Image and Text in Hypermedia Literature:
The Ballad of Sand and Harry Soot

Jaishree K. Odin

Hypertext writers have written extensively on the potential of links to create a highly fluid and discontinuous text which changes with each reading. The fluid quality of the hypertext is achieved to its fullest in a hypermedia work where both text and image, and sometimes audio, are interlinked to give rise to perpetually changing constellations and arrangements which appeal to all senses. The task of assembling a hypermedia work, therefore, is complex as the writer must not only pay attention to the creation of visual and textual components, but also to the obvious or not so obvious permutations and combinations that could result through hyper-linking. In a collaborative work, finding the right graphic elements or images to accompany written elements requires a great deal of care in order for different components to work together and generate maximum artistic impact.

When hypertext linking becomes an organizing principle in a work, it dramatically affects the way the narrative unfolds. Both the context and the content morph with the choices that the reader makes as s/he reads the work. Several kinds of discourses using different media can thus be gathered together in a hypermedia work—various discourse units enhancing the multiplicity that the work projects onto the reader. Katherine Hayles proposes the term "multicourse" to describe hypertext literature that is comprised of various discourses, which can be explored by the reader in multiple ways. (1) The hypertextual breaks in the narrative create temporal and spatial dislocations, which mark the points of disruption as well as provide frames for alternative narratives whose relationship to the main narrative is parallel and extrinsic or embedded and intrinsic. In complex hypermedia works of literature, there is a dynamic relationship between form and content. Such works retain the best of print literature in their artful use of language, imagery, metaphors, as well as various literary devices, while exploiting the potential of the electronic medium to the fullest.

The hypermedia work *The Ballad of Sand and Harry Soot* brings together a unique poetic text with images of digital artworks originating in a variety of disciplines to create a web of relations with limitless potential for diverging and converging series of readings. (2) The print version of *The Ballad of Sand and Harry Soot* by Strickland was the winner of

1999 *Boston Review* Prize. (3) Reading the print version is a totally different experience from reading the hypermedia work. The linear unfolding of the ballad in the print version serves to keep the reader on the same track. The reader can still perform imaginative leaps, but only in the realm of Sand and Soot, who emerge as the central characters in the ballad. In the hypermedia work, the Sand-Soot center of the narrative is destabilized as links within the ballad and links to images, provided by various contributors from a variety of disciplines, create multiple reading tracks within the hypermedia work. Other narratives make inroads into the unfolding drama between Sand and Soot who become amorphous as they seep into images that unleash other narratives.

The Ballad is a web-based work and is published by the *Word Circuits* website. The gathering force of the hypermedia work is the poetic text, embedded in a rich context of images. The images move into many web spaces: algorithmic art, webcams, scale-inversion experiments, hyperbolic geometry, digital sand etchings and so on. The migration from print format to the electronic environment decenters the text and sets in motion diverging series of readings, which only exist by the return of the others.

Thematically, *The Ballad* is about unrequited love between Sand and Soot; at another level, it is about the art of navigation through multiple discourses that constitute human experience. In some ways, it also alludes to the computer-generated electronic spaces and humans who interact with these spaces. The sophisticated conception and design of this hypermedia work brings together a variety of discourses from art, science, mathematics, philosophy, and even mythology to create a weave of texts. In spite of the centrality of the ballad in this hypermedia work, Strickland is listed as one of the seventeen contributors of the work. Even the act of transferring the poem to the web environment is unbundled in that the title screen states that the poem text is by Strickland, the design of the hypermedia work is in collaboration with Janet Holmes and the implementation to the web is by Janet Holmes. The authorship is thus diffused and distributed at various levels, even as the decentered center of the work continues to be the ballad. The hypermedia format allows Strickland and Holmes to design the work in such a way that the verses on each screen are linked to other verses in the ballad through three links per screen. The link is either through the image or through words in the text of the poem. Strickland employs the form of the ballad, which is

the earliest form of literature connected to communal gatherings or dance, and the work itself has been conceptualized as a dance. While commenting on the creation of *The Ballad* in the essay "Seven Reasons," she says:

> It is akin to choreographing a dance piece for a theater in the round. Every step, every posture, every gesture, has to work for every seat in the house. In addition, in hypertext, the dance has to work even if members of the audience enter and leave at different times. It is also analogous to visual artwork that sets out to be readable at any scale, as for instance fractal work does. We do hope to leave that more coherent impression one takes away from a dance or scale-crossing image. (4)

The aim of the hypermedia work thus is to present a very integrated piece that brings together different discourses in seemingly coherent fashion, while providing sufficient openings, so readers can relate to it from many different perspectives. The narrative coherence is reflected in the selection of images as well as carefully thought-out links in the text. The navigational paths provided enlighten rather than frustrate, since readers can choose between a complete reading, random reading or a link-based reading.

The relationship between the verses and the images is revealing. Strickland's ballad assumes the form of a thread that passes in and out of the images that constitute the nodes of the ballad. Thus, there is a very intimate relationship between the images and the text of the poem. It is sometimes hard to distinguish if the verses were written to weave together the images or the images sought out to hold the ballad together as a coherent piece. The images don't represent what is stated in the verses; rather the images express visually the forces and relations embodied in the verses. Labeling the images as merely the background or the context of the ballad is not accurate, as there is a continuous interpenetration of the foreground and the background and the text and the image. The verses are cryptic, almost idiomatic, so that the reader has to go back and forth between the verses and the images to arrive at various readings.

In an attempt to have the media reflect on itself, the binary coding, the technological basis of all electronic productions, has been turned into a literary device to frame the verses on each screen. The verses about Sand appear under 0s and those under Soot are under 1s,

though in a few verses the numbering is intermixed to illustrate the interpenetration of two realms encoded by Sand and Soot. Each screen reflects a juxtaposition of two voices/two modes of being and becoming: the male and the female; the silicon-based entities/the carbon-based entities; the world of vectors and dimensions/the world of concrete materiality; the world of dreams/the world of reality; the world of flow/the world of rest; mother-child pod/mother and child as two separate entities. Certain words or sections of the verses are color-coded to reveal connections between words or parts of the verses listed under 0s and 1s, though no set formula is used for color-coding the words. The function of the image on each screen is then to point towards a space that goes beyond dualities of all kinds or which marks a space of co-existence or dynamic relationship between what is represented by the 0s and the 1s in the poem.

The images of the art works, which in their original form appeared as kinetic light sculptures, kinetic sand etchings, quilt wall hangings, webcam art photos, or photographic images, serve to translate discourses from mathematics, science, and art into visual metaphors. The text and image on each individual screen are linked to other textual and visual elements of the ballad in a hypertextual collage. In the instructions stated under the section "how?" the reader is provided with three choices to read the work: a random reading by clicking zeroes in the navigational bar, reading through linkages, and complete reading through clicking images on each screen. Another way to read the hypermedia work is through the Coda section, which lists the images. A short statement about the contributors accompanies each image or set of images. Also, a link to the website of contributors is provided. Clicking the images of the Coda section takes the reader back into the poem whereas the URL given under each contributor statement allows the reader to explore the images in their original context in greater detail.

The Coda reading is totally different from the first three readings that give primacy to the poem. Even though the author/s state that the Coda pieces illuminate the ballad's "theme of the passionate relation between silicon- and carbon-based life," these pieces actually do more than that. The Coda pieces bring to the forefront the multiple discourses that shape the poetic sensibility reflected in the poem. The images in the Coda section assume the form of a hyperlinked digital quilt sewn together by the verses of the ballad. The Coda reading allows

the reader to go beyond the literal meaning of the poem to the level that deals with forces, vectors and dimensions of human experience. The visual presentation of metaphors unique to various discourses of art, poetry, science and mathematics allows crossing the boundary that separates them from one another. If the reader takes the Coda pieces as the starting point of the reading and hops from images to verses and back to images, a shifting and changing narrative emerges that refuses to be congealed into a single perspective or a single meaning; instead it spills out in multiple directions. The center of the hypermedia is thus nowhere and yet it is everywhere

Although a variety of images are used in the *Ballad*, those from Ho, a collaboration between Jean-Pierre Hébert and Bruce Shapiro, are central to its conceptualization. The Ho works included are digital sand etchings from the Sisyphus project. The creators of Ho images describe their work as "an interactive happening for the beholder" and a "transient piece, a piece as well as a medium." The title page of the ballad depicts *Swheel (Small)* from the Western Gallery of the Sisyphus website, tinted by Janet Holmes. The *Swheel* is the image of a sand etching, a heptagon with fractal overlapping images of the pattern traced by the Sisyphus ball. The credits page has another image *Detail of "Swheel"* which depicts an enlarged corner of the heptagon with the ball. As I mouse over the second screen, the part of the screen that takes me to the poem is the image of the ball of the Sisyphus computer-controlled device used to trace patterns in Ho's kinetic sand etchings. The track ball of my computer and the Sisyphus ball used to trace the sand etchings become one in my clicking; my computer trackball taking the place of the Sisyphus' ball as I embark on tracing a pattern in the hypermedia work.

Curious about the Sisyphus ball, I click the Coda section and find out more about the Sisyphus project, including the name Sisyphus. Just as Sisyphus rolls a stone up the summit for eternity, Sisyphus, the computer-controlled kinetic device, rolls a ball in the sand. I also follow the outgoing link to the Greek myth. In the Greek myth, gods condemned Sisyphus, a mortal who loved life, to the punishment of rolling a stone up a hill for eternity in the underworld. Once he reaches the top of the hill with the stone, it rolls back to the bottom and down he goes to roll it up again to the summit. The myth can be interpreted in variety of ways, but what is relevant in the present context is more along the lines of the interpretation

that is given by Albert Camus—again an outgoing link from the Sisyphus site. Camus is not so much interested in Sisyphus' rolling up the rock to the top of the summit and, in his hard labor, becoming one with the rock. He is fascinated by the pause when Sisyphus reaches the summit and starts to descend downwards to get ready to roll up the stone again. This moment of pause, Camus says, is the moment of full awareness or consciousness for Sisyphus and the moment when he overcomes his fate. The digital sand etchings traced by the ball operated by Sisyphus are the realization of this state of pause, an aesthetic pause that takes the beholder beyond the preoccupation with mundane rituals of life to a heightened state of awareness.

Of the thirty-three images included in the hypermedia work, eleven are of Ho's digital sand etchings (from the Sisyphus project), which are woven into the fabric of the ballad. Sand sculptures or etchings, the most ephemeral of all built environments, can be toppled by a mere touch or blown away by a whiff of the wind and are meant to remind the beholder of the transience of existence. I once again follow the outgoing link to the Sisyphus project from the Coda section and, under Concept, come across the following statement: "Picture a sand garden in the spirit of the Zen gardens of Japan. A digital system conducive to meditation, peace and serenity: where beauty and nature stroll hand in hand through the rhythm of human existence..." The spirit of this statement shapes various readings of the ballad.

Interestingly, there is more to this ballad than the use of sand as a medium and a concept to reflect on human experience. In Ana Voog's *Goldshow* images, the woman's body itself becomes a medium for artistic expression. The images are from "Anacam," which is Voog's 24/7 video performance project. The images titled *Goldshow 1, 3,* and *7* show a hazy picture of a woman, sitting up or lying down, against a granular sandy background. The images are bathed in gold, yellow and yellowish white hues. Clicking the images takes the reader into the verses that are descriptions of Sand. Thus there are contrasting images of Sand, those that are associated with the Ho images, which evoke austerity, simplicity and tranquility, and those associated with the Ana Voog images of a sensuous woman's body, Ana's body, revealed through the lens of a webcam. The daily rituals of living are turned into aesthetic occasions for viewers who view the live images as they are posted on the Anacam website. Strickland et al thus create a poetics of sand by weaving the images that

embody fragility, simplicity, beauty, transience, sensuality, and dreaming into the ballad of Sand and Harry Soot.

The first two verses of the Ballad state:

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Sand was a gourd fanatic
and she played
                a glass
        marimba.

        1

Harry Soot loved to listen.

The image that accompanies the first two verses on the first screen of the ballad is one of Ho images called *Three Rocks*, which is also the logo for the Sisyphus project. The "one rock" of Sisyphus myth is transformed into "three rocks" of the Sisyphus project. Three rocks in the sand etching are emblematic of the theme of the ballad that centers around the player, the listener and the song or in other words, the reader, the writer, and the work. The ballad is about language, words as well as navigation in art as well as life. In Japanese sand gardens, the beholder strategically sits outside the garden in a position of rest so as to resonate with the tranquility and peace that is embodied in the sand garden.

        The word "listen" in the above verse is linked to the following verse:

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Twirly languid blue-eyed blue pearls clearly not Sand.
Down on the fourth harmonic she simply singly for a second
stood, so symmetric, second subsequent swiftly sliding side-
riding slamjamming shivering switching—

        1

        Soot calls it "searching."

        The above incomprehensible verse seems to portray the shifting and changing nature of Sand. Sand is not "blue-eyed" like Soot as we find out in another verse. This verse thus

alludes to the ocular metaphors, which dominated western discourse for centuries. The rise of ocular metaphors in the 17th century had a lot to do with the development of the science of optics that made it possible to see both the large and the small more accurately. But the sole reliance on the eye also eliminated other perspectives and other ways of seeing. The eye was thus severed not only from the body but also from the world in which it was located. As the reader searches through the jumble of sliding and slithering words, the eyes fall on the accompanying image of a kinetic light sculpture by Friedlander called *Spinning String Light Form*. This is what Friedlander says about this work from his "Visual Music" series: "In this illustration, you see a spinning string vibrating in harmony, this description sounds like a musical instrument, but it is a light sculpture. The vibrating form is a superposition of the second and fourth harmonic: a 'visual chord.' " Sand's movement and shape shifting is the visual music: a transposition of the sense of seeing into the sense of hearing.

The hypermedia work thus serves to bring the two domains together: the inner and the outer space; the mind and the body; the abstract and the concrete; the real and the virtual; and science and art. The crossing over from one discourse to another is illustrated by the image *Henon Strange*, by Brian Meloon. The contributor statement states: "The Henon map is the two-dimensional analogue of the logistic equation $H(x,y)=(x^2-a*y+c,x)$, where *a* and *c* are constants. The picture shows a portion of the locus of points where the rate of escape of a point under iteration is the same going forwards and backwards (using the inverse map)." This statement might not mean much to those who don't rely on numbers to make a living, but the accompanying map compares to any work of art. It has a musical quality about it, with colorful flowing shapes with a rhythm of their own. The image is linked to a screen, which describes Sand as a marimba player.

Another verse comments on the multi-sensory as well as synaesthetic perceptions of Sand; Soot, however, seems to rely primarily on visual perceptions.

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As albino cave bats who let go
of coloration, but develop keener
sensors, Sand.

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Soot, who seeks to catch a falling star
in the monitoring
cave, evolves into colorblind.

The above pair of verses is accompanied by the image of one of the Ho pieces called *Winddrifted*, which depicts a sand etching in the process of getting erased. The above two verses contrast two different perspectives. Sand, by giving up attachment to one particular form or shape embraces many forms, shapes and perspectives. Soot, on the other hand, with his monocular vision is oblivious of other colors or perspectives. In an interesting series of links, the word "bat" is linked to *Fibonacci x 3*, an image of a patchwork quilt created by Elaine Krajenke Ellison, a mathematics teacher. The bio section on Ellison states that she "has designed and made numerous quilt wall hangings to inspire her students to explore mathematics from a new perspective." In the original piece, "11 different fabrics are used for the design, which is enhanced by the quilting lines that extend outside the triangle." The reader also comes across another quilt image by Ellison called *Poincaré Plane*. Precise descriptions of the quilt are given: *Poincaré Plane* is "44 inches in diameter; white background fabric with contrasting bright blue fabric for the tiles, which were sewn on using an appliqué technique." Another quilt image woven into the ballad is that of *Spiraling Pythagorean Triples*, designed and quilted by Diana Venters (also a mathematics teacher). Once again precise description of the quilt is provided: "37 x 37 inches; 7 different brightly colored fabrics and black fabric. The design center is a one-quarter-inch square; the side lengths of the largest triangle are 3.25 inches, 21 inches, and 25 inches." Quilting has been traditionally a women's craft and a way for women to express themselves artistically. Patchwork quilts in old days were made out of scraps of material cut out from discarded clothes. These quilts were a part of family history. In Ellison and Venters' quilt the art of quilt making is used to make mathematics more accessible. Both Ellison's and Venters' quilts bring together the discourse of feminism, art, and mathematics.

The word "evolves" in the above verse is linked to the screen with the following two verses and an image titled *Hilbert* (Sisyphus in Action).

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If a silly con were all Sand were.

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    If an ashy trash were all of Soot.

    The verses seem to pose a question regarding the nature of Sand and Soot. Is Sand just "silly con" (a play on the word "silicon")? Or, in other words, can Sand be reduced to its chemical composition? This verse alludes to Sand both as a metaphor as well as a medium. The sand is composed of silicon dioxide, commonly called silica, which is used to make silicon chips for computers. Computers are capable of generating electronic spaces of immense simplicity or complexity or art objects of subtle beauty. The online world is a sea of information—a space that requires navigation; it is also a medium of communication, including artistic communication. Silica is also used in the manufacture of glass, the material used for Sand's musical instrument. Should we then judge Sand by her mediumistic potential? Sand's world is that of open possibilities; it involves both creation and navigation. This reading is validated by the verse on navigation that is linked to the word "silly con."

    How do we approach Soot's existence? Is Soot simply a lump of flesh, which one day will turn into ashes? The word "ashy" in the above verse connects to the first screen of the ballad, which presents Sand as a "gourd fanatic," playing a "glass marimba" and Soot as listening to the music. The image *Hilbert*, accompanying the above verses, depicts a ball in the act of creating a sand etching as it rolls through the sand. Sand's playing of a glass marimba and the Sisyphus ball in the act of tracing a sand etching refer to the creative act itself. Once again the linked verse reveals to the reader that like Sand, Soot should not be reduced to his materiality. The ballad tells the reader of Soot's growing love for Sand and her mediumistic potential to generate diverse worlds of great profundity and subtle beauty. Both Sand and Soot are thus constituted and reconstituted as the reader traverses multiple paths through the hypermedia work.

    The linked verse on navigation reads:

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Sand, a cat's cradle fan and economic.
Her shave and a haircut, fifteen cents;
her Oceania nodes of knot
        remembered navigation;
her numerous fingers interlaced
with gloves—made of holes—slipped
successfully over;
        her mediumistic con
in the dark apparatus, all one, all
the same nano-rope. This point
escaped Harry. Harry preferred Ouija
wavering words, reassured
by Ouija jerk.

Sand in the above verse is associated with the cat's cradle, a game between two players using a string to create patterns. Just as the same sand, one medium, can transform into different shapes, so it is with a piece of string or rope used to create multiple patterns or string figures that have become an integral part of many traditional cultures. The mediumistic potential of both the sand and the rope can be used to create new things. The image that accompanies the above verse is *Verenga-uka* (Female Spirit), a string figure from Easter Island. Sand is thus intimately associated with her creative potential—in fact she is described in terms of what she creates which is referred to as her "mediumistic con." Soot, on the other hand, relates to the world primarily through what he sees and what he can describe in words. Soot thus lacks the ability to navigate through the sea of multiple discourses that constitute human experience. By juxtaposing the Sand and Soot verses on each screen and intermixing the two in a few verses, the poem does seem to say that Soot is opening up to Sand's mode of perception. At another level, Sand and Soot can be thought of as a composite and the poem seen in terms of Soot's opening up to the "sandy" parts of himself.

Sand morphs from one shape to another, now a symmetrical or an asymmetrical pattern, and now swept out of existence by a slight gust of wind. The transience of sand patterns extends outwards to the transience of all creation. Thus the ballad is not only about navigation, but also about time. Since time and memory are intricately linked, it is also about memory—in fact, about two types of memory:

1

....
Soot is attached to his memory lines,
crow's feet crinkle, scar arroyos, worry
furrows, wry sag, time written in skin,
in bone, in blood. Chemical peels do not
appeal to him. Nor implant chips (wait until
he gets sick!).

    01010011

    Sand's unbelievable memory
    learned, of course,
    not lived.

The two types of memory are: personal memory that determines Soot's being and becoming

in the world and universal memory as manifest in the history of various discourses. Sand thus

embodies the memory of multiple discourses that constitute human experience. The image

that accompanies the above two verses is *Tread* by Trudy Myrrh Reagan, or Myrrh, whose

art deals with ideas in science which somehow reflect back on life. The image seems to be of

tire treads that have left their mark.

    Sand in one of the verses is associated with emptiness:

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Sand insinuated herself. ZaumZoom in,
she has gone ahead. ZoomTzim out,
  she is not behind. To hear,
in her gourd, her mallet-fall, a relation to
  emptiness, finest gauze, so finely
    woven even the strands
       appear to disappear.

    1

    Harry Soot believes he is watching.
    Harry thinks he is in Times Square.
    He is. She is not.

At a more metaphysical level, as reflected in the Ho images that are strategically placed in

the text of the poem, the Zero (associated with Sand) alludes to the emptiness or nothingness

of Zen Buddhism, and the number One (associated with Harry Soot) to the contemplating

self. But Soot verse shows that he has a hard time letting go as he continues to see what is inside him as what is outside. Thus, he continues believing that he is "watching" or looking for Sand outside. Sand is both in and outside time; a reality that eludes him.

The hypermedia work also plays with the idea of inverting the traditional understanding of the internal and external environment, by turning what is inside into what is outside and vice versa. The scale inversion refers to the central theme of the ballad, which is the relationship between Sand and Soot. Sand as a character is the poetic realization of Soot's creative potential, for which he is "searching." This reading is supported by Alexander Heilner's microbe images. The contributor statement states that Heilner's work deals "primarily with the intersection of organic and human-constructed landscapes and environments." Heilner's microbe series, the *Airplane Microbes, Helicopter Microbes* and *Manhattan Microbes* re-imagine airplanes, helicopters, and the island of Manhattan as they might be viewed under the microscope. The microbe images are images of built environment transformed into organic entities that occupy internal spaces. The image *Transmission Helix* uses radio transmission towers to depict a DNA structured molecule which stores and codes information in living beings. The image is accompanied by the following verses about Sand and Soot.

1

Harry is no fool. Harry Soot is shrewd.
Harry has allergies and moods.
Harry lies—he can't
                              help it.
Harry has structure—genes and grammar.
Harry is a detective, but he can't find
    an answer. Harry is violent
and violently quiet;

        01000011

        Sand is sand.

Whereas Soot is solid and has structure, genes, and moods, Sand is ubiquitous. Here, Sand as a character in the ballad becomes one with the sand as a medium—the literal and metaphorical levels coalesce. The sand is everywhere and yet nowhere and perhaps for that

reason the sand (and by analogy, the online computer-generated electronic space) is defined by its own mediumistic potential rather than by its material composition.

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Sand religiously stops. And starts the next thing.

1

Bluesy Soot can't conclude.

Sand realizes itself as a discontinuous succession of creative acts. The discontinuity can also be seen as a continuous renewal, which embodies both novelty and surprise. Sand's existence is not marked by the sterile repetition of the same, but rather by the repetition with a difference. The same logic applies to the reader's position with respect to the hypermedia work, which enables multiple readings. Each reading is unique, intricately linked to the reader and the context in which the reading takes place. Soot is, however, associated with time and memory, and he can only realize himself in terms of linear progression. He has yet to unlearn his attachment to his personal history in order to fully experience the present moment in its fullness—a moment that is imbued with multiplicity as it comes into existence only to be displaced by a succession of other similar moments filled with creativity and novelty. Soot's encounter with Sand in the ballad can thus be seen as his opening up to a worldview where creative discontinuity rather than continuity contributes to the enlightened perspective.

To conclude, then, creating hypermedia literature is more than simply linking text and image. It is becoming apparent, as some have pointed out, that in order for hypermedia literature to become mature, the writers need to pay attention to the overall coherence of the narrative when they mix media and create a hyperlinked work. In a creatively crafted work like Strickland's *Ballad*, linkages are not merely formal techniques for navigation purposes, nor visual elements just for decorative purposes. Instead links create a shifting dynamics between the form and the content. The formal techniques enhance and multiply the thematic import conveyed through the visual and textual elements. In a well-crafted hypermedia work, each facet of the work reinforces every other facet by entering into a relationship with it, thereby creating complementary or contradictory narrative fields, which spill out in multiple

directions. There is an ongoing interpenetration of the text and the context, of the foreground and the background. The discontinuity and the perpetual overcoming of the discontinuity thus becomes a guiding principle of the work. As Gilles Deleuze commenting on complex works says: complex works are not self identical, rather "the identity of the object read really dissolves into divergent series" in a similar fashion "as the identity of the reading subject is dissolved into the decentred circles of possible multiple readings. Nothing, however, is lost; each series exists only by virtue of the return of the others." (5) In complex works that can be approached from multiple perspectives, each reading is thus dependent on the possibility of every other reading. The hypermedia work by Strickland et al illustrates very well how artful conceptualization can result in the work spilling outward into diverging series and how the existence of each series is directly dependent upon the return of the others.

     Hypermedia literature is still in the process of defining itself and that keeps the attention of the majority of writers working in the medium focused more on innovative ways of mixing the media through hyperlinking and less on overall coherence of the piece. Most of the critical writing on electronic literature has primarily focused on describing the techniques that have gone into creating the work. Though descriptive analyses of the techniques employed have their place in the critical evaluation of electronic literature, some effort also needs to be devoted to interpretive analyses where the form and content are seen in a dynamic relationship with one another and become the engine for generating diverging or converging readings.

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