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CART351

Reflection 1

On hypertext and early net art

I read “Exprima Talks: Reading Hypertext with Mark Bernstein”, an interview of Mark Bernstein, chief Scientist at hypertext publishing company Eastgate Systems, on hypertext narratives and the future of digital content consumption. He talks about how the link might be “the most important new form of punctuation since the comma” and how the interactivity they allow has transformed the experience of writing and reading themselves. Then he turns into promoting StoryGate, a tool to facilitate the creation of complex hypertext narratives developed by Eastgate (Pressman).

Despite Bernstein talking about the future, I felt a somehow nostalgic retro feel when thinking about that way of using hyperlinks. Maybe it was because of the aesthetics of Eastgate website design or the aesthetics of the books published on Twine, another tool mentioned in the interview. That extensive use of hyperlinks remind me of the internet during the 2000s, a time when the internet seemed to me to be more experimental and explorative compared to the nearly prettier yet template-like uniform aesthetics which can be found across the internet these years. I had heard about hypertext narratives before, mainly in otome games and visual novels, a popular Japanese genre. I thought them to be quite niche with a specific fan base. Taking a closer look at Twine from a designer’s perspective, the complex entanglement of links which characterise

hypertext narratives is instinctively heretical as they go against simple navigation principles that we usually want from commercial websites. Yet, they are meant to be designed like this to allow the reader to get lost into the story line. And this is an extreme in the use of hypertext links. As I've been feeling recently that all websites look the same nowadays, hypertext narratives seem fresh, artsy yet worth exploring within the right context. So really, this reading has expanded my toolbox of techniques by adding one more component which could be used in the future.

Works Cited

Pressman. "Exprima Talks: Reading Hypertext with Mark Bernstein." *Publishing Perspectives*,
27 Feb. 2014,
<https://publishingperspectives.com/2014/02/exprima-talks-reading-hypertext-with-mark-berstein/>.