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HYPertextUAL INNOVATION IN EVGENIOS TRIVIZAS' *THE 88 DOLMADAKIA*

Abstract: Hypertextuality involves creating texts that are interconnected through digital hyperlinks, providing a network of related pieces of content that can be explored in a non-linear way. Evgenios Trivizas' *The 88 Dolmadakia* (1997) serves as a pivotal case study in this exploration, encapsulating the transformative potential of hypertextuality within children's literature. This modern Greek literary work distinguishes itself through a nuanced blend of text and illustration, offering a non-linear narrative structure that hinges on reader participation and metafictional techniques. Central to *The 88 Dolmadakia* is its dynamic narrative pathway, which relies on reader choices to dictate the course of events. Each reading yields a distinctive narrative outcome, underscoring the mutable nature of the narrative. Trivizas' employment of hypertextual strategies in this work not only amplifies the immersive quotient of the reading experience but also posits a profound commentary on the fluid boundaries of narrative construction. In synthesizing these elements, *The 88 Dolmadakia* emerges as an exemplar of the transformative potential of hypertextuality in children's literature, suggesting an avenue for further scholarly exploration into the adaptive and participatory dimensions of contemporary storytelling.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Greek illustrated children's literature has undergone a significant metamorphosis, adapting to the intricate cultural shifts and contemporary pedagogical standards. Historically, the narrative construct predominantly hinged upon textual content complemented by illustrations. However, considering the global literary renaissance propelled by digitalization, this genre has evolved into a more immersive and interactive medium.

The embrace of hypertextual narratives in children's literature marks a profound shift in the genre, a transformation aptly discussed by Yannicopoulou (2007a, 2007b). Modern Greek children's literature, while maintaining its traditional format, which typically refers to linear and print-based storytelling with a clear beginning, middle, and end, has seamlessly integrated branching narrative paths and reader-driven outcomes, making each reading experience unique. These hypertextual elements challenge traditional linearity and immerse readers in a dynamic, participatory storytelling experience. Although these modifications might resonate with the logic of digital interactivity, they are, in fact, innovations within the tactile confines of printed books, providing readers with an enriched, layered experience, appealing to both traditional and contemporary sensibilities.

As posited by Hammerberg (2001), this evolution should not be misconstrued as a diminishment of the printed medium's relevance. Rather, it underscores an adaptive recognition of shifting communicative modalities. While the printed literary artifact remains an esteemed possession, its intrinsic nature is experiencing a conceptual transformation. This isn't merely a consequence of technological assimilation; it represents an overarching paradigm shift in our understanding of the potentialities a book can encapsulate.

In amalgamating multimedia, and more pertinently, hypermedia components, contemporary literary works are not just restructuring the genre's traditional framework but are also recalibrating the dialogic relationship between the narrative and its consumer, that is, its reader.

CONCEPTUALIZING PRINTED HYPER-TEXT

Theodor Nelson (1981) introduced the term "hyper-text" within the context of computer-screen-based text systems. However, this concept has evolved, finding resonance in the realm of printed literature. Fundamentally, hyper-text subverts traditional reading paradigms. It represents not merely a divergence from linearity but a nuanced

reconceptualization of textual organization and narrative engagement. In this regard, my analysis is informed by Nelson's original term and it builds on Eliza Dresang's application of these principles to children's literature (Dresang, 1999). Dresang argues that hypertext “refers to text that branches and allows choices to the reader; it is usually associated with the computer, but is used in this book to describe a hypertext-like experience in the handheld book” (ibid: 21), thus granting the reader a significant degree of control over the narrative journey.

Notable examples of hyper-texts in children’s literature are the *Choose Your Own Adventure* book series, which have become synonymous with the concept of reader-led narrative. These books, which offer a multitude of endings based on reader choices, epitomize the very essence of hyper-textual autonomy within a printed format. Similarly, Jason Shiga's graphic novel *Meanwhile* (2010) leverages a physical system of tabs and pathways that challenge the reader to navigate through an intricate network of potential outcomes. *Black and White* (1990) by David Macaulay takes a different approach by presenting four concurrent narratives within a single book. Here, the hyper-textual experience is not just about choice but also about interpretation, as readers must untangle the interconnected tales that unfold across the pages.

The above books, distinct from conventional printed texts, which delineate a fixed narrative trajectory, propose a dynamic, reader-determined navigation. Such literary compositions lack a singular chronology; instead, they proffer multiple narrative trajectories, resonating with the interactive, non-linear attributes of digital hyper-texts characterized by interlinked segments or content nodes.

In our exploration of printed hyper-texts within children’s literature, we have observed a variety of attributes that mirror the flexibility and interactivity of their digital counterparts:

a) Narrative Autonomy: Analogous to their digital iterations, printed hyper-texts confer upon readers the agency to dictate narrative progression. Consequently, individual readers might experience divergent narrative pathways within an identical textual work.

b) Nodes and Interconnections: Central to the hyper-textual format are nodes—pivotal narrative junctures or salient events—and links, which function as conduits, steering readers across nodes, facilitating a stratified reading experience.

c) Narrative Networks: Beyond mere nodes and links, hyper-texts manifest as intricate narrative networks. Each potential narrative route constitutes this complex matrix, granting readers the liberty to chart their trajectory.

d) Reader Engagements: Printed hyper-texts inherently champion interactivity. Readers transition from passive recipients to active agents, their choices and pacing instrumental in shaping the emergent narrative.

e) Active Domains in Text: Mirroring Yannicopoulou's (2007a) observations, printed hyper-texts feature "active domains", paralleling the hyperlinks in digital formats. These zones enable readers to delve into deeper narrative layers, pursue side narratives, and cyclically engage with primary narrative tenets.

The inherent inquisitiveness of children renders them especially receptive to exploratory and interactive narrative structures. Hypertextual interventions in children's literature resonate with this propensity for discovery and autonomy. In an era marked by autonomy and interactive engagement, it is apropos that children's literature mirrors these societal shifts. Hypertextual children's literature augments the traditional reading paradigm, granting young readers the agency to sculpt and individualize their literary journeys.

EXPLORING *THE 88 DOLMADAKIA*: HYPERTEXTUAL INNOVATION IN GREEK CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Turning our attention into the nuances of Greek children's literature, *The 88 Dolmadakia* (Trivizas, 1997) stands out as a pivotal work that epitomizes the infusion of hypertextual elements into the traditional literary narrative. Authored by Evgenios Trivizas, this seminal piece not only showcases the adaptability of Greek tales in embracing modern storytelling techniques but also underscores the evolving expectations of its young readership. By juxtaposing classic narrative structures with innovative hypertextual elements, *The 88 Dolmadakia* serves as an exemplar of how children's literature is being reshaped in the face of technological and cultural shifts. This paper seeks to unpack the intricacies of Trivizas' work, offering a comprehensive analysis of its narrative strategies and its engagement with readers.

The essence of a book, to a considerable degree, is often first communicated through its cover, which comprises its imagery, title, and potentially, accompanying text (Genette, 1997). These elements work together to create an anticipatory horizon, or what Hans Robert Jauss (1977: 27) referred to as a "horizon of expectations" that guides potential readers towards or even away from engaging with the book. Regarding the cover of the book we are examining, we have noticed that the title of the book is particularly intriguing when viewed in isolation from the other elements of the cover due to its reference to cooking. Dolmadakia means "stuffed vine leaves". Small, distinctive in taste and simple, dolmadakia are a treat made from spring onions, dill, parsley and mint mixed with rice and wrapped in vine leaves. Trivizas, then, uses the word "fairy-multi-tales" as a subtitle of his book, suggesting the

existence of numerous interconnected stories encapsulated within a solitary overarching narrative. The phrase “fairy-multi-tales” performs a dual dance of intrigue. Immediately, it steers the reader towards the comforting world of children's fairy tales, evoking images of enchanted forests and magical creatures. However, the addition of “dolmadakia”, with its distinct culinary connotations, introduces an unexpected flavor to the mix (Oikonomidou, 2016: 68-69). This fusion of fairy tales with culinary nuances crafts an endearing yet humorous paradox (ibid). It's as if the book invites its readers to a whimsical banquet, where stories are both narrated and savored, teasing the palate with a blend of laughter and lore.

The book's cover serves as a visual feast, rich in colors and brimming with details that mirror the whimsical blend of tales within its pages. Illustrator Rania Varvaki masterfully weaves together iconic fairytale characters like princesses, witches, and a rabbit. Yet, the presence of unconventional elements such as an elephant and a dragon with black sunglasses adds an element of surprise. This intricate tapestry of symbols seems to resonate with the title's playful juxtaposition, promising readers an adventure where the familiar mingles with the unexpected. Just as one would decipher flavors in a gourmet dish, the cover challenges its viewers to unravel the layers of stories it hints at, beckoning them to dive into a narrative world as diverse and delightful as its cover.

The rear cover of the book also offers a compelling tableau that symbolizes the interconnectedness of magic and reality. Depicting a vivid, yet monochromatic panorama of a northern seascape, the illustration conveys a sublime intersection of fantasy and nature. Here, a princess engages in a dialogue of silent supplication with a polar bear, whose intentions remain enigmatically uncertain. Complicating this scene further is the reflected silhouette of a horse-riding figure, previously concealed in the darkness between the main subjects. This duality stimulates profound inquiries: What is the princess's relationship with the bear? What is the significance of the concealed figure emerging from the watery abyss?

The text within the rear cover of the book emphasizes its multifaceted nature, with a description such as “A magic book with a thousand stories hidden in the same story” underscoring its depth and breadth. As readers navigate this narrative landscape, they are consistently presented with divergent paths, ensuring that each reading experience remains distinct and personalized. This novelty isn't just reserved for the story itself, but also extends to the very act of reading. As if pulling back the curtain on a grand stage, the book begins with a guiding note. It doesn't merely guide readers through its pages but urges them to craft their very own tales. A standout phrase that captures the essence of this work is, “you decide”. Seen on the back covers and echoed throughout, it's a mantra that underscores the book's philosophy. It's an invitation to readers, especially young ones, to seize control of the narrative. This instructional text emphasizes not just the act of reading, but the art of co-creation.

Diving into the book's content, we should first highlight a distinct feature: the artistic choice to employ black and white illustrations. This characteristic is often more profound than mere aesthetic preference. Within the monochrome palette, there lies an inherent sense of timelessness. Each shade of gray, each contrast between the stark black and the pristine white, beckons the reader's imagination to infuse life and color. In doing so, the book becomes less of a passive experience and transforms into an interactive journey where each reader's perception of the story is tinged with their personal hues of understanding. Juxtaposed with this visual narrative is the written word. As the reader navigates the pages, they are met with an intricate dance between text and image. This interplay is a silent dialogue where each medium feeds into and builds upon the other. While the imagery offers a visual anchor, grounding the reader in the story's setting and atmosphere, the text weaves in-depth context, and nuance. Together, they guide the reader's interpretations, shaping their emotional responses and engagement. This balance in storytelling, where neither word nor image seeks to overshadow the other, suggests a harmonious relationship. It's as if the story is whispered in tandem – where one medium leaves off, the other picks up, ensuring the reader is continuously engaged and immersed. Beyond the immediate narrative, the choice of black and white bears symbolic resonance. In many cultural and literary contexts, these colors epitomize dualities – from the eternal struggle of good versus evil to the more nuanced interplay of clarity and ambiguity. By opting for this monochrome scheme, the book might be hinting at deeper thematic explorations, probing into the nature of contrasts, conflicts, and eventual harmonies that shape our existence.

As previously mentioned, rather than imposing a singular narrative progression, this work presents its readers with a plethora of narrative alternatives. This approach resonates with Dresang's (1999) conceptualization of “handheld hypertext”, ushering readers into a domain where choices mirror the interactivity inherent to digital hyperlinking.

One of the salient innovations in *The 88 Dolmadakia* lies in its adept integration of digital hypertextual principles within the traditional printed medium. Readers conversant with digital interactive narratives will discern parallels between the interactive dynamics of digital platforms and this literary work, wherein a singular decision (analogous to a digital click) can precipitate a myriad of divergent narrative outcomes. Trivizas masterfully transposes the adaptability and participatory nature of digital platforms onto the ostensibly fixed pages of a book, challenging traditional literary paradigms.

This hypertextual narrative methodology extends beyond merely proffering various conclusions. It reimagines the very fabric of storytelling, introducing variability in narrative progression, arcs, and denouements. Consequently, each reading, even if initiated from an identical starting point, as we will see below, can manifest as a distinct, novel literary expedition.

Contrary to conventional storytelling structures that prescribe a fixed narrative journey, *The 88 Dolmadakia* bestows agency upon its readers, allowing them the autonomy to navigate a narrative maze defined by choices and consequent outcomes. Central to this narrative is Emma, a young protagonist whose journey undergoes continuous transformation based on the decisions imposed by the reader. The narrative commences with an ostensibly ordinary event: the ringing of a telephone. Within the narrative, distinctive boxed texts emerge, directly posing queries to the reader. For example, “What do you want her to do?”. Readers can opt for Emma to answer, leading them to page 55, or choose to ignore, redirecting them to page 101. Upon deciding to have Emma answer, the unfolding story on page 55 reveals her response: “Hello! Who is calling?”. This action then prompts another crucial decision for the reader. The boxed text presents a quartet of possibilities for the caller's identity: Nancy, Emma's best friend; an unfamiliar individual with a deep voice; the prime minister of Peru; or the coach of the Green Team. Each choice propels the reader to a different page and storyline trajectory. Yet, this act serves as a catalyst, bifurcating the narrative into myriad directions. The reader's decision, be it to answer the call or disregard it, determines the subsequent narrative trajectory. Such decision points are interspersed throughout the narrative, enabling readers to sculpt Emma's adventure in a multitude of configurations. Readers, after reaching a conclusion, have the autonomy to revisit previous junctures—like the initial phone ring—and select alternative paths, embarking on an entirely new narrative adventure.

What's particularly ingenious is how these decisions are presented. Frequently readers are faced with riddles and questions that stimulate cognitive engagement. The riddles interspersed throughout the book serve a dual purpose. First, they act as gatekeepers to certain narrative arcs, challenging readers to decode them to proceed. By embedding these puzzles, Trivizas ensures that the narrative journey is not passive. Readers must actively engage with the text, piecing together clues, and unlocking subsequent sections of the story. In tandem with riddles, the questions posed in the book stand as reflective pauses. More than just guiding the narrative direction, they push readers to introspect, weighing personal biases, experiences, and preferences. These questions, while seemingly simple (for instance, if the reader chooses for Emma's mother to let her go to her friend's party, then to find the page that continues the story, the reader will need to add ten to one hundred and then add five), are profound decision nodes that shape the course of the story. It's notably intriguing that the reader is asked whether he is bored or not with the story, an act of choice that influences the outcome of the story. This direct engagement not only keeps the reader actively involved but also gives them a semblance of control over the narrative's pacing and direction. Such an approach acknowledges the reader's emotional state and preferences, making the reading experience deeply personalized and responsive.

Literary works, especially those aimed at children, are more than mere stories. They're intricately designed tapestries that convey societal values, beliefs, and norms. Children's literature serves not just as a medium of entertainment but as a mirror reflecting the values and moralities of a society. Within these narratives, underlying ideologies play a pivotal role in shaping the perception of young minds (Stephens, 1992). Ideological undertones of a narrative often emerge from the choices and dilemmas presented to its characters. Let's consider the quandary faced by Emma, a character from a tale, where she encounters a moral crossroad. Should she risk everything to aid her friends, who have been turned into twigs by a wicked witch? Or should she prioritize her safety, turning a blind eye to their predicament, and head back home? The narrative doesn't just unfold based on Emma's decision but casts a subtle shadow on the reader's own value system. If the reader leans towards the former choice, Emma, through various challenges, manages to rescue her friends, culminating in a joyful reunion. Conversely, if the latter path is chosen, Emma's journey concludes in solitude and sorrow.

It's in these moments of character choices and their redundant consequences that narratives reveal their ideological backbone. The text not only seeks to narrate an event but also attempts to nudge the reader towards certain societal norms and values. The silent cues, the unspoken judgments, and the outcomes based on character choices craft a framework of ideals that the narrative wishes to endorse. In essence, as readers venture through stories, they aren't merely passive observers. They're active participants influenced by the ideologies embedded within, and often left with profound insights about their own beliefs and moral compass.

This transformative role of the reader is even more pronounced in certain narratives. One of the salient characteristics, as we saw above, of printed hyper-texts is the deliberate disruption of linear reading. This departure from linearity is realized in *The 88 Dolmadakia* where, upon concluding each page, Trivizas posits a query concerning the forthcoming narrative trajectory. Subsequently, readers are empowered to select from a set of provided responses, thereby steering the subsequent course of the tale. This mechanism not only deviates from the traditional linear narrative structure but also places the reader at the helm of the story's progression (Oikonomidou & Karagianni, 2021: 115).

Trivizas's *The 88 Dolmadakia* stands as a testament to the evolving nature of narrative structures in literature. In stark contrast to traditional linear storytelling — which adheres to a well-demarcated beginning, middle, and conclusion — this seminal work propels the reader into a labyrinthine tapestry of narrative trajectories.

The unique brilliance of *The 88 Dolmadakia* lies in its audacious departure from a fixed denouement. Trivizas presents not a single, unequivocal ending but a cornucopia of

narrative termini. A remarkable forty-four pages conclude with the ostensibly definitive declaration: “The End”. Yet, each of these conclusions merely serves as a gateway to further narrative explorations.

However, Trivizas's ingenuity does not stop here. He further extends an open invitation to readers by introducing unresolved conclusions and by inviting them to draw their own ending in a blank big box, effectively providing them with a white canvas upon which to etch their personal narrative closures. This approach transcends mere reader engagement; it solicits co-authorship, beckoning readers to expand the ever-growing narrative cosmos of the book.

Such active participation is at the heart of metafiction, a concept explored by Waugh (1984), which disrupts the conventional boundaries between fiction and reality. Metafiction does not content itself with passively involving the reader; it is self-aware and acknowledges its own fictionality, thus inviting the reader into a dynamic relationship with the text. This self-awareness becomes a bridge to a deeper exploration of the narrative's power dynamics. Just as Trivizas invites co-authorship, metafiction acknowledges itself as a story, reminding readers that they are not merely passive consumers but active participants in the storytelling process. The narrative breaks the fourth wall, drawing the reader into a complicit bond with the author. However, this empowerment is complex. While Trivizas allows the reader to dictate the closure, the choices and paths offered within a metafictional work are still orchestrated by the author's original design. Yannicopoulou (2007b: 19-20) examines this nuanced interplay, noting that the reader's autonomy is both affirmed and subverted within the metafictional realm. Readers are encouraged to step into a role that feels commanding, yet they operate within the confines of the author's imagination.

This nuanced power play speaks to the very essence of metafiction. The author, by opening the door to reader involvement, cedes some control, while also subtly guiding the narrative's potential directions. Readers are granted the freedom to choose, but their options are part of a pre-defined set. It is this dance of power, control, and agency that characterizes the relationship between author and reader in Trivizas's work, as well as in metafiction at large. The balance between narrative autonomy and a structured set of choices represents the quintessential challenge of metafictionality—a challenge that not only enriches the reader's experience but also prompts a profound reflection on the nature of fiction, reality, and one's agency within these constructs.

The concluding page of the book distills the work's core philosophy. Far from providing resolution, it accentuates the narrative enigma. It portrays a young protagonist, emblematic of the reader, seemingly at the culmination of his tale. Yet, a signpost intervenes, inscribed with a cautionary proclamation: “Attention! Attention! This seems to be the last

page. But in reality, it is not". This potent imagery serves to subvert entrenched norms of literary closure. The depicted protagonist — and by extension, the reader — is immersed in an unending odyssey. An odyssey that is not confined by the book's physical boundaries but extends into the limitless realm of individual imagination.

CONCLUSION

In the specific context of *The 88 Dolmadakia* (Trivizas, 1997), our paper has pinpointed the role of hypertextuality as it redefines narrative progression and reader engagement. Trivizas' narrative in *The 88 Dolmadakia* casts new light on redefining narrative progression, offering readers an empowered role with choices that subvert standard storytelling conventions. Multiple pathways, divergent choices, and interactive elements disrupt traditional storytelling mechanisms. It's within this space that readers become active participants, choosing their journey through a myriad of hyperlinked possibilities. Through the innovative narrative structure of the book, we observe a microcosm of this literary evolution, one where the reader's freedom within the text becomes a focal point of exploration.

Hypertextual narratives take the escapist quality of literature a step further, introducing interactive elements that transform reading into a playful experience. Readers are not just passively absorbing a story; they're navigating complex narrative webs, making decisions, and directly influencing the plot. This gamified approach to storytelling, which echoes the decision-making processes in games like those faced by the character Emma, deepens reader engagement, and enhances the immersive nature of the narrative.

Enter the world of metafiction, where narratives are acutely self-aware, challenging readers to reflect on the nature of storytelling itself. This self-conscious fiction creates a duality between reality and fantasy, magnifying the reader's role in the storytelling equation. However, this heightened awareness also brings forth a paradox. While readers are endowed with the illusion of autonomy and the thrill of the game, they remain tethered to the confines pre-ordained by the author.

This dichotomy, central to our paper, presents a compelling contradiction. Readers, empowered by hypertextual choices and the gamified narrative structure, feel a sense of control. Yet, the overarching hand of the author is always present, subtly guiding, shaping, and limiting these choices. The freedom is vast but not boundless. Readers navigate a playground designed by the author, and while they can choose which slide to use or which swing to ride, they cannot step outside its fences.

In a literary world where stories are often handed down to readers, Trivizas' approach presents a significant shift in children's literature. He positions his young readers not as mere

spectators but as active participants. They aren't just consuming tales; they're shaping them. This inclusive tactic, cultivated by Trivizas, encourages young readers to be dynamic, to question, to explore, and to take charge and reveals a realm where boundaries are fluid, play is integral, and readers are both empowered and confined. Hypertextuality, metafictionality, and the enigma of reader freedom intermingle in a complex dance, promising an exciting future for contemporary literature.

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**HIPERTEKSTUALNE INOVACIJE U DELU EvgeniosA Trivizasa 88
DOLMADAKIA**

Rezime: Hipertekstualnost uključuje stvaranje tekstova koji su međusobno povezani digitalnim hiperlinkovima i na taj način kreira mrežu povezanih sadržaja koji se mogu istraživati na nelinearan način. *88 Dolmadakia* EvgeniosA Trivizasa (1997) je predmet ovog istraživanja, u kojem se razmatra transformativni potencijal hipertekstualnosti unutar dečje književnosti. Ovo moderno grčko književno delo ističe se kombinacijom teksta i ilustracije, nudeći nelinearnu narativnu strukturu koja se oslanja na učestvovanje čitaoca u delu i na metafizijske tehnike. Za *88 Dolmadakia* je specifičan dinamičan narativan sled, koji se oslanja na izbore čitaoca kako bi diktirao tok događaja. Svako čitanje rezultira jedinstvenim narativnim ishodom, čime se ističe promenljiva priroda narativa. Upotreba hipertekstualnih strategija u ovom delu ne samo da naglašava ulogu čitaoca već i ilustruje koliko su fluidne granice konstrukcije narativa. S obzirom na to da obuhvata ove elemente, *88 Dolmadakia* se pojavljuje kao primer transformativnog potencijala hipertekstualnosti u dečjoj književnosti i sugerise pravac za dalje naučno istraživanje promenljivih i interaktivnih dimenzija savremenog pripovedanja.

Ključne reči: dečja književnost, Evgenios Trivizas, hipertekst, interaktivno pripovedanje, metafizičnost

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