

In Regards to HOPSCOTCH by Julio Cortazar

HOPSCOTCH, first published in 1963, is referred to as the first hypertext novel. In the Author's Note, Cortazar writes that "this book consists of many books, but two books above all. The reader is invited to choose between these two possibilities." The possibility is to read through the first 56 of 155 chapters. The second possibility intertwines chapters 57 through 155 in seemingly random order into sequentially ordered chapters 1-56.

Besides having two alternative paths, Cortazar's writing engages the reader by switching between the person or people to whom the narrator is speaking. For example, in the very first chapter, the narrator begins by asking "Would I find La Maga?" He goes on to describe to the reader the places he and La Maga would meet, but before the end of the page, he is speaking directly to La Maga: "Oh, Maga, whenever I saw a woman who looked like you...Maybe you remember, Maga, that old umbrella...." By alternating between audiences, Cortazar is drawing the reader in, forming a triangle between the narrator, La Maga, and the reader.

The narrator's thinking is somewhat distracted, as he navigates through the story using detailed anecdotes. The narrator, in a way, reminds me of Bloom from Joyce's ULYSSES as he walks to the store for ingredients to make Molly's breakfast. Every detail along the way conjures up a memory for Bloom. The same is true for Cortazar's narrator, as he branches from the main storyline to develop detail.