Hypertext Narrative and Globalisation: Studying the Cultural Intersection of Carnivalesque and Altermodernism in Michael Joyce's *Twelve Blue*

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Abstract

Globalisation has brought the world together and technology has helped it do so efficiently. It has eliminated the idea of distance by proposing virtual proximity so much that everything seems almost the same. Although this cultural homogenisation leads the path towards wider accessibility, it has also resulted in a lack of originality and uniqueness. This article aims to explore the structure of Michael Joyce's work *Twelve Blue* to understand the contemporary cultural significance of hypertext narrative construction in this globalised context. By drawing from the notion of carnivalesque by Mikhail Bakhtin and altermodernism by Nicolas Bourriaud, it seeks to present the function of hypertext as that of creating singularities within a totalization of heterogeneous values. The nodal standpoint of this kind of narrative, where the chaos of the carnival and altermodernist individuality converge, represents the inherent complication of our cultural ethos faced by all individuals. The article argues that hypertexts like *Twelve Blue* address this complexity and writers like Joyce make sure that their work structurally replicates the dilemma of this age. Moreover, it is posited that instead of mourning the loss of a traditional reading process which had stability, *Twelve Blue* celebrates the newfound authority of choice with readers of a literary work. The article is thus an attempt to reconcile the hypertext narratology of *Twelve Blue* with our present cultural sensibility in terms of its disconnection within connection, singularity within standardisation, and chaos within stability.

Keywords: hypertext narrative, globalisation, *Twelve Blue*, altermodernism, Bourriaud, carnivalesque, Bakhtin

Introduction

The technological boom and internet revolution of the twenty first century has had the most important impact on the reading and writing preferences of today's generation. Technologies like hypertext and hypermedia are a product of this age and they are an experimental tool in the hands of the creators of digital literature who are constantly trying to represent "something distinctly new."[1] Hypertext fiction, literature created with hyperlinks, is an invention in this direction. It is a literature that seeks to disrupt, what may be called, normative or traditional literature. Ideas like non-linearity, surrealism, decentering, etc., which were a challenge for the writers of print, have become the central motif for the writers of hypertext who are dealing with the representational demand of globalised times.

Michael Joyce's first web hypertext *Twelve Blue* is made on the Storyspace software. It is a work that narrates twelve different stories, with twelve different perspectives, on an

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[1] J. Yellowlees Douglas, *The End of Books or Books Without End? Reading Interactive Narratives* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 2.

interface that is almost entirely blue. It seems like a collected anthology of different works that are linked with one another in a web-like structure. Unlike Joyce's other hypertext *afternoon, a story*,[2] *Twelve Blue* has significantly different characteristics due to which it becomes important to study the narrative quality of this work, which according to Ulmer "is a brilliant probe of the direction in which on-line writing must inevitably evolve".[3]

There are two points of analysis of this study: reading *Twelve Blue* as a carnivalized hypertext and establishing it as the space for altermodern singularities. In the contemporary global world, the emergence of hypertext technology and the production of literary works like these can be interpreted in several ways. It may be looked at with a Bakhtinian lens where all elements are brought together at a carnival commonplace and homogenised to produce a totality that represents global culture, or one may look at it as a literary transgression in the lines of altermodern theory that seeks to disrupt homogenisation and produce singular representations for individual values. As both interpretations are equally convincing, one is forced to find the common link between them, which is - globalisation. The Bakhtinian interpretation looks at *Twelve Blue* as the result of globalisation, whereas the altermodern interpretation looks at it as the necessary revolution which seeks to disrupt it. This common link is the very cultural dilemma that each individual is caught within. *Twelve Blue*, with its structure and content, does not seek to resolve this dilemma by giving the readers something to hold on to on a platter, rather, it invites the readers on an explorative journey of global values and ethics in a surreal way and rejoices on the journey without seeking a resolution or a closure. Before talking about the carnivalesque and altermodernism, the article first seeks to analyse the narrative construction of *Twelve Blue* and draws out a brief comparison between hypertext and print literature. This is essentially done to study how the narrative choices are made by the writers of both these kinds of literature and what it leads to. This section also talks about the aesthetics of the *Twelve Blue* interface and how it contributes to the overall experience. Only after establishing some important points, the article then moves on to talk about the carnivalesque and altermodernism in the context of the work under study.

Nick Fulton in his review calls *Twelve Blue* "poetry explored through technology" which, in the course of one's reading, seems to be the best definition for this work.[4] It is apt to treat Joyce's work as poetry because a poem does not necessarily need a plot, a central theme, or even a specific structure. Poetry can flow on the pages (in this case a screen), it can talk about things that are diverse in the same space, and it can be full of "paradoxical spiritual musings."[5] Poetry, like Joyce's narrative, can be sublime.

The Narrative Construction of *Twelve Blue*

Twelve Blue contains 269 randomly organised links and 96 spaces. Praised for its aesthetic literary representation of the colour blue, it is often compared with William Gass's *On Being Blue* which itself is a philosophical meditation on this colour. To initiate this comparative conversation Joyce himself quotes Gass on the first page of his hypertext – "So a random set

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[2] Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story* was written in 1987 and is amongst the early works written using hypertext technology. It does not employ the use of any significant colour or stylistic techniques like *Twelve Blue*.

[3] Greg Ulmer, 'A Response to *Twelve Blue* by Michael Joyce', *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1997). At: https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/1606. Accessed 22/3/2023.

[4] Nick Fulton, 'A Review of *Twelve Blue*', *CultureNet @ CapilanoU*, 6 November (2009). At: https://culturenet.wordpress.com/2009/11/06/a-review-of-twelve-blue/. Accessed 19/03/2023.

[5] Arnaud Regnauld, 'The Ghostly Touch of the Blue Devils' Second Coming: Reading *Twelve Blue* by Michael Joyce', *French Journal of American Studies*, vol. 141, no. 4 (2014), p. 145. At: https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-d-etudes-americaines-2014-4-page-145.htm. Accessed 15/03/2023.

of meanings has softly gathered around the word the way lint collects. The mind does that."[6] Joyce took Gass's words too literally and gave the world a hypertext that not just represents this statement but performs it. As a collection of lint has no structural coherence, *Twelve Blue* lets go of it too and Joyce has made sure that it adds to the aesthetic beauty of his work as a whole.

When we talk about hypertext narrative construction, we do not think about it in terms of a mere writing process. It is more than that. It is a process of 'creating' meaning where meaningful creation does not exist. According to Ben Thomas,

> We understand the meaning of an object in terms of the meanings of other objects - other chunks of reality to which our brains have assigned certain characteristics. In the brain's taxonomy, there are no discrete entries or "files" - just associations that are more strongly or more weakly correlated with other associations.[7]

As hypertext does not rely on associations for constructing a narrative, creating and finding meaning in such works can be difficult. But, if we give up on the process, it leaves us with nothing but traditional production and ordinary experiences. In a traditional print narrative, the writer chooses one event which is preceded and succeeded by another single unique event to produce a sense of linear association between different plot sections. In each of these stories "the before is antecedent to the after, the past comes before the present, the present has repercussions on the future."[8] During this writing process, the writer has various options to choose a single event from and she chooses that which is the best, best in terms of which event encapsulates all, and compromises on none of the other ideas. This type of plot progression produces a narrative that is homogenised and generalised to its core.

In *Twelve Blue* Joyce has revolutionised this very idea of narrative choices. Rather than choosing just one master event of all, he organised all the other possibilities in a window next to the main text which contains a range of URLs that can take a reader to other lexias.
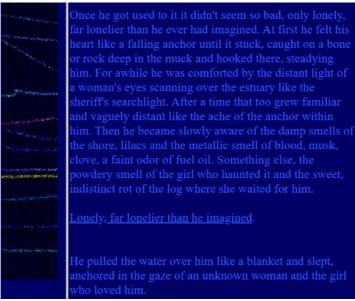

Once he got used to it it didn't seem so bad, only lonely, far lonelier than he ever had imagined. At first he felt his heart like a falling anchor until it stuck, caught on a bone or rock deep in the muck and hooked there, steadying him. For awhile he was comforted by the distant light of a woman's eyes scanning over the estuary like the sheriff's searchlight. After a time that too grew familiar and vaguely distant like the ache of the anchor within him. Then he became slowly aware of the damp smells of the shore, lilacs and the metallic smell of blood, musk, clove, a faint odor of fuel oil. Something else, the powdery smell of the girl who haunted it and the sweet, indistinct rot of the log where she waited for him.

Lonely, far lonelier than he imagined.

He pulled the water over him like a blanket and slept, anchored in the gaze of an unknown woman and the girl who loved him.

Figure 1 - Michael Joyce, 'Twelve Blue', *Eastgate Systems* (1996). At: http://www.eastgate.com/TwelveBlue/Twelve_Blue.html. Accessed 03/01/2023.

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[6] William Gass, *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1991), p. 7.
[7] Ben Thomas, 'Meaning on the Brain: How Your Mind Organizes Reality', *Scientific American*, 26 December (2012). At: https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/meaning-on-the-brain-how-your-mind-organizes-reality/. Accessed 03/01/2023.
[8] Sergio Cicconi, 'The Shaping of Hypertextual Narrative', *Cise Net*. At: https://www.cisenet.com/the-shaping-of-hypertextual-narrative/. Accessed 26/03/2023.

As readers, we can indulge in a digressive experience by clicking on the threads branching on this left margin of the *Twelve Blue* interface and refuse to compromise on other possibilities. George P. Landow in his foundational work *Hypertext 3.0* carries out the fundamental comparison between Aristotle's theorisation of a plot and Hypertext form.[9] He opines that Hypertext poses a challenge to linearity in literature and "calls into question ideas of plot and story current since Aristotle."[10] By not opting to choose only one event, Joyce has posed a similar challenge to print literature.

Another noteworthy characteristic of this work is its multiple entry points. There are eight ways via which one can start reading the text. All these eight links are mentioned numerically on the first page of the text. Although these entry points are part of a whole that is *Twelve Blue*, they can still be interpreted as eight different ways to start the text. To further undercut the idea of totality, Joyce has also given the option of entering the text by clicking on the picture of the bars or threads on this page.
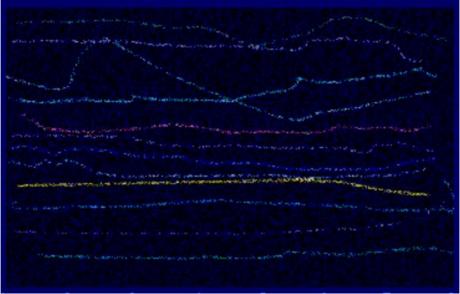

Figure 2 - Joyce, 'Twelve Blue'.

Choosing one from this plethora of ways of beginning a text is like flipping a book's pages and randomly deciding to begin reading from any. Joyce's endeavour is not just undercutting the literature of print, but it is also a celebration of a human being's most primal instinct – the act of choosing. Thus, what *Twelve Blue* really represents is up to the reader and how she chooses to interpret it. Figure 2 consists of twelve threads and almost all of them are shades of blue. There are only two threads which are of different colours, one pink and the other yellow. Critics have suggested that while experiencing the text, these threads sometimes gave them the "semblance of continuity" but they soon realise that it is the result of a desperate mind to find some connection between the lexias and associate one meaning with another.[11] So, the best

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[9] Aristotle was a Greek philosopher whose theories on the construction of a literary work were adopted and followed for centuries. Juxtaposing his theorisations with hypertext portrays how much literary studies have evolved over time.

[10] George P. Landow, *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization*, 3rd edn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 218.

[11] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, 1st edn (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 228-229.

way to read it is to actually drift through it and follow what Gass suggested. If one tries to control the text by purposefully navigating it, it will be extremely difficult to reveal its thematic logic.

The dark blue backdrop with the light blue text of *Twelve Blue* seamlessly represents Gass's imagism of meanings gathering around the word like lint collects.[12] Imagine a central theme, in this case, the colour blue, and now picture the 269 lexias of this hypertext gathering around this theme, gradually falling, piling up randomly. Now imagine yourself, the reader, picking out one lexia at a time and reading it for its own sake and not for the sake of the entire pile. This is what Joyce wanted us to experience as readers. For him "hyperfiction is like sitting in a restaurant in the murmur of stories, some fully known, some only half-heard, among people with whom you share only the briefest span of life and the certainty of death."[13]

The Blue Carnival

Mikhail Bakhtin talked about "carnivalized literature" in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* when he traced the "carnival sense of the world" in Dostoevsky's works.[14] He writes:

> We are calling this transposition of carnival into the language of literature the carnivalization of literature…Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants live in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect; that is, they live a carnivalistic life.[15]

After several decades, almost a century, it seems apt to trace the carnivalesque in the hypertext form because of its tendency to transform literature, or at least our understanding of literature and its forms. Similar to a carnival, there is no division between a writer (performer) and a reader (spectator) of hypertext, they both participate actively in the narrative process and are almost a part of it. In its own way, hypertext overturns the established patterns of writing, subverts hierarchies, and questions the essence of truth and meaning. A critic has also suggested that "the hypertext link would seem to be the most daring peripeteia of all because of the way it shocks the reader and defies any narrative expectation whatsoever.[16]

Twelve Blue as a hypertext adheres to the carnivalistic tendencies of the genre in terms of its form, content, and thematic presentation. There are several characters, some named and some unnamed, representing the atmosphere of a carnival. There is not one uniform plot or a single main character. Along with the ambiguity of personas, meaning is ambiguous too. The twelve threads in the left window represent the twelve months in a year but the first thread does not necessarily represent January, and the last one does not represent December. All the hierarchies are suspended and there are no justifications given for it. "A free and familiar attitude spreads over everything: over all values, thoughts, phenomena, and things."[17] Symbols like the "whirly wheel"[18] present in some of the lexias account for a direct indication of the presence of the carnivalesque mode in *Twelve Blue*. Moreover, the writing style and thematic experimentation of Joyce make it more and more tangible and identifiable. His use of dualistic

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[12] Gass, *On Being Blue*, p. 7.

[13] Michael Joyce, 'Forms of Future', *MIT Communications Forum*. At: https://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/legacy/papers/joyce.html. Accessed 26/03/2023.

[14] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 8th edn, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 107.

[15] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 122.

[16] Anthony Enns, 'Don't Believe the Hype: Rereading Michael Joyce's *Afternoon* and *Twelve Blue*', *Currents in Electronic Literacy*, vol. 5 (2001). At: https://currents.dwrl.utexas.edu/fall01/enns/enns.html. Accessed: 08/03/2023.

[17] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 123.

[18] Joyce, '*Twelve Blue*'.

carnival imagery is also prominent in how he frames the sentences – "[h]e was falling inside-out and inverse, from dark to light, from bottom to top, from death to life, from silence to the sound of stars and the sirens of the police cruisers."[19] *Twelve Blue* thus becomes a space for the writer and the reader to experience the interaction of all the lexias freely, a space which, in post-structuralist terminology, "escapes structurality."[20] In this contemporary globalised time, contrary to Derrida's conception of his general audience, "the notion of a structure lacking any center" does not represent the "unthinkable" anymore.[21] *Twelve Blue's* narrative construction is a perfect example of how a text should not necessarily be constructed around a central character, event, or theme. There is decentering "and something of a displacement in which events along a single thread in fact violate the larger time of the characters sensibilities."[22]

While all the talk about non-linear narratives, decentering, and carnivalesque leads one to think about *Twelve Blue* as a fictional narrative, it is unjust to look beyond it. According to Joyce, "*Twelve Blue* explores the way our lives – like the web itself or a year, a day, a memory, or a river – forms patterns of interlocking, multiple, and recurrent surfaces."[23] In a globalised world, one which has become much smaller, where distance seems virtual, where all are one and one is all, a technical anomaly like hypertext becomes a common meeting ground like the carnival where heterogeneous perspectives and genres find a representational space. They all cluster together like Gass's lint without the rules of a structure and become a part of a dynamic totality while constantly interacting with each other. Our cultural ethos with its technological implications finds its mirror image in both the form and content of *Twelve Blue* and other such hypertexts.

The Altermodern Transgression
In an interview with Bartholomew Ryan, Nicolas Bourriaud defined altermodernism as "the specific modernity according to the specific context we live in – globalisation, and its economic, political and cultural conditions."[24] According to him, altermodernism is characterised by the revolution against standardisation and its core lies in "the experience of wandering – in time, space and mediums."[25] In a world that is fully dependent on technological stability and cultural uniformity, altermodernism poses a threat to globalisation and its implication of standardised practices and meanings.

As a theory, altermodernism reflects the aesthetics of a hypertext narrative where all lexias are randomly organised with the spirit of multiplicity. When he curated the fourth Triennial exhibition at Tate Britain, Nicolas Bourriaud organised it in a way that represented

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[19] Joyce, '*Twelve Blue*'.
[20] Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Theoryisms*, ed. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay (Delhi: Worldview, 2015), p. 133. Derrida points out that structurality, as a philosopher's discourse, is inherently abstract. He does not agree with the philosopher's obsession with relying on a 'center' which is supposed to control the 'play' of the entire structure without participating in it. Derrida problematises the entire myth of this center by saying that as it does not participate in play, it does not lie inside the structure, but outside it, as the entire purpose of the structure is play. This is how the center escapes what is widely known as 'structurality'. Now, as the center is not there to control play within the structure, all the elements engage in free play and thereby lead to the deconstruction of the structure itself.
[21] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 133.
[22] Joyce, 'Forms of Future'.
[23] Joyce, 'Forms of Future'.
[24] Bartholomew Ryan, 'Altermodern: A Conversation with Nicolas Bourriaud', *Art in America*, 16 March (2009). At: https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/interviews/altermodern-a-conversation-with-nicolas-bourriaud-56055/. Accessed 15/03/2023.
[25] Ryan, 'Altermodern'.

"scattered or fragmented forms, archipelago-like, and the impression of a journey."[26] This altermodernist organisation is similar to the creative style of hypertext writers where more importance is given to the sense of fragmentation, and the negation of the ideas like beginning, middle, end, and closure which ultimately defy the traditional structural norms and break the narrative into separate chunks of information. In the *Altermodern Manifesto* published for the exhibition, Bourriaud writes –

> A new type of form is appearing, the journey-form, made of lines drawn both in space and time, materializing trajectories rather than destinations. The form of the work expresses a course, a wandering, rather than a fixed space-time. Altermodern art is thus read as a hypertext.[27]

If we trace Bourriaud's description in *Twelve Blue*, we easily come across a fair number of lines drawn in both space and time. The lines on the left side, as shown in Figure 1, can be considered the literal example of what has been talked about in the Manifesto. As an altermodernist hypertext, *Twelve Blue* is fairly experimental and represents an archipelago-like structure where various lexias are linked with each other to form a network. As readers, it becomes impossible for us to trace where the narrative begins and ends. As mentioned previously, there is no centre to this structure as the text cannot be looked at as a structure at all. "The narrative structure of the text has no exposition, middle or end; it is entirely nonlinear because it is composed of multiple reading paths and over-lapping content."[28] Because of its non-linearity, the idea of closure grows distant and the reader becomes more active in the process of reading.

Since the very beginning, our minds have been conditioned to treat linear representations of meaning as authentic and true and anything different is either termed as meaningless, or simply false. With hypertexts like *Twelve Blue*, our literary history has encountered a "right-angled" break, which is "abrupt, cataclysmic" and has made "a drastic, even an absolute, difference."[29] Following this type of "right-angled" break, it is impossible to look at literature with a traditional lens and it also becomes pertinent to understand that our literary history does not represent linear and homogeneous values anymore. What it does now is let the readers decide what they want it to represent. As a puzzle, *Twelve Blue* wants the readers to fix the pieces at the right places but it does not decide on any standard or correct place for any piece. Determining how the narrative 'fits' is now a reader's prerogative. By giving a certain kind of authority to the readers and taking some away from the authorship, *Twelve Blue* as an altermodern hypertext breaks the standardised chains that globalisation has brought with it. Regardless of its networked totality and carnival unitedness, each element of *Twelve Blue* has its individual presence throughout the narrative. Not a single lexia exists for the sake of furthering the plot or enabling the narration. Rather than being homogenised for creating substantial meaning, all of the lexias enhance the digital reading experience by

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[26] Ryan, 'Altermodern'.

[27] Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Altermodern Manifesto: Postmodernism Is Dead', *Tate Britain* (2009). At: https://web.archive.org/web/20090513070735/http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/altermodern/manifesto.shtm. Accessed 25/03/2023.

[28] Ashraf Taha Mohamed Kouta, 'Narrative Nonlinearity and the Birth of the Wreader: A Hypertext Critical Reading of Selected Digital Literary Texts', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 62, no. 5 (2020), p. 4. At: https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2020.1804820. Accessed 26/03/2023.

[29] M. H. Abrams, 'The Design of Biblical History', *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 36. The phrase "right-angled" break was first used by M. H. Abrams in his description of the line of change in Christian history. According to him, the changes in general history are gradual and they happen continuously but changes in Christian history happened abruptly, for example, the creation of the world, the fall of humanity, etc. The phrase "right-angled" break in history can thus be metaphorically used for events that did not happen gradually and after which the entire course of that field changed forever.

introducing fragmentation, disorientation, and waywardness which is unique for all. The use of disparate images furthers these feelings and altermodern transgressions grow out of this arrangement.

If our globalised world finds stability in standardisation, hypertexts like *Twelve Blue* work towards creating chaos which is the undercurrent of the global façade. They create singularities and singular experiences for each reader by refusing to follow the normative regulations of a writing process. This leads to readers enjoying the freedom of interpretation in the truest sense of the word. With a rise in psychological studies that focus on individual aspects, a text like *Twelve* Blue becomes the most relevant literary creation because it invites and encourages individual interpretations in practice, not just in theory, by bringing together a wide array of subjects and themes. The altermodern experiment too "weaves disparate elements together"[30] to represent our cultural ethos in these literary works, as Joyce does in the text "[i]t is not the season for love, however, thin blue snow in the air, distant carols. There's a rumour someone drowned in the river. The evening star is icy phosphor. You'll be doing alright with your Christmas of white but I'll have a blue, blue, blue."[31] Here Joyce has brought together several thematic concerns in one place, yet none loses its importance. We know that it is December because of Christmas, and we know that someone drowned. Love and death find representation in the same narrative space. Although this can be termed as a carnivalesque dichotomy, the mention of these same motifs throughout the hypertext in different ways does not lead one to cancel out the other. The drowned boy somehow emerges in the folds of other lexias at least expected times and constantly reminds us of the presence of death throughout, similarly, the motif of love is adopted and discarded in different places. The narrator also asserts that he wants his own blue Christmas, not a homogenised white one. This creates a story which is weaved into different threads without merging. A story that allows "new intercultural connections."[32]

On one hand, there is the hypertext carnival and on the other hand, the altermodern hypertext. They seem like opposites yet represent our contemporary cultural sensibility in astonishing ways. The dilemma of a carnival cluster and modern fragmentation represents a scenario where the contemporary individual has to find her way through the labyrinth of choices – both narratorial and real. She can choose her way through the threads on the left margin or continue with the provided link within the text. What she might discover is unpredictable, much like the world is. We can just hope that "tunnels in her own or any body likewise [lead] to impossibly bright vistas."[33]

Conclusion

Studying the narrative construction of *Twelve Blue* with respect to ideas like the carnivalization of literature and altermodernism seems to be a wide point of analysis in literary studies. But, when we look at it through a contemporary lens, its familiarity becomes shocking. Critics have suggested that "hypertext could be recognised as the direct effect of the emergence of new technology and communications, especially after the advent of internet."[34] Although this is true, we cannot ignore the fact that along with being a product of a globalised culture, hypertext

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[30] Alison Gibbons, 'Altermodernist Fiction', *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, ed. J. Bray, A. Gibbons, and B. McHale (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 240.

[31] Joyce, '*Twelve Blue*'.

[32] Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, ed. James Gussen and Lili Porten (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009), p. 40.

[33] Joyce, '*Twelve Blue*'.

[34] Khalid Alqadi, 'Globalization, Hypertext and Literature: Changes in Authoring and Reading', *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, vol. 4, no. 11 (2014), p. 63. At: http://www.aijcrnet.com/journals/Vol_4_No_11_November_2014/7.pdf. Accessed 26/03/2023.

is also an apt representation of it. With the boom in technological innovation, several means were developed to create art and literature. But it was not just this that was affected by technology. People's lives and perspectives too were changing. So, there was an imminent need to produce a model that could encapsulate this distance from an old but familiar world and the proximity to a future that is expected and new. While digitality in literature produced old texts in new formats, it was hypertext that really captured the essence of this post-modern age by addressing the dilemmas that came with the times and the sense of meaninglessness felt by people.

Hypertext works like *Twelve Blue* contain within themselves the politics of global homogenised representation as well as the revolution against it. It is a kind of literature where our contemporary stability of mixed culture is undercut with unmediated chaos of versatile feelings. The rebellion that this form poses to the print narrative is a rebellion from within the system. By being a product and a part of global technological advancement, hypertext has resisted its tendencies of standardisation from within. The structure of the web makes it possible for writers like Joyce to experiment with writing styles and include such polarisation in them. For the writers of the print, this is not possible because of their dependence on content only. The restriction of the printed pages which are numerically organised does not give them the liberty to experiment with the form of their literature. *Twelve Blue* is the kind of literature where two diverse concepts like carnivalesque and altermodernism converge. Some of the dominant voices in its narrative account for people who are never assigned a name by Joyce in the entire text. It is full of characters that can be identified only via pronouns. Many lexias begin and end with what "she" is thinking or what "he" is doing. It somehow becomes a collective global consciousness with similar concerns. Critics have also observed that "characterhood, in *Twelve Blue*, is a fuzzy predicate"[35] because some of them are given names while others are just described. Yet, along the way of the narrative, we come across characters who have individual personalities who, apart from being in a pool with others, maintain their unique presence throughout and become the advocates for altermodern singularities.

Although *Twelve Blue* comes with its own inherent feelings of dejection and death, along with "ruptures generated by mourning"[36] yet one cannot say that it mourns the loss of something bigger than itself – like a structure of associations. Happy with its narrative, the text flows freely from screen to screen and lets the reader lead the way without any biased expectations. N. Katherine Hayles compares its narrative to "tides flowing in and out of an estuarial river" where all the elements like characters, images, and events seep into each other.[37] Joyce's text is indeed like this. It is a river of stories that branch into several directions, some part ways, and some continue towards an indefinite end. One cannot possibly define the narrative structure of texts like these and calling it non-linear is not enough. Yet, any set vocabulary for defining hypertext literature would put shackles on its fluidity. This is a problem that hypertext literary theorists can seek to resolve.

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[35] Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality*, p. 232.

[36] Joelle Gauthier, 'Review', *Hypermedia Art and Literature Directory*, 21 July (2009). At: https://nt2.uqam.ca/en/repertoire/twelve-blue-0. Accessed 26/03/2023.

[37] N. Katherine Hayles, 'From Page to Screen: Michael Joyce's *Afternoon: A Story* and *Twelve Blue*', *In Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), p. 63.