

# Issues in Multimedia Authoring

## Lecture 16: The Changing Notion of “The Text”?

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# Summary

- Landow and Delany's "Hypertext, Hypermedia and Literary Studies: the State of the Art"
- Claim that hypertext / hypermedia illustrate theses of Derrida, Barthes, etc.
- Originally written in 1991; available in *Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality*
- Lecture today has two aspects:
  - Present and illustrate L & D's views
  - Provide a criticism of L & D
  - Will not be commenting on whether they "get Derrida (etc)"



# L & D I :The Traditional Text vs Hypermedia

- 3 characteristics of traditional:
  - linear
  - bounded
  - fixed
- Hypermedia “transcends” these characteristics

# L & D II :The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia- Linearity

- Deals with composition and reading order of a text
- Nonhypertext book read sequentially from beginning to middle to end
- Hypertext can be read in many ways by following links
- Some text not even present for some readers

# L & D III : The Traditional Text - Linearity 2

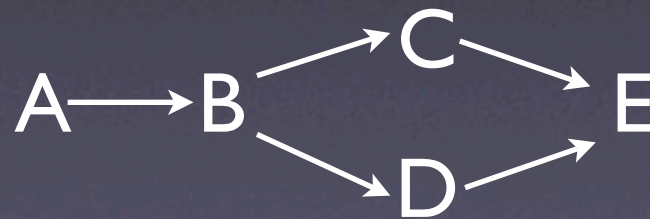
A → B → C → D → E    Linear

A → B → C → E  
          ↓    ↘  
          D → E    Nonlinear



# L & D IV: The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia - Boundedness

- Typical text is well circumscribed - think of a book and how it is isolated from others on a shelf
- By contrast a hypermedia document can have “fuzzy” edges
- Overlap possible - for example, texts ABCE and ABDE overlap



# L & DV: The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia - Fixity

- Traditional document hard to “reassemble”
- With hypermedia can make new connections

# L & D VI: The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia - more properties

- Multivocality (Barthes)
- Intertextuality
- Decentering (Derrida)



# L & D VII: The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia - Example to work from (see handout)

<http://www.macnn.com/articles/07/04/05/best.buy.apple.boutiques/>

The screenshot shows a web page with a main headline "GOT DUPLICATES?" in large yellow letters. Below the headline, there are several columns of text and images. On the right side, there are several vertical advertisements, including one for "Your Playlist List get smarter" and another for "Mac: The ultimate PC upgrade". The page layout is dense with text and images, typical of a news or technology website from the early 2000s.

# L & D VIII: The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia - Multivocality

- Story is about Best Buy featuring Apple boutiques, by MacNN staff
- Also contains the reactions from the readers who have written into comment also the “voice” of the various advertisers, even one in French!
- Reader must distinguish them to understand the page
- Note that most prominent item at the top is NOT the story! (“Got Duplicates” ad item.)
- I can even change the vocality: contribute to the user comments



# L & D IX: The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia - Intertextuality

- Related to unboundedness
- Look at all the links to other places and other subject matters
- Some automatically generated “just for me” (the French language eBay.ca ad)



# L & D X: The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia - Decentering I

- Comparison between a hypermedia document and a conventional text: L&D's own!
- L&D encourage us to see conventional text as static, narrative as essentially sequential in scope.
- Web page can be taken in a different way. The eBay.ca ad (presumably) changes depending on my IP address (~ location)

# L & D XI: The Traditional Text vs. Hypermedia - Decentering 2

- L&D's text simply ends - no attempt to connect it to what's next
- Could do this automatically with hypermedia document, even to one's not written at the time
- Can decide that I want to proceed in any number of ways: can read comments on the story, can follow advertising, etc.



# Pause and reflect

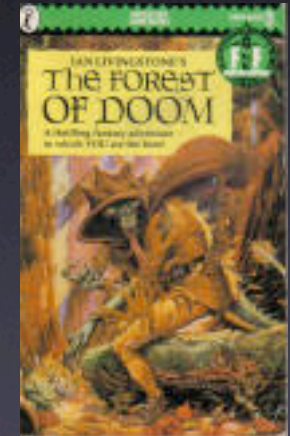


(Source: <http://cutestthingever.typepad.com/photos/kittens/paws002.jpeg>)



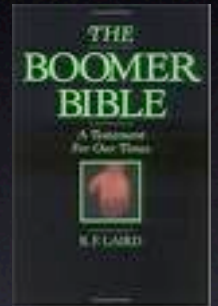
# Criticism of L&D I

- Traditional texts only read in one way? L&D mention footnotes. Are FNs clunky compared to hyperlinks?
- Conventional books can overlap too
- If hypertexts are dynamic, something (what?) underlies the change? How do we know we have a changed text rather than merely a different text when I (e.g.) add a comment?



# Criticism of L&D II

- Conventional books can be have two readings - “Centralians” in The Boomer Bible
- In order to test that the literary concepts apply more to hypertext, a comparison must be done with conventional texts. L&D have not done this.
- To show that they apply better requires at least an ordinal scale of “decenteredness” (etc), which has not been developed.





# TTQs

- Are footnotes clunky compared to hyperlinks?
- Take a photo from somewhere and illustrate the literary studies concepts with it.



# Projects

- Discuss how *The Boomer Bible* is (or is not) a work of hypertext.