of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" on a floppy disk.
4. The electronic text manifests symptoms of being an "anti-text". It is often a text that you do not want. Its value is dependent upon signal-to-noise factors, delay times, "Not Found 404" messages (error messages which occur when you arrive at a non-existent Web page). There is often too much of it and the fact that it is so excessive often limits your ability to spend time with the texts in which you are actually interested.
5. It can be manipulated. You can change the font. You can edit it. You can cut and paste it into a new document and submit it as a seminar response paper. It can be concordanced, analyzed for frequency of locutions, words can be counted, statistical studies may be performed, it can be cut to ribbons through collocation programs or be grepped down to a single sentence.

The electronic text acts both as body and as fulcrum or fertile crescent; its only constant is that it is likely to change for each instance in which it is viewed. It is a textual site with a momentum that can shift in any direction.

Defining Hypertext

REFERENCE
IS THE ONE
IMPOSSIBLE
THING

To name it
makes it
what in it
is

-- George Quasha (231)

Someone once told me, that if you've used a remote control, you've experienced hypertext. I suppose this is true, especially if there's also a newspaper draped across your shorts and you're reading the back of a bag of chips. But this is a rather extreme, decadent, and Homer Simpsonian definition. It is also a definition with a few clear drawbacks. For example, the range of materials which you can access via your remote is highly filtered, with the consistency and intellectual complexity of Spam, if we were to parallel television programming with meat products. Secondly, the reception is always clear. I would think that a "remote" metaphor would more accurately portray a remote connected to a shortwave radio. Here connections often fail, reception quality is less than perfect, sometimes things are there one minute and the next they are not, and "pages" can be evoked from the full circumference of the earth. An acceptable definition of hypertext would have to take into account a range of theoretical positions on this subject.

Hypertext is much broader than most would assume. For those who are struggling with HTML, it may come as a surprise that HTML-based hypertext is only one of the species in this genus. In a public talk at SUNY Buffalo in 2000, Jim Rosenberg noted hypertext systems such as hypertexts of arbitrary structure, spatial hypertexts, set-based hypertexts, and knowledge-structuring hypertexts. The alt.hypertext FAQ provides further examples, listing six types of hypertext systems. These include a diverse range of systems. HyperWave, formerly Hyper-G, is "a sophisticated Web document management system for large information spaces". Microcosm provides "an open and extensible hypermedia system designed for managing and disseminating unstructured digitally encoded files". WebPIng's "holistic" hypertext is "an object-oriented hypertext system designed for collaborative authoring and implemented on the WWW.... Documents in WebPIng generate HTML links from other documents on-the-fly, relieving authors of the need to manage HTML links, and eliminating the problem of outdated or uncoordinated references". Xanadu, the system Ted Nelson wrote about in his groundbreaking book *Literary Machines*, pioneered an early -- indeed the first version of a Web system that was very different

from the Web as we know it today.² Storyspace is a commercial product which describes itself as a "writing environment designed for the process of writing" and suggests that it is "especially well suited to working with large, complex, and challenging hypertexts" ("alt.hypertext" n.p.). (I would re-word this last statement to reflect Eastgate's approach through mapping and its preference for links within a controlled universe.) Finally, of course, there is the World Wide Web, a popular system characterized by client-server architecture and running on the Internet. Of this broad array of systems, the two that we will be concerned with are Storyspace and the Web since these are the most widely used for literary hypertext work.

If one were to define hypertext, how would it be done? First, some supporting definitions. One must note that the line dividing hypertext and hypermedia is so indistinct that for most general purposes "hypertext" can be used to encompass both. Secondly, there is a distinction that should be made between a hyperbook and a hypertext. Both employ hypertextual systems of linking but the difference is that the hyperbook consists of a stand-alone, presumably self-contained, universe of writings that are inter-referential. Most of the publications of Eastgate systems, by this definition, would be called hyperbooks, even though Eastgate markets its products as hypertexts. Thirdly, if a hyperbook (a reproduction of the package of a book) refers to its own limited universe of references, then our usage of the term "hypertext" by contrast refers to a larger, uncontrolled universe.

This "universe" is the Web. The network of documents which combine to form the choices for linking are also called the "docuverse". (Note that the "Compact for Responsive Electronic Writing", a web users/programmer's convention followed by some Web providers, commits itself to the interlinking of documents within the Web in order to foster "new forms of collective intelligence". The guiding statement of the "Compact" is: "Should a fellow user of the World Wide Web request that I include within my own work a link to her or his work, I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate that request.") A further complication is that "Hypertext" refers to the dynamics of interlinking in both hyperbooks and hypertexts. The Electronic Labyrinth notes the same distinction as follows: "[Hyperbook] is distinct from the term 'hypertext', which refers to the defining form of the work as a structure. An electronic book with hypertext features is a hyperbook. This distinction is not usually made in the literature; the two concepts being elided into one. We believe this lack of precision leads to sloppy arguments, though we acknowledge that it is sometimes desirable to use 'hypertext' in a more general sense" (Hyperbook).

Ted Nelson, who first coined the terms hypertext and hypermedia, wrote in *Literary Machines* that, "As popularly conceived, [hypertext] is a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways" (0/2 n.p.). It is useful to think in terms of these pathways but an unresolved issue is the degree to which the author engages in trying to control such pathways.³ Jakob Nielsen, author of

Hypertext and Hypermedia, defines hypertext in his essay, "The Art of Navigating Through Hypertext":

Hypertext is non-sequential writing: a directed graph, where each node contains some amount of text or other information.... Hypertext should also make users feel that they can move freely through the information according to their own needs. This feeling is hard to define precisely but certainly implies short response times and low cognitive load when navigating. (Nielsen's).

If this were accurate, then the Web falls far short of delivering the "short response times" and "low cognitive load" called for. The Electronic Labyrinth defines hypertext as "the presentation of information as a linked network of nodes which readers are free to navigate in a non-linear fashion. It allows for multiple authors, a blurring of the author and reader functions, extended works with diffuse boundaries, and multiple reading paths" (Hypertext). The non-linearity of this definition is useful. What may be less than useful, however, is the insistence that the author and reader are blurred. This, I believe is one of the greatest myths about hypertext. The fact is, you can no more write to most of the files you encounter than, as a film viewer, you could have influenced the father's fate in "Life Is Beautiful", as much as we may all would have liked that. The [alt.hypertext](#) FAQ emphasizes a layered sense of the Web, citing the OED Additions Series that texts "are interconnected in such a way that a reader of the material (as displayed at a computer terminal, etc.) can discontinue reading one document at certain points in order to consult other related matter" ("alt.hypertext" n.p.). This is a sound observation. However, I would argue that it is a definition that can equally apply to a stack of magazines next to your reading chair. Eastgate, a company that advertises itself with the blurb (a quote by Robert Coover from the New York Times), "the primary source for serious hypertext" (Coover 1), is a proponent of hypertext distribution on magnetic and optical media. Eastgate states that "the World Wide Web is, of course, a huge and wonderful hypertext -- a docuverse. Many sections of the Web, however, are not particularly hypertextual" ([Hypertext Resources](#)).

This is of course a fair statement. But though Eastgate has pioneered visual mapping approaches to hypertext, their preference for closed hypertext universes transfers hypertextuality into what we might consider a laboratory setting. Granted that the controlled environment typified by a laboratory can at times facilitate scientific breakthroughs in a given medium, such controlled environments are not meant to supplant the writing scene at large. The controlled environment of disk-based hypertext creates built-in limits, limits that seem strikingly out of step with contemporary hypertextual practice. Eastgate's publications are also sold following the commodity model of publishing's present power structure; this too is a little disconcerting. Finally, Eastgate advocates something they have referred to as the "craft of hypertext" ("[Hypertext Now](#)"), an approach that may very well be compared

to an argument sometimes made for poetry with a conservative ideological slant. ("Craft" not only meaning "skill" but having imbedded in it notions of artifice and even guile.) In this sense, there is an implication that hypertext should be genteel or proper or at the minimum, well considered, a proposal that might be less than ideal for a publishing universe exploring a new paradigm.

Who Are the Masters of Hypertext?

Here is
where there
is.

– Robert Creeley (Poems 547)

If an adequate sense of hypertext cannot be achieved by way of definition, perhaps it would be useful to survey practitioners in the field. If you were going to read work by hypertext practitioners, who would you read? I now refer to three notable sources from the mid to late nineties that present lists of prominent practitioners of hypertext. This is an important period for the emergence of a general consensus about hypertext and these sources are highly respected and often cited. They are The Electronic Labyrinth, Scott Stebelman's "Hypertext and Hypermedia: A Select Bibliography", and the "Research on Hypertext" section of the Voice of the Shuttle's "Technology of Writing Page".⁴

In its page that defines hypertext, the Electronic Labyrinth lists Ted Nelson, Michael Joyce, Jakob Nielsen, the InterMedia development team, Laurence Sterne, and Delany & Landow, as important hypertext practitioners. Scott Stebelman offers the following as examples of what he calls "prominent writers of hypertext": Jay David Bolter, Jane Yellowlees Douglas, Michael Joyce, George Landow, Stuart Moulthrop, and Gregory L. Ulmer. The hypertext theorists who have a prominent individual entry in The Voice of the Shuttle's list of hypertext resources include J. Yellowlees Douglas, George P. Landow, Jerome McGann, Stuart Moulthrop, Ted Nelson, John Tolva, and John Unsworth. Which authors receive the most mentions? Comparing these resources, we arrive at Table 1.

"Comparing the Masters"		
<i>Electronic Labyrinth</i>	<i>Stebelman</i>	<i>Voice of the Shuttle</i>
3 REFERENCES		
George P. Landow	George P. Landow	George P. Landow
2 REFERENCES		
---	Jane Yellowlees Douglas	Jane Yellowlees Douglas
Michael Joyce	Michael Joyce	---
---	Stuart Moulthrop	Stuart Moulthrop
Ted Nelson	---	Ted Nelson
SINGLE REFERENCES		
---	Jay David Bolter	---
Paul Delaney	---	---
Intermedia Dev.	---	---
---	---	Jerome McGann
Jakob Nielsen	---	---
Laurence Sterne	---	---
---	---	John Tolva
---	Gregory L. Ulmer	---
---	---	John Unsworth

The lists are surprising different in who they cite as prominent practitioners in the field. The results are even more surprising given that these lists are all slanted towards academic hypertext. Of these 14 authors, 9 appear only once. Among authors listed only once are Jay David Bolter, Jerome McGann, and Gregory Ulmer, a fact that is quite surprising for different reasons for each author. Jay David Bolter, a co-developer of Storyspace, should be more widely recognizable as one of hypertext theory's best-selling authors. Gregory Ulmer is a highly regarded theorist and literary critic who brings penetrating philosophical insights into the conversation. Jerome McGann brings the tradition of textual criticism to electronic textual theory and has pioneered crucial ground through works such as his "Radiant Textuality", "The Rationale of Hypertext", and his Rossetti Archive at the University of Virginia.

It is interesting to examine the five authors who were mentioned by more than one source. Only one hypertextual practitioner, George Landow, is listed by all three sources and there are four authors listed in two sources. Of the five authors

receiving two references or more, three are Eastgate authors. One, Landow, is associated with Intermedia, and one, Nelson, with Xanadu. Nelson may have received a greater number of references because of his pioneering efforts rather than for his influence in the practice of hypertext today. Overall, these results suggest that the general perception of what hypertext is, is slanted towards an Eastgate vision; a vision that, though instructive, is away from the front lines of the hypertextual public space of the Web.

Looking for a definition of "hypertext", can a sense of hypertext be garnered from the people who seem to be prominent in the field? Although each practitioner certainly would have a definition of his or her own making, it is interesting to consider a document by the hypertext practitioner who was the frontrunner in the above comparison. Of interest particularly is the "Landow's Overview Types" page, drawn from Landow's essay, "The Rhetoric of Hypermedia", at [The Electronic Labyrinth](#). In this document Landow gives examples of six types of overviews which may be useful in hypertext:

1. The Graphic Concept Map organizes ideas, authors, terms, or other concepts in a hub and spoke pattern. This illustrates the influence peripheral concepts have on the concept in the centre.
2. The Vector Flow Chart presents directed lines connecting nodes, representing "lines of influence or causal connection" (91). The length of the lines may be used as a measure of the strength or importance of the influence.
3. Timelines allow for concise chronological organization.
4. Natural Object overviews consist of anchors superimposed on pictures, maps, technical diagrams, etc.
5. Outlines "add a graphic component to text by breaking up the flow that characterizes discursive prose" (91).
6. Source text may act as its own overview in networks which are dominated by a central node or nodes. Landow's example is a poem with hypertext commentary. ([Landow's](#))

Though such suggestions are certainly sound, I submit that most of them simply make electronic many conventional storyboarding techniques and hardly make use of the potentials of hypertext.⁶ It seems reasonable to say that his approach is not centered on exploring innovation within the medium.

I would like to suggest that the most useful way to consider hypertext is not as a generic medium (a compositional medium which instantiates a number of genres) but as a delivery medium; that each particular form of practice is the exemplar of an underlying ideology. In one sense, what a hypertext is about is how it is made and what it does. Further, the above lists suggest that hypertext is widely

misunderstood; the practitioners listed above not only practice similarly, but represent only a small spectrum of the practice of hypertext that is possible. The omissions in this list point to a profound need for a richer understanding of the range of practice possible within the medium.

Certainly some of the medium's earliest practitioners explored alternative models. These were scientists, mathematicians, and cyberneticists, including Vannevar Bush, Norman Wiener and John von Neumann (famous for his work with the ECP, Electronic Computer Project) and their work often compared the computer network to the human nervous system. (The human body as a network certainly resonates with the concept of the Web as a body of writing distributed across a network.) This is a model that has some interesting resonances, given some of the senses of the prefix "hyper" in "hypertext".⁷ Though these thinkers paved the way, it wasn't until Bolter and others that the general concept of hypertext reached its present limits.

"La Vie en Prose"

Prose may carry a load of ill-defined matter like a ship. But poetry is the machine which drives it, pruned to a perfect economy. As in all machines its movement is intrinsic, undulant, a physical more than a literary character. In a poem this movement is distinguished in each case by the character of the speech from which it arises.

William Carlos Williams (Collected 54)

What are some of the limits of the present dominant paradigm for hypertext? The most striking of these is an equating of writing with prose. A problem with this perspective is that a focus on the narrative or "story" or even alternative or permuted versions of stories can obfuscate the malleability, permeability, and materiality of the medium. Thinking of writing this way is like having a seance with an overly chatty guest at the table; such a session simply entails abrupt leaps from one story to the next. A lack of such focus on the materials of the medium also seems to perpetuate existing textual power structures and to efface any hope for the "death of the author". This concentration on prose is quite clear in three of the widest known hypertext theorists: David Jay Bolter, Michael Joyce, and George Landow.

In *Writing Spaces* for example, Bolter constantly equates "writing" with prose. Speaking of Writing Spaces, he says, "We will consider the computer as a conceptual writing space: the nature of the electronic book and the styles of fiction and non-fiction appropriate to it" (11). His book is full of statements such as "Writing in topics is not a replacement for writing with words: the writer must eventually attend to the details of his or her prose" (17). And "Hypertext shows how

programming and conventional prose writing can combine in the space provided by the computer" (27). Clearly there is no attempt to see writing's "other" side in Bolter's view. Landow's *Hypertext* contains an entire section called "Reconfiguring Narrative" where he discusses plot, "narrative beginnings and endings", along with Michael Joyce's fiction work, *Afternoon*. There is no acknowledgement of any relation between hypertext and poetry. Further, would there not be a place for a consideration of John Ashbery's *Three Poems*, Robin Blaser's *Image Nation*, any text by Gertrude Stein, or Robert Duncan's *H.D. Book*, along with other works if one were "reconfiguring narrative"? Michael Joyce's omission of a discussion of poetry may be the most striking since his book, *Of Two Minds*, has the third of its three parts devoted to what he calls "Hypertext Poetics". This section has chapters on the multiple novel and hypertext narrative, clearing marking his sense of the poetics of hypertext as being prose based. Joyce even concludes a section called "Hypertext Poetics" with the chapter "A Feel for Prose: Interstitial Links and the Contours of Hypertext". Could one be accused here of seeing the world through prose-colored glasses? Could contemporary innovative poetry practice – or even Gertrude Stein, Jackson Mac Low, or Robin Blaser – be so unrelated that it does not emerge once in these three major works of hypertext theory? It seems to me that these hypertext theorists are ignoring at least some relevant information.

This is a practice that seems widespread, even among writings by hypertext poets. It seems to me that hypertext poets tend to position their practice in relation to hypertext fiction because it is hypertext, too. This is an astonishing oversight since classic hypertext fiction practice (like postmodern theory) are an extension of print; by contrast, print innovative poetry actually investigates the dynamics of linking, metonymy, process, and disjunctive poetics key to hypertext poetry! Though poets who call themselves hypertext poets frequently mention the canonical classic hypertext writers, they rarely seem to mention the tradition of innovative practice that has put poetry in the perfect position to inform digital practice; though they often seem to evoke postmodern theory, postmodern poetry is surprisingly overlooked.

"Prose & Versus"

Poetry in [the] vocal and intellectual sense is an ancient art or technology:
older than the computer, older than print, older than writing and indeed,
though some may find this surprising, much older than prose. –
Robert Pinsky (Sounds 9)

The point is that models can't be drawn from prose alone. Robert Duncan, for one, explored this area in the "Nights and Days" section of his H.D. Book. "Nights and Days" serves as the proving ground upon which Duncan's own poetics of the open field were developed and which may provide information about a multi-genred poetic for hypertext. Not only a "defense...offense" of this poetic project but an enactment of the process of the poetics it pursues. The process of writing is the project of "The H.D. Book"; its *modus operandi* is the progressive and continuous movement towards "opening" and away from closure. "I seek now in working upon the later draft of the book not to correct the original," Duncan writes, "But to live again in its form and content, leaving in successive layers record of reformations and digressions as they come to me" (H.D. II: 7, 53). (This image is not unlike the experience of layering document files as you open on your computer desktop; the movement towards "opening" evokes open-ended hypertext, such as the Web.) The notion of reinscription and digression pursue a fundamental tenet of what a writer does in this "open" terrain:

I had gleaned from some reference to a dictionary that the word verse, our verse in poetry, like our prose in poetry, was backwards and forwards, as a man ploughing goes along one line and returns. Prose, forward in the row or line; then "turning to begin another line" (as now I find in the O.E.D.) versus. (H.D. II: 8, 75)

To this Duncan adds, "But in verse now, we return to begin another line. We do not reach the end or margin" (H.D. II: 8, 75).

Significant to "The H.D. Book" is the idea of verse and prose sharing a primary connection. In fact, it is not an interconnectedness but a similitude of emergence the two share, as in the undefinable similitude of night and day, the two "selves" on opposite sides of a boundary or border. There is a similar need to have the influence of some "versus" in the hypertextual medium. Given the metaphor of Duncan's plow, it is obvious that the field of hypertext might benefit from a turning by some poet-plough-persons.

Could the medium of prose possibly be sufficient? The nature of the Web suggests, in fact, that it accommodates a mix of genres and media. Indeed, the multi-media appearance of the Web presents itself like a pile-up of many innovative arts practices: mail art, installation art, happenings, visual poetry, and mixed media compositions, among them. It furthers – or perhaps consummates – the

degradation of the notion of the book as a sacred object undertaken by Fluxus, certain British small presses of the Seventies, and in conceptual projects like Allen Fisher's Edible Press, where each publication was also a food object (perishable in the most literal sense.) It was not a case of "publish or perish" but of publishing a perishable. In the Fluxus work, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, for example, Joseph Beuys walked around the gallery for about two hours with his head covered with honey and gold leaf and with one shoe soled with felt and the other iron. The concept of a piece of art as an "action" is particularly compelling in the light of JavaScript, animated GIFs, and other text manipulating programs which are often more about staging an event than about the event's content – how I often feel waiting for the server to respond.

What is the future of digital writing? If we take the text's ability to be active as a criterion, then hypertext might be considered a still life with apples as compared to an Edible Press's artwork on an apple. That is, we have to be critical about what really characterizes digital writing and what simply qualifies as a longing for the past. Placing earlier technologies like linking into a medium of the present is simply remediation and hypertext may be a preliminary step backward as we try to stumble into the future. We need to ask ourselves what is the actual advance of the new medium in order to define writing that can be argued to put that medium to task. The basic defining feature of hypertext, its ability to link, is operationally identical to the codex with its footnotes, index, table of contents, see also's, lists of prior publications, parenthetical asides, and other abundant means of multilinearity. As Marie-Laure Ryan notes, "Through its structured network of choices, hypertext stands halfway between texts that impose a strictly sequential reading order (traditional novels) and texts with a totally free mode of access (encyclopedias, texts written on cards that can be shuffled)"(7). Though she continues to argue that hypertext should be classified as "the embryo of an electronic genre", I feel it is equally sustainable to argue that its primary kinship is to the codex. Following this reasoning it would be very dangerous to look at link node hypertexts as harbingers of new textuality. At the very most they are the Photorealism of digital writing, a last attempt to render the perfect oil painting before moving on to the real potentialities of the new medium.

Our need then, is to find new paths through the digital forest. To find work that, like innovative poetry itself, questions and investigates the materiality of the electronic medium. There has been outstanding work in this area, specifically the work of John Cayley in his *Indra's Net*/programmatology project, Jim Rosenberg in his *Integrams*, Eduardo Kac in his holographic work, Miekal And in his *Flash* and *MOO* experiments, the work I have done in "*Mouseover*", "*Bromeliads*", and other works, and in the kinetic works of various e-poetry practitioners. Further, there is room to argue that poetry, not prose, is the arena for this medium to be explored. The "strictly sequential reading order" that Ryan identifies as the limiting factor to hypertext is opposed to

the more granular approach that poetry offers, with its acutely sensitive literal/lexical surface. As Jim Rosenberg notes, "It is very exciting to me that as poets we have much more freedom to work this way than the fiction writers, since our approach to words is already so 'granular' anyway" (Re: Update n.p.). A true digital text is one that is highly sensitive in every grain of its surface. This practically defines innovative poetry, the ability for any word or character to be part of the action of the text. Thus, poetry, it can be argued, has already been on the scene and may be uniquely qualified to serve as the site for emergent forms of digital textuality.

Who are the masters of hypertext? Though we may now have a good idea of who might be included in such a group, we may have fallen fall short of the digital Valhalla. This question, also addressed later in this book when authority is considered, might not be as important as putting hypertext in a proper context, defining e-writing, and establishing a new canon that might adequately prepare us for what really constitutes the future for new poetries in digital media.

***Chapter 5 from:

Loss Pequeño Glazier

Digital Poetics. The Making of E-Poetries

University of Alabama Press 2001

Works Cited

Bolter, Jay David: Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing, Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1991

Creely, Robert: The Collected Poems of Robert Creely, Berkeley: U of California P, 1982

Duncan, Robert: "The H.D. Book, Part II, Chapters 5, 7, 8." *Credences* 1.2. (1975): 50-94

Glazier, Loss Pequeño: Tango. Unpublished MS 2000

Nelson, Theodor Holm: Literary Machines 93.1, Sausalito, CA: Mindful, 1992

Olsen, Charles: Selected Writings of Charles Olsen, New York: New Directions 1966

Pinsky, Robert: The Sounds of Poetry : A Brief Guide, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998

Ryan, Mari-Laure (ed.): Cyberspace Textuality: Computer Technology and Literary Theory, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999

Williams, William Carlos: *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, Volume 2, 1936-1962*, ed. by Christopher J. MacGowan, New York: New Directions, 1988

Notes

1. A word needs to be said about approbation. Having an authoritative agency approve a work implies that we are in need of a validating superstructure. The workings of mainstream publishing evokes Phyllis Wheatley, whose poems were approved by a group of influential men in an attempt to get them published. This resonates with the fact that, after Gutenberg made it possible for Bibles to be individually owned, religious schools of thought emerged that would argue for less intervention in the man-deity relation. This may be seen as a liberation of the word if you are an optimist, a degradation of the word if you believe more can be less, or a sign of the declining capital value of the written word, if you look to an economic model for an explanation. The fact is that it is now possible for anyone to publish just about anything; this inundation characterizes the environment within which web-based hypertext must function.
2. The Xanadu FAQ describes Xanadu as "An overall paradigm - an ideal and general model for all computer use, based on sideways connections among documents and files. This paradigm is especially concerned with electronic publishing, but also extends to all forms of storing, presenting and working with information. It is a unifying system of order for all information, non-hierarchical and side-linking, including electronic publishing, personal work, organization of files, corporate work and groupware" (Xanadu). John Cayley notes: "I think that actually with the docuverse and his notion of transclusion (the literal, link-evoked incorporation of quoted material into any extension to a new part of the docuverse which is in the process of composition), rather than pioneering a first version of the Web, Nelson conceived of a very different form for "the Web" (as if there is only one possible web) before it existed, one which would have been radically different - not necessarily 'better' but a much stronger challenge to the world of letters than hypertext or the actually-existing Web (which can't even take on copyright it sometimes seems)" (Chapters).
3. The issue of control is a big one. As a dramatization of one such possibility for example, my work "That Thing About Client Pull" is subtitled "Hypertext Without A Mouse" and uses a Web feature called "client pull" to present a series of hyperlinked screens which move in a timed sequence without any input from the reader. (See "On Mouseover" below.) On the other side of such a debate are

certain software packages which offer visual maps and other aids so that the writer can control the possible paths of reading.

4. URLs are: the Electronic Labyrinth (<http://web.uvic.ca/~ckkeep/hfl0037.html>, 1995, 23 April, 2000), Scott Stebelman's "Hypertext and Hypermedia: A Select Bibliography" (<http://www.gwu.edu/~gelman/train/hyperbib.htm>, 1997, 23 April, 2000), and the "Research & Theory on Hypertext" (<http://vos.ucsb.edu/shuttle/techwrit.html#hypertext>, c. 1999, 10 January, 1999) section of the Voice of the Shuttle's "Technology of Writing Page".
5. Martin Spinelli, making an observation about David Bolter, writes about a similar lack of engagement with the possibilities of hypertext. Bolter is not using the potentials of hypertext, Spinelli argues, "In fact, the reverse is true, Ulysses and Finnegans Wake would be flattened out by the type of hypertextual rendering Bolter proposes." (87)
6. See the document "Hyper-, An Etymology" in this volume.