

From *Hopscotch* to Digital Games: The Pleasure and Dilemma of Interactivity

Huajing Pan

Uppsala University

Gotland, Sweden

huajing.pan.0469@student.uu.se

ABSTRACT

In the transformation from a dominant immersive tradition to an interactive postmodern approach in literature, novelists explore new possibilities of interactivity, which brings a self-reflection on the binary relation between the author and the reader. This paper uses Cortázar's gamified fiction, *Hopscotch*, as the main case study. By providing an analysis of the infrastructure and game rules of *Hopscotch*, this paper examines the limitation of interactivity in *Hopscotch*, from a post-structuralistic perspective. Cortázar's concerns for the structuralist dilemma of interactivity also applies to digital games. The analysis of interactive digital narratives (IDN) suggests a progressive post-structuralistic turn. Although the dilemma of interactivity persists in various media, from traditional novels to digital games, the pleasure and possibility of interactivity has been continuously enriched in the designer's self-reflective practice and dynamic cooperation with the player.

Keywords

Game narrative, interactivity, authorship, post-structuralism.

INTRODUCTION

What is the most pleasurable strategy when reading a novel? Going through everything sequentially, immersing oneself in the virtual world created by the author, or reconstructing the plots freely, as playing a delicate jigsaw puzzle? The answer may differ according to genres, book length, reading habits, even the reader's mood at that moment. The different attitudes reflect a postmodern transformation in literature.

Since the mid-20th century, the dominant tradition of immersion has switched to an interactive postmodern approach in literature (Ryan, 2001). Rather than providing a ready-made, vivid experience into which readers can project themselves, the meaning of text becomes dynamic and unstable, waiting to be reconstructed by the reader. The transformation is also revealed in art. For instance, cubist paintings invite the spectator to detach from illusory three-dimension space depicted in traditional paintings, instead observing from fragmented perspectives. Accordingly, the pleasure of the reader has undergone a similar transformation from constructing a fictional world following guidance of the author to actively participating in the reconstruction process as a player (Ryan, 2001).

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Hopscotch, written by Julio Cortázar in the 1960s, is a typical novel that envisions and evokes the pleasure of interactivity. Its “Table of Instructions” suggests three reading paths: i) read sequentially from Chapter 1 to 56 and ignore the left chapters; ii) follow the sequence given by the author, “hopscotching” back and forth within the 155 chapters, except for the chapter 55; iii) decide on the reading path oneself (Cortázar, 2008). By encouraging a hopscotching reading strategy, the author plans a game, inviting the reader to play on the playground of *Hopscotch*'s texts. The tension between the author and the reader includes the exploration of the essence of interactivity: to what extent can the reader have a meaningful reconstruction of text when all the textual resources are provided by the author? Aarseth (1997) argues, the author-reader relationship is not restricted to paper text. The concerns regarding whether readers have actual freedom in reconstructing the text also applies to digital games. Using *Hopscotch* as the main case study, this paper deconstructs the binary relation between the author and the reader, bringing reflections on the interactivity in digital games.

The extension from literary analysis to digital games echoes the long-lasting debate between narratology and ludology. From the perspective of ludology, narratology fails to account for interactive features such as real-time user input, thus facing the critiques of explanatory validity in games. There are two main responses to the critiques (Nguyen, 2017): i) pivot the narrow concept of narrative to a broader understanding, which avoids intentional over-simplification of narrative (Aarseth, 2012) ; ii) adopt hybrid and middle-ground approaches to synthesise understanding of games, such as Leino's (2012) analysis of the materiality of computer games.

This paper is not meant to take sides in the ludology vs. narratology debate. Although this paper includes a detailed analysis of ludic features of *Hopscotch*, including its infrastructure, rule and winning condition, this paper is neither an ontological judgment on whether *Hopscotch* as a form of printed hypertext can be categorized as a game. Rather, this paper focuses the perspective of the author, examining Cortázar's motivation and outcome of gamifying *Hopscotch*, making it an anti-novel. Regardless of whether Cortázar succeeds, Cortázar's anxiety invites us to rethink the interactivity in digital games: is game the utopia of narrative, free of the binary relation between the author and the reader?

THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF HOPSCOTCH

The 155 chapters of *Hopscotch* consist of three parts: i) Chapter 1-36, “From the other side”, depicting Oliveira and La Maga's life in Paris; ii) Chapter 36-56, “From the other side”, depicting Oliveira's life return from Paris to Buenos Aires, after separation from La Maga; iii) Chapter 57-155, “From diverse sides”, consisting of Morelli, a writer's fragmented notes. As Cortázar writes, for the “passive reader”, the third part after Chapter 56 can be abandoned; for the “active reader”, they can hopscotch among total 155 chapters, generating new interpretations in interleaved reading, and discover the resonance between surface everyday life and a hidden second reality. A detailed elaboration of plots and metaphors in *Hopscotch* is out of scope of this paper. Rather than a content-focused approach, this paper provides an overview of the structural infrastructure of *Hopscotch*, exhibiting a picture of the “infinite” labyrinth in which the reader plays.

Material

Italo Calvino defines literature as “a combinatorial game which plays on the possibilities intrinsic to its own material” (as cited in Ryan, 2001, p.185). The materiality of literature can bring significant influences on reading experience. In interactive media such as digital games, the text could be utilized as narrative resources for creating gameplay experience. The materiality does not only relate to text itself, but also connected to its medium: in digital games, the text comes to the screen according to a pre-designed programming logic (Ryan, 2001), the full amount of text is unknown to the player unless the player has traversed every branch; when it comes to paper book, the reader can intuitively perceive the scale of the text, as physical perceptions of the thickness of the pages left could imply the possibly approaching climax and ending.

In the digital text-based game, *There’s just something about u* (GooseStranger, 2024), the text is unfolded gradually when the player (the letter “I”) jumps on the platform consisting of letters, depicting a love story. The relative positions of words indicate passionate or sorrowful tones of a sentence; different letters stand for platforms with different attributes, including bouncing, moving, fragile (disappear after the player stands on for three seconds) and deadly platforms. The sentiments of youth are expressed through interactions with various letters. *Word Game* (Team9, 2022) also utilizes traditional Chinese characters as interactive objects, integrating semantic representations with pictographic metaphors. For instance, the image of bird wings is consisted of many traditional Chinese characters of “wing”. By merging the basic material elements of text (letters, characters and punctuations) into expression and narrative, materiality of text participates in shaping gameplay experience, rather than being a transparent container of meaning. When the player becomes aware of materiality of text, it is the moment when immersive reading experience declines and interactive experience rises.

Chapter 34 (see Figure 1) in *Hopscotch* is Oliveira’s commentary on a novel La Maga has read. In the first glance, the text seems nonsense, as the text is not conventionally read line by line, but by skipping one line – the odd-numbered lines are comments from Oliveira, even-numbered lines are the original content of the novel. Facing the disrupted text, as a person with a cold who suddenly becomes aware of their breathing, the reader comes to notice the spatiality of text, an ignored dimension in traditional novels. The intertextuality in Chapter 34 visualizes the role of Oliveira as a commentator. Besides a spatial explanation of text, Aarseth (1994) suggests an existential understanding from the perspective of the reader, the displacement. The discontinuity of text invalidates a habitual perception of text, thus bringing anxiety and uneasiness to the reader; meanwhile, the text has undergone the process of defamiliarization, thus emptying a space that allows new interpretations to enter (Pan, 2025). Once the reader reconstructs a valid understanding and regains mastery of the text, the puzzle-solving satisfaction and pleasure will be achieved.

IN September of 1880, a few months after the demise of my father, I decided to give up my business activities, transferring besides, but you wonder how she can get interested in things them to another house in Jerez whose standing was as solvent like this. To think that she's spent hours on end reading tasteless as that of my own; I liquidated all the credits I could, rented out stuff like this and plenty of other incredible things, *Elle and France Soir*, those sad magazines Babs lends her. And moved to moved to Madrid to take up residence there. My uncle (in truth *Madrid to take up residence there*, I can see how after you swallow four or five pages you get in the groove and can't stop reading, a little like the way you can't help sleeping or pissing...

Figure 1: Excerpt from Chapter 34 (Cortázar, 1978, p.191).

The mastery of unknown text is the core mechanics in *Chants of Sennaar* (Rundisc, 2023). When entering the virtual world of *Chants of Sennaar*, all texts are strange characters to the player. Through interactions with NPCs, learning from facial expressions, attitudes and behaviours, the player gradually unravels the meaning of foreign languages. Successful interpretation of text enhances players' immersivity in the community and culture of the virtual world. Although initial confusion and anxiety when being placed in a strange environment could interrupt immersivity, it may create a space for reconstructing understanding and evoke new immersive experiences. Therefore, immersivity and interactivity are not inherently incompatible (Ryan, 2001). The tension between immersivity and interactivity can be mitigated via the player's agency in constructing game narrative. Here, immersivity cannot simply be understood as a linear, mental flow, but a whole picture of multilayered experience, progressively perceived by the player: the materiality of text outlines the possibilities of immersivity; the player's non-trivial efforts make the text ergodic (Aarseth, 1997), bringing an emerging, dynamic immersive experience.

Entrance

The starting point for a digital game is obvious, by clicking the "Start" button in the main menu, the player can enter the game-world. But what is the entrance for *Hopscotch* as a game? Opening the book to the first page does not mean the beginning of the game, as there are multiple options for the first page. Cortázar provides two basic options: either start from Chapter 1, or start from Chapter 73 following the "Table of Instructions". Two entrances firstly divide two groups of readers, the "active reader" and the "passive reader", leading to two reading experiences and strategies, while both of them will find themselves trapped in the "anti-novel" dilemma. The understanding of entrance is internalized in the paths and exits of *Hopscotch*, which depict the picture of an "infinite" labyrinth.

Path

In traditional linear novels, there is one reading path for the the reader to generate meaningful understanding of the text. In *Hopscotch*, Cortázar provides two basic

reading paths, and encourages readers to conduct non-linear reading (Hardin, 1994), making the reading experience an endless exploration in an “infinite” labyrinth.

The infiniteness cannot be simply understood as generated infinite branches (Simpkins, 1990), as all the content of 155 chapters and traversing ways will eventually be exhausted, just as the player can experience all branches in digital games by multiple playthroughs. Although quantitative infiniteness could be realized by looping branches, the enrichment of the path is merely an illusion, created by repeated text resources (Mawhorter et al., 2014). Rather than a quantitative understanding, the infiniteness in *Hopscotch* should be understood as a reading freedom without being restricted by one single path pre-assigned by the author. Like the audience who stands in front of the cubist paintings of David Hockney, what is presented to them is not an accomplished painting, but a dynamic, emergent object that includes diverse perspectives. Each perspective stands for a specific spatio-temporary recording, different perspectives collaboratively integrates a montage image. To capture a meaning of the painting, the audience has to make the decision themselves to determine a perspective, a spot for observing. The audience can definitely cover different angles and integrate a whole picture by repetitive observations. Nevertheless, the unsettlement of the audience (Novillo-Corvalán & Patricia, 2008) still exists in every choice.

The unsettlement can be associated with anxiety proposed by Kierkegaard, it is evoked when people undertake the responsibility of making choices. Whenever the reader needs to make a choice between different paths, they are put into an unsettled situation. They will hesitate, walk back and forth, explore new paths and revisit old paths. Hence, the narrative text where the reader explores can be imagined as a labyrinth (Aarseth, 1997). Umberto Eco categorizes three types of labyrinth: “the linear, the maze, and the net” (cited in Aarseth, 1997, p.6). The three types are not differentiated by different levels of complexity, neither the temporality that the reader is trapped in, but the destination which the path leads to. There is only one path in a linear labyrinth, either straightforward or tortuous, to the exit. The journey in the linear labyrinth can be interrupted by obstacles and therefore extended, but it eventually leads to the only exit. In a maze, the reader can wander in multiple paths, while the dead ends of paths will force the reader to return backwards to the only exit. Different from the previous two, the net is an unlimited space where “every point can be connected with every other point” (Eco, 1986, p.81). There is not an exit marking the end of the labyrinth, which cancels the differentiation between the “successful path” which leads to the escape and the “failure path” which keeps the reader trapped in the dead end.

The infrastructure of the net labyrinth can be understood as “rhizome” proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (Ryan, 2001), a decentered structure in which all paths are interconnected and construct an infinite playground for the reader to explore. By depicting Oliveira’s frustrated pursuit of La Maga, Cortázar presents his struggle in making *Hopscotch* a net labyrinth. Nevertheless, whether Cortázar succeeds in constructing his ideal labyrinth is not decided by Oliveira, but the reader of *Hopscotch* — more precisely, whether the reader believes *Hopscotch* is a net, allowing for infinite play.

Exit

Hopscotch begins and unfolds with Oliveira's inquiry, "would I find La Maga". For Oliveira, the exit of his dilemma is the reunion with La Maga, which embodies a dual meaning: i) physical reunion with La Maga; ii) intellectual resonance with La Maga. Together with members of *Serpent Club*, Oliveira has been pursuing a logical, rational framework when approaching things. On the contrary, La Maga always fails to understand abstract concepts and metaphors. She never reads any books of Heraclitus or Wittgenstein, her reading preference is 'clumsy' nineteenth-century novels that adopt a linear, progressive structure (Novillo-Corvalán & Patricia, 2008), just as the "passive reader" Cortázar describes. However, the intuitive and innocent way La Maga approaches the world has always been admired and imitated by Oliveira.

Although Oliveira is the embodiment of the "active reader", Oliveira is pessimistically aware of his intellectual and rational method in establishing an authentic relation with the world (Aboul-Hosn, 1995). Oliveira's situation can also imply Cortázar's pessimistic attitude toward the fate of the active reader. Having experienced struggle and disappointment throughout his path, Oliveira projects his hope in La Maga: "without understanding, she understands" (Hardin, 1994). In Oliveria's interpretation, La Maga stands for the ideal state in Daoist philosophy: grasp the meaning and forget the words. By overcoming the attachment to language and concepts, one bypasses the structural limitations (Shepherd, 2007). Therefore, for Oliveira, La Maga is the symbol of redemption of his life situation of being trapped in logocentrism, she stands for the exit for Oliveria who has been lost in the rational and linguistic dead ends. The journey seeking for La Maga is a turn away from logocentrism toward an anti-logocentric standpoint (Aboul-Hosn, 1995).

In summary, Oliveria's exit is actually a leap from structuralism to deconstruction. Oliveria's journey echoes with Cortázar's attempt in writing an anti-novel, Oliveria's failure in reuniting with La Maga also implies Cortázar's failure in subverting logos in novels. In Chapter 99, through Morelli, Cortázar expresses his frustration about language: "Language is betraying us... the writer should burn language and fixed forms..."(2008) Even written in an unconventional way, Cortázar still organizes the sequence of *Hopscotch* to make the content coherent (Aboul-Hosn, 1995). The spatial arrangement of text presupposes a reading guideline for the reader. Although Cortázar opens up space for flexible reading methods, how many meaningful interpretive paths the narrative experimentation can actually offer still remains skeptical. In the hopscotching reading path following "Table of Instructions", the delicate connections among intersecting chapters are still pre-designed by the author.

Having realized the limitation from the perspective of the author, Cortázar announces the death of an omniscient narrator, who has absolute power over the text and the reader's experience. Instead, Cortázar cedes his power to the reader, turning to a gamified novel. In the labyrinth of *Hopscotch*, the exit is not decided by the author, but the reader. For the "passive reader", Chapter 56 is the exit of the labyrinth; for the "active reader", if they follow the recommended path, they will be trapped in the infinite repetition of Chapter 131-58-131 (Hardin, 1994); if they explore their own ways, any point of the net can be determined as the exit. The reader can even refuse to read to escape from the infinite loop, just as the player leaves the marked grid on the ground in the game of hopscotch. By assigning different categories to his readers, Cortázar builds the characteristics of the reader into the unfolding of the text. The

strategy can be associated with dialogue design in many Role-playing games such as *Disco Elysium* (ZA/UM, 2019), the unfolding of different narrative branches depending on the character stats. It's worth noting that the rigid division of "active reader" and "passive reader" is not Cortázar's ultimate goal, but rather a strategy to accomplish his pursuit of anti-novel. By giving up the decision of the location of the exit, Cortázar includes his readers in the construction of the labyrinth. Therefore, the infrastructure of the labyrinth is always fluid, waiting to be completed by the reader.

As a becoming labyrinth, *Hopscotch* is grounded in a transition from the tradition of immersivity to experimental interactivity in narrative. Its attempt of subverting the linear structure involves a self-reflection on the authority of the author. To fully understand the ludic features of *Hopscotch*, the next chapter elaborates how Cortázar challenges the binary relation between the author and reader. The tension of the author and the reader evokes the pleasure of interactivity, as well as implies the structural dilemma of interactivity, which also applies to concerns for digital games.

THE GAME OF HOPSCOTCH

From the reader to the player

There are two modes of reader participation. Take a football match as an example, in the first mode of reader participation, the reader can be regarded as the audience sitting around the football field; in the second reader participation, the reader is the football player on the field, participating and influencing the result of the match. Both kinds of readers can be highly engaged and immersive, while their situations essentially differ. The reader as an audience is in a safe position, without any risk of injury, thus being powerless; the reader as a player is unsafe, always exposed to dangers on the field, thus having actual power over the match (Aarseth, 1997). The two modes reveal different degrees of authorial power of the reader. In traditional novels, the reader can only appreciate the text without intervening its structure. In cybertext and postmodern experimental text such as *Hopscotch*, the reader can explore the game-world as a player (Aarseth, 1997), participating in deciding the text structure, just as the reader of *Hopscotch* can determine the exit.

The authorial power in *Hopscotch* can be interpreted through Aarseth's concept of user-functionality (1994). User-functionality implies the responsibility and efforts one needs to undertake for reading the text, or rather, choosing the text. In *Hopscotch*, Cortázar's division of the "active reader" and "passive reader" strategically highlights the self-awareness of the reader. The division provides the role-playing opportunity for the reader, binding their preference and personality with construction of the text. Since reading *Hopscotch* involves their self-expression, the reader becomes the author.

I Ching, the Chinese divination text, is another example of the user-functionality (Aarseth, 1994). *I Ching* consists of sixty-four hexagrams, each hexagram has a different image and judgement. Through divination practices, such as coin tossing, the person can generate a specific hexagram image and interpret the image based on its hexagram judgement. Although the written hexagram judgement can provide a general reference, interpretation of the hexagram image highly depends on the person themselves. The reason for divination, personal situation, and even their present state of mind, collectively influence their understanding of the hexagram image. Merging ego to the text, the reader becomes the author who generates the

meaning of the text. The reader's pleasure also shifts from "the voyeur observation" (Aarseth, 1997) to player participation.

The transition from reader to player allows the interpretative possibility to go beyond the author's perspective. The reader's life situation, cultural background, thinking way and personal preference enrich the meaning of the text. The importance of reader-as-author has already been revealed in game field through playtext and participatory design. With the author's self-awareness of their individual limitations, Cortázar makes *Hopscotch* available for co-authorship with the reader. The following section further analyzes Cortázar's strategy and purpose for cooperation with the reader.

Authorship and interactivity

"The death of the author" proposed by Roland Barthes (1977) announces the dominant position of the reader in the author-reader relationship. From this perspective, the authorial power that Cortázar possesses is diminished objectively (GUEVARA-GEER, 2013), as the reader is actually the final author of the text (Simpkins, 1990). Some argue Cortázar's reading guidance is meant to create an illusion, making the reader believe that they are co-authoring *Hopscotch* (Simpkins, 1990). The reader holds the belief that they are choosing their own reading path by hopscotching among chapters. In fact, they are meeting Cortázar's expectation of being the "accomplice". Therefore, when the reader thinks they choose the hopscotching method according to their own wishes, they are reading *Hopscotch* in the way Cortázar suggests for them (Hardin, 1994).

The authoritarian interpretation understands Cortázar's strategy as a manipulation of the reader. From the authoritarian perspective, *Hopscotch* can be regarded as a strategic game. For Cortázar, the winning condition is inducing the reader to participate in the "anti-novel" attempt, like an experienced chess player who strategically yields, attracting his opponent to play according to his own predictions. For the reader, they can choose to be the "passive reader" to win, or even quit reading, avoiding the expected path of the author. As La Maga, the symbol of the "passive reader", disappears from Olivera's world, the reader can also get rid of Cortázar's control. However, the reader wins the game only if they are playing the game of struggle for authorial power. If their purpose is to experience all the narrative possibilities *Hopscotch* provides, the reader's refusal of cooperation will lead to a lose-lose outcome. Back to the example of a chess match, two experienced chess players often follow certain conventions to achieve a balanced opening which both players are satisfied with. Even though they both act according to the opponent's predictions, neither is in a disadvantaged position. Instead, they both contribute to a high-quality match.

Besides the authoritarian interpretation, this paper is inclined to a cooperative interpretation of Cortázar's strategy. Through the depiction of Olivera's failure in forming a stable rational framework, Cortázar no longer persists in maximizing the power of the author. Instead, he discloses his powerless condition to the reader, inviting the reader to exhaust the meaning of the novel together. By intentionally sharing the authorship with the reader, Cortázar challenges the limited interactive way in traditional media, that the reader retrieves the meaning created by the author (Nguyen, 2017). His pursuit of a new interactivity, reader-as-author, is rooted in his critical attitudes towards logocentrism, a rigid, binary structure in the text. The binary structure asks for a center to ensure that the text as the signifier, can singly refer to

the signified, which is the meaning (Derrida, 1976; Garrison, 1999). The reader is supposed to grasp the referential relation and receive the meaning correctly. The desire for the center generates multiple binary relations to keep the center fixed, including the binary relations between the author and the reader, the beginning and the end, the reality and the imagination.

In summary, Cortázar's pursuit of anti-novel can be understood in a post-structuralistic perspective. The undetermined exit and emergent text makes *Hopscotch* a monstrous, savage form of game fiction, a typical postmodern novel (Thabet, 2011). However, it remains skeptical whether Cortázar actually achieves his purpose. Cortázar himself has already realized, as long as he is still writing novels, he cannot get rid of the restriction of the text in traditional novels, which is essentially a fixed spatial form, passively waiting to be perceived by the reader. The reader can definitely reconstruct the meaning of the text, yet the activity of reconstruction is restricted in the reader's subjective side, unable to elicit any response from either the text or the author. If Cortázar's gamified fiction fails to solve the dilemma of interactivity, can digital games provide an innovative relationship between the author and the reader? The following section switches the focus from Cortázar's postmodern novel to interactive narrative design, exploring to what extent can digital games meet Cortázar's expectation.

FROM HOPSCOTCH TO DIGITAL GAMES

Compared to other mediums such as traditional novels, digital games are typically associated with a more flexible space for interactivity. Besides reading text, the player can watch animations, hear background music and sound effects, interact with NPCs or other players, collect food and construct a building. Multiple interactive methods and various in-game activities makes digital games go beyond a descriptive approach. Application of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) into digital games even make the distinction of the reality and virtual world merges. Instead of aiming at referential accuracy, digital games highlight situational experience of the player (Nguyen, 2017). The all-embracing interactivity in digital games brings new vitality to fundamental concepts in narratology, including the issue of authorship and narration (Thabet, 2011).

From direct textual and voice communication with other players in Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMO) to silent companion in *Journey* (Thatgamecompany, 2012), player participation as the necessary source consists of game experience. Interaction within players does not merely exist in the game-world, but also extends to reality in the player community. Even if the game content is exhausted, MOD (Modification) by player community continuously brings new content to the game. In the context of digital games, the long-lasting distinction between the author and the audience dissolves, players co-create the game world and game experience, moreover, contributing to its sustainability both spatially and temporally.

As the infrastructure of *Hopscotch* contains narrative power, the materiality in digital games also conveys narrative information (Millard, 2022), participating in narration. In *Depression Quest* (Quinn, Lindsey, & Schankler, 2014), some links fail to navigate as expected by the player. The failure of interactive feedback actually simulates the frustrated situation of the person with depression (Millard, 2020). The ludonarrative that combines game mechanism with storytelling utilizes the materiality of digital games, the feature of real-time feedback, thus bringing unique interactive experience

of the new medium. In analogy with hopscotching reading in *Hopscotch*, even the behaviour of flipping a page to connect two chapters can be informative.

However, it would be innocent to believe digital games are the utopia of interactivity. As long as digital games contain narration, the tension between the player's input and the system's output still exists (Thabet, 2011). Whenever a cut-scene shows and takes over the narratory control, or the player finds themselves failing to trigger a simple event, the player will immediately be aware that their identity of co-narrator is temporary and secondary, all the narrative possibilities in the virtual world have been predecided by the game system, written in code files. Here, the long-lasting conflict between immersivity and interactivity once again echoes in digital games.

Millard's (2022) provides a detailed structuralistic analysis of the interactive digital narratives (IDN). The IDN framework explains how the reader progresses digital hypertexts based on the author's design. Adopting the *storylet* as the basic unit, there are different infrastructures in IDN, which exhibit various patterns: based on the scale of the infrastructure, IDN are divided into micro, meso, and macro patterns; based on the navigation map, IDN are categorized as directional structures and open structures; based on the mechanism, there are calligraphic hypertext and sculptural hypertext (2022). This systematic framework of hypertext has strong explanatory power, which can apply to analysis of *Hopscotch*. For instance, the reader can directly navigate to another chapter according to the number at the end of every chapter, therefore *Hopscotch* can be interpreted as the calligraphic hypertext. Meanwhile, the "active reader" can hopscotch among chapters, so *Hopscotch* can also be understood as a sculptural hypertext, as sculptural hypertext is "sculpted" based on specific conditions. Which is to say, it is the active personality of the reader that makes the hidden text visible.

Although the structuralist approach has undergone serious criticism, the IDN framework is still attractive from an engineering mindset, as it makes interactive design highly efficient and reusable. Millard's (2022) suggests a progressive post-structuralistic turn: on one hand, the IDN patterns can serve as ready-made resources to support narrative design; on the other hand, the IDN patterns should not be regarded as universal and eternal truth, but always open to reconstruction. Post-structuralism does not abandon structure, just as Cortázar's anti-novel is still a novel. In critiques and practice, the rebellious one brings new vitality and hope to its opponent.

CONCLUSION

In this era, post-structuralism has already succeeded structuralism in narratology and literary criticism, its critical reflections on structure, binarism and logocentrism open up new possibilities for the relationship between the reader and the author, the player and the designer. By providing a structural analysis of Cortázar's experimental textural practice, *Hopscotch*, this paper examines how the transformation from an immersive tradition to an interactive approach happened. The transformation happened from the author's side, rooted in Cortázar's self-awareness and consciousness of the limitation of the medium.

The infrastructure of *Hopscotch* reveals the author's efforts in making the text available for dynamic, emerging and cooperative reading experience: the rediscovery of the materiality of the text enriches interactive methods; the multiple entrances and

exits lead to a hopscotching reading path, which collectively form an “infinite” labyrinth for the reader to explore. Cortázar’s strategy makes *Hopscotch* a playground, transforming the reader into the player.

However, the structural limitation of interactivity always exists. It brings anxiety and frustration both for novelists and game designers when distributing authorship. As analysis of the IDN framework reminds, the dilemma of interactivity does not cut off the pleasure of interactivity. The possibility of interactivity is not ultimately realized in a utopia, but continuously been enriched in the self-reflective design practice and actual struggles.

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