{CARAC TERES}

Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital

EDITORIAL
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Caracteres es una revista académica interdisciplinar y plurilingüe orientada al análisis crítico de la cultura, el pensamiento y la sociedad de la esfera digital. Esta publicación presta especial atención a las colaboraciones que aporten nuevas perspectivas sobre los ámbitos de estudio que cubre, dentro del espacio de las Humanidades Digitales. Puede consultar las normas de publicación en la web.

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Hypertexts: From the digital environment to the printed books of children's literature: a case in Greek

Hipertextos: desde el ámbito digital a los libros impresos de la literatura infantil: un caso griego

Tzina Kalogirou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)
Vassiliki Gkouni (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

ABSTRACT: Hypertext is a particular kind of text that allows the readers move to its end through a non-sequential way as it consists of different "paths" and "links". In comparison to the ordinary printed texts, hypertexts present significant differences referring to their structural characteristics, while they make the reading process different as well. This open- ended type of database system was created in the digital environment but nowadays it's also found in printed works of children's literature. A great Greek author, Eugene Trivizas, has written two masterpieces of this kind of texts. The complex structure of these literary books affects positively the cognitive, social and emotional development of young readers but it makes their approach in the classroom difficult. However, differentiated teaching is a modern instructive method that can be used by the teachers in the classroom in order to help their students to deal with difficulties of this kind.

RESUMEN: El hipertexto es un especial género textual que permite a sus lectores desplazarse hacia su objetivo a través de un modo no lineal, dado que consiste en caminos y conexiones. En comparación con los textos impresos habituales, los hipertextos presentan diferencias concretas con respecto a las características de su estructura, y además hacen el procedimiento de la lectura diferente. Este sistema de tipo abierto se creó en el ámbito digital pero hoy en día se encuentra también en las obras impresas de la literatura infantil. Un importante autor de Grecia, Eugenio Trivizas, ha escrito dos obras maestras de este género textual. La estructura compleja de estos libros literarios influye de manera positiva en el desarrollo cognitivo, social y sentimental de los lectores jóvenes, pero provoca dificultades en el acercamiento en la clase escolar. Sin embargo, la enseñanza diferenciada es un método didáctico contemporaneo que se puede utilizar por los docentes en la clase para ayudar a sus alumnos a enfrentar este tipo de dificultades.

KEYWORDS: hypertext, teaching differentiation, children's literature
PALABRAS CLAVE: hipertexto, enseñanza diferenciada, literatura infantil

1. Introduction

In the past, children were described as incapable of making complex decisions or thinking creatively. This viewpoint of childhood was reflected on children's literature which was characterized by didactic tones and its content was organized in a linear way, namely the plot unfolded progressively step by step only in one path. On the other hand, nowadays, the digital world has a substantial influence on literature for children and young people, as it has affected both form and content of the handheld printed books. This phenomenon is justified as the findings of academic research on children's abilities and the literary preferences of young readers

combined with the potential of modern technology has created the "milieu", commonly the adequate conditions which allowed this transition (Dresang, 1997: 643- 645).

Under these circumstances, writers have adopted the non- linear way that characterizes the plot of the electronic texts so that they create remarkable children's literary "hypertexts" which bear an important reading and pedagogical value. In case of printed hypertexts the readers apart from their active role in the intake of the meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978: 10), take on the additional task to compose the story themselves. However, the complex plot of those texts makes it difficult for schoolteachers to approach them with their students in the classroom. Therefore, the aim of our article is to approach the general features of this type of texts, introduce to the young readers some written hypertexts for children created by the Greek author Eugene Trivizas, and suggest an instructive method that can be used by the educators in order to use these literary texts in their classrooms.

1.1. *Digital hypertexts vs ordinary printed narratives*

According to Tuman (1992: 55) the term "hypertext" was coined by Theodor H. Nelson in the 1960s to refer to electronic texts that allow the readers move to the end of the text through a non-sequential way. In addition, Landow (1992: 3) claims that Barthes used the terms "link", "node", "network", "web" and "path" to define descriptively this particular kind of text which is "composed of blocks of words (or images) linked electronically by multiple paths, chains, or trails in an open-ended, perpetually unfinished textuality". In other words this "ideal text" consists of "brief contiguous fragments" or "units of reading" which are called "lexias" (Barthes, 1973: 13).

The above definitions outline the differences between ordinary printed texts and digital hypertexts. Starting from their structural characteristics, we notice that most print narratives begin on the first page of the printed book and end at the last one. In addition, there is only one path which leads from the beginning to the end of the story (Douglas, 1992: 2) and the end of the book remains the same no matter how many times we read the text (Hunt, 2000: 116). On the other hand, hypertexts have no single beginning but they consist of open- ended places and paths (Douglas, 1992: 2) which provide links to other places in the narrative and offer different versions of the story.

Apart from the form change between hypertexts and print narratives, the course of reading changes as well. The readers of a book or an article follow a linear process in reading, while in case of hypertext narratives the readers will not necessarily encounter the places and paths of the story in a specific order or they will not encounter many of them during the process of reading. As for the finish line of the hypertext, the readers themselves decide when they are satisfied among different points of closure (Douglas, 1992: 2- 3, 7). Under these circumstances, reading hypertexts becomes an interactive process (Dresang, 1997: 647) which makes readers undertake an active role (Landow, 1992: 7) by composing the text itself.

1.2. *Hypertexts: The transition from the digital environment in the printed books*

In spite of the fact that links and paths derive from the digital hypertexts, in our days they do appear in innovative forms of print narratives which offer different versions of the plot from reading to reading through variable options (Miles, 2001: 65). Under these circumstances, the same book offers young readers the opportunity to meet totally different literary experiences by

choosing between a variety of pathways and links. Indeed, even the same reader can read an entirely different story, simply by choosing different versions of the plot every time he opens the book.

For example, Gianni Rodari (1920- 1980), the famous and internationally acclaimed Italian author of children's literature, has written a great book with the title *Many stories to play with* (*Tante storie per giocare*) (Rodari, 1971). This book- as its title indicates- gives children the opportunity to choose between variable versions of the plot in order to experience different humorous stories according to their liking. A similar work is the book *Lost in Austen* by Emma Campbell Webster (2007), which consists of many adventures based on Jane Austen's great pieces of work. The readers themselves determine their literary journey according to their choices, while each path provides them with some points in order to make their adventure even more interesting.

Regarding on the value of the printed hypertext, we should underline the fact that the respective academic research is limited but there is a considerable amount of empirical evidence due to the observation of children reading these nonlinear multilayered texts. In particular, their positive influence on the maturing process of young readers is based on their open- ended structure. In other words as the young readers have the opportunity to interact with the story relying on their own perspectives (Hammerberg, 2001: 208), they are invited to activate their critical thinking, their creativity and their imagination in order to satisfy their reading expectations.

1.3. *Eugene Trivizas as a writer of printed hypertexts*

Eugene Trivizas is an awarded Greek writer who also works as an academic researcher in the field of Criminology at the University of Reading in United Kingdom. He was born in Athens and since 1980s he has written more than 150 children's books receiving many literary prizes and awards. Most of his books have become bestsellers and some of them have been translated into English (e.g. *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*[1]) (Trivizas, 1993). Some characteristics of his writing style is verbal humour by using "unfreezed" stereotypes and metaphors turned back to their literal sense (Nakas[2], 2004: 351- 411), parody, the intensive use of etymological, homonymic and homophonic puns, as well as the playful use of language in general (Stamou, 2011: 5).

In particular, Trivizas has written two books, *The 88 stuffed vine leaves* (*Ta 88 ntolmadakia*) (Trivizas, 1997) and *The 33 Pink Rubies* (*Ta 33 roz roumpinia*) (Trivizas, 2003) which he characterized as "multi- fairy tales" ("parapolimithia") or "multi strand fairy tales" ("polyklona paramythia"). The element that makes these books so interesting lies in their multiform narrative structure because as the writer (Trivizas, 1997: 3; 2003: 3) claims they are "magical books with thousand tales hidden in the same story". Indeed, in the first pages Trivizas (1997; 2003) gives readers some advice on how to read those books- which are composed of narrative points (nodes) organized into a network with many paths (links) (Delany & Landow, 1995: 7-9; Douglas, 1992: 2-3) – namely he admits the removal of the linear narrative and highlights the fact that the story depends on their personal point of view. Even the last page in *The 88 stuffed vine leaves* (Trivizas,

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[1] This particular picturebook became a best seller in the U.S.A sortly afterwards its first edition, solding more than one million copies.

[2] Nakas (2004: 351-411) devotes the chapter "Unfreezed stereotypes and metaphors turned back to their literal sense. Elements of verbal humor in the work of Eugene Trivizas" on these particular elements of the writing style of Trivizas providing the researchers with descriptive examples based on the wider literary work of the writer.

1997: 161) shows the elimination of the linear narrative as the writer claims that "this seems to be the last page of the book but actually isn't".

Therefore, it becomes obvious that these books can attract easily the interest of the young readers and can be used even in the school classroom. However, there is a severe concern about the instructive method that can be used so that students approach creatively these types of texts.

2. The differentiated teaching
2.1. *Teaching differentiation: an instructive method*

In developed societies one ordinary classroom of 25 schoolchildren consists actually of smaller pupils' groups according to their school performance, the special way they learn and their particular interests, commonly their learning profile (Knight, 2009: 869). Therefore, the traditional teacher- centred instructive methods cannot satisfy all students' needs and restrict pupils in a passive role. On the other hand, it's very difficult for schoolteachers to diversify the learning activities for each student individually (Lynch & Adams, 2008: 36), even for half of their pupils.

Instead, they could use "teaching differentiation", a modern instructive method which supports the variety of student's needs by grouping them in two or three levels (Tomlinson, 1999: 20- 22) and engages all children in the learning process by promoting different learning styles. Referring to the types of teaching differentiation it's worth mentioning that through individual and teamwork activities schoolteachers can diversify the content of students' tasks (Salend, 2005: 30) –the target cognitive concepts and skills and the corresponding teaching strategies– either the way children shall work on the differentiated activities (Lawrence-Brown, 2004: 36- 37) or support students create different final products that represent what they have learned (Tomlinson, 1999: 11). Under these circumstances, the traditional teachers' authority is abandoned as the educators are invited to become their students' partners in order to coordinate the learning process.

Differentiated teaching can be implemented in all grades of education in a variety of subjects. Academic research has proved the contribution of the method to improve students' language skills in both writing and oral level and their general school performance. Moreover, some educators use this method to support their pupils discover their interests and their special talents in science and mathematics classes or even during the function of literature circles (Grimes and Stevens, 2009: 679; Tomlinson, 1999: 109- 110). Therefore, based on the above it becomes obvious that this innovative teaching method could be used by educators so they approach "multi- fairy tales" with respect on students' interests and choices.

2.2. *Approaching "The 88 stuffed vine leaves" by Eugene Trivizas through differentiated teaching*

The 88 stuffed vine leaves (Trivizas, 1997) is a multi- fairy tale that has been honored with the Award of the Academy of Athens. The parallel stories of Emma, the young heroine of the book, provide schoolteachers with many ideas so that they design a variety of creative activities (Cornett, 1999: 134-137) for their students from the fourth grade classroom of primary school until the first grades of high school. In addition, the educators should take into account the transactional theory of L. M. Rosenblatt (1978), the reader- centered model of Benton and Fox (1990: 110), Benton et al. (1988: 205) and Tomlinson's (1999) theory about differentiated teaching.
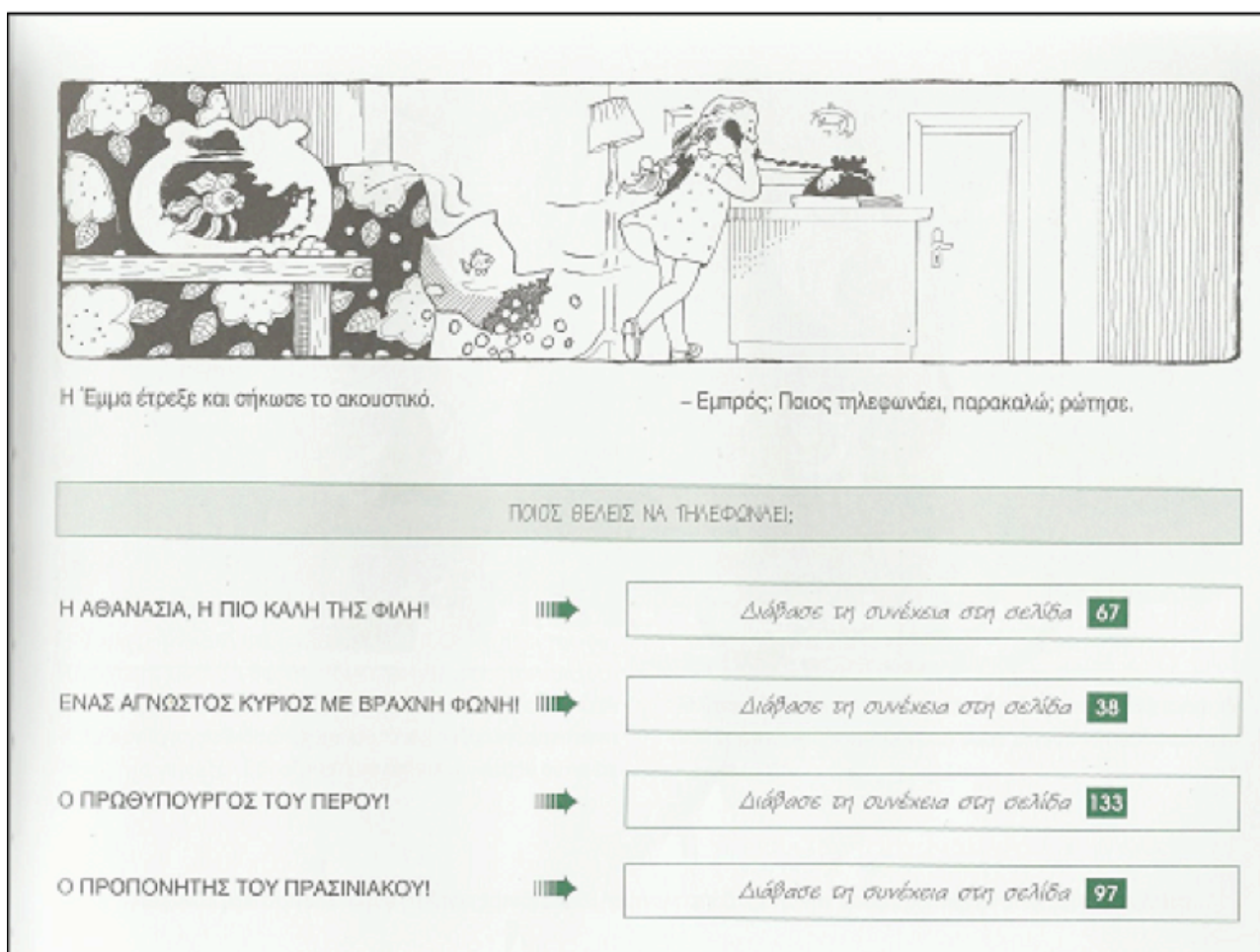
Figure 1. A page of "The 88 stuffed vine leaves" (Trivizas, 1997: 55). At the top of the page Emma appears to be talking on the phone, while under the picture there are four potential respondents of the heroine.

Under these circumstances, the creative activities should be organized in four stages in order to help the readers express their reading responses creatively. In particular, in the first stage the educators should include preliminary activities that create the adequate context in the classroom. Furthermore, according to the instructive model in the second stage students read the text and respond to its content in an initial level through literary activities so that they express their individual response during and after the reading process through the third stage. In the last stage students develop, modify and refine their response individually or in groups after reading and they have the chance to explore further their experience of the text through a vast range of activities (creative writing, artistic expression, discussion, drama activities, etc.). This instructive model is the general framework that the schoolteachers should use when they define their goals and create a variety of literary activities so that they help the young readers express their responses before, during and after the reading process.

However, in case of a printed hypertext, such as *The 88 stuffed vine leaves* (Trivizas, 1997), which includes a variety of paths that lead to different versions of the plot, a particular activity might be irrelevant to the content of some choices that the text offers. For example, if all students were invited to define Emma's friends and enemies regardless of the plot's versions they had chosen, those readers who had preferred the heroine experience her adventure by herself would not be able to edit the first part of the activity. Therefore, we suggest that the educators should create one or two common activities for all students in the first stage of their instructive plan in order all

readers get prepared for the particular structure of the text but the goals and the content of the literary activities during the rest three stages should be diversified according to the versions of the plot. In other words, each time educators should encourage their students read the next two or three pages of the text defining themselves the development of the story and then motivate them to form groups according to their choices in order to get a substantial contact with the majority of their peers. At this point we should highlight the fact that each group should consist of the students that have made the same or similar choices referring to the content of the text. So it's necessary that the educators have already read the text and have grouped the proposed plot's options so that they correspond to one of the three diversified versions of the creative tasks. In other words, if there are six possible paths that lead to the end of the story, the first activity might be based on the three of them, the second one on the other two choices and the third one could refer to the last option.

For example, at the beginning of the story Emma seems undecided on whether to answer the phone that rings or not (Trivizas, 1997: 7). If Emma picked up the phone, she would have a telephone conversation with one of four different individuals: her best friend, a mysterious man, the coach of a football team called "Prasiniakos"(the name means literally the Green Football Team) or the Prime Minister of Peru (Trivizas, 1997: 55). On the other hand, if Emma didn't answer the phone, she would meet a chubby chef with whom she would visit either Ntolmandias (the country of stuffed vine leaves) or Lichoudistan (the country of delicacies) (Trivizas, 1997: 101). In this case, if students choose Emma talk on the phone with one of the three first persons and should decide whether she would meet them somewhere, they could edit Emma's diary (Cornett, 1999: 134) (Figure 2):

Emma couldn't decide if she should respond positively to the proposal of the person she talked with on the phone. In the end, she decided to write in her diary in order to find an answer to her dilemma:

Date: _____

Dear diary,

I really need you. I've just talked with _____ on the phone who invited me _____

_____

_____

_____

Your friend,
Emma

Figure 2. Emma's Diary.

If students choose Emma talk on the phone with the prime minister of Peru, who has called her by mistake in order to complain about an article he thought our heroine has written, they could complete this hypothetical article (Cornett, 1999: 135) (Figure 3[3]):

After the call of the prime minister of Peru, Emma decided to look online in order to find the article he mentioned. She was very surprised when she read the following lines, which you can fill with your imagination!

Tuesday.................................

Scandal!!! The prime minister of Peru wears... wigs!!

A serious scandal has messed up Peru's government as the prime minister of the country was "caught" in a hairdresser choosing wigs_____

_____

_____

As the photo shows, when the prime minister noticed the photographer

he got furious!!!

Site: www.newsofperou.pr
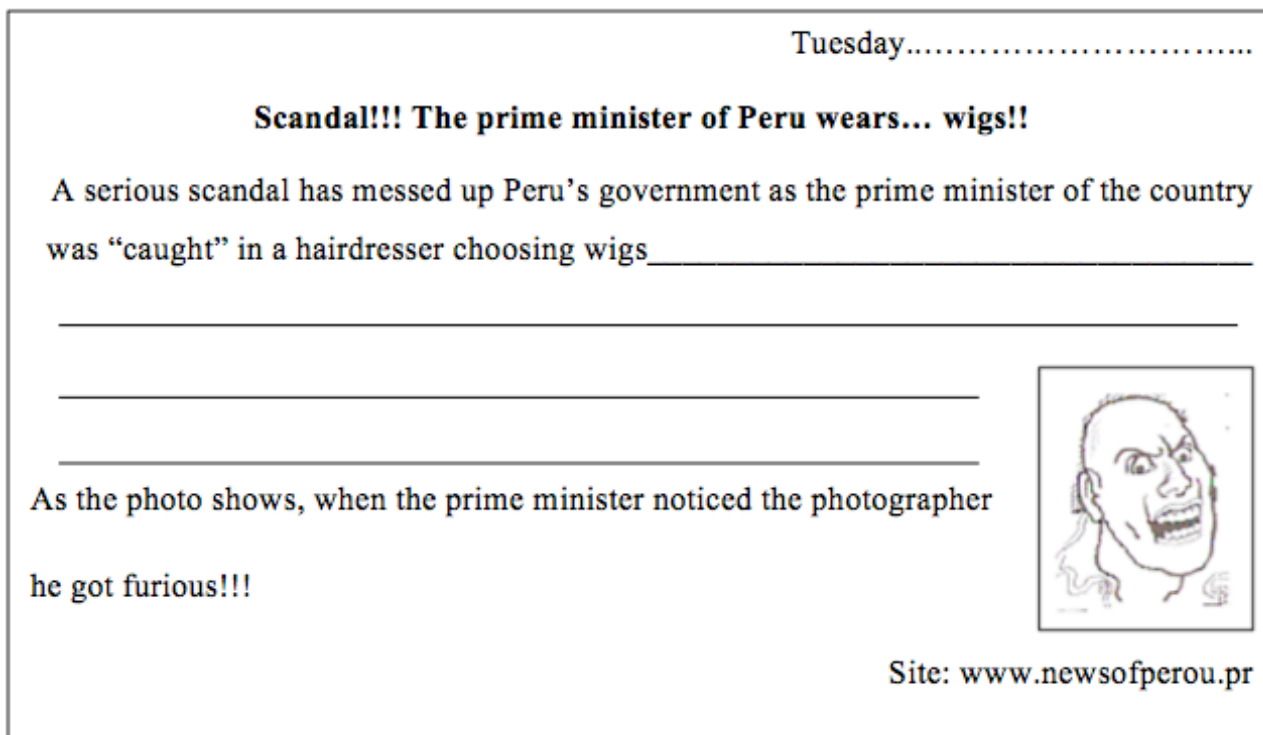
Figure 3. The article about the prime minister of Peru.

If students choose Emma not to answer to the phone call and visit the country of Ntolmandias or Lichoudistan, then they could write a letter that the heroine is supposed to have sent to her mother in order to describe the strange country she has visited (Cornett, 1999: 134) (Figure 4):

Emma decided not to answer to the phone call and follow the chubby chef to his strange country. She was so excited about her trip that she decided to write a letter to her mother so that she describes her that weird place. What do you think she wrote in her letter?

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[3] The image of the prime minister of Peru as well as the whole illustration of the book was created by Rania Varvaki (Trivizas, 1997: 133).

Hi mam,

How are you? At last I've arrived in _____. I'm writing you this letter so as to describe _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please write me back as soon as possible!!!

Lots of love,

Emma

Figure 4. Emma's letter.

3. Conclusions

We should emphasize the fact that further academic research about children's interaction with hypertexts is needed. Researchers face a variety of difficulties in approaching these types of texts on account of some factors, such as their structure (Miles, 2001: 61), so they are unable to approach them by using the logic structures that linear texts present (Hunt, 2000: 117). On the other hand, what is evident is the fact that the digital environment will continue to affect printed literature not only regarding to the quality of the printed texts but also referring to the actual form and content of the contemporary literature. The linear and sequential literary experience that traditional texts offer will be no longer the pred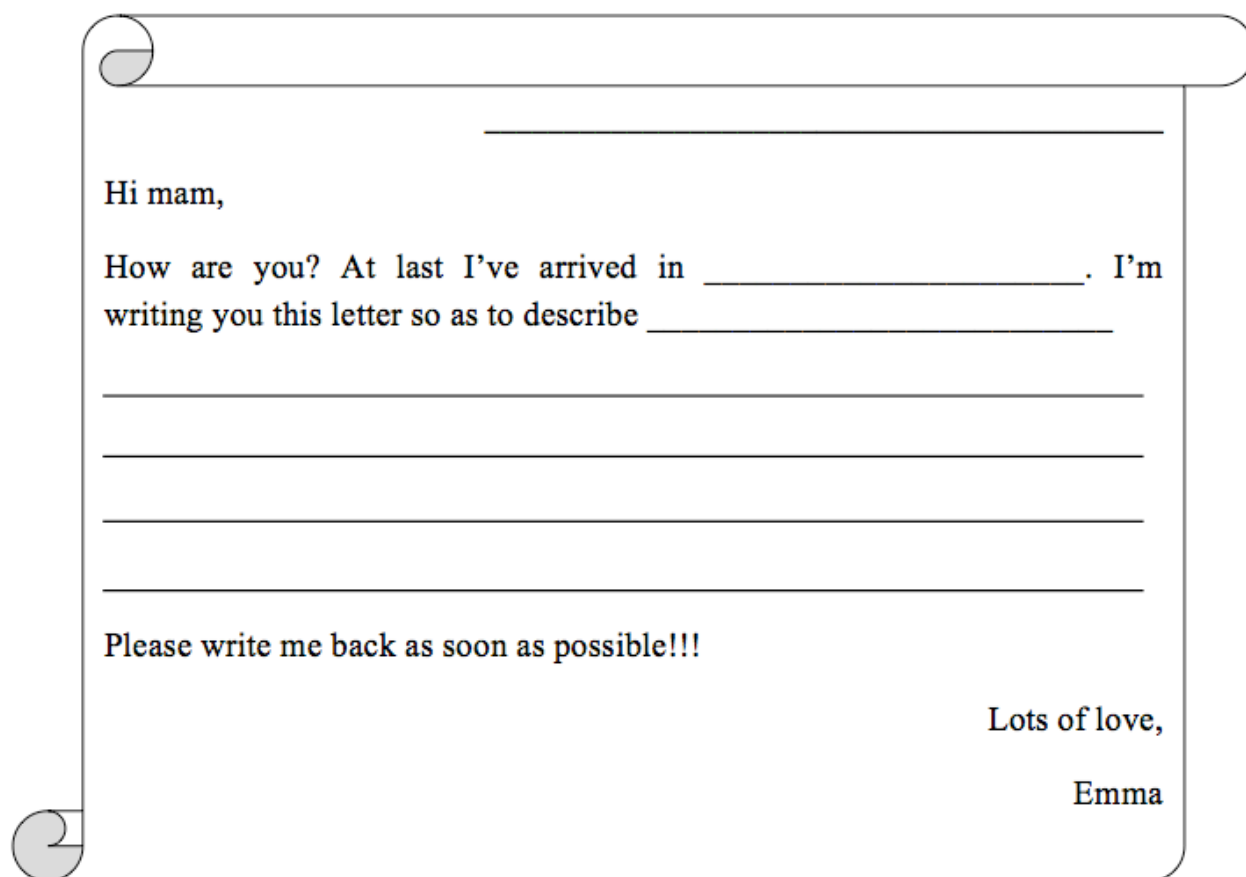ominant or favored mode. Indeed, Dresang (1997: 559- 560) underlines the fact that "the continuing radical changes in children's literature will follow a rhizomic pattern, a nonlinear, non-hierarchical alteration" on account of the technological influence.

As far as the pedagogical approach of the printed hypertexts, it has become clear that the instructional design may seem difficult, mostly at the part that refers to the coordination of all students in time – but through differentiated teaching educators could design a variety of didactic actions and creative students' tasks. Thus, the plot itself offers a series of textual options so that teachers diversify the activities that will allow children wander in the literary world they will create. On the other hand, this modern type of text has an additional pedagogical aspect as it offers young readers the opportunity to meet respectively the different perspectives of their classmates. Progressively, through team literary activities students will realize that different aspects may be used for sake of the collective benefit. There is another reason, though, for considering the printed hypertexts of this kind: they teach us how literary conventions change in

response to wider changes in society and culture. The implementation of new textual forms in the classroom offers numerous possibilities for students to explore the ways in which texts work. In an era dominated by mass media and new media, texts are bound to change. Students should be prepared for change and capable of responding effectively to many different kinds of texts.

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Sobre los autores

Sobre los autores

A continuación encontrará información sobre los autores que han publicado en este número:

Jaime Almansa Sánchez. Licenciado en Historia por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, con un máster en Arqueología Pública por el University College London y eterno doctorando, desde 2010 dirige la empresa JAS Arqueología S.L.U. y sus diferentes líneas de trabajo, incluyendo la editorial. Además de ser activista por una arqueología diferente, trabaja como consultor en Etiopía desde 2006.

María Jesús Bernal Martín. Licenciada en Filología Hispánica (2007) y en Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada (2010). Ha cursado estudios de Filosofía, concretamente, en el área de Estética y Teoría de las Artes. En 2008 completó el Periodo de Docencia del programa de doctorado "Vanguardia y Posvanguardia en España e Hispanoamérica" (Universidad de Salamanca). En esta misma universidad, ha logrado el título de máster "La enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera". En la actualidad está realizando su investigación principal sobre la cultura material del siglo XIX en el espacio literario español bajo la tutela del Dr. D. Fernando Rodríguez de la Flor Adánez.

Celia Corral Cañas. Becaria de Investigación PIRTU por la Junta de Castilla y León (2011) y FPU por el Ministerio de Educación (2011-2015), realiza su tesis doctoral en la Universidad de Salamanca. Ha superado el máster "Literatura Española e Hispanoamericana: estudios avanzados" y el periodo de docencia del doctorado "Vanguardia y Posvanguardia en España e Hispanoamérica. Tradición y rupturas en la literatura hispánica".

Daniel Escandell Montiel. Doctorando en la Universidad de Salamanca con una tesis sobre narrativas digitales, trabaja en el ELElab del Vicerrectorado de Innovación e infraestructuras de esa institución. Ha editado el libro *Best Served Cold: Studies on Revenge* (2010) y participado en volúmenes como *Literatura e internet. Nuevos textos, nuevos lectores* (2011) o *Nuevos hispanismos. Para una crítica del lenguaje dominante* (2012). Ejerce también como crítico de videojuegos en la revista en línea Vandal y es uno de los fundadores de la revista Caracteres.

Daniel Esparza. Profesor en el departamento de Estudios Románicos de la Universidad de Olomouc. Ha impartido clases como profesor visitante en las Universidades de Salamanca, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria y Málaga. Ha sido profesor-tutor de Geografía Humana en la UNED y presentado lecturas en la London School of Economics y en la Columbia University de Nueva York. Doctor en Ciencias Políticas, máster en Turismo y licenciado en Filosofía y Letras (Geografía e Historia). Ha publicado tres monografías, dos de ellas relacionadas con el estudio de la identidad, y más de una decena de artículos en revistas europeas y norteamericanas. Colaborador de El País y del Real Instituto Elcano.

J. Daniel García Martínez. Máster en Investigación y Docencia de la Lengua y la Literatura en la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, es en estos momentos doctorando en Medios

Audiovisuales y comprensión en la Universitat de les Illes Balears. Realizó la edición crítica de *Inés de Castro, Escena Trágico-Lírica* (GES XVIII/Ediciones Amnesia) y ha publicado artículos como "Entre: Entre Categorías anda el juego". Firma también el libro de relatos *Paso a nivel sin barrera.* Es docente en el Colegio Agora Portals International School y examinador de International Baccaulerate A1, EE y B1.

Vassiliki Gkouni. Maestra de Educación Primaria y doctoranda en la Universidad Nacional y Kapodistríaca de Atenas en la especialidad de enseñanza de la lengua y la literatura. Sus investigaciones se centran teoría literaria contemporánea, el acercamiento instructivo a la literatura infantil y la implementación de métodos contemporáneos de enseñanza a través de la literatura. En particular, ha participado en programas de investigación sobre biblioterapia, la función de los círculos de lectores en el aula y el uso de la enseñanza diferenciada a través de la literatura.

Tzina Kalogirou. Trabaja como profesora asociada en la Facultad de Educación Primaria (Departamento de Humanidades) de la Universidad Nacional y Kapodistríaca de Atenas. Su campo de investigación principal es la Literatura griega contemporánea y la Enseñanza de la literatura. Sus intereses académicos incluyen la lectura y respuesta literaria, la teoría y crítica de la literatura, los usos de la literatura en la educación y las relaciones entre literatura y artes visuales.

Beatriz Leal Riesco. Historiadora de arte, es investigadora *free-lance* en los Estados Unidos, desde donde escribe para diversos medios africanistas y es programadora del African Film Festival de Nueva York. Ha publicado múltiples artículos de teoría e historia cinematográfica en revistas tales como *Secuencias. Revista de Historia del Cine, Film-Historia, African Screens, Africaneando* o *Art-es*, editado libros y organizado seminarios, cursos y eventos centrados en cines minoritarios. Sus intereses se centran el papel de la música en el cine africano contemporáneo y en el papel del cineasta en la construcción de un discurso alternativo propio.

Sheila Lucas Lastra. Licenciada en Filología Hispánica por la Universidad de Salamanca y máster en Gestión de la Documentación por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Como profesora de español, ha trabajado en la Universidad de Salamanca y en Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas de Madrid. Como preparadora de textos, correctora y asesora lingüística, es colaboradora habitual de SGEL desde 2010 y ha intervenido en diversos proyectos para instituciones como la Fundación Instituto Castellano y Leonés de la Lengua o la Real Academia Española.

Enrique Martín Martín. Ingeniero informático especializado en la creación de aplicaciones web para bibliotecas. Ha trabajado en el ámbito de la digitalización para crear bibliotecas virtuales en el marco del proyecto Europeana gracias a su puesto en la empresa Digibís. Se declara defensor del OpenData y del OpenGovernment.

Alessandro Mistrorigo. Actualmente *Visiting Research Fellow* en la Queen Mary University of London, consigue el doctorado en la Universidad Ca' Foscari de Venecia en 2007 especializándose en la poesía española del sigo XX. Es autor de varios artículos publicados en

revistas internacionales y libros colectivos. Su actividad de investigación se dirige principalmente al lenguaje poético contemporáneo en relación con las tecnologías digitales y el elemento de la voz.

Pau Damià Riera Muñoz. Pianista, violonchelista y compositor, ha estudiado en el Conservatorio Superior de Música Municipal de Barcelona y en la Escuela Superior de Música de Cataluña (ESMUC). Combina la docencia con la actividad concertística. Ha trabajado junto a figuras como Calixto Bieito, Marc Rosich, Albert Guinovart, Abel Coll y Jordi Faura. Paralelamente, desarrolla su faceta como compositor, muy enfocada hacia el trabajo con medios audiovisuales, habiendo compuesto música para danza y teatro, y colabora habitualmente con la productora de animación 23 Lunes, junto al compositor y director de orquesta Carles Gumí.

Israel Roncero. Ha cursado Bellas Artes en la Universidad de Salamanca y el máster en Teoría y Crítica de la Cultura de la Universidad Carlos III. Su tesina versó sobre redes sociales y movimientos contraculturales con el título *La ventana abyecta. Persuasión y seducción en los nuevos espacios (in)materiales. Una aproximación antropológica.* Ha participado como ponente en varios congresos sobre feminismo, analizando el papel de la tecnología en la configuración del deseo y la sexualidad.

Vega Sánchez Aparicio. Licenciada en Filología Hispánica por la Universidad de Salamanca. Actualmente cursa los estudios de doctorado en Vanguardia y Postvanguardia en España e Hispanoamérica en la misma universidad. Concretamente, realiza su investigación sobre el escritor venezolano Juan Carlos Méndez Guédez.

Carlos Santos Carretero. Licenciado en Filología Hebrea y Árabe por la Universidad de Salamanca, está realizando su estudios de posgrado dentro del programa de doctorado de la misma universidad en torno a la literatura apócrifa hebrea. Trabaja como traductor de árabe, hebreo, inglés y español y como redactor en publicaciones electrónicas de ocio y tecnología, como Tallon4 y Ociomedia.

Eugenio Tisselli. Ingeniero en Sistemas Computacionales en el TEC de Monterrey, máster en Artes Digitales en la Universidad Pompeu Fabra (titulación de la que ha sido posteriomente profesor y codirector) y doctorando en Z-Node, ha trabajado como investigador asociado en Sony Computer Science Lab (París) y en el proyecto europeo TAGORA. Es miembro del grupo de investigación Hermenia, asociado a la Universitat de Barcelona. Ha llevado a cabo múltiples proyectos artísticos y desarrollado programas, webs y aplicaciones como MIDIPoet o el PAC (Poesía Asistida por Computadora). Como poeta ha publicado también libros como *El drama del lavaplatos*.

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