Text and Hypertext in
William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*

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Contents

Abstract

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The purpose of this dissertation is to prove that in spite of the burgeoning chasm between hypertextuality and textuality as they perform different functions and display opposite characteristics, they could be dovetailed. It is conceived that hypertext fragments and atomizes a text by destroying the notion of linearity which results in a deconstructed, dynamic, and dispersed text. Hence, the relationship seems to be blurred, destroyed, and dissentangled. Concrete lines of demarcation between them are constantly drawn. Nevertheless, the relationship between textuality and hypertextuality could be differently revisited. There are points of convergence that render textuality and hypertextuality complementary. After comparing between the original print format and its hypertextual counterpart, one can come up with a different conclusion: hypertextuality is a subset of textuality, rather than an adversary. The former is a derivative of the latter. Both of them are intertextually related to other works of arts. Hence, hypertextuality is a digital form of textuality; a different form of narrative
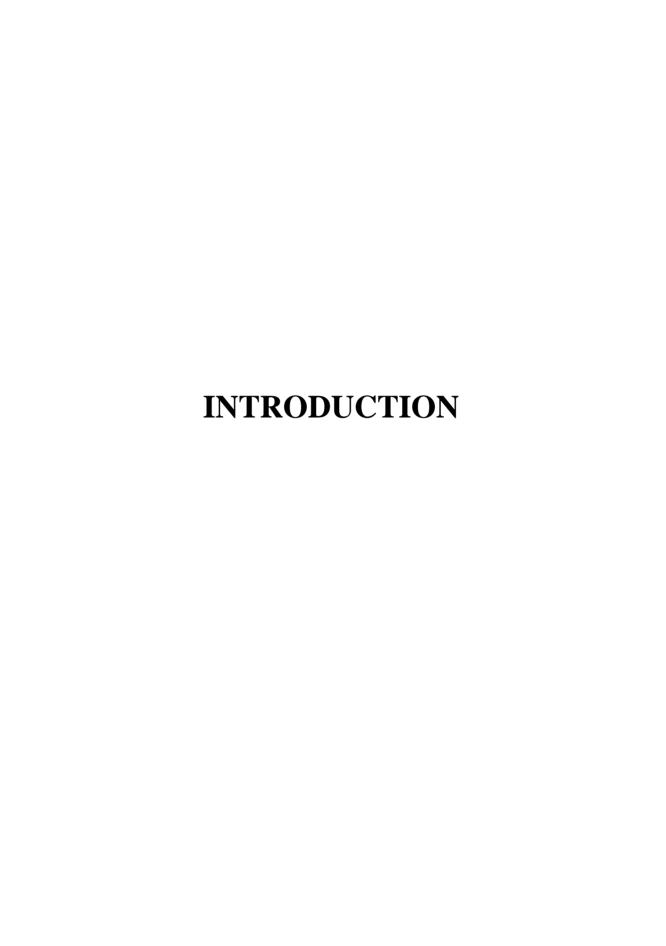
structure. As a result, text and hypertext could be complementary. But in spite of the hypertextual medium's increasing crescent of success, no one can declare the death of the print form. Nevertheless, every age has to seek out new forms to give a further insight into understanding dramatic art in particular and life at large.

The dissertation falls into an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction provides a general background of what will be tackled throughout the dissertation. Chapter one relates the origins of hypertext and demonstrates that it conforms to the notions of postmodern literary theory. Chapter two traces back the transformation of dramatic form through ages leading up to the possibility of changing the parameters of dramatic art through the genre of hyperdrama. As to chapter three, it is dedicated to elucidating the different interpretations induced from the hypertextual version of *Hamlet* compared to the original version by Shakespeare. In chapter four, the hypertextual form of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* is examined as a demonstration of the new possibilities offered through hypertext writing techniques. Finally, the conclusion states the findings and the recommendations of the dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

Hypertext marks a significant change in the departments of not only information technology, but also those of the humanities. Digital technology manifested via computing has carved itself an important niche in the humanities, arts, and culture as George P. Landow, an authority on hypertext and a professor at Brown University, asserts. In spite of the fact that digital technology has led a trajectory different from that of literature, they could be intertwined. Points of convergence could be discerned between literary theory and computer hypertexts as Landow points out in his most seminal books and articles which have become canonical in the discussions of hypertext.

Neither a textual study nor a performance study is this dissertation. It is a hypertextual study which investigates the relationship between a text and a hypertext. Hypertext has revolutionized the conventional elements of dramaturgy, dramatic performance, and dramatic text. The traditionally preconceived triad of author-reader-text has been reshuffled, reshaped, revisited, and eventually restructured. As a result, a new way of NAVIGATING the text has been introduced. The author whose death has been declared by poststructuralists is transformed into a HYPERAUTHOR who is seemingly demised. Nevertheless, he/she indirectly guides the HYPERREADER through multifarious paths. As to the conventional reader who is accustomed to the print-bound format; who enjoys flipping through pages, has been converted into a HYPERREADER who plays the role of a playwright-cum-producer. A new way of reading or rather web crawling where the HYPERREADER or HYPERCRAWLER encounters challenges throughout in order to decipher the hypertextual structure. As to the text, it

has been dismantled into a plethora of lexias or rather HYPERPAGES which carry multiple interpretations.

As to the conventional dramatic elements which comprise the plot, the characters, and the dialogue, hypertext revolutionizes them. There are no plots and subplots. All stories are given the same weight. Off-stage scenes are transformed into on-stage ones. As a result, decentralized narrative is what the HYPERREADER encounters. Similarly, all marginalized characters are demarginalized and brought to the fore. They are all given equal importance. Moreover, the dialogue is replaced by polyphony of voices. All characters revolve around one theme, and the HYPERREADER views each character's perspective according to his/her own tendencies and propensities. A new or rather different format that requires a different way of reading and perceiving a text develops. Therefore, in this dissertation, all conventional elements are compared to that of the hypertext to investigate both convergences and divergences.

The dissertation entitled *Text and Hypertext in William Shakespeare's Hamlet and Anton Chekhov's The Seagull* is an attempt to analyze the author-reader-text triad from the postmodern vantage point using a number of postmodern dramatic tools: intertextuality, deconstruction, and polyphony of voices in order to investigate the relationship between text and hypertext. Hence, it answers the following questions: can text and hypertext be dovetailed? Is it possible that computing and literature complement each other and become integral? What happens to the deeply-entrenched author-reader-text bond? Is the author utterly declared dead or does he/she indirectly orient the reader? Does the reader become

omnipotent or virtual or does he/she still need the authorial power? Is the text completely shattered? To answer these questions, it is inevitable to choose classic works from the literary canon which have been transformed into hypertexts, and more importantly, to draw a double comparison between Shakespeare's original text and the hypertextual format from the vantage point of the author-reader-text relationship, followed by a comparison of Chekhov's original text and its hypertextual adaptation which is respectively compared to that of Shakespeare's.

The dissertation is divided into an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter is entitled *Hypertext and Literary Theory* where the origins of hypertext and its gurus are introduced. The types, the structure, and the different linking patterns and forms of hypertext are then expounded. Examples of all patterns and forms are provided to render them fathomable. A debate pertinent to the possibilities offered through electronic textuality manifested via hypertexts is consequently placed. Both opponents and proponents of hypertexts are equally portrayed where all arguments and refutations are expressed. Hence, the intriguing yet inevitable competition between the print medium and the electronic one is delineated at length. As a result, a number of perennial questions could be raised: Can hypertext replace books? Is it a better means of information dissemination than the printed medium? Does the development of digital technology benefit the reader? Is the birth of electronic revolution a declaration of the demise of the print medium? Or does it contribute to the development of dramatic art?

Reflection on the previous issues amount in the demonstration of the characteristics reminiscent of postmodernism. Hence, points of convergence between hypertexts and literary theory are investigated in-depth. Theories of textuality voiced out by poststructuralists: Roland Barthes (1915-1980) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984) are introduced and compared to theories of hypertext in order to depict further resemblance. Hence, hypertext is investigated from poststructuralists' textual vantage point. Moreover, poststructuralists' vision of intertextuality is examined through the ideas of Julia Kristeva (1941-) and other poststructuralists, the most significant of whom is Barthes whose notions conform to hypertexts. To add a further insight into understanding intertextuality, the ideas of the French structuralist theorist Gerard Genette (1930-) are introduced. The structure of hypertexts render intertextuality more explicit and visualized than the print medium.

In addition to that Barthes' declaration of the death of the author echoes the reader empowerment theory outlined by hypertext. Hence, hypertext lends itself to literary theory as it gives the reader the chance to be the producer of a text. Speaking in the same vein, Foucault questions the role and the importance of authorship. The reader does not succumb to the authorial power which results in the multifarious levels of interpretation. Moreover, Barthes's conception of the 'readerly' versus the 'writerly' text is expounded. The 'writerly' text is reckoned the modern one which further elaborates on the convergence between hypertext and literary theory.

Hypertexts are conceived by a number of critics as the logical extension of postmodernism. Hence, the ideas of Jacque Derrida (1930-2004) on deconstruction, binary oppositions, and logocentrism are examined at length. Moreover, Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895-1975) multivocality and heteroglossia are explicated in order to shed more light on the hypertext –literary theory resemblance. Hence, a disappearing line of demarcation between literary theory and computer hypertexts is depicted by tracing down critics of reader-response theory to deconstructionists who speak about texts in a manner strikingly similar to that of hypertext as Landow declares.

Chapter two, entitled *Hyperdrama: A New Art Form,* is dedicated to expounding hyperdrama. It commences by declaring that in order to understand hyperdrama, it is inevitable to trace back the developments of dramatic form through ages. The origins of drama which are attributed to the Greeks are depicted. Great Greek tragic playwrights, namely, Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), Sophocles (496-406 B.C.), Euripides (c.480-c.380 B.C.), as well as the most renowned Greek comedians, Aristophanes (c.448-c.380 B.C.) are introduced as the precursors of drama. In addition to the Greek forefathers of drama, Aristotle's *Poetics* (360-322 B.C.) is thoroughly examined as it sets down the principles of dramatic art and establishes the infrastructure of literary criticism. He outlines the structure of drama and tackles its objectives, achievements, and purposes.

After delineating the beginnings of drama and the dramatic form through the Greek pioneers, the Romans are investigated. Horace-Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 B.C.), an authority in literature and criticism, is presented through

his seminal book *Ars Poetica* (24-20 B.C.). In his book, Horace does not only tackle poetry as the title implies, but rather the principles of dramatic art. He points out the importance of organic unity which is reminiscent of Aristotle's fundamental ideas. He examines drama as a form of poetry in which he tackles the subject matter, form, style, plot, characters, and chorus in drama. Latin literature which is introduced via Horace is followed by displaying the characteristics of dramatic theory and criticism through ages.

The unsettled conditions of Europe during the Middle Ages is then displayed to account for the scanty outcome of this period. The different kinds of medieval drama which entails miracle plays, mystery plays, and morality plays are then explicated. Unlike the medieval culture and drama, the Renaissance has been an era of enlightenment which is marked by the illuminating revival of the classics. Moreover, the phases of literary criticism development are examined in an endeavor to help depicting this prolific period. Renaissance drama has developed during the 15th and 16th centuries in some European countries: Italy, France, England, and Spain. An illuminating revival of the classics develops in Italy which ushers in the Renaissance and renders Italy the center of enlightenment. Hence, the Italian Renaissance drama is given much attention as new dramatic forms are developed, such as the 'intermezzo' and the 'Commedia dell'Arte.'

The Renaissance is enthroned by the Elizabethan drama during the second half of the 16th century. It is an era of paramount importance that contributes to the development of dramatic art. William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Ben Jonson (1573-1637), and Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) are the

most renowned playwrights of this period who have influenced each other. Their plays are patterned on Greek tragedy, Seneca's plays, English miracle plays, morality plays, and interludes. In England, a new kind of drama is developed as a result of a concoction of medieval and classical dramatic art which is displayed through the works of Shakespeare.

In spite of the thriving period of the Elizabethan drama, a number of reasons amount to its fading crescent. After elaborating on those reasons, the Jacobean drama is introduced along with the political upheavals and instabilities. Nevertheless, theaters are closed for about eighteen years and it is not until the restoration of the monarchy that a revival of dramatic art is witnessed. Hence, the Restoration period (1660-1700) which marks the rebirth of English drama is highlighted. It signals a number of developments, such as the appearance of the first actress on stage and the first professional woman playwright. It is a new kind of theater performing to a new kind of audience which has ushered in the Restoration comedy which is also called the Comedy of Manners whose style, characteristics, themes, and most renowned writers are stated.

In addition to the Comedy of Manners, the Heroic Tragedy dominates during the Restoration period. Hence, in England, the Restoration drama is replete with new forms in comedies and tragedies. The French influence which has affected and resulted in the Heroic Tragedy is depicted. The salient features of Heroic Tragedy as well as the major restoration dramatists are delineated. Parallel to the Restoration period in England, the Neoclassical movement comes into being during the second half of the seventeenth

century in France. The French neoclassicists are extremely affected by the Italian Renaissance drama which reigns the classical elements of drama supreme. The French dramatists blend classical and medieval elements of drama in a striking resemblance to their counterparts in England. Hence, points of convergences and divergences are depicted. Neoclassicism is also depicted as a school of criticism which is tagged New-classical, Pseudo-classical, and/or Augustan. The reasons for its nomenclature are illustrated which is followed by a thorough delineation of its characteristics. Thus, neoclassicism paved the way to other movements of literary dramatic art.

In revolt to Neoclassicism, Romanticism comes into existence and reigns from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century (1798-1832). An investigation of the term romanticism, its definition, and its norms is held. In addition to that Romanticism is further explained through its comparison to Neoclassicism. Principles of romantic drama are then pointed out through Victor Hugo's renowned manifesto, the *Preface to Cromwell* (1927). Romanticism is not confined to France; nevertheless, it is a European phenomenon. The common characteristics of Romanticism are ubiquitous throughout Europe. The content of romantic drama is shaped by the political and social circumstances of the period. Hence, it is depicted from the vantage point of significant historical events.

Romantic drama which has lasted for about seventeen years from 1823-1840 is followed by the Victorian age. Hence, a brief historical background of the era is displayed to pave the way to the new forms of drama which develop throughout. An illustration of dramatic transformation is