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Writer's disclaimer: Please keep in mind that my experience in writing scholarly papers is truly scarce. I have not written "formally" in several years; my MLA is an ugly sleeping beauty with more than one hundred years of undreaming undreamt dreams to carry on. Right in the middle of this paper I stood up and walked downstairs to the Learning Center where I signed up for a writing tutor. Monday will be my first appointment and I hope to achieve acceptable results in a short period of time. Bear with me please.

A paper that is not a paper

I can easily imagine Robert Coover's imagination in full blossom while he was writing the "Briar Rose." I am sure he must have had the time of his life, loving every page and letting his brain fly away and land on the next one. When I found out that the book itself was written ten years ago, weighs 4.3 ounces and costs five dollars –used- I felt like a character grabbed from one of the pages who managed to break the spell of eternity entrapment: I felt disenchanting. I wonder if Coover meant to write this book as a conceptual piece rooted in hypertext theory or if that just happened to be perceived and defined as such later on. It would have been a great different story had the text be written sixty years ago when communication technology was still limited or if the book itself would have been written as a script for a film piece or a radio novel. The second immediate thought that came to my mind was a collection of contemporary computer animated feature films by Dreamworks and Pixar Studios and particularly "Happily N'Ever After" and the "Shrek" sequels where the whole concept of the movie could be compared to Coover's interlacing narrative. Even though they may seem far ends to be compared they share a

common need: the audience must be aware of the previous stories and their narratives to function properly and to reach its ultimate goal: to tell a story. It seems to me that defining “Briar Rose” as hypertext is too much of a conceptual extent, specially if we consider a modern definition of hypertext:

Text which does not form a single sequence and which may be read in various orders; spec. text and graphics (usu. in machine-readable form) which 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. Freq. attrib. ("footnote?" 16)

What is interesting however is Robert Scholes' appropriation of the text when he incorporates images and sounds and by doing so changing drastically the reception of such body of text by somebody like myself who did not know about Coover's publications or his writing style. I still would not consider Scholes' work as an example of hypertext rather one of intertextuality (Landow 1992) as his proposal lacks freedom of choice as a modern hypertext proposed piece should present. The interactive piece takes takes you through a very linear path, very much opposed to Coover's story that keeps your mind flying all over the place. Coover's storytelling method entirely relies on your previous experience with the fables he chose to re-tell. What I found captivating was the resonance of each paragraph in the brain, even though the language was very complicated to grasp by the end of each “entry” my imagination put together a mental image and the feeling of accomplishment that followed was indeed valuable and a great resource to be considered for an interactive piece or a website. What I don't understand from Coover's story is the excessive -and gratuitous- use of graphical descriptions of sex and pain. Sometimes I sensed a need from the storyteller to shout out, using words as disguise to let the reader know his own pain. Reiteration as a writing tool for this particular story seems to work well for Coover's idea however, as a reader I found it rather boring and uncreative which was not improved by Scholes' creative input. On the other hand what was interesting about his contribution to the “Briar Rose” is that image and sound change the whole perspective

of the story by marrying the open meaning of the original structure with the meaning of the chosen image and sound providing the reader with another level of entrapment and confusion. Even the use of Coover's portrait between two pages makes a tremendous difference when you know that it is Coover himself. The first time I saw that image my perception was "pedophile," yet when I came back to it knowing that it was Coover the meaning changed to "insult" for me. Scholes's input connects the "hyperreared" to contemporary culture in many ways, especially when he connects Jack Nicholson's iconic image as depicted for "The Shining" (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) the whole meaning ties to it and changes the perspective of the story. Coover's layering of re-interpreted fairy tales with contemporary issues such as perception of beauty, sex, desire, and consumption are very interesting. On top of the image Scholes sets a new layer of meaning using pieces of known songs that they will mentally create more layers of intertextuality. Sometimes Scholes even "borrows" advertising images taking the narrative to a whole different level. I did not perceive the selection of images by Scholes as well defined for every case and above all his hypertext proposal resulting in a boring piece.

Another detail that I caught during the reading was the repetitive use of opposing terms, over and over, back and forth, pushing and pulling the reader to leave him exactly where he began, preparing the reader for an expected new situation, playing with him as a running treadmill that takes you to no place but the one where you already are leaving the reader exhausted. When I got to the end of the web story I found myself urged to continue again, to re-read the entire piece (of course I did not do it) to have a new sense of how meaning changes in my brain by doing so.

I think that the Coover's creative approach would render amazing results if they are applied conceptually to different contemporary media but then I question myself about the effectiveness of using old resources to create new ones. Why is it that contemporary story telling doesn't have an outlet for new ones and we have to keep repeating ourselves on old ones to generate a seemingly creative piece? Are we enchanted ourselves in theories from the past, trapped in ideas already thought, concepts already developed, books already written to propose new material? Is

it possible to propose new ideas at all? I don't even know if a scholarly paper is expected to finish like this. Isn't the whole educational system a fable trapped in itself as a hamster desperately running around the mill of its cage? I enjoyed this mind exploration yet I believe more than ever than "time" is the devil's real name.

Works Cited

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